



*The year 2017 marks Fairfax County's 275<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – check out [www.fairfax275.com](http://www.fairfax275.com) for a calendar of upcoming events this fall, all celebrating the County's historic birthday!*

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One of our current projects at the Historic Records Center is a re-inventory and re-housing of our loose documents, collectively known as "Drawer X." Among the deeds, wills, estate accounts, petitions, marriage bonds and other court documents are records that at first glance look rather ordinary, but, upon closer inspection, reveal forgotten or little-known events and facets of Fairfax County life.



*Jamestown Exposition Postcard, 1907, courtesy of Wikipedia Commons*

The year 1907 marked the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in North America. An exposition was planned to commemorate the event and 21 states, including Virginia, built state houses to showcase their history and industry. Other attractions comprised the latest transportation technologies, a menagerie, a Wild West show, a model of the Panama Canal, an exhibit on the Civil War battle between the

ironclad warships the *USS Monitor* and *CSS Virginia*, and a naval revue. The location was Sewell's Point on Hampton Roads, which is in sight of where the ironclads fought. At that time, it was believed that the original Jamestown settlement was under the James River, and Jamestown Island was very difficult to get to.

Fairfax County's response to the Jamestown Exposition was to use it as a promotional event. In the spring and early summer of 1907, the Board of Supervisors commissioned, prepared and published a book entitled *Industrial and Historical Sketch of Fairfax County, Virginia*. The committee in charge of the book was made up of local notables which included M. D. Hall, Superintendent of Schools; M. E. Church, property developer; and Franklin Williams, Jr. and J. S. Pearson, who were both members of the Board.

GRANT LEET. ALFRED B. LEET.

Washington, D. C., June 12, 1907

Committee Fairfax  
 Mr. M. D. Hall, County Board Supervisors

To Leet Brothers, Dr.

WASHINGTON SOUVENIR CO.  
 Photographs + Blue Prints + Post Cards.

613 Fourteenth Street Northwest. Midway between F and G Streets N. W.

Office Telephone, Main 2867  
 Residence Chevy Chase 47 K.  
 1907.

March	6	Franklin Sta. - 4 1/2 Views & Expenses	8 50	
"	11	Langley - 1 1/2 Print. Reps.	2 50	
"	14	Accotink - 4 Bldgs. Ext. 1 Int.	10 00	
"	16	Fairfax C.H. - 9 Views & Expenses	21 75	
"	22	Falls Church - 5 "	11 00	
April	9	Woodlawn - 2 " Woodlawn Chick	4 00	94 3
"	"	Teacher, Oakton School - 1 Print. of Res.	50	28 3
"	"	Bank Station - 6 "	3 00	66
"	"	Norington - 1 Luncheon Hall	50	
"	9	Chick Station - 1 1/2 and expense	3 05	
"	22	Vienna - 5 Prints	2 50	
May	7	Burke Sta. - 2 1/2 Views and expenses	6 15	
"	"	Alexandria - 4 Views	10 00	
"	"	Oakton - 1 1/2 School House and expenses	2 85	
"	11	Falls Church - 4 1/2 Views	8 00 =	94 3

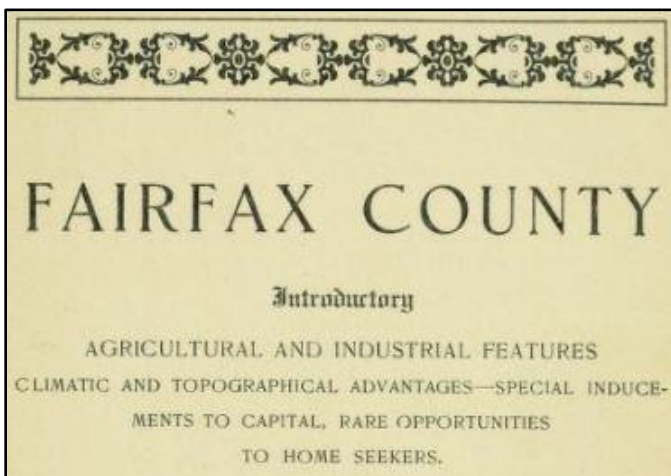
Pay amount of \$60 in  
 this bill accompanied  
 by M. D. Hall, Chairman  
 June 24, 1907

[Bill for photographs commissioned by the Board of Supervisors, June 12, 1907](#)

To illustrate the book, the Committee asked professional D.C. photographers, the Leet Brothers, to produce photographs of landmarks and impressive features of Fairfax County. Their bill (at left) exists in our Drawer X files, and lists the images commissioned and dates on which they were taken. It is rare that historic photographs maintain their metadata, and this kind of information can be invaluable to researchers and historians. The village of Fairfax Court House (modern-day City of Fairfax) was the subject of the greatest number of images taken, at a cost of \$21.75.

