



1922-2009

**Friends of the
Thomas Balch
Library, Inc.**

P.O. Box 2184
Leesburg, VA 20177

E-Mail:

info@balchfriends.org

Website:

www.balchfriends.org

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The Thomas Balch Chronicle

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208 WEST MARKET STREET, LEESBURG, VIRGINIA 20176

A Library for History and Genealogy

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Where the Future Goes to Meet the Past

By James P. Lucier

What is Thomas Balch Library, and why is it so different from a regular circulating library? The answer: The Balch is where the future goes to meet the past.

These questions came up recently during the budget hearings with the Town of Leesburg, but perhaps they would be of general interest, not only to those who use the Balch, but to those who are not sure what to look for when they come to the library. The following is an adaptation of a presentation I made to the Town Council.

I was formerly a member of the Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission and Chairman of that Commission for three terms during the planning, building and implementation of the library's expansion. At the present time, I am a member of the Board of Directors of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc., the private end of the public/private partnership that has supported and continues to support the library. Thus I have more practical experience with the organization of the library than the ordinary patron. Moreover, I have lived both in Leesburg and Loudoun County for over 40 years.

This hands-on experience has enabled me to appreciate the rare quality of the Balch, and the extraordinary competence and vision of the staff.

As a historian, I have done research in many

world-class libraries, such as the Hatcher and Clements libraries at the University of Michigan, the Walpole library at Yale University, the Library of Congress, the U.S. Archives, the Library of Virginia (the state library in Richmond), and the Library of the Virginia Historical Society. I can say without equivocation that Thomas Balch Library is the equal of such libraries when consideration is made for its scope and focus. The Balch has a first-rate staff, combining not only a high level of professionalism, but a love and dedication to its collections.

However, some questions have been asked that seemed to suggest a misunderstanding about the mission of the library. Specifically, statistics were quoted that sought to compare the performance of the Balch with the County Government's largest library, the Rust Library. But any such comparison is inappropriate. Perhaps my experience in overseeing the development of the Balch in its present configuration may help to bring about a deeper understanding of the Balch's mission.

As you probably know, the Balch was once the main library of the county library system. After the construction of the Rust, the Balch was dedicated to historical and archival purposes. It is precisely because the mission of the Balch is so dif-

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Please Join Us for 'An Evening at Morven Park'

Friends of the Thomas Balch Library invite you to share in an *Evening at Morven Park*, home of Governor and Mrs. Westmoreland Davis. The event will be held on Sunday, September 27. A highlight of the evening will be an account by Virginia historian Brent Tarter of Governor Davis' life and his victory over the powerful Byrd "machine" in 1917.

Mr. Tarter is the founding editor of the Library of Virginia's multi-volume *Dictionary of Virginia Biography* and senior editor in the library's Division of Publications and Educational Services. His experience promises a fascinating journey into the politics of the early twentieth century as he explores the life of Davis – politician, visionary farmer, horseman, and owner of the *Southern Planter* and *Loudoun Times Mirror*.

Morven Park is reopening after a four-year, eight-million dollar program to stabilize and restore the Mansion, parts of which date back to the 18th Century, and will be open for self-guided tours. The property has one thousand acres in conservancy, including three acres of boxwood gardens which will be open exclusively to event guests.

Tickets, priced at \$125 per person, will be strictly limited. All proceeds will go to the Friends continuing commitment to endow Thomas Balch Library. Tickets to last year's event, *An Evening with President James Monroe* at his home, Oak Hill, sold out quickly. We urge those planning to attend this year's event to please call the Friends at 703-737-2166 for further information and to order tickets. Please leave a message and your call will be returned promptly.

Continued from page 1

ferent from that of the Rust that the Balch did not seem to fit into the county library system. That's why the Town of Leesburg stepped forward, in a time even then of economic downturn, to rescue the Balch and to take it over from the county government. Since that time, the Town has been faithful to its promise.

The Rust Library (and the county system) has an ever-renewing collection of contemporary books, and it is now reopening after being doubled in size. Some books that are taken out frequently wear out quickly. Other books that do not meet the criterion of popularity are ultimately "de-accessioned," that is to say, disposed of. The Rust's collection appeals to broad citizen interests in entertainment, literature, and knowledge. The typical patron might spend a half-hour or an hour in the library making selections, then checking out a number of books selected. There is nothing wrong with this; it is the mission of the Rust to reach as broad a population of contemporary readers as possible.

