



1922-2014

The Thomas Balch Chronicle

The Newsletter of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library of the Town of Leesburg, Virginia
208 West Market Street, Leesburg, Virginia 20176

A Library for History and Genealogy

Volume 18 Issue 3

Fall 2014

Summer Vacation? Not for Friends of the Thomas Balch Library and The Black History Committee!

June 23, 2014

Sanabria Family Painting Donation

The Black History Committee hosted a dedication and memorial ceremony to honor the late and beloved Sherry Svares Sanabria.

Mayor Kristen Umstatt, on behalf of the Town of Leesburg, accepted the donation of a very special painting by Sherry Svares Sanabria. The painting, entitled *Settle-Dean Cabin*, will be on permanent view at TBL in the micro-film area.

Sherry's husband, Robert Sanabria, made the presentation, along with other family members. His abbreviated remarks follow, and speak to the meaning of the painting, for all of us to see:

"Thank all of you, for coming to share the dedication of the *Settle-Dean Cabin* painting by artist, Sherry Svares Sanabria.

"We are honored to have this wonderful work of art accepted by the Town of Leesburg as a memorial to Sherry. A master of her art, she also wanted her work to be much more than an object of beauty. It took courage for her to choose to paint images of old buildings, considered ugly by many, and often infused with controversy.

"Of course, she saw them differently. The buildings she painted were about the spirits that remained of those who had inhabited them, the dramas of life that took place within them, and often because of human suffering, what the buildings



l. to r.: Sherry's daughter, Jessica Kasten, Sherry's son, Alex Kasten, and his wife Tovah Kasdin, Robert Sanabria and Sherry's *Settle-Dean Cabin*.

themselves came to represent. Thus, they became what she called, *Sites of Conscience*.

"And that's how she came to paint the *Settle-Dean Cabin*, a former quarters for slaves. She was alerted when she learned the developer of the community of South Riding was on the verge of razing the building. Because the African American community would have none of it, he agreed to move the building and restore it. But for Sherry, doing that would destroy its essence. And so to preserve it, she painted the image of the building before anything was done to it, and thereby retained its inherent symbolism.

"Before she died, I promised her that I would do my best to place her works where they would be seen, hopefully understood, and appreciated. Those criteria certainly apply here. And for that we, her family, will always be grateful."

August 6, 2014

Tribute to Civil War Veterans and Wreath Laying for Loudoun's Own

The Loudoun County Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee, the Black History Committee of the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library and the Mount Zion Cemetery Committee hosted a tribute to the County's African American Civil War veterans. For full coverage, please go to Page 3.

August 24, 2014

Joint Fundraiser with Inova Loudoun Hospital Foundation

Historic Rokeby House, near Leesburg, was the site for a highly successful and enjoyable event, the first joint effort by two of Loudoun County's most venerable community organizations.

For full coverage and a history lesson, please go to Page 2.

Advisory Commission's Loudoun History Awards, November 9, 2014

The Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission honored four individuals who "have made significant contributions to preserving Loudoun's past through collection of county documents and memorabilia, preservation of historic landmarks, visual arts, writing and long term involvement in local history organizations." Please go to Page 4 for the full story.

Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc.

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info@balchfriends.org

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www.balchfriends.org

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Balch Library, Inova Loudoun Hospital Join to Re-create Stunning Historical Event

By James P. Lucier

The Friends of the Thomas Balch Library and the Inova Loudoun Hospital Foundation in August joined together in a successful gala to raise funds to support their respective institutions. In doing so, they brought to life a colorful phase of Loudoun's history.

During a very late evening on August 24, 1814, a weary wagon-driver arrived in Leesburg after most honest folks had gone to bed. He had a very unusual cargo of linen bags sewed shut. To the east, the sky glowed red. He aroused the Sheriff, and then the Clerk of the Court, Charles Binns III, and told them what he had. He was no ordinary wagon driver; his name was Stephen Pleasonton, and he was the Clerk of the U.S. State Department. He had on board the most precious documents of the founding of the young Republic: The actual manuscripts of the Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and many more.

Two days before, even as the British were triumphing at the Battle of Bladensburg, and nothing stood between the British army and Washington, D.C., President James Madison and Secretary of State James Monroe stood on the battlefield watching the debacle. Monroe, whose office was tasked with maintaining the archives, hastily dispatched a note to Pleasonton in the city: "You had better remove the records."

