

Key to the Past

STEWART BELL JR.
ARCHIVES

♦
Fall 2025



The People of Winchester Appealing to Washington, ca. 1818

From the Archivist

The image above formed the backdrop of a recent event with Peter Stark, author of *Young Washington*. Stark is a New York Times bestselling author who has written for many national magazines. He has also written several non-fiction titles focused on exploration in the American Wilderness.

Young Washington details George Washington's early career as an inexperienced and somewhat naive young military officer in the Ohio Valley during the lead up to the French and Indian War. Winchester, which was on the frontier of this conflict, forms an important part of the narrative. Washington oversaw the building of Fort Loudoun and was later elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses for Frederick County.

In Handley Library's West Reading Room, a colored rendition of the print *The People of Winchester Appealing to Washington*, sits above the fireplace.



The original engraving first appeared in Washington Irving's *Life of Washington*, and imagines a moment in 1756 when the residents of Winchester appealed to Washington and his troops to stay and defend the town during the French and Indian War.

The funds for Stark's visit to Winchester came from the Duncan Regional History Trust, a new fund honoring Civil War historian Professor Richard Duncan. This fund has allowed the Archives to expand its programming and conservation work.

Lorna Loring
Archives Manager

Events & Programs

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Family History Hunters

Thursday, October 9
12:30 pm to 2:00 pm
Off-site, Family Search Center
Apple Pie Ridge, Winchester
Registration Required

Lineage Society Workshops

Tuesday, October 14
10:30 pm to 12:00 pm
Benham Gallery, Handley Library

Archives After Hours: Ephemera

Thursday, October 23
5:30 pm to 6:30 pm
Reading Room, Stewart Bell Jr. Archives
Registration Required

The First Ladies, with author Andrew Och

Saturday, November 8
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
Robinson Auditorium, Handley Library

Family History Hunters: German Genealogy

Thursday, November 13
12:30 pm to 2:00 pm
Benham Gallery, Handley Library

Deciphering Old Handwriting

Wednesday, November 19
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm
Zoom Webinar
Registration Required



Andrew Och is the “First Ladies Man” and author of “Unusual for Their Time: On the Road with America’s First Ladies”

Andrew will be joining us on Saturday, November 8 to talk about America’s first ladies, their influence and their legacies. With the 250th Anniversary of the United States fast approaching, Andrew will be highlighting the role of Martha Washington.

Winchester also had its own connection to the First Ladies in the figure of Mary Elizabeth “Betty” Taylor Bliss Dandridge, the only surviving daughter of Zachary Taylor and Margaret Mackall Smith Taylor (1788–1852).

Betty was raised in frontier forts while her army general father conducted the Black Hawk War (1832) and the Second Seminole War (1835–42). When her father became president, she and her husband, William Bliss, lived in the White House, where she served as hostess, a duty her mother declined to assume.

Her time in the White House only lasted sixteen months, owing to her father’s death in office. However, “Miss Betty” earned high public praise for her grace, wit, and humor. After being widowed in 1858, she married Philip Dandridge, a great-grandnephew of Martha Washington, and settled in Winchester, Virginia.

The image to the left is a photographic portrait of Betty Taylor Bliss Dandridge. It was taken around 1860 and is held in the Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society collections at the Stewart Bell Jr. Archives.



Archives Updates

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Staff Changes

This July, we said goodbye to long time staff member Joan Wood (right) who retired after fifteen years as one of our two Archives Assistants.

Joan was one of the first faces people saw when they visited the Reading Room. With her knowledge and skill at overcoming genealogical “brick walls” Joan helped many people fill the gaps in their family histories. Joan also led workshops on beginner genealogy and established our long running family history meetup, Family History Hunters.

Although Joan is retiring as a staff member, she will continue to volunteer with us and help coordinate Family History Hunters along with two other Archives volunteers, Anne and Janet.

This summer we also said good bye to Archives Associate Buffy Knappenberger. Buffy mainly worked behind the scenes, updating finding aids and cataloging to improve access to collections, as well as managing our public relations and social media.