But the mission of the Balch Library is completely different. Most of the Balch's books do not circulate, because they are irreplaceable. The Balch is reluctant to de-accession material. In fact, the older the book the better. This applies to one-of-a-kind documents and archival material, as well.

The typical Balch patron comes and spends hours, even days, in the library, researching irreplaceable materials. In addition to books, the Balch has microfilms, genealogical material and computer collections that can be accessed only from the reading rooms. It has unique collections of historical negatives and photographs, such as the Winslow Williams collection, and newspapers and maps that go back to the 18th century. It has cemetery records, census records, indexes to local deeds and wills, historic house files, maps, microforms, military collections, on-line subscriptions, oral histories, tax rolls for Loudoun, and vital records.

The Balch patron is not reading for entertainment, but for understanding and analysis of local and Virginia history. It supports the basic research that helps to determine our understanding of who we are and how we got here. The Balch Library is unique in that it is catering not to the present generation, but to the future. The Balch Library is a covenant between this generation and the next. The Balch's strong commitment to the rescue and promotion of our community's black history is an example of this covenant. It is an institution of higher learning that is a building block for a stronger community.

Finally, I might note that there is strong community support for Thomas Balch Library. It has received hundreds of thousands of dollars not only from the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, but also from the Balch Foundation in Philadelphia, the Robey Foundation, the Loudoun Library Foundation, the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, the Loudoun Historical Society, the Loudoun Preservation Society and from the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Town's expenditures have been matched with hundreds and hundreds of volunteer hours from citizens, a contribution which expands the reach of the Library and confirms its community support—not only from individuals, but also from many outside foundations, businesses and professional corporations. It is the depth of this support that must be compared with the breadth of the county's library system that is the relevant comparison. That's why Thomas Balch Library is a unique and irreplaceable institution.

Don't Miss These Exhibits at the Library

In the Mercer Room for June: "African American Involvement in Rice Plantations of South Carolina Through History and Art" by Kathie O'Keefe.

July-August : John Creamer's Civil War artifacts.

In the Meeting Room for July-September:

"The Natural World that is Northern Virginia" by Gary Mester.

New Acquisitions at TBL

250 Years in Fauquier Co., by Kathi Brown

Aldie Mill, by Virginia Outdoors Foundation

Along Virginia's Route 15, by Josei Ballato

Bradfield Genealogy, by Donald Armstrong

Civil War Projectiles II, by W. Reid McKee

Clarke Co., Virginia Marriages, by Patricia Duncan

Cline-Kline Family, by Paul Kline

Confederate Victory at Mansfield, by Alonzo Plummer

Court of Claims 1663 (Irish), by Geraldine Tallon

Early Art & Artists in West Virginia, by John Cuthbert

Erwins and Related Families, by Frances Evans

Family of Cornelius & Mary Cating, by Lillan Gikas

Five Rivers Genealogy of the Donahoe Family,

by William Donahoe

Genealogist's Address Book -6th edition, by Elizabeth Bentley

History of VA DIV United Daughters of Confederacy,

by Cabell Smith

In Memory of Col Edmund Scarborough, by Robert Johnson

Last Chance for Victory, by Scott Bowden

My Story: My Miller & Related Families, by Carola Masotto

New York Foundling Hospital, by Carolee Inskeep

Noland History, by Paul Noland

Norman Genealogy, by William Norman

Old Richmond Neighborhoods, by Mary Scott

Recollections of a Colored Troop, by John McMurray

Recollect. of Early Hist. of Presb. Church Fredericksburg,

by Anne Carter

Scots-Irish Links 1825-1900, by David Dobson

The Battle of Gettysburg, by Frank Haskell

The Greatest Virginians, by Richmond Times Dispatch

The Road I Would Take Again, by Marvin Compher

Traxell, Trexel, Trexler, etc., by Laura Hawley

True Sons of the Republic, by Martin Ofele

Unknown Soldiers, by Mark Snell

Welcome to the Hour of Conflict, by John C. Carter

With Much Decorum, by The Waterford Foundation

Compiled by LaVonne Markham

Also new:

Howardsville: The Journey of an African American Community in Loudoun County, Virginia by Kevin Grigsby

