

Key to the Past

STEWART BELL JR.
ARCHIVES

Spring 2025

Left to right: H. R. Shaffer, H. C. Miller, & Maurice Murnam
get into the spirit of Apple Blossom, 1925 (1806-082 THL)



From the Archivist

The beginning of spring also marks the return of the Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival. Among our recent acquisitions are photographs from the 1925 festival (see above), as well as a button from the very first festival (below).



Continue reading for more information about new items in our collections, as well as the latest on local history and genealogy programming. If you have questions about our collections, services, or programs, please email us at archives@handleyregional.org

Lorna Loring

Archives Manager

Events and Programs

Using the US Census

Wednesday, April 2

6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

Virtual Event

Registration Required

Lineage Society Workshop: Applying to Colonial Dames, with Kat Collins

Saturday, April 5

10:30 am to 12:00 pm

Robinson Auditorium, Handley Library

Family History Hunters: Online Resources

Thursday, April 10

12:30 pm to 2:00 pm

Benham Gallery, Handley Library

Archives After Hours: Uncovering Stories in Photographs

Thursday, April 17

5:30 pm to 6:30 pm

Archives Reading Room

Rattlesnake Granny: Stories of Old Thornton Gap

Saturday, April 26

10:30 am to 12:00 pm

Robinson Auditorium, Handley Library

Family History Hunters: Immigration Records

Thursday, May 8

12:30 pm to 2:30 pm

Benham Gallery, Handley Library

Lineage Society Workshop: DAR, Finding and Proving your Revolutionary War Ancestors

Saturday, May 10

10:30 am to 12:00 pm

Benham Gallery, Handley Library

Conservation of Historic Documents and Art on Paper, with Rachel-Ray Cleveland

Saturday, May 17

10:30 am to 12:00 pm

Robinson Auditorium, Handley Library

Family History Hunters:

Thursday, June 12

12:30 pm to 2:00 pm

Benham Gallery, Handley Library

Beginner Genealogy

Saturday, June 28

10:30 am to 12:30 pm

Bowman Library Meeting Room



Scan the QR Code to learn more about
programs and events.

Collection Highlights

New Accessions – First Quarter 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>

Below is a highlight from these new materials capturing a dramatic moment in the history of the Civil War.

