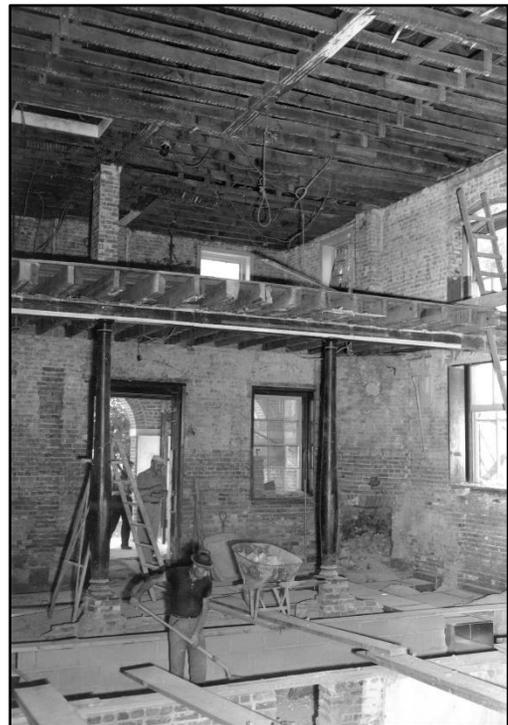


FOUND IN THE ARCHIVES, no. 74 – May 2022
Courthouse Maintenance Records
Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center



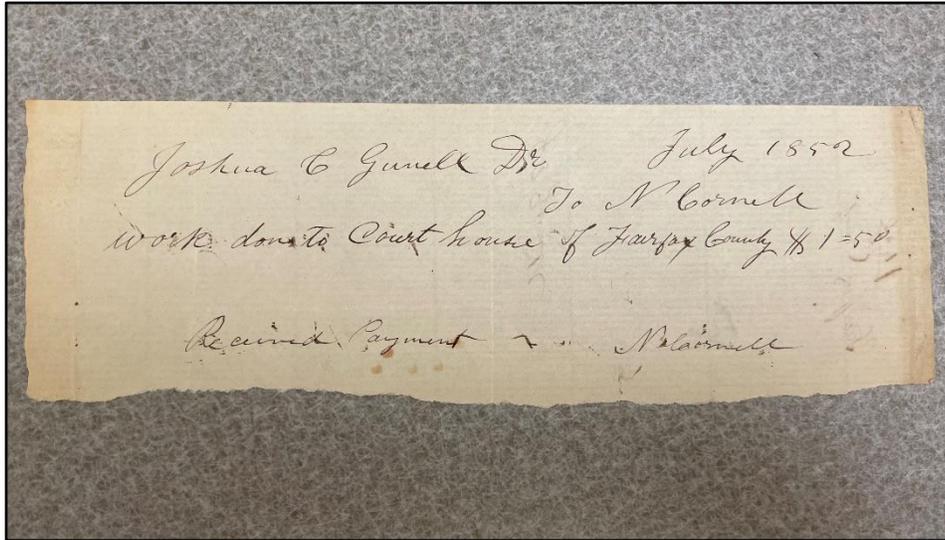
Happy Spring, and welcome back to *Found in the Archives*! The Historic Records Center is pleased to announce that we are now once again taking walk-ins. Researchers who wish to make an appointment are still welcome to do so, but appointments are no longer required. We are also excited to announce we are **resuming tours of the Historic Courthouse every Friday at 3 pm**, and those who are interested can meet at the green Courthouse doors where the tour begins. In this month's edition of *Found in the Archives*, we showcase court records that recount maintenance projects done on our 1799 Courthouse, also called the Historic Courthouse.

Since its 1799 construction, the Historic Courthouse has undergone several maintenance projects and additions. As Fairfax grew in the 20th century, basic maintenance work gave way to large-scale additions, like the 1929 and 1954 additions to the original, arcaded building. The 1960s even saw a “renovation” of the 1799 Courtroom’s interior. One of the ways these projects can be traced is through the court records that both authorize and detail them. Within our “Term Papers” collection (which refers to the “term of court” for a given month), we have dozens of documents categorized as Public Servants’ Receipts, which document expenses paid by public servants for various work-related supplies and projects. These receipts include reimbursement for items like coal or wood for the courthouse fireplaces (which are located on either side of the rear of the 1799 Courtroom), maintenance on the courthouse well (which is now covered), and even court orders authorizing major renovation projects.