This book is about the rich history of Howardsville in Loudoun County, Virginia. Howardsville was founded by freed slaves following the end of the Civil War. The book will serve as a historical timeline of the struggles and triumphs of the community from slavery through the years of racial segregation. The extensive genealogical research contained in the book will allow many African-Americans with roots in Loudoun County to rediscover their family's past. It is from that past that younger and future generations of Howardsville descendants are provided with valuable lessons to help them uphold and cherish the legacy of Howardsville. The last names of the African-American families discussed in the book include: Howard, Basil, Valentine, Summers, Reid, Mitchell, Dorsey, Moreland, Cosberry, Gregg, Jackson, Grigsby, Peterson, Brooks, Young, Payne, Page, Scott, Peters, Gaskins, Pinkett, Gibson, Colbert and others. Paperback copies are available at Thomas Balch Library for \$30. Hardcover copies may be available on request..

REPRINTED FROM THE VERY FIRST ISSUE OF THE *THOMAS BALCH CHRONICLE*, JANUARY 1996, AS ASSEMBLED BY THE EDITOR, SARAH E. SARGENT, WE HOPE YOU ENJOY THIS GLIMPSE OF LIFE IN THE YEARS LEADING UP TO THE CIVIL WAR. BACK ISSUES OF THE CHRONICLE ARE ARCHIVED AND AVAILABLE FOR READING AT THE LIBRARY.

THE LETTERS OF ANNIE FILLER

The George W. Janney papers at Balch Library contain the accounts and letters of a merchant who made his living in Hamilton, Lovettsville and Berlin (Brunswick). The collection covers the years 1843-1873. It contains these letters from Janney's cousin, Annie Filler, which offer a glimpse of life before the Civil War.

January 13, 1858

My dear, dear Cousin Mary,

I expect by this time you do really begin to think that you little Cousin Annie has quite forgotten you all, but such is not the case, I have been intending to write you ever since I returned home but it seems that we have had so much winter sewing to do that it keeps Ma + I busy most of the time...We are all very well and Ma says "now tell Cousin Mary that I say it is a real shame that you have not written to her sooner". Well I know myself that as kindly as I was treated by your family I ought to have written before but it can't be helped now, I am writng to you at last.

How are all my kind acquaintances in good old Loudoun? How often do you go over to Berlin? I guess Cousin George dont go so often as he used to when I was there...How are all the dear little children. Do they still go to school in Waterford? Is my little Nelly as mischievious as ever...

...Aint you most ready to move west, Cousin Mary. I expect we will go sometime to live[,] the folks have got Pa in the note on strongly...And now Cousin Mary I want you to write me as soon as convenient, remember if you do not answer this letter sometime that I wont write to you again and I wont love you half so well as I do.

Kindly, Annie M Filler
["Cousin Mary" is Mary Compher Janney, wife of George W. Janney.]

December 25, 1858

Dear Cousin George,

Your welcome letter of the 7th was duly received and now to convince you how much it was appreciated I am going to answer quite promptly ...As you will doubtless observe from the above date today is Christmas. But I cannot tell why it is that it seems to dull to me. Surely it cannot be that I am growing old and do not appreciate Hollidays—for tomorrow is only my 18th birthday..."Tis true I listen to the joyous children prattling about Christmas and I hear the boys firing crackers, torpedoes, etc—yet they do not awaken within me merriment. I am troubled with a terrible bad cold however + perhaps I may attribute some of my stupidity to that cause...

Why in the world dont Mary Ellen Householder answer my last letter...Please tell her when you next see her that I hope her thoughts and attention is not so much engrossed with getting married but that she can

remember to write me...it is thought she + Mr Enoch Kalb will be married sometime this winter, I know that is considered generally a very important event with young ladies...and of course engages a good deal of time and thought yet I think nevertheless that Ella might write to me ...So you think I made a fortunate escape in not having Mr Arnold. Well I think myself Cousin George that I am better off now than coming home upon my father with a baby and a husband to support, for Pa, poor man is in trouble enough already...he has the "blues" dreadfully. Well, I must stop my scribbling, Ma was invited out to dinner today and left me to cook our turkey and I must go see to it right away...

April 17, 1860

My dearest Cousin

...Cousin George we have passed through a bitter trial since I heard from you one which many are compelled to taste of its bitter dregs of sorrow ... Pa has been compelled from necessity by pressing security debts to sell our beautiful house...oh this law is a hard customer to deal with to turn a family out of house and home...ugh, it makes me feel like talking sarcastic...

