

FOUND IN THE ARCHIVES, no. 23 – August 2016

Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center



Greetings! The Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center is excited to continue bringing our monthly newsletter, *Found in the Archives*, to you.

This month, we are pleased to discuss the return of four fragile court documents that were recently conserved through a grant awarded by the Library of Virginia.

In June 2015, the Fairfax Circuit Court was awarded \$10,600 to restore four historic court documents through the Library of Virginia's Circuit Court Records Preservation (CCRP) Program.

From the Library of Virginia's website:

The Circuit Court Records Preservation Program (CCRP) is a part of the Library of Virginia's Local Records Services Branch. Funded through a \$1.50 of the clerk's recordation fee, the CCRP provides resources to help preserve and make accessible permanent circuit court records. The program awards grants to the commonwealth's circuit court clerks to help them address the needs of the records housed in their localities.

We selected, and were awarded funding for, the conservation of four documents:

- the 1749 Court Order Book
- the 1751 Test Oath
- the 1774 Martin Cockburn Pew Deed
- the 1819 Court Minute Book

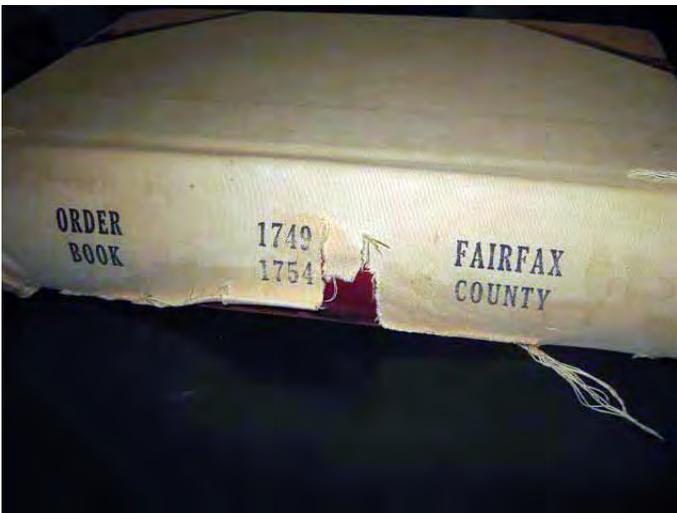
On behalf of Clerk of Court John Frey, the staff at the Historic Records Center are pleased to share with you the product of the conservation efforts. We will discuss each document, the treatments applied, and share before-and-after photographs of each record. These records have been added to the permanent record collection housed in the Historic Records Center, which is open to the public Monday – Friday.

The 1749 Court Order Book

The 1749 Court Order Book details the court proceedings during each court term for the years 1749 through part of 1754. It is the oldest court order book that remains in Fairfax Court custody.

This book was rebound sometime before 1980, and had been silk laminated, creating very stiff pages that were prone to splits and tears. Lamination is no longer considered an appropriate technique for document stabilization. It was popular between the 1930s and 1970s, and the process involved adhering tissue or silk and plastic (cellulose acetate) to the original document with heat-set glue. Since the 1970s, conservators have discovered that lamination results in the degradation of the original document. Over time, laminated pages start to yellow and give off a vinegar-like smell.

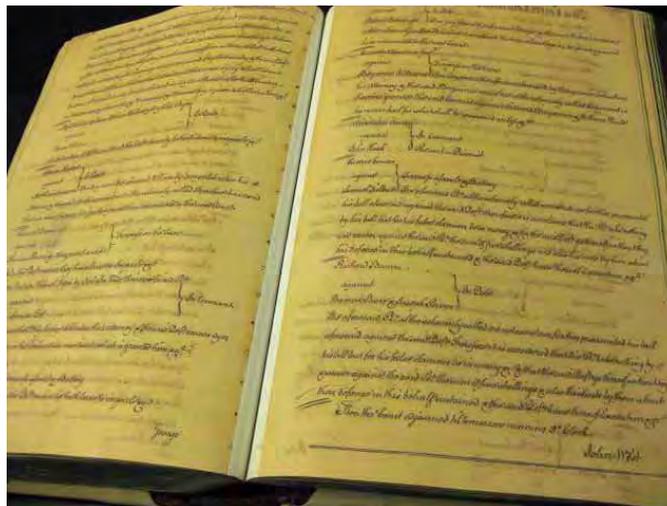
Here are some **BEFORE** pictures of the 1749 Court Order Book:



Binding, done sometime before 1980

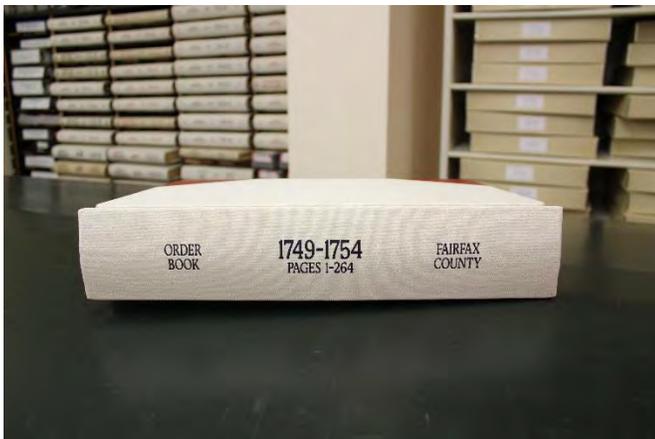


Cracked pages due to lamination, tape residue



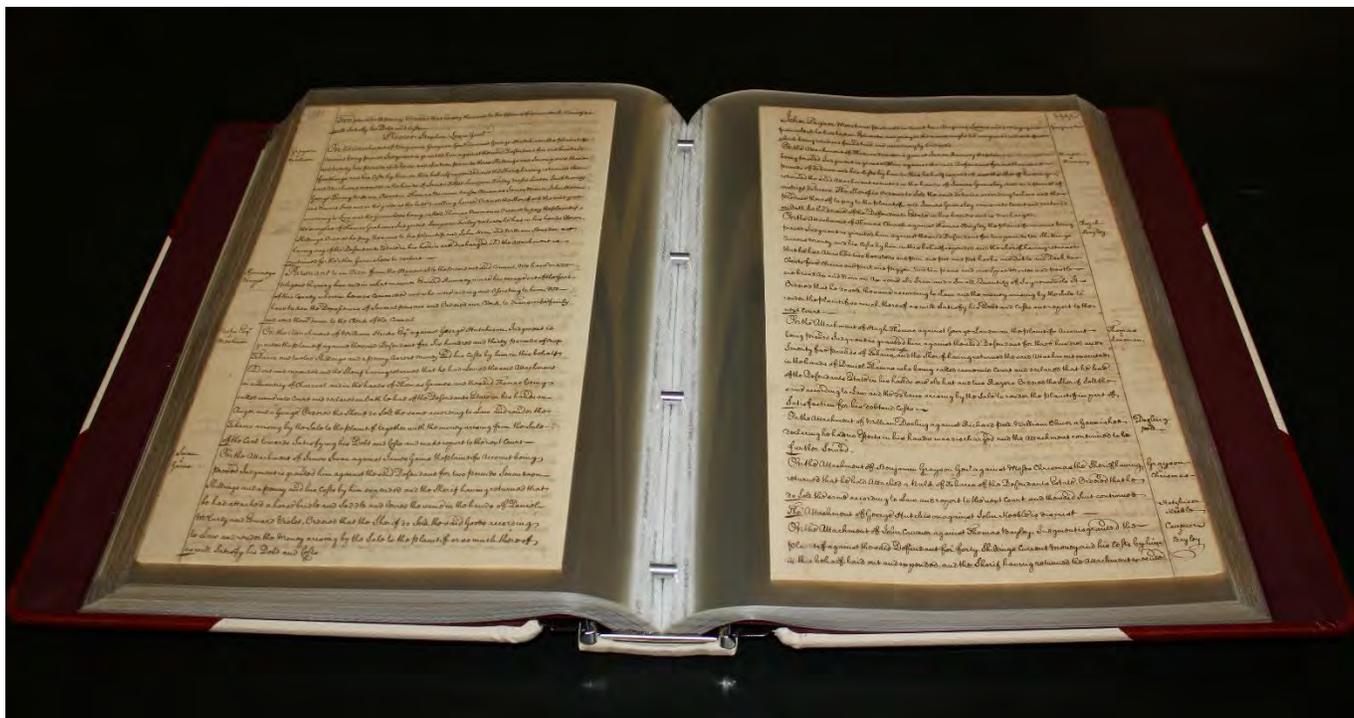
Yellowed, stiff pages; cloudy in appearance