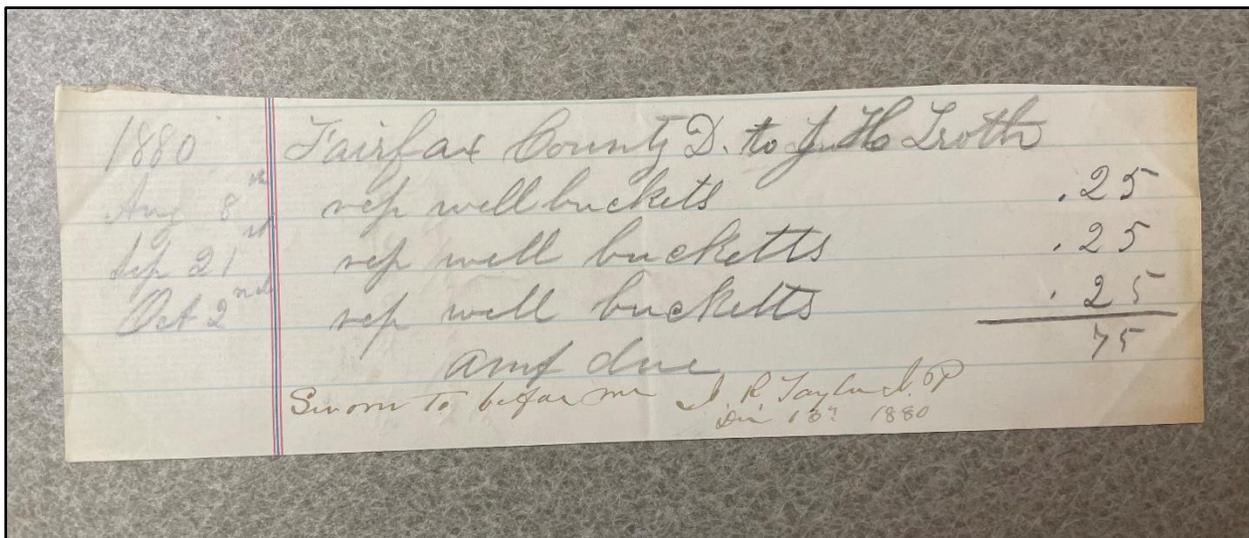
*Fairfax Courthouse Renovation, ca. 1967,
Courtesy of Lee Hubbard*

One of the earliest surviving receipts in our Term Papers collection is an 1852 receipt, paying Joshua C. Gunnell \$1.50 for “work done to Court House of Fairfax County.” Even when these receipts do not specify the exact work that was done, they still provide interesting insight into the price of projects for the courthouse, and how often different projects were completed.



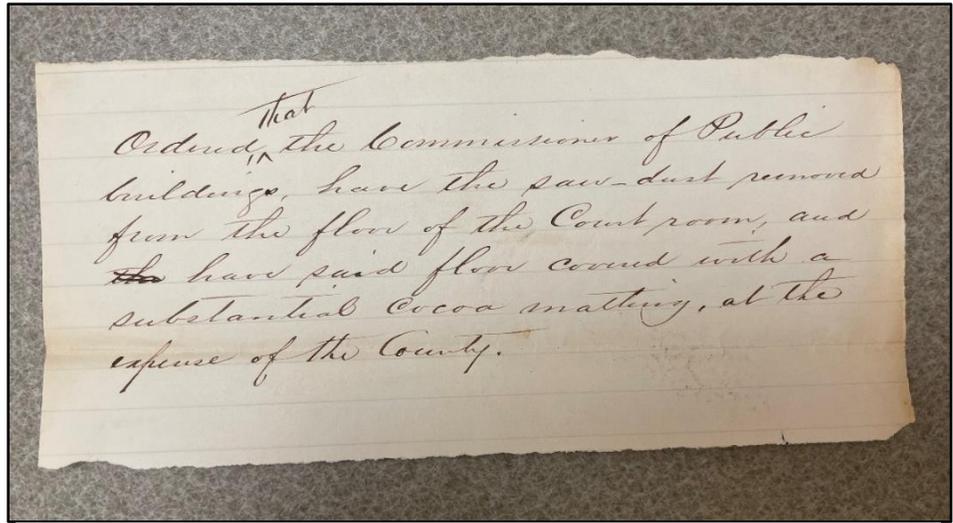
Fairfax Term Papers, #1854-005

Sometimes, though, these receipts do itemize expenses authorized by the court justices. An 1880 receipt details that the court paid J. H. Troth twenty-five cents each for the repair of three buckets, used at the well on the courthouse grounds.