[Annie's last letter, dated in 1861 is a quick note to "tell you I have found someone to take care of me", and is signed "Annie Zooke"] *

—Sarah E. Sargent

The Director's Letter

Early this spring an opportunity arose for Thomas Balch Library to acquire an 1860 Runaway Slave broadside published August 1860 in Leesburg, VA for J[ane]. D. Wildman and C. F. Fadely by the *Washingtonian*. As I had insufficient funds in my acquisitions budget to acquire this I turned to several organizations and individuals in an effort to raise the necessary funds to add this outstanding historic document to our research collections. Through the generosity of the Black History Committee of the Friends of TBL, Inc., Loudoun County Civil War Round Table, Loudoun County Historical Society, Friends of the Thomas Balch Library and three individuals we are privileged to add this item to our collection. It augments materials already in our collection including a Livery Stable book for C. F. Fadley (1870-1873) and Wildman family materials in a recent accession from the family of Betty Seccombe.

It is also a pleasure to share with you yet another acquisition. Through the generosity of Friends of Thomas Balch Library, Inc., we have added *GenealogyBank (NewsBank)* to our line-up of digital offerings this summer. The company has agreed to place an acknowledgement of the Friends of Thomas Balch Library on our interface page access. This subscription includes access to Historical Newspapers (1690-1980), Historical Books (1801-1900); Historical Documents (1789-1980); American Obituaries (1977-Current) and the Social Security Index (1937-Current.) This on-line subscription searches over 147.9 million historical newspaper articles, obituaries, birth and marriage notices often highlighting surprising facts about the past. Newspapers are being added monthly. It provides access to hard-to-find printed items including: family genealogies, local histories, funeral sermons, biographies, military records, casualty lists, Revolutionary and Civil War pension requests, widow's claims, orphan petitions, land grants, newspaper obituaries from the last 30 years with new obituaries added daily, and the Social Security Death Index. While the Social Security database is accessible in other programs its duplication here provides easy access to family history information helpful while researching in the other resources. GenealogyBank is one of ten in-house on-line subscriptions offered to researchers at the library. The others include: Access NewspaperArchive.com; America: History and Life; AncestryLibrary.com; Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970 – Virginia only; Footnote.com; HeritageQuest Online; JSTOR, and New England Historic Genealogical Society. A rack card illustrating TBL's electronic resources is available on request.

Library Week is celebrated every year in April and the Town of Leesburg Council signed a proclamation at their April 14 Council meeting recognizing it. Leesburg resident, long time Library Volunteer and member and past chair of the Black History Committee, Mary Randolph, accepted the proclamation. At the same Council meeting a request to approve a \$2,000 supplemental appropriation for Thomas Balch Library FY 2009 operating budget was granted from the Loudoun Laurels Founders INOVA Grant Fund to pay Matthew Exline a stipend for conducting mini oral histories, related research and compiling and editing a DVD on Leesburg History for use by the Town. The library received a \$500 supplemental grant from INOVA Loudoun Laurels Foundation to add to the \$10,000 grant received earlier this year. Randy Kelly and the Loudoun Laurels Board met here earlier this year and have been excited about the prospect of working with TBL.

The Town of Leesburg will have a new website effective May 30, 2009. Beth Schuster has been preparing TBL's material for the new town website. We are excited about the new content

available to the public on our web pages. Examples include: Microform index; Family File index; Bible Records index; Historic Property records - Lewis-Edwards index, Loudoun County supplement index, African American survey index, and Leesburg historic district index; Map Collection index, Newspapers Holdings index; Newspaper index; Vertical Files (Biographical, Church and general); *Exploring Leesburg* Index; Pathfinders (topical guides to research) along with easier access to subscription databases - similar to TBL's in-house splash page. There will also be information available on the Loudoun History Awards and the Social Science Award sponsored by the Thomas Balch Library Commission. This new information supplements that which has already been posted – index to Cemeteries, Index to *Loudoun Discovered*; *The Balch Column*, calendar of events, manuscript and visual collection guides and links to the Friends of Thomas Balch Library web pages. Check our website frequently as updates and additions will be made periodically.