That's why Pleasonton had arrived in Leesburg. But what to do with his cargo? Its presence in Leesburg had to be kept quiet. Binns had the solution. Although he lived in town, his late father, Charles Binns II, who also had been clerk of the court, had built a handsome brick house on the estate that we now know as Rokeby, in 1757, just outside of town. The elder Binns had been the first clerk of the court in Loudoun before the courthouse was erected, so he constructed a large, arched brick vault in his cellar to hold the county records. Those records were later removed to the courthouse when it was completed; so then the elder Binns' vault was empty. Eventually the Binns family closed up the house and moved into Leesburg. It was to the old mansion, then that Charles Binns III led Pleasonton, and opened for him the old vault. By morning the precious documents were quietly under lock and key.

Two hundred years later to the day, nearly 200 people gathered at Rokeby to mark those events on August 24, 2014. The Friends of the Thomas Balch Library and the Inova Loudoun Hospital Foundation joined together to present a Bicentennial Celebration. Thanks to the gracious hospitality of Christine and Ed Brennan, the owners of the historic house, guests were able to tour the vault itself and the home filled with period furniture.

Outside, the co-directors of the event, Ron Rust, from the Friends, and Pamela Maroulis, from the Hospital Foundation, had erected a large pavilion in the terraced garden overlooking the lake, where, after a discussion panel of speakers, dinner was served.

Each of the invited experts who came to discuss the events of August 24, 1814 was carefully chosen to present a full picture of what happened. Even the chairman of the panel, Gary M. Clemens, is the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Loudoun County, and the modern-day avatar of the 1814 clerk, Charles Binns III. Clemens presides over a complete collection of Loudoun County Court Records going back to its founding in 1757, one of only five Virginia county record collections to escape destruction during the War between the States. Just as the U.S. archives were rescued by Pleasonton and Binns in 1814, the Loudoun records were removed by the county clerk in 1861 and taken to remote locations, moving them from place to place to escape the path of war.

Loudoun historian Richard Gillespie painted the broad picture of what was going on in Loudoun in the year 1814. The county was very prosperous, having transitioned from tobacco to crop rotation of cereal grains, resulting in places called Wheatland and Oatlands. Since the 1790 census, the population had quadrupled to 21,338, with 3,000 of them living in the towns. It was believed that the county had become "completely developed," since every square foot seemed to be tilled as farmland. The county was served by five turnpikes, and modern machinery had been installed in places like Aldie Mill. The prosperity was confirmed by the large houses, such as Rokeby, that began to dot the landscape, said Gillespie.



Richard Gillespie

Jessie Kratz, who is the Historian of the National Archives in Washington D.C., gave an authoritative account of the saving of the documents. From the beginning of the Republic, the Secretary of State had been tasked with preserving the state papers. The collection of the papers began, of course, in Philadelphia, which was the original capital. Eventually the papers were moved to Washington in 1800, and stored without much ceremony in a building that State shared with the U.S. Treasury. Kratz detailed how Pleasonton, after receiving the note sent by Monroe from Bladensville, had to scrounge to find a wagon and horses, since most of the wagons had already been taken by ordinary citizens fleeing the city. Eventually he prevailed, found bolts of linen, and with the help of his assistant clerks, sewed the documents into linen bags.



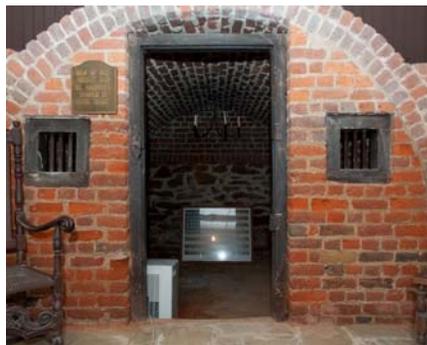
Jessie Kratz

Taking his cargo first to a mill on the Virginia side of the Potomac, Pleasonton realized that there was a munitions foundry right across the river that might invite bombardment. Accordingly he continued on to Leesburg, 35 miles from the capital.

According to Kratz, the documents included not only the major three—the Articles, the Declaration and the Constitution—but also such items as Washington's correspondence, including his letter to Congress reporting the final victory at Yorktown, his letter resigning his commission as commander-in-chief, and Washington's personal copy of the Declaration with his own notes written in the margins.

Steve Vogel is a military historian, author of the new book *Through the Perilous Fight* about the British campaign in the Chesapeake, and a former newspaperman who has covered armed

Continued on page 3



Honoring Loudoun's African American Civil War Veterans

On Saturday, September 6, 2014, the Loudoun County Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee, the Black History Committee of the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, the Mount Zion Cemetery Committee, Mosby Heritage Area Association, and Visit Loudoun hosted a tribute to the County's African American Civil War veterans.