Shenandoah Valley Archives Fair

Though we're sorry to see Joan and Buffy leave, we are delighted to welcome Nova Kulakowski and Bee McDowell to our team.

Both Nova and Bee will be representing the Stewart Bell Archives at the Shenandoah Valley Archives Fair on Wednesday, October 8.

The Archives Fair is annual event that draws together Archives and heritage sites from throughout the Shenandoah Valley region to showcase their collections and highlight programs and services.

This year the event includes Bridgewater College, George Mason University, James Madison University, Laurel Ridge Community College, Massanutten Regional Library, Rockingham Circuit Court Clerk's Office, Warren Heritage County Heritage Society, Shenandoah County Library, Loudoun County Circuit Court Clerk's Office, Morven Park, Loudoun Heritage Farm Museum, Loudoun Museum, and Oatlands.

An advertisement for the Shenandoah Valley Archives Fair. It features a photograph of archival boxes and documents on a table. A sign in the top left corner says "Free & Open to the Public!". The main text in a large orange box reads "SHENANDOAH VALLEY ARCHIVES FAIR". Below this, in a smaller orange box, it says "Wednesday, Oct. 8, 2025" and "THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY from 11:00am - 1:00pm".

Free & Open to the Public!

**SHENANDOAH VALLEY
ARCHIVES FAIR**

Wednesday, Oct. 8, 2025
THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY
from 11:00am - 1:00pm



Join us for an Opportunity to:
Connect with historical institutions as they showcase their unique programs and collections to local historians, genealogists, students and teachers
Discover rich history and resources available!



Quarterly Report of Newly Available Archival & Manuscript Accessions

July to September 2025

The Stewart Bell Jr. Archives is constantly receiving new materials into its archival and manuscript collections. A summary of these new acquisitions is published every quarter. The full list is available on our website: <https://www.handleyregional.org/archives/new-accessions>.

John Handley High School Collection, #145. 1 item

JHS pin, metal with safety chain, from 1936. Gift of Suzan Bly.
(Accession Number 2025.055 THL)

Subject Files, 0.5 linear feet

Various articles on topics pertinent to the history of Winchester, Frederick County and the Lower Shenandoah Valley. Gift of Patrick Farris.
(Accession Number: 2025.051 THL)

Ephemera, Handley Regional Library Collection, #39, 2 items

Jewelry boxes from E. Bruce Capper, 11 W. Water Street, Winchester, Va. Gift of Suzan Bly.
(Accession Number: 2025.055 THL)



Artwork, Prints, and Posters Collection, #1200. 2 items

Lithograph. Old Time Winchester, Va. 1754 to 1854 by Keith Williams, 1969; print, Winchester VA Apple Capital, by Bob Woods, 1973. Gift of Suzan Bly.
(Accession Number 2025.055 THL)

Letter, Ariana Washington to Samuel Brown, February 10, 1834, 2022 MMF, 1 item.

Received from the Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society.
(Accession Number: 2024.011 WFCHS)

Letter, Charles J. Faulkner to John F. Hinkle, January 21, 1876, 2023 MMF. 1 item.

Received from the Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society.
(Accession Number: 2024.012 WFCHS)



The Stewart Bell Jr. Archives is a local history and genealogy center jointly operated by the Handley Regional Library and the Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society. Our holdings include materials documenting the history of the Lower Shenandoah Valley from 1732 to the present, with an emphasis on the City of Winchester and Frederick County, Virginia.

Contact

Tel.: (540) 662-9041, ext. 17
Email: archives@handleyregional.org
Website: www.handleyregional.org/archives

Reading Room Hours

Monday - Tuesday: 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Wednesday: 10:00 am to 8:00 pm
Thursday - Saturday: 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Location

Lower Level, Handley Library
100 W. Piccadilly Street
Winchester, Virginia 22601

Please note that we close for lunch daily from
12:30 pm to 1:15 pm