I would like to share with you the substance of my remarks at the Commission's April meeting and the Friends May Board meeting concerning achievements of Thomas Balch Library over the last six years. Six years ago the number of patrons using the library was smaller and a more closely defined user base with the largest number of patrons utilizing our meeting room. Library use was irregular and the number of people attending programs limited. Attendance at programs has increased and special programs have drawn over 100. Two exhibit programs, scheduled into 2011, have been created with patrons coming especially for these. For programs I now receive calls seeking opportunities to participate in the popular library lecture series. A monthly series of week-day research orientation classes has been established for patrons. A concerted effort has been made to account for and make more accessible to the public collection materials. In 2003 approximately 9,110 items were catalogued; by 2008 there were over 32,000 catalogued. Efforts to re-establish provenance and make accessible for research use manuscript and visual collections are ongoing. National standards have been embraced and are being implemented. Our presence on the Internet has been enhanced and digital offerings expanded. Library patrons have increased and represent a broader cross section of society and now include Internet reference users from across the globe. Just as our patronage base now comes from across the globe, those who donate to the library – whether collection materials, which have a monetary value, or money - come from across the country. More recognition should be given to this public/private sector support of the library. So many residents of the county through direct donations, volunteer hours, and indirect donations through the Friends, Black History Committee, and other community organizations support the library. Many of these groups and individuals are donors of long standing and feel a partnership and ownership of the library. With this continuing generosity and support TBL has an outstanding future as a research center and a drawing card for Leesburg.

There is considerable activity at the library—by frequently checking our website; you will be able to keep up with our activities, research collection additions, and events. As always it will be my pleasure to welcome you when visiting Thomas Balch Library or when attending our programs.

Alexandra S. Gressitt, Library Director

NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

Archives Library Information Center
Robert E. Ash
Jeffrey A. Bolyard
Mary E. Bradley
Alice H. Calhoun
Valerie D. Gibbs
Tracy and Richard Gillespie
David C. LeRoy
Dorothy K. Rickard
Betty S. Ruby
Ronald A. Rust
Jonathan R. Stayer
Marguerite and Kevin Teska
Karen and Temp Titus
Susan and George Webber
Mary L. Smalley Wood

An Invitation!

Please join us at the newly restored
Morven Park
September 27, 2009 for an evening of
good food, libations, and to hear
Brent Tarter speak about
Governor Westmoreland Davis and
Virginia's early 20th Century politics.

A REMINDER

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PO Box 2184 Leesburg, VA 20177

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P.O. Box 2184
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P. O. Box 2184
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An Invitation!

Please join us at the newly restored Morven Park
September 27, 2009
for an evening of good food, libations, and to hear Brent Tarter speak about
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS AT THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY

Don't miss this opportunity to learn the best ways to use Thomas Balch Library in your research. This series of classes, presented by professional and skilled library staff will enable you to make the best use of your time at Thomas Balch Library. All classes are held in the library's downstairs meeting room and are free and open to the public. However, pre-registration is recommended because of limited seating. Call 703-737-7195 to register.

Thursday, June 4, 2009 - 10-11:30 AM - Traditional Genealogical Resources at Thomas Balch Library - Mary Fishback, Library Assistant, will demonstrate how to use traditional research materials in the collections of Thomas Balch Library to uncover family history. Users will be introduced to documenting and abstracting historical resources.

Thursday, August 6, 2009 - 10-11:30 AM - Beginning Genealogy - LaVonne Markham, Library Specialist, will introduce researchers to the intricacies and secrets of locating ancestors using resources and online subscriptions available at Thomas Balch Library.

Thursday, October 1, 2009 - 10-11:30 AM - Research Using Visual Collections at Thomas Balch Library - Beth Schuster, Library Reference Specialist, will introduce users to visual collections at Thomas Balch Library. Schuster will discuss types of images available, how they may be accessed and their use in historical and genealogical research.

Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission meets at the Library, at 7 PM, the second Wednesday of every month. The public is always welcome.

Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc., a 501c3 corporation organized to provide support for Thomas Balch Library, meets at the library the third Tuesday of every other month at 9:15 AM. The public is always welcome. For more information call 703-737-2166 or visit www.balchfriends.org.

Black History Committee of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc., meets at the library the fourth Tuesday of every month at 7 PM. The public is always welcome. For more information visit www.balchfriends.org.

Programs sponsored by Thomas Balch Library are held in the downstairs meeting room and are free unless otherwise noted. Because of limited seating, we recommend registering in advance by calling 703-737-7195.