Held at the Senior Center of Leesburg, the fervent voices of the combined community choirs from Mount Zion United Methodist and First Mount Olive and Providence Baptist Churches singing *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, set the tone for the event.

Master of Ceremonies Major General (Ret.) Robert Nabors led the audience of an estimated 300, in the National Anthem. After the Invocation, he introduced Leesburg Mayor, Kristen Umstadd, and keynote speaker, author Kevin Grigsby.

In his book, *From Loudoun to Glory*, Mr. Grigsby documented the service of nearly 300 African Americans from Loudoun County, Virginia, who served in the Union Army and Navy during the Civil War. Mr. Grigsby's moving talk, making frequent references to the US Constitution and speeches by famous American notables, showed how African Americans were deliberately excluded from our country's historical events in which they played crucial roles.

The program then moved across the street to the Mount Zion Community Cemetery for the dedication of the permanent sign telling the story of the four African Americans whose remains are buried there. A rifle salute and playing of Taps followed the laying of memorial wreaths at each of the four gravesites by descendants of the veterans.

Remarks by Donna Bohanan, Chair of the Black History Committee; Harold Stinger, Chair, Mt. Zion Cemetery Committee; Kevin Grigsby, and others, ended the well-attended event.



The military contingent honoring Loudoun's African American Civil War Veterans included 23rd USCT Regiment, 54th Mass Vol. Infantry Regiment, African American Civil War Memorial & Museum, NVRPA & Friends of Ball's Bluff Battlefield, Loudoun County High School ROTC, Regimental Quartermaster - Gettysburg PA, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1177



Continued from page 3 FTBL/ILHF Fundraiser

conflict all over the world. He sketched out the British advance, which resulted in the burning of Washington and the failed attempt to take Baltimore.

The origins of the war were confused, he said, with only about half of the American people supporting President Madison's declaration of war. Britain was engaged in the war against Napoleon, and thought the Americans should be grateful that Britain was fighting to save civilization, as it were. The British were seizing American sailors to be impressed for work on British warships, and embargoing U.S. trade with France. Even Francis Scott Key, who later would write the iconic *Star Spangled Banner*, thought that it was insane for a weak and ill-prepared America to take on the greatest military power in the world.

Up until 1814, most of the fighting had taken place along the Canadian border, with disastrous results for the Americans, said Vogel. After Wellington's victory over Napoleon at Water-



Steve Vogel

loo, British forces were freed up to bolster the American campaign. Admiral of the Fleet Sir George Cockburn arrived in the Chesapeake in 1813, with the determination to bring the war to the heart of the United States, harass its ships and economy, and decapitate the U.S. government. The arrival of Maj. General Robert Ross, Wellington's veteran general, at the port of Benedict, Maryland on August 19, 1814, caused consternation because the Americans had long believed that Washington, still a rural site with a handful of government buildings, was too insignificant to be attacked. But Ross's plan was to bring down the U.S. government, capture President Madison, and impose harsh terms to limit American expansion and influence. The burning of Washington was accomplished, but it served only to reinvigorate American will.

The Thomas Balch Library and Inova Loudoun Hospital are two Loudoun institutions approaching 90 years old. By joining together to celebrate Loudoun history, their support groups insure that both institutions will continue to make history.

Advisory Commission Honors Four

In its 22nd annual recognition of Loudoun individuals who have made significant contributions to local history research, preservation and writing, the Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission, this year, tapped African American history researcher Vernon Peterson, attorney and preservation activist Steve Price, former Leesburg Town Manager John Wells, and longtime Loudoun County Supervisor and Legislator Charles Waddell.

The Loudoun History Award was established to honor the late historian and author John Devine. Nominations for the awards are solicited from the public each year. For full information about the nomination process, please contact Thomas Balch Library Director Alexandra S. Gressitt, 208 West Market Street, Leesburg, VA 20176.

Book Review

Reviewed by Barry Wasser

Why Normandy Was Won: Operation Bagration and the War in the East 1941-1945 by Ken Weiler.