The back of the Leet Brothers bill also contains interesting information: the School Board paid \$28.30 of the \$94.30 bill. Only two images listed on the bill relate to local schools -- the Oakton School House and its teacher.

The 'Industrial' part of the book contains detailed sketches of Fairfax County's main towns and villages, as they existed in 1907. These sketches describe the local schools, churches, transportation opportunities, public facilities and amenities such as telephone cables. The County is also marketed as a gateway to to Capital. Other chapters highlight the physical geography, fairly temperate climate, excellent farming conditions, rising industry and economy of Fairfax County.



[Industrial and Historical Sketch of Fairfax County, page 5, 1907, courtesy of archive.org](#)

The 'Historical' part of the book describes the important people who made the county their home, such as George Washington and George Mason, and their houses and grand estates. Tourism was still mainly the preserve of the wealthiest classes, but improving transportation methods meant that areas of interest were opening up for more people. It may have been

that the Supervisors saw the possible future of cultural tourism, and decided to harness it as a way to make Fairfax more of an attractive prospect.

came. If there be anywhere any home-seeker who desires to locate convenient to the best market and most beautiful city in the world; who is seeking a genial climate and good sanitary conditions, where educational, social and religious opportunities are unsurpassed, and who wishes to pursue any special line of farming, fruit-growing, or stock-raising, he can find in Fairfax County, lands, locations, and conditions ideally suited to his purpose.

[Industrial and Historical Sketch of Fairfax County, page 34, 1907, courtesy of archive.org](#)

Another member of the Committee, M. E. Church, also stood to gain from the incoming population and investment that the Board of Supervisors hoped would result from the book. As a property developer, real estate agent and mortgage lender, Church would have benefitted immensely from the new 'home-seekers' referenced in the above excerpt of the book, and he took out a full-page advertisement at the back of the publication.

1907  
Fairfax County, Va.  
C. H. Ford Jr.  
To Compensation and expenses  
in going to Jamestown Exposition  
& receiving and distribution of  
the historical description of Fairfax  
Co. Va. prepared by said County -  
one month at \$100. per mo. \$100.<sup>00</sup>/<sub>100</sub>  
Rec'd Payt of J. W. Richardson  
this amt. is for his use Sep. 19. 1907.  
C. H. Ford

[Receipt for Payment to C. H. Ford by Board of Supervisors, September 19, 1907](#)

To distribute their book, the Board of Supervisors paid two young men to go to the summer session of the Jamestown Exposition for a month each, and hand out copies to other attendees. One of these men was Charles Humphrey Ford, from Clifton Station. A receipt (at left) for Ford's financial compensation also exists in our Drawer X files. He was paid \$100 for the month, which was a very good amount in comparison to the national average men's monthly wage of about \$45. Of course, he also had to pay for food, transportation and lodging.





*Jamestown Exposition Postcard, 1907, courtesy of Wikipedia Commons*

near Alexandria. The Virginia State House can be seen second from left in the above image.

The Jamestown Exposition closed in December 1907, and was ultimately a financial flop, which may be why it isn't well-known. Sewell's Point on Hampton Roads was later developed into Norfolk Naval Base, in preparation for the United States' entry into the World War I. Some of the Exposition's buildings were torn down and materials used elsewhere in Virginia. For instance, materials were used to renovate the Washington/Custis estate of Woodlawn,

Despite the 1907 exposition's best efforts, Fairfax County's population and economy didn't develop significantly until after World War II, so the *Industrial and Historical Sketch of Fairfax County, Virginia* looks aspirational, from our modern perspective. The book does, however, present a fascinating snapshot of Fairfax County at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and shows how forward-thinking and proactive the early Board of Supervisors were. The Board also made sure that the book survived in perpetuity, as they presented a copy to the Library of Congress. The Jamestown Exposition Company must have been impressed by the publication too, as they presented a copy to the Virginia State Library (now the Library of Virginia).

The Leet Brothers' bill and C. H. Ford's receipt lead us, a hundred and ten years later, to the Jamestown Exposition, and explain the genesis of the *Industrial and Historical Sketch of Fairfax County, Virginia*. Even the most ordinary of records, such as bills and receipts, are treasured by the Clerk of the Court as they can lead to rediscoveries of Fairfax's fascinating past. The most insignificant-seeming documents really can lead to rediscoveries of historically important moments.

You can view the *Industrial and Historical Sketch of Fairfax County* in the public domain [here](#).

*For more information on these and other records held at the Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center, please call 703-246-4168 or email [CCRHistoricRecords@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:CCRHistoricRecords@fairfaxcounty.gov).*

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[http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/courts/circuit/historical\\_records.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/courts/circuit/historical_records.htm)