Here are the **AFTER** pictures of the 1749 Court Order Book:



LEFT: The 1749 Court Order Book was rebound in a slide-release post, canvas binding, allowing us to take out individual pages if need be.

RIGHT: With each leaf (page) being encapsulated in protective mylar, the order book was divided into two volumes.



The silk lamination was removed from each page, and tears and losses repaired with Japanese tissue, resulting in the original pages looking nearly brand-new!

The 1751 Test Oath

The 1751 Test Oath is the document on which the county justices subscribed their names, having taken an oath that they did not believe that the bread and wine transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. In the Catholic Church, this transformation is called “transubstantiation,” and those appointed to county positions had to swear that they would defend the Church of England, a Protestant organization of religion.

We believe that the two leaves of the Test Oath were at one time part of the 1749 court order book.

In the 1980s, the Test Oath was laminated and framed. Based on what we know about lamination, it was imperative to have this process undone as soon as possible.

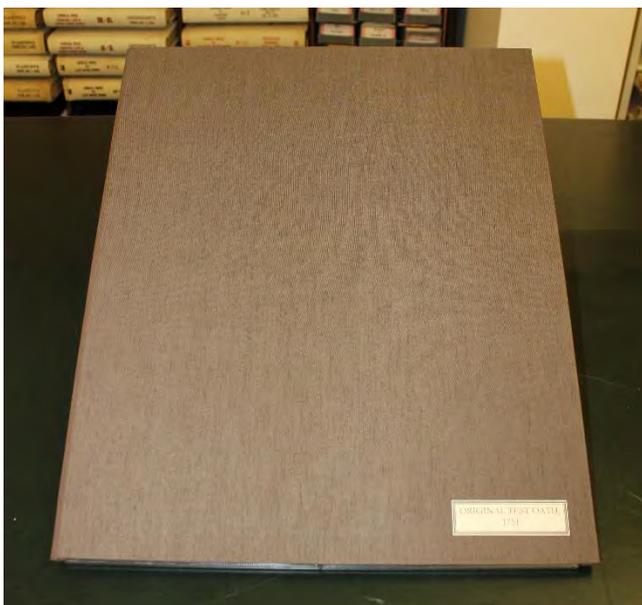
BEFORE treatment:



LEFT: You can see that the original leaves were in poor condition.

BELOW: The plastic (cellulose acetate) lamination was removed with acetone. Tears and losses were repaired with Japanese tissue. The document was encapsulated in mylar, rehoused in a conservation storage mat, and mounted inside a “clam shell” and appropriately labeled.

AFTER treatment:

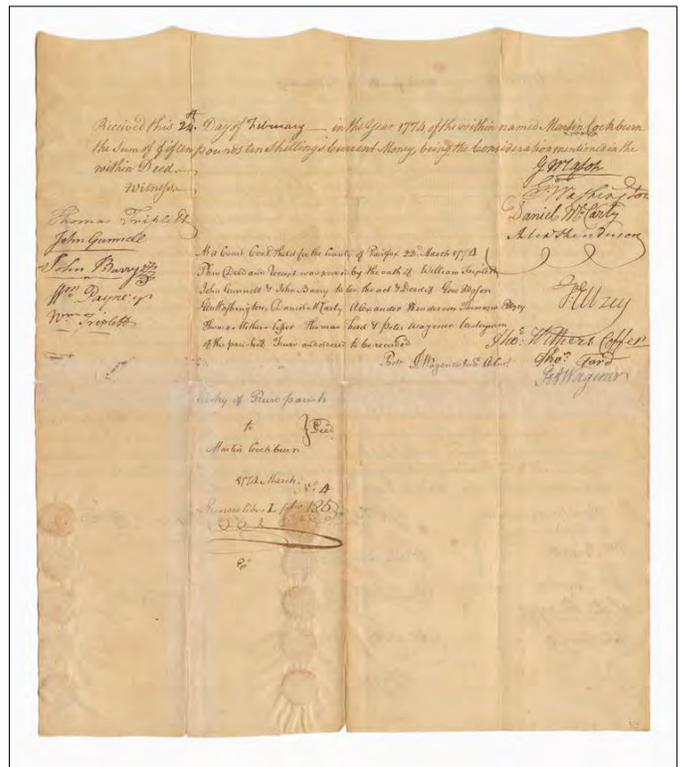
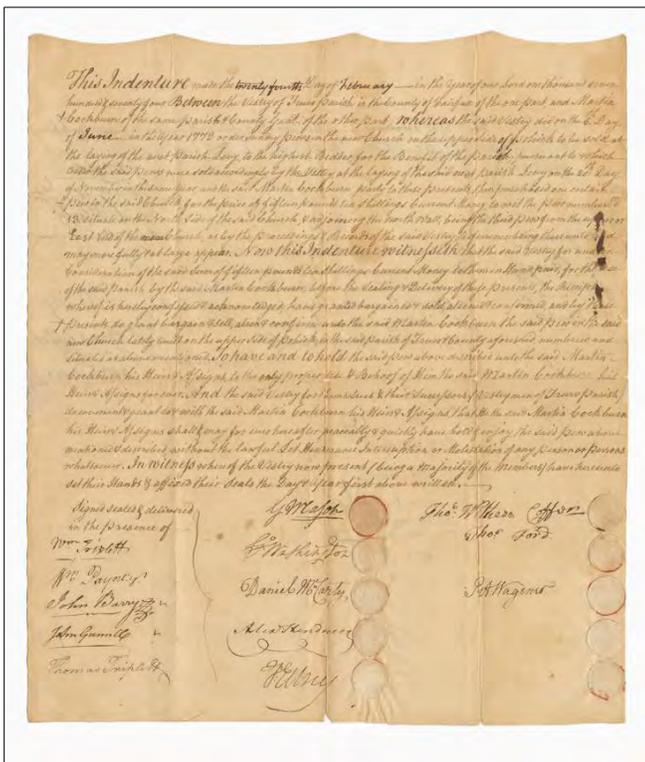


The 1774 Martin Cockburn Pew Deed

The 1774 pew deed records the transfer (sale) of a Pohick Church pew to Martin Cockburn for use by his family. The document was recorded in Fairfax County Court as a deed. At the bottom of the document are the signatures of the vestrymen, who were responsible for all of the financial concerns of the church. Two of the signatures are those of George Mason and George Washington, both vestry of Pohick Church in its early years, as well as signatures of other founding families of Fairfax County.