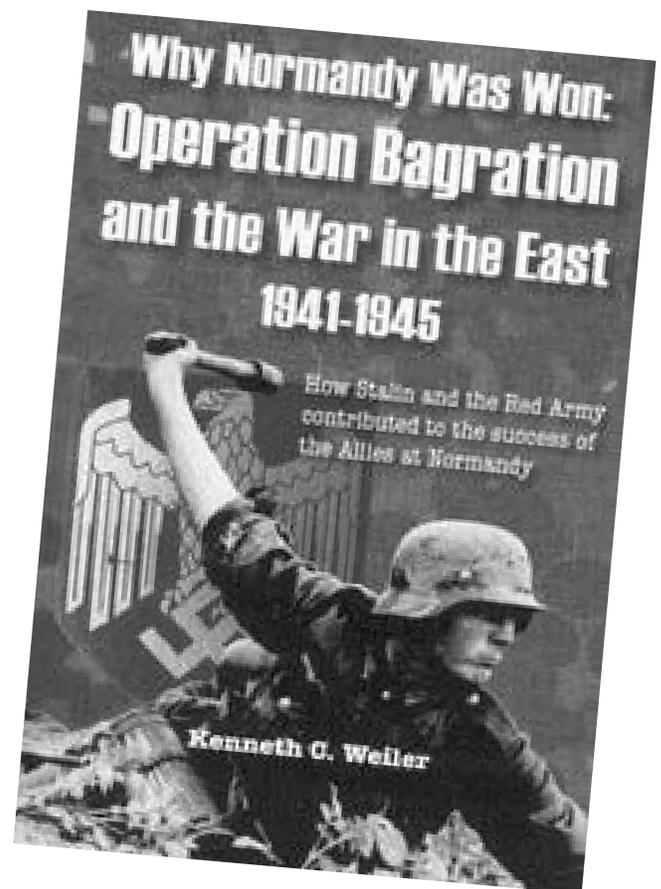
While we have concentrated on the Sesquicentennial of the War of 1812, we have not ignored the seventieth anniversary of World War II and its D-Day, June 6, 1944. In this review, new FTBL member, Barry Wasser, reminds us of another definitive event and its affect on the success of the Allied push from the shores of Normandy to the Elbe.

Why Normandy Was Won: Operation Bagration and the War in the East 1941-1945 by Ken Weiler is an intriguing work. I had read a number of books about Operation Overlord, the name for D-Day on June 6, 1944. I had not known anything about *Operation Bagration*. Despite massive losses repelling the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, Operation Barbarossa, the Russians assembled another attack on Nazi Germany that began on June 22, 1944. It was designed to be a movement that would reduce the pressure on the Allies as they came inland after the landing in Normandy. In June 1944 the German Wehrmacht had more than 217 combat divisions fighting in Europe. Fifty-seven were in Normandy, Belgium, and Holland—where were the others? Why were they there? Who and what kept them away? These questions and others are answered by author Ken Weiler in his book, *Why Normandy Was Won*. The Allied return to Europe in northwestern France was fully expected by the Nazi armies, but when they landed on D-Day, why was only a fraction of German fighting divisions there waiting, and why were many units not staffed with ethnic Germans?

This new look at the crucial struggle in northwestern France and western Russia, for the first time connects the two most important fronts in Europe: the Western Front and the Russian Front. It discusses and explains why the best and brightest of the German armies were not where they should have been, defending the beaches at Normandy, but instead deep in the heart and borderlands of Russia.

If *Operation Bagration* was written only as a narrative of an uncoordinated action, it would be of value to those of us who wanted to learn more about the actions of World War II. Mr. Weiler has gone an extra mile in documenting a comprehensive lead up to the Operation. He explores the time before the Soviet - Nazi treaty and the Nazi's betrayal of that treaty. He then, through extensive and comprehensive research, lays the ground work for following a detailed history of the Operation. His research is meticulous and thorough. The book encompasses detailed but easily read footnotes that can draw the reader to follow other paths in self-study of World War II. The footnotes offer a more detailed understanding of the Operation, and the costly Soviet contribution

Some authors thoroughly know their subject and write as if the reader has the same knowledge. Not so with *Operation Bagration*. It is easy to understand, interesting and informative to read. Mr. Weiler provides clear maps in the appropriate locations of the book that enable the reader to quickly reference the specific events that he is discussing. My time was well spent reading the book without disappointment.



