



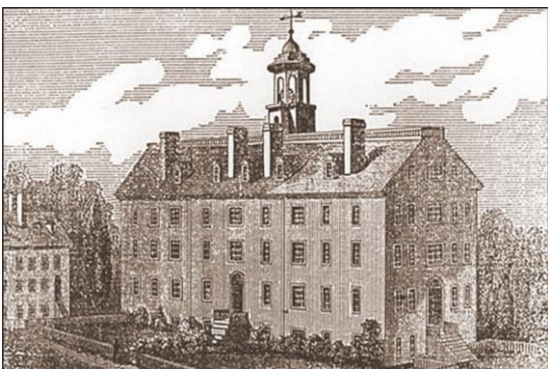
The year 2017 marks Fairfax County's 275th Anniversary – stay tuned for news about all of the great events happening around the county celebrating this historic birthday!

In this month's edition of *Found in the Archives*, we examine a simple expenditure account recently rediscovered in our records. This document sheds light on higher education opportunities for wealthy families in Virginia during the 19th century, and involves George Washington, the Fairfax family, and slavery.

During a recent reprocessing project at the Historic Records Center, we came across a debt case titled *Columbian College in the District of Columbia vs. Henry Fairfax, Administrator*, dated June 1849 (Term Papers 1849-085). Henry Fairfax died in 1847, during the Mexican War, in command of the Fairfax Volunteers at Saltillo, Mexico, and after his death, several creditors filed claims against his estate. Columbian College claimed that Henry Fairfax owed tuition and board for his son, Reginald Fairfax, who had attended Columbian College in 1845.

Curious about the Columbian College of the District of Columbia? Today we know it by another name – The George Washington University.

While the case concerns a simple debt, the detailed expenditure account provided as evidence gives insight into the higher learning experience that few families in Fairfax County could afford in the 19th century.



Reginald Fairfax entered Columbian College in early 1845, with his bill coming due in November of that year.

The professor who wrote the account, William Ruggles, worked for Columbian College for 55 years, from 1822 until his death in 1877. The university recognizes him today as an as an important historical figure.

Columbian College as it appeared in 1850, courtesy of The George Washington University

The itemized bill can be seen below:

Henry Fairfax Esq.
 For son Reginald
 To the Columbian College, D.C. Dr.

1845
 Nov 19 25th Year First Session.

Matriculation Fee	\$11.00
Tuition	26.00
Room, Library, Bed & Furniture	17.00
Some Board	2.00
College Laws	.25
Table & Servants 24 weeks at \$2.25	54.00
1 1/4 Gallons of oil	1.40
Jug & can for oil	.38
8 1/2 doz. washing 37 1/2 c per doz.	3.25
21 Bushels of coal at .25	5.25
Davies Algebra	.75
	<hr/>
	120.28
	45.
	<hr/>
	75.28

By Cash

Wm Ruggles, Professor

District of Columbia City and County of Washington. On this twentieth day of June in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and forty-nine, before me the undersigned a Commissioner in and for the said District, appointed by the Governor of the State of Virginia, to take the acknowledgment and proof of deeds and other writings under seal to be said or recorded in the said State of Virginia and to administer oaths and affirmations, personally appeared Professor William Ruggles and made oath on this