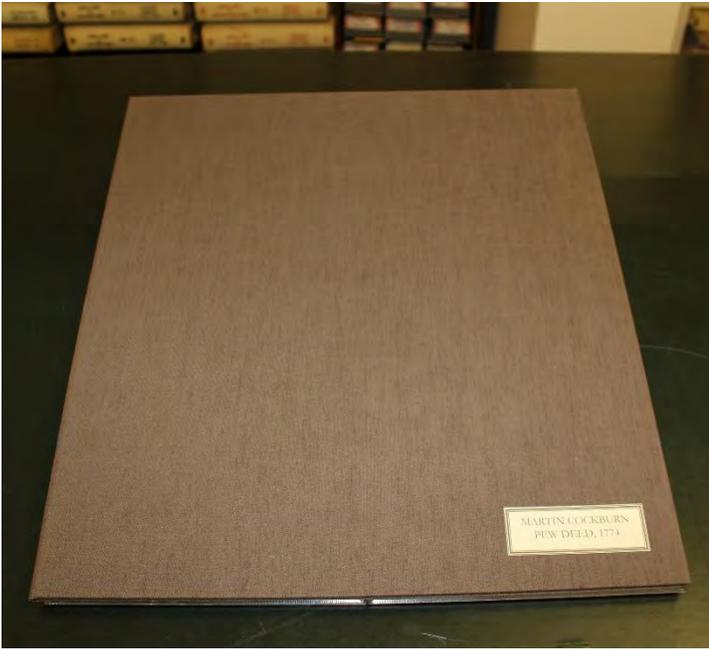
To our knowledge, no prior treatment had been done to this pew deed, but the seams where the document was folded had begun to tear, and someone had applied conservation tape to the back of the document to hold it together.

BEFORE treatment:

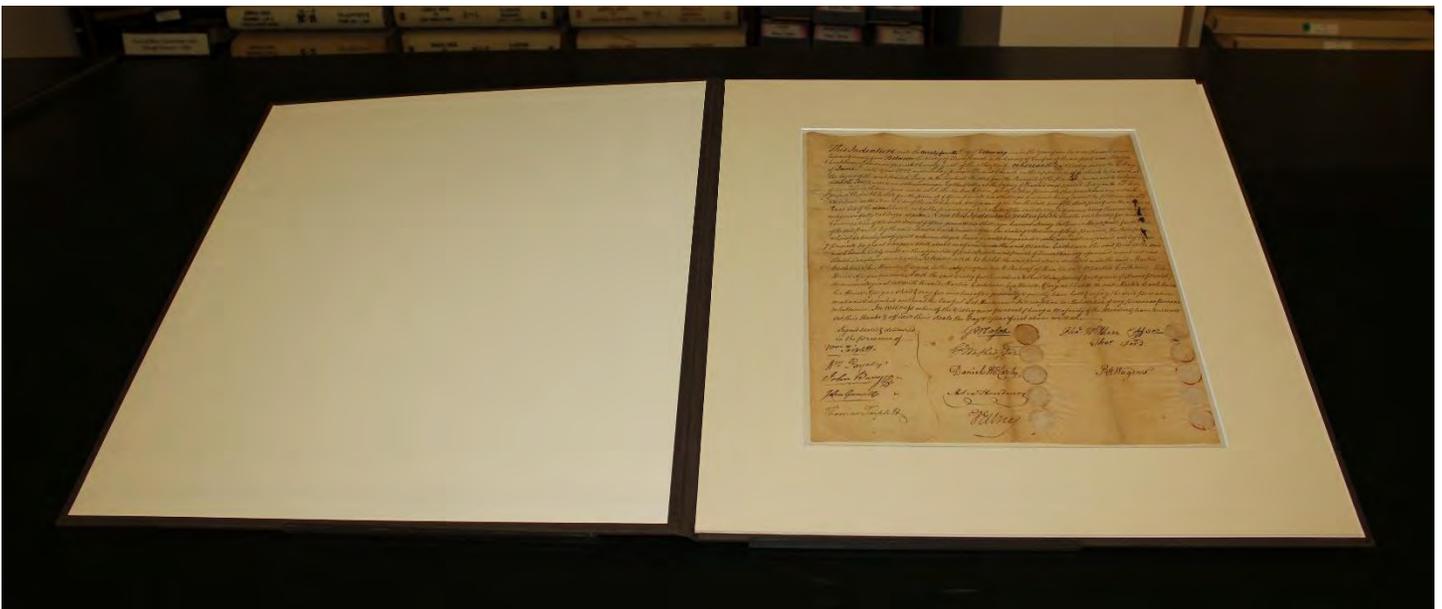


The document was in relatively good condition prior to treatment, but we wanted to stabilize it and remove the conservation tape – in the image on the right, you can see the outline of it horizontally and vertically across the back of the document.