The Director's Letter

There have been changes in staffing at Thomas Balch Library. The resignation of Elizabeth Preston was accepted with regret and sadness. Best wishes were extended for her future professional success and happiness as she, with her family, relocated out of state. Elizabeth's contributions over the last 4 years have been outstanding and she will be missed by all – staff and patrons alike. Following a national search (we had applicants from as far away as Hawaii and Idaho), Laura Christiansen accepted our offer for the open position of Curator of Manuscripts and Archives. Her first day was September 15. Laura holds a BA in History and a BA in Art History from Berry College, Mount Berry, GA and an MLIS and an MA in Public History from USC, Columbia, SC. She spent five months studying Museology and Intensive Painting Restoration at Scuola Lorenzo D'Medici in Florence Italy. Prior professional experience includes serving as Archivist at the South Carolina Historical Society; Head Librarian at the Jean Outland Chrysler Library, Chrysler Museum of Art; Public Relations and Development Officer, Handley Regional Library; Library Associate Thomas Balch Library and most recently as Executive Director, Clarke County Historical Association, Berryville, VA. Please welcome Laura when you see her.

Over the summer months we hosted an intern from Patrick Henry College, Ashley Swartwout. Her experience with us included processing numerous collections.

On June 23 Robert Sanabria and family presented to the library a painting by Sherry Zvares Sanabria entitled *Settle Dean Cabin*. Given as a memorial to Sherry Zvares Sanabria, long-time member of the Black History Committee and artist of national and international reputation, this work captures the very essence of Sanabria's artistry "luminous paintings of spaces that seemed to hold the spirits of those who inhabited them." The presentation ceremony was conducted by the Black History Committee and attended by some 35 people. The painting is available for viewing and hangs in the library's microfilm room.

A visit to our Facebook pages will introduce you to interesting historical facts on Leesburg, Loudoun County and Virginia. Please also take a few moments to explore our website for information about our collections and upcoming events.

The fall edition of the Balch Column has been published and distributed. An electronic version of the newsletter is available at:

<http://www.leesburgva.gov/Modules/ShowDocumnt.aspx?documentid=13885>

As always it will be a pleasure to welcome you when visiting the Library or when attending programs and exhibits.

Alexandra S. Gressitt, Library Director

Newly Processed Manuscript Collections: July - August 2014

Loudoun County Courthouse Records, 1920-2011 (M 092)

Woman's Christian Temperance Union Collection, 1880-1965 (M 101)

Griffith Thomas Family of Virginia Collection, 1934-1990 (M047)

Loudoun Restoration and Preservation Society Records (M 094)

Mount Zion Church of the United Brethren in Christ (SC 0106)

Register of White Voters at Purcellville Precinct, Jefferson District, Loudoun County, Virginia (SC0107)

Joseph Thomas Martz Stamp Collection (SC0108)

Douglass Family Collection (M103)

Newly Catalogued Books: July - August 2014

Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, William A. Blair

Quakers and Abolition, B. Carey & G. Plank

The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion, Peter S. Carmichael

English Silver at Williamsburg, John D. Davis

Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day, William A. Frassanito

The Counter-revolution of 1776: Slave Resistance and the Origins of the United States of America
Gerald Horne;

Cotton and Conquest: How the Plantation System Acquired Texas, Roger G. Kennedy

The Town of Leesburg in Virginia: H-2 corridor design guidelines, Town of Leesburg, Department of Planning, Zoning, and Development

The Allegheny Frontier: West Virginia Beginnings, 1730-1830, Otis K. Rice

Country Roads of Virginia, W. Lynn Seldon.

**About Us:
Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc.**

Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc. was organized in 1995 as a 501(c)3 corporation. The membership stretches from coast to coast, due to the unique nature of the Library's collections and the faithful support of genealogists and history lovers everywhere.

The board members and committee members of the Friends are active participants in collecting and preserving information from Loudoun County as well as surrounding areas.

The Library, owned by the Town of Leesburg, underwent a major renovation, in 2001-2002, and the Friends organization was heavily involved in the massive fundraising effort. The success of that effort is evident today in the bright, comfortable, and most complete history and genealogical research library in Northern Virginia.

Please use the form below, for yourself and for your friends -- Join Us Today!

Friends of the
Thomas Balch Library, Inc.
invite you to join us!

Yes! I wish to join the Friends and play an important part in supporting the collections and programs of Thomas Balch Library.