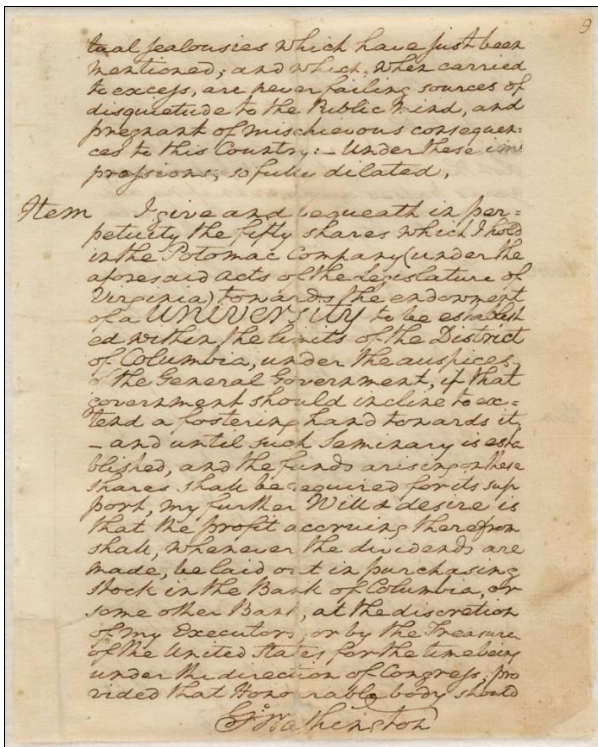
Henry Fairfax, Esq.		
	For son Reginald	
	To the Columbian College, DC	Dr.
1845	25 th Year, First Session	
Nov 19	Matriculation Fee	\$10.00
	Tuition	26.00
	Room, Library, Bed & Furniture	17.00
	Average Damages	2.00
	College Laws	.25
	Table & servants 24 wks at \$2.25	54.00
	1 1/4 gallons of oil	1.40
	Jug & can for oil	.38
	8 8/12 doz. washing 37 1/2 c per doz.	3.25
	21 bushels of coal at .25	5.25
	Davies algebra	.75
		<hr/>
		120.28
	By cash	45.
	[total]	75.28
	[signed] Wm Ruggles, Professor	

The most obvious costs in this account are those to which we can relate today: tuition, room and board. Notice that use of the library was included in this charge. Oil and coal would have almost certainly been used for lighting and heating Reginald Fairfax's room, and the school also took care of his laundry.

One item in this account, however, is indicative of Reginald Fairfax's elevated status – “[a] table and servants for 24 weeks at \$2.25 [per week].” While the “table” reference is somewhat unclear, this cost could be understood to mean that the college provided servants (slaves) to bring Fairfax meals and perform other chores. One can imagine that the use of private servants would be a luxury few in Fairfax County could afford; in the case of this account, the cost of a table and servants made up almost half of the total bill.

Using a currency calculator, Historic Records Center staff determined that the \$120 billed for 24 weeks tuition, room, board, and other sundry expenses, would, in today's currency, amount to roughly \$3700.

The *Columbian College in the District of Columbia*, chartered by an Act of Congress in 1821, has its roots in George Washington's will. Prior to his death, Washington made it clear that he wanted a college founded in the new nation's capital, and he made a provision for such an institution in his will:



Item I give and bequeath in perpetuity the fifty shares which I hold in the Potomac Company (under the aforesaid acts of the Legislature of Virginia) towards the endowment of a **UNIVERSITY** to be established within the limits of the District of Columbia, under the auspices of the General Government...

LEFT: *The Last Will of Testament of General George Washington*, page 9, probated January 1800.

Image courtesy of the Hon. John T. Frey, Fairfax Circuit Court

Unfortunately, due to the Potomac Company's poor business, the shares that Washington allotted to the government were never received. Nevertheless, Washington's dream of having a college founded in the capital was realized twenty years after his death, when President James Monroe approved an Act of Congress chartering the *Columbian College in the District of Columbia* in February 1821. The first graduation ceremony was held in 1824. In 1904, *Columbian College in the District of Columbia* was renamed to *The George Washington University*.

Today, the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences (CCAS) within The George Washington University remains the home of liberal arts and sciences programs, paying homage to and retaining the name of the first college in the District of Columbia.

For more information on these and other records held at the Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center, please call 703-246-4168 or email historicalrecords@fairfaxcounty.gov.

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http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/courts/circuit/historical_records.htm

Save the Date! June 17, 2017
HISTORIC FAIRFAX COUNTY COURTHOUSE



Celebrate FAIRFAX COUNTY'S 275TH Birthday!

Saturday, June 17, 2017

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Historic Fairfax Courthouse

The day's events, which are free and open to the public, will include:

- Family-friendly activities
- Entertainment
- History Exhibits
- Living History
- Performances

...and more!

Visit www.Fairfax275.org
for more information.



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