

FOUND IN THE ARCHIVES, no. 3 – DECEMBER 2014

Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center



Hello! This is the third installment of “Found in the Archives,” where the Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center will highlight interesting and unique documents in our custody.

In December, we are focusing on the courthouse as the center of public life in Fairfax County.

Early in the court’s history, especially during the 18th and 19th centuries, court was heard only one or two weeks per month during the year. Residents of the county traveled to Fairfax to conduct business at both the courthouse and privately-owned businesses in the courthouse’s vicinity. Due to the influx of residents during these court sessions, the exterior of the courthouse became an excellent location for posting notices, known as broadsides, about sales and other important events from both the local government and private residents.

Below is a photograph from 1905 of the historic courthouse’s exterior. Under the covered archway, you can see the broadsides posted near the entrance.

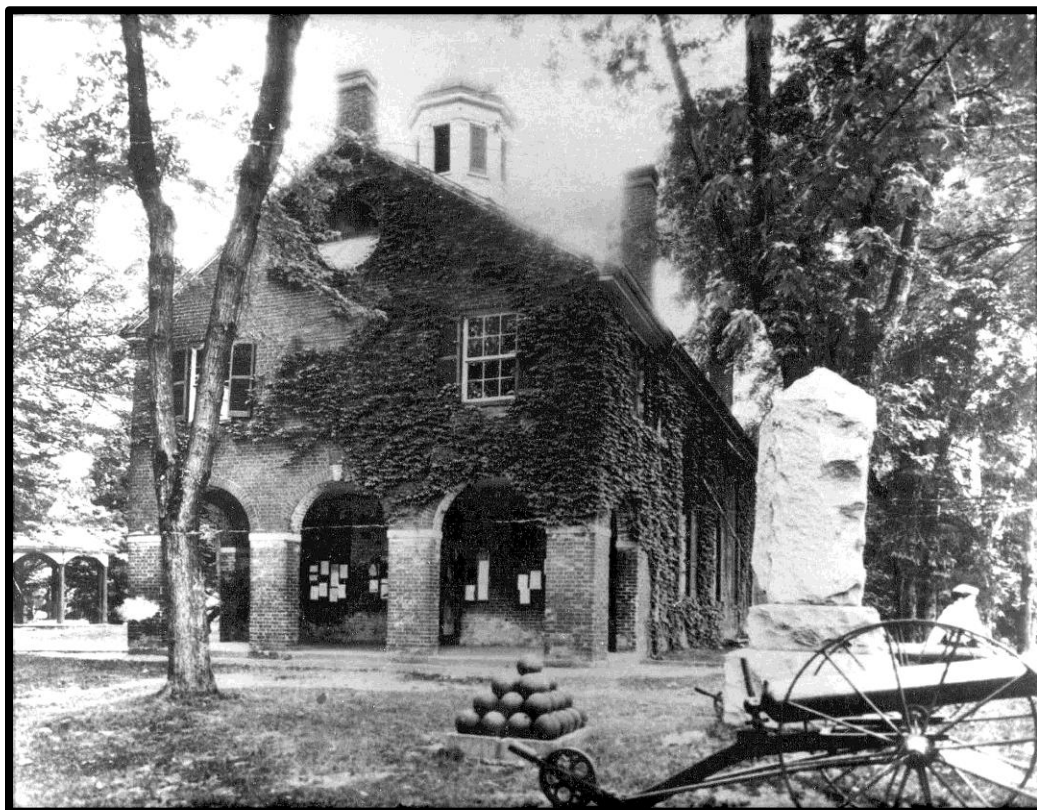


Photo courtesy of the Virginia Room, City of Fairfax Library

The Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records center is custodian of some broadsides from the 19th century that were hung on the exterior of the courthouse. Typically, broadsides were displayed for a short period of time and then discarded. Due to the temporary nature of these documents, very few remain. We at the Historic Records Center are not sure why the broadsides below were not discarded, but we are certainly glad to have them in our collection, as they provide an excellent glimpse of daily business conducted in the county.

Below is a broadside advertising the sale of Jonathan Roberts' personal property from 1869. Roberts served as Sheriff of Fairfax County from approximately 1862 to 1866.

PUBLIC SALE

OF VALUABLE

PERSONAL PROPERTY.

**Will be sold, by Public Auction,
at Cedar Grove Farm, near Acco-
tink Village, Fairfax County, Va.,
on fifth day**

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1869,

the Stock and Farming Utensils on the above farm, consisting of 2 first-rate Horses, 1 Brood Mare, 2 Colts, 1 pair large well-broke Mules, 12 Devon Cows, 1 Durham Bull, 1 young Alderney Bull, 2 Devon Calves, 3 Chester Sows and 25 Pigs, [full blood,] Threshing Machine, and Horse Power, Corn Sheller, Turnip Cutter, Grain Fan, Wheat Drill, Roller, Cutting Box, Cider Mill, Germantown Carriage, Market Wagon, Farm Wagon, Cart, Corn, Corn-Stalks, Hay, Straw. Plows, 1 cast-steel Plow, Harrows, Cultivators, Forks, Rakes, 1 Horse Fork, Grind Stone, Furnace Boiler, 1 barrel old Cider, Meat Tubs, &c. &c., also Household Goods, and Kitchen Furniture, such as Tables, Chairs, Sofas, Matrasses, Stoves, Dishes, Milk Pans, churns and a large lot of valuable Books &c. Sale to commence at 10 o'clock a. m.