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Legacy Society	\$	500.00+

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**New &
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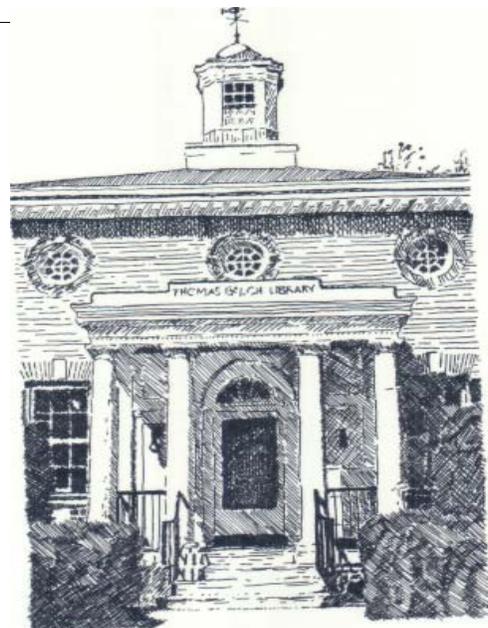
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***The Winter Holidays are
Just Around the Corner -***

Get a head start on your gift shopping!

The perfect gift for that student, or the historian in the family, or the newcomer to the area is to be found on the order form to the right.

All books are available at Thomas Balch Library, and others, as well. And we accept Visa and MasterCard.



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- Loudoun County's African American Communities
A Tour Map and Guide** \$ 5.00
- A Taste of Loudoun County:
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Home Interest Club Cookbook - Centennial Edition** \$ 10.00
- A Story of Round Hill, Loudoun County, Virginia**
by Ann W. Thomas \$ 20.00
- In the Watchfires: The Loudoun County
Emancipation Association, 1890-1971**
by Elaine E. Thompson \$ 20.00
- George Washington Carver: Scientist, Artist, & Musician**
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- Journey Through Time**
by Black History Committee of Friends of the
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- "The Imperious Laird": John Campbell,
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- Loudoun 1757: On the Border of Mayhem Loudoun
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The Thomas Balch
Chronicle

Friends of the
Thomas Balch Library
P. O. Box 2184
Leesburg, VA 20177

FTBL Annual Meeting
2 PM-Sunday, Jan.11, 2015
Please Join Us!

Calendar of Events

Please see the Fall Issue of *The Balch Column* for full description of TBL Sponsored Programs

- Monday, 6 Oct. – 7 PM **Clerk's Office Tour, Loudoun County Courthouse Historic Records** - John Fishback
Saturday, 18 Oct. – 9-12 AM **Leesburg Tour** - James P. Roberts
Sunday, 19 Oct. – 2 PM **Benefit and Improvement: Evidence of Antebellum Virginia Social Libraries** - Yvonne A. Carignan
Sunday, 2 Nov. – 2 PM **Martha Jefferson Randolph: Republican Daughter and Plantation Mistress** - Billy Watson
Sunday, 9 Nov. – 2 PM **22nd Annual Loudoun History Awards** - Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission

Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission welcomes your nomination to honor those who “have made significant contributions to preserving Loudoun’s past through collection of county documents and memorabilia, preservation of historic landmarks, visual arts, writing and long term involvement in local history organizations.”

- Sunday, 16 Nov. – 2 PM **ADAK: The Rescue of Alpha Foxtrot 586** - Andrew C. A. Jampoler
Sunday, 7 Dec. – 2 PM **An Unsung Soldier: The Life and Times of Gen. Andrew J. Goodpaster** - Robert S. Jordan
Sunday, 14 Dec. – 2 PM **What So Proudly We Hailed: Francis Scott Key: A Life** - Marc Leepson
Sunday, 11 Jan '15 -- 2 PM **Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc. Annual Meeting - Welcome to All**

Other Activities at Thomas Balch Library

Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission sponsors the annual Loudoun History Awards and an award for excellence in historical research at the annual Loudoun County Public School Social Science Fair. It meets at the Library the second Wednesday of each month at 7 PM. The public is always welcome.

Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc., a 501(c)3 corporation organized to provide support for Thomas Balch Library, meets at the Library every other month. The public is always welcome. For more information call 703/737-2166 or visit www.balchfriends.org.

Black History Committee of Friends of Thomas Balch Library, Inc., meets at the Library the first Saturday of every month from 9 to 11 AM. The public is always welcome. For information visit: www.balchfriends.org.

Loudoun County Civil War Round Table meets the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30PM except January and February. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in Loudoun County’s history during the American Civil War.

Programs sponsored by Thomas Balch Library are held in the downstairs meeting room and are free unless otherwise noted. Due to limited seating we recommend registering in advance by calling 703/737-7195. For updated news on events visit our website at: www.leesburgva.gov/ThomasBalchLibrary/publications or follow us on Facebook.