Letter, J. D. Starry to George W. Ward, September 21, 1861

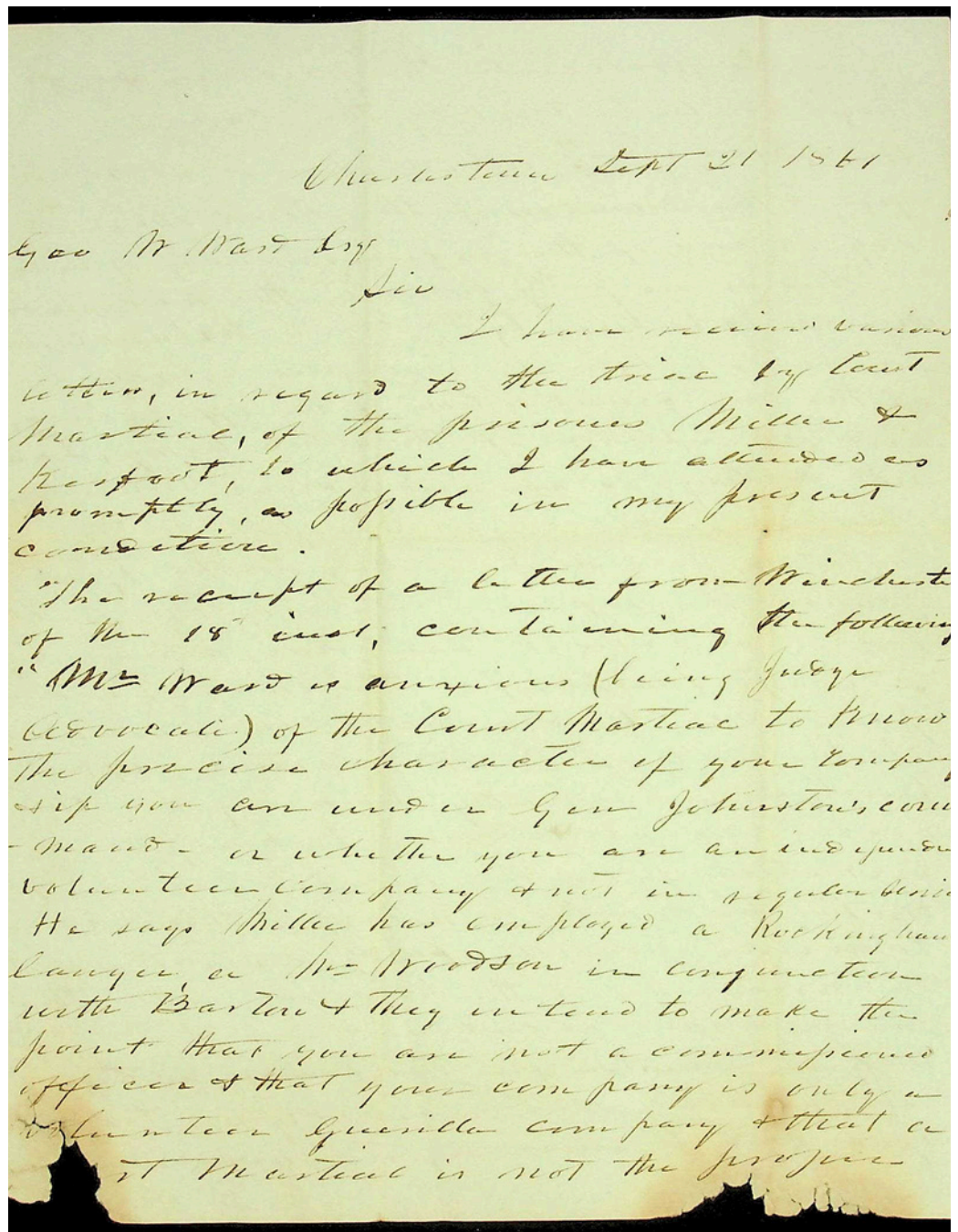
2024 WFCHS MMF

Dr. John D. Starry was a surgeon with the 7th Virginia Cavalry during the Civil War. At the time of writing this letter he was stationed in Charlestown, West Virginia.

The letter to George W. Ward (1826-1902) concerns the court-martial of two soldiers implicated in the shooting death of their commanding officer. Ward was, at the time, a judge advocate in the legal proceedings. Starry wrote to urge Ward to ignore calls to turn the case over to civil authorities.

On September 8, 1861, Private James W. Miller of the 7th Virginia Cavalry, shot and killed his commanding officer, a Captain Henderson, following an altercation over the arrest of another soldier. Miller, along with George W. Kerfoot, a fellow soldier accused of inciting Miller to the act, was court-martialed. Miller was found guilty and was executed by firing squad in spring 1862. Kerfoot received a sentence of hard labor.

This was purportedly the first court martial during the war in which a sentence of capital punishment was carried out.



Charlestown Sept 21 1861

Geo W. Ward Esq

Sir

I have received various letters, in regard to the trial by Court Martial, of the prisoners Miller & Kerfoot, to which I have attended as promptly, as possible in my present condition.

The receipt of a letter from Winchester of the 18th inst, containing the following "Mr Ward is anxious (being Judge Advocate) of the Court Martial to know the precise character of your company - if you are under Gen Johnston's command - or whether you are an independent volunteer company & not in regular service. He says Miller has employed a Rockingham Ranger, or Mr Woodson in conjunction with Barton & they intend to make the point that you are not a commissioned officer & that your company is only a volunteer guerrilla company & that a Court Martial is not the proper



RATTLESNAKE GRANNY: STORIES OF OLD THORNTON GAP

*With Stephanie
Gardner*

**Saturday, April 26
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
Robinson Auditorium, Handley Library**

In this work of historical fiction, Stephanie Gardner brings to life the story of Nancy Pullen and her community in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia in the mid-1860s. Nancy is a snake catcher who makes her living selling snake oil. The book captures the folklore and ways of Old Appalachia.

Following the event, Stephanie will be available to sell and sign her book and its sequel, *Rattlesnake Granny Strikes Again*.

Stephanie Gardner grew up in the mountains of Western North Carolina, but also has roots in mountains of Southwest Virginia. She is a Master Naturalist and works as a librarian, archivist, and museum creator.

This event is free. No registration is required.

CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC DOCUMENTS AND FINE ART ON PAPER



*With Rachel-Ray
Cleveland*

**Saturday, May 17, 2025
10:30 am to 12:30 pm
Robinson Auditorium, Handley Library**

Conservator Rachel-Ray Cleveland will be here to discuss how she remedies various types of paper problems such as mold, tears, and tape.

In particular, she will describe the treatment process for a Fairfax Grant between Lord Thomas Fairfax and Henry Baker in 1777, that was recently donated to the Archives. She is also discuss another collection of family papers held by the Archives which is under consideration for conservation treatment.

Rachel-Ray Cleveland, a professional conservator who has served museums, libraries and private collectors along the Eastern Seaboard for the past 25 years. She owns an independent conservation business called Cleveland Conservation of Art on Paper, Inc., located near Laurel, Maryland.

This event is free. No registration is required.



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

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

Location

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

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.