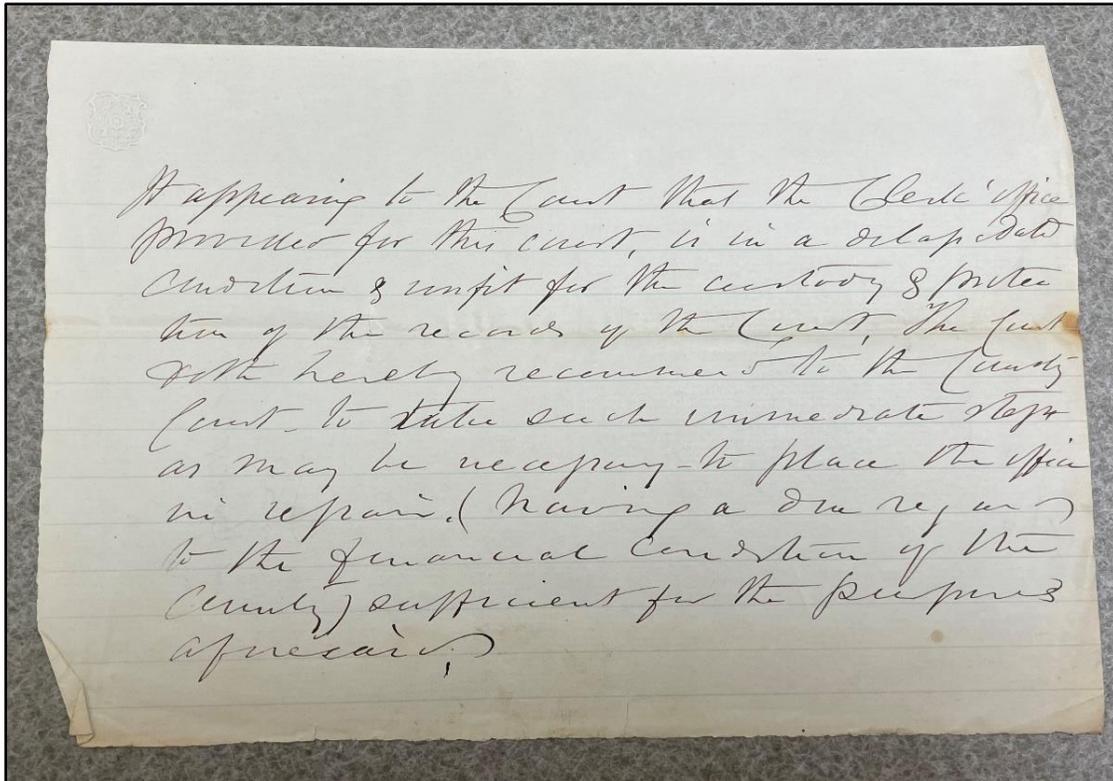
Fairfax Term Papers, #1880-241

A more substantial project comes from an 1876 court order requiring “the Commissioner of Public Buildings have the saw-dust removed from the floor of the court room, and have said floor covered with a substantial cocoa matting.”



Fairfax Term Papers, #1876-228

“Cocoa matting” is a rough, brown material made from the outer fibers of coconut shells, and was once used as a flooring material in Fairfax’s historic courthouse.



Fairfax Term Papers, #1866-171

The Historic Records Center also holds an 1866 Court Order regarding the state of the Clerk’s Office, which, at the time, operated out of a separate building next to the courthouse. This order notes that the Clerk’s Office was in need of repair, and “is in a dilapidated condition and is unfit for the custody and protection of the records of the court.”

In their own way, these records help tell the story of the Historic Fairfax Courthouse, and they demonstrate that public servants charged with the care and custody of the court and its records have had a timeless task of maintaining the venue of justice in Fairfax. Just as most businesses or homeowners of today keep their maintenance records, so the court has since its founding in 1742.



The ca. 1805 Clerk's Office, pictured around 1920, located at the site of today's Historic Courthouse flagpole. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



The 1799 Fairfax Courthouse, pictured around 1920. Note the high step up into the courthouse at its entrance. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

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.

At this time, the Historic Records Center is open to both walk-ins and appointments. You can make a research appointment by calling 703-246-4168.

Tours of the 1799 Historic Fairfax Courthouse are given every Friday at 3pm. Please meet Historic Records Center staff at the green doors of the courthouse for the start of the tour.

Sign up for *Found in the Archives*, the monthly newsletter of the HRC:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/circuit/historic-records-center>