TERMS OF SALE.—All sums under \$20, cash, all sums of twenty dollars and upwards a credit of four months will be allowed upon the purchaser giving his note with satisfactory security, payable at the First National Bank at Alexandria. No property to be removed until the above terms are complied with.

JONATHAN ROBERTS.

The broadside below advertises the need for proposals to repair Difficult Bridge in May, 1877. The bridge probably stood near to where Fair Oaks is today (at the intersection of Middle Turnpike and Difficult Run).

Proposals for Repairing Difficult BRIDGE IN THE COUNTY OF FAIRFAX.

1ST. SPECIFICATION.—Proposals will be received by the undersigned until the 14th day of MAY, 1877, for rebuilding the east abutment, and the two piers of DIFFICULT BRIDGE on the MIDDLE TURNPIKE. Parties making proposals for building the abutment and the piers of said BRIDGE, will be required to furnish all the additional material necessary to the completion of said abutment and piers; to be laid in CEMENT from the foundation to the height of two (2) feet above ordinary water mark; the remaining portion to be laid in LIME and SAND, to be paid for by the perch.

2ND. SPECIFICATION.—Proposals will also be received for excavating a CHANNEL through the FLATS above, and the SAND BARS below the BRIDGE. Parties proposing for the above excavation, will be paid per cubic yard. The CHANNEL thus excavated will be six feet wide, about four feet deep, and fifty yards long—the material so excavated to be left upon the banks of said CHANNEL.

3RD. SPECIFICATION.—The Committee will also receive proposals for making the excavation mentioned in 2nd Specification, and for rebuilding the east abutment, and the two piers of said BRIDGE; to be laid in CEMENT from foundation to two feet above ordinary water mark, the remainder thereof to be laid in LIME and SAND. The said abutment to be four-tenths of its height, and to be finished to two feet at the top, with two-inch batter on the face, if it will allow it, but this bid is not to affect the west abutment; the material upon the spot can be used for building the same if fit for that purpose. The bids under this Specification will be received for amount of WHOLE WORK TO BE DONE, AND NOT BY THE PERCH OR YARD. The superstructure to be replaced upon said piers and abutment, in as good condition as when taken therefrom. No contractor will be allowed to sub-let the whole or any portion of his work, but required to give his personal and constant attention to the same, during its progress. All materials furnished to be of good quality, and the work done in a workman-like manner, subject to the inspection and approval of Committee in charge. Monthly estimates will be made between the FIRST and TENTH of each month, and as soon thereafter as practicable; a payment of EIGHTY (80) per cent of such estimates will be made. The COUNTY BOARD will reserve the right of increasing or diminishing the work at the option of the Committee—and the right to accept or reject any one of the bids received. Security will be required to insure thorough and prompt execution of the work.

**DR. IRA WILLIAMS,
J. B. GOLEMAN.**
Committee in Charge.

“Messenger” Print, Fairfax C. H., Va.

In the notice below, from December 1878, the constable has advertised the sale of the personal property of Jerome Linton, in order to repay a debt owed to W. H. Young. Residents who saw this broadside could report to the site of the auction and bid on Linton's property

CONSTABLE'S S A L E.

By virtue of an order of the County Court of FAIRFAX COUNTY, December term 1878, made in the Attachment Cause of

W. H. Young vs. Jerome Linton,
the undersigned will on **TUESDAY, DEC. 31, 1878,** upon the premises of said **LINTON,** near **SHERIDAN'S POINT,** in said County, sell at **PUBLIC AUCTION** to the highest bidder, for cash, the following property, to wit:

1 Red Cow, 1 Red and White Cow, 1 Farm Wagon and Harness, 1 Wheat Fan, lot of Blacksmith Tools, &c. 1 Grind Stone, 2 Circular Saws and Bench, lot of Ploughs, Harrows, and Cultivators, 1 Single Set of Harness, lot of Plough Harness, 1 Iron Pot, lot of Fodder and Straw, lot of Swingle-Trees &c., lot of Chain, 1 Large Farm Wagon, 1 One Horse Carriage, also by virtue of said order--

I will, on monday, the 20th day of January, 1879, that being Court Day, in front of the Court House door of Fairfax County sell upon the foregoing terms, the following property, to wit:

1 Sorrel Horse, 1 Brown Mare, 1 Bay Colt.

John H. Sarten,

Constable of Fairfax County.

With the advent of technology and prevalence of computers, one might think that posting broadsides outside the courthouse would be a thing of the past. In reality, notices are posted to this very day outside of the courthouse, advertising auctions, summonses, orders, and other official documents. (See the *Code of Virginia*, § 1-211.1)

The pictures below were taken in front of the Fairfax County Courthouse in November 2014.



Even in the 21st century, the tradition of posting notices for the public's use lives on!

For more information about this and other documents, please visit the Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center website:

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