AFTER treatment:



The old repairs were removed with alcohol. Tears and losses were repaired with Japanese tissue. The leaf was encapsulated in mylar and rehoused in a conservation storage mat and appropriately labeled.

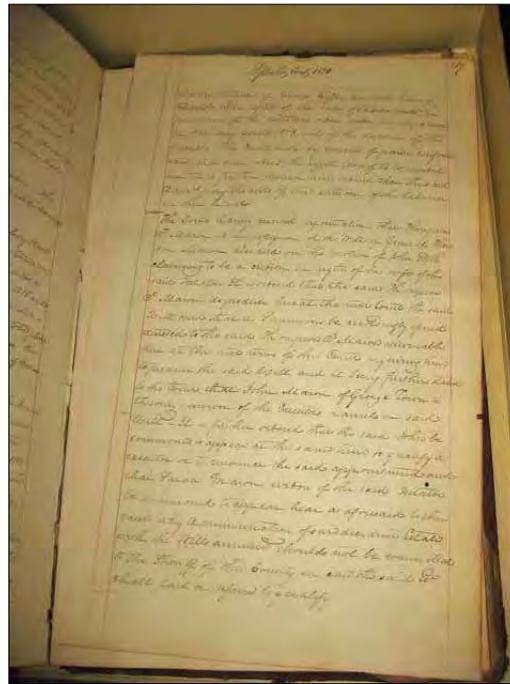


The cover of the mat can be folded behind and the document displayed in one of our cases. This is what it (and the 1751 Test Oath) look like laid flat.

The 1819 Court Minute Book

The 1819 Court Minute Book serves the same purpose as the 1749 Court Order Book – it records the actions taken in court during each court term. The 1819 book, however, had had to no treatment done to it, and therefore sat in its original binding from around 1818 or 1819. Several of the pages had started to break loose from the original binding.

Before treatment:

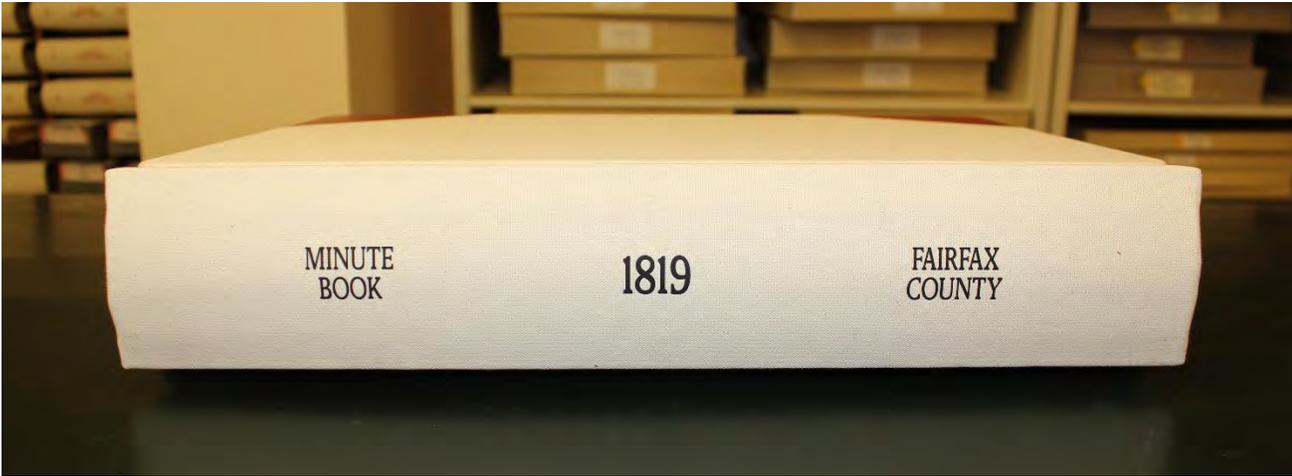


TOP LEFT: The original binding for this document was leather, and as a result of age and improper storage, “red rot” had set in. “Red rot” happens when leather starts to degrade, and becomes powder-like to the touch. Additionally, you can see “tide lines,” where water has stained the binding.

