

FAIRFAX COUNTY

VIRGINIA

Fairfax Voting Changes:

Polling Places & Taxes

As we gear up for Election Day, we will look at two books from Fairfax County Circuit Court Historic Records Center which demonstrate how voting has changed over the years. The first is an unlabeled book (Fig.1).



Fig. 1 Precinct posting book.

This is the precinct polling book with recordings from 1904 to 1962. It records where the County Sheriff had posted a list of all people who had paid their poll tax. The Clerk signed off on it. The sheriff included what the voting place was, where the list was posted, as well as the date. It is interesting to see which places were used year to year and which ones have changed (Fig. 2-3). Places include stores, service stations, post offices, blacksmith shops, schools, fire houses, and even residences.

VOTING PLACE	WHERE POSTED	DATE OF POSTING
Woodyards	Woodyards Store	June 15 th 1904
Pulpanis	Pulpanis Barn	" 16 " 1904
Fall Church	Town Hall	" 14 "
West End	Balinger's store	" 16 "
Amundale	O'Connor's shop	" 16 "
Fairfax C.H.	C.H.	" 20 "
Vienna	Voting house	" 14 "
Langley	" "	" 14 "
The Lick	Schoolhouse	" 14 "
Drausville	Thos Kainey's store	" 17 "
Freshville	Oliver's Store	" 17 "
Wynnton	Mill building	" 15 "
Hogston's	Wright's store	" 17 "
Thompson's	School House	" 15 "

Fig. 2, detail 1904 entry

VOTING PLACE	WHERE POSTED	DATE OF POSTING
Centerville	Turbernell's Store	June 22, 1948
Chilton	Chilton Post Office	June 22, 1948
Sweetnam's	Wychoff's Store	June 24, 1948
Hells'	Hell's Service Station	June 22, 1948
Burke	Staud's Store	June 22, 1948
Lorton	Lorton Post Office	June 22, 1948
Woodyards	Makely's Store	June 22, 1948
Accotink	Rynn's Store	June 22, 1948
Pulman's	Balling's Store	June 22, 1948
Sum Springs	Sum Springs Market	June 22, 1948
Franconia	Franconia Fire House	June 22, 1948
Falls Church	Town Hall	June 22, 1948
West End	Cockrell's Store	June 22, 1948
Amundale	Amundale Fire House	June 24, 1948
Fairfax	Fairfax Court House	June 22, 1948
Langley	Carpenter's Garage	June 24, 1948
Vienna	Vienna Post Office	June 22, 1948
The Lick	Bluclynn's Store	June 22, 1948
Drausville	Drausville Tavern	June 22, 1948
Wynnton	Wynnton Post Office	June 21, 1948
Freshville	Wynn's Store	June 22, 1948
Thompson's	Bow's Store	June 23, 1948
Wheaton	Wheeler's Mill	June 22, 1948
Pleasant Valley	Waters's Store	June 21, 1948
Wynnton	Wynn's Store	June 22, 1948
Barley's Cross Rds.	Fire House	June 22, 1948
Brookton	Brookton Fire House	June 24, 1948

Fig. 3 Detail, 1948 entry.

The Historic Courthouse was listed as a voting place for several years. Other locations include a "telephone pole" (Fig. 4), a "Chestnut Tree", and an "old barn."

VOTING PLACE	WHERE PAID	DATE OF PAYING
Fairfax C. H.	Court house	June 11/15 1912
Horton	On a tree	" " "
Dranesville	Blacksmiths shop	" " "
Forestville	Oliver's store	" " "
Sweetnam	On Store building	" 12/15 " "
Woodsland	" Mabley's store	" " "
Clepton	" Buckley's store	" " "
Virginia	" Freeman's store	" 13 "
Hudson	" Mill Building	" " "
Lick	" Telephone pole	" " "
Centerville	" Utterback's store	" 14/15 "
Wells	" Hill Board	" 14/15 "
Pleasant Valley	" Palmer's store	" 14/15 "
Thompson	" School house	" 14/15 "
Falls Church	" Town Hall	" 15/15 "
Accotink	" Blacksmiths shop	" 17/15 "
Gum Spring	" Blacksmiths shop	" 17/15 "
Pullman	" Old Building	" 17/15 "
West End	" Ballenger's store	" 17/15 "
Langley	" Hummer's store	" 18/15 "
Guadalupe	" Jackson's store	" 19/15 "
Moore	" Broder's store	" 19/15 1912

Fig. 4 1912 entry detail

Poll taxes were paid so that an individual could vote. Virginia's poll tax largely accomplished two things: it allowed the Commonwealth to earn revenue and disenfranchised individuals who were unable to pay the tax. The tax purposefully and disproportionately affected African Americans. A poll tax was also referred to as Capitation taxes. HRC holds books that show who paid this tax between 1911 and 1926. The lists categorize voters as "White" or "Colored," and after 1920, women are included.

When the sheriff posted the list of those who had paid their poll tax, he was therefore posting who was eligible to vote in an upcoming election.

While the reason is not stated, the 1902-1903 voter registration that HRC has in the collection does show that some residents were exempt from the poll tax (Fig. 6). In Virginia members of the Armed Services were exempt. Other states allowed exemptions based on age and gender.

LENGTH OF RESIDENCE			Is he exempt from payment of poll tax as a prerequisite to voting?
In state	In County	In Precinct	
4	3170	3170	Jan
25	384	384	ms
7	334	164	"

Fig. 6 Detail, 1902-1903 Voter Registration. Last column “is he exempt from payment of poll tax as a prerequisite to voting?”

In 1964, Annie E. Harper, Gladys Berry, Curtis Burr, and Myrtle Burr from Fairfax County would file a federal suit against the poll tax. Along with another suit, the poll tax was deemed unconstitutional in *Harper v. Virginia Board of Election*. In 2023, this case and these individuals were honored with a historical marker at the former home of Annie E. Harper in Gum Springs, Fairfax County.



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Women in the list of Voters Registered 1902-1920

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Women & The Vote

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Found in the Archives is a monthly publication of the Clerk of the Fairfax Circuit Court, 19th Judicial Circuit, who proudly serves The City of Fairfax and Fairfax County. The Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center (HRC) holds the early county and court records including deeds, wills, court minutes, chancery and law papers, marriage licenses, birth, death, and tax records dating from 1742 through the early 1900s housed in approximately 2300 books and roughly 750 boxes of loose paper files. HRC is open Monday – Friday 8 am to 4 pm. and offers tours at 3pm on Friday. Click below to plan your next visit