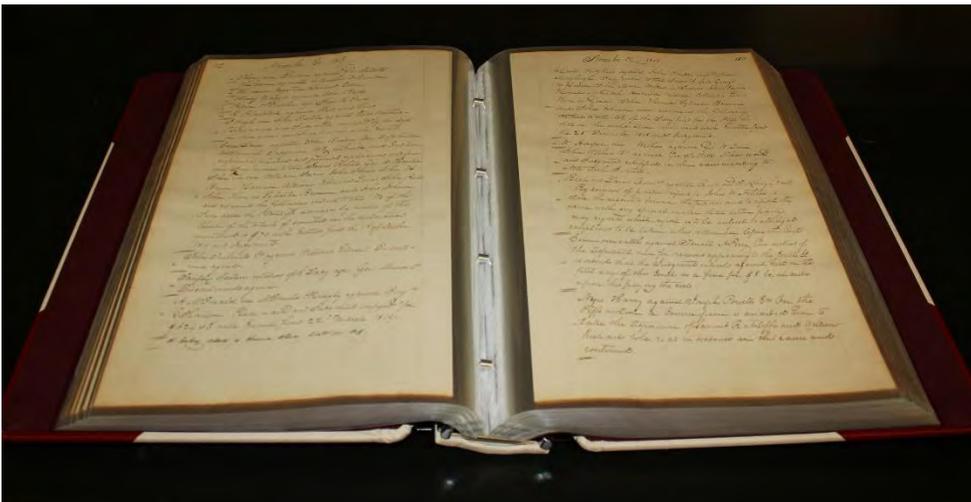
ABOVE: Several of the pages had broken loose from the original binding.

LEFT: The spine of the original binding had broken loose. You can also see where the leather was pulling away from the book cover.

After treatment:



The order book was rebound in a slide-release post, canvas binding, allowing us to take out individual pages if need be.



Each leaf (page) was deacidified and encapsulated in mylar sleeves. Small tears were repaired with Japanese tissue.

Our main goal with conserving the 1819 order book was to get it out of its original binding, as it had seriously deteriorated.

Since the spring 2015 grant cycle, we have been approved for funding for two more cycles, so we will have many newly-conserved documents in our custody soon!

We also wish to thank the Library of Virginia and Kofile Technologies in Greensboro, NC, for their tremendous work and the care they took with our historic court documents.

For more information about these and other records held by the Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center, please call 703-246-4168 or visit our website at:

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



@ffxcircuitcourt

Forgotten Fairfax

Uncovering Slaves in Court Records

A Talk by Archivist Heather Bollinger

List of Slaves, belonging to the Estate of the late M. W. Fitzhugh Esq

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Prices</i>
<i>Family, No. 1.</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>200</i>
<i>Lloyd</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>200</i>
<i>Charles Hinks</i>	<i>39 Defective</i>	<i>500</i>
<i>Ellen & her children</i>	<i>Charles Margitta and Ellen price Ellen & 31</i>	<i>1380</i>
<i>Louisa and child</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>1100</i>
<i>Elizabeth</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>1000</i>
<i>Kempwood</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>700</i>
<i>Margitta</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>700</i>
<i>Bell Street</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>500</i>

Saturday, August 6 • 11:00 a.m.

City of Fairfax Regional Library

10360 North Street, Fairfax, VA

Curious about the history of enslaved African-Americans in Fairfax County? Heather Bollinger, assistant archivist at the Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center, will present how they're creating a slavery index database from court records. The Historic Records Center has been searching for slave names in wills, inventories, and deeds.

Register for free:

- Call (703) 293-6227, extension 4
- Go to <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/events/>

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library



Fairfax County Public Library
12000 Government Center Pkwy.
Suite 324
Fairfax, VA 22035



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Reasonable accommodations will be made upon request. Call 703-324-8380 or TTY 703-324-8365.