



SCHS News



The Newsletter of the Stafford County Historical Society

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IN THIS ISSUE:

**FEATURE ARTICLE: THE WORLD TRAVELS OF AN
18TH CENTURY STAFFORD COUNTY COURT RECORD
BOOK**

**SEEKING TRUTH IN HISTORY: THE 1666 MASSACRE
OF THE PATAWOMECK INDIANS**

**THEY CALLED STAFFORD HOME: WILLIAM LAMB,
QUARRIER**

AND MORE...

PRESIDENT'S PEN

Dear Members,

I hope this finds you well. I am very pleased that things are opening up and we are able to have face to face meetings and events again. Attendance at our monthly meetings has been increasing and I hope to soon see many of you that I have not seen for quite some time.

On behalf of the Society, we extend our heartfelt sympathy to the Scheungrab family for the unexpected loss of their dear son, Jeremy. He was a frequent attendee of SCHS programs and was fascinated by our history.

In this edition of the newsletter, I hope you will enjoy the article about a recently returned 18th century court record book and our featured person, William Lamb. William is the only free black, of whom we are aware, who is named in the Washington Commissioners' records as having been paid for freestone that was used during the building of the capitol city. He provided stone for both the White House and the Capitol.

Have you ever put together one of those puzzles where the pieces are SOOO close? Inevitably, you will find a piece that has to be the right one, even if you have to pound it in with your fist. It's just too close not to be the correct one—right? After all, it looks perfect and you've been searching for that exact piece for a long time, so you convince yourself it is the right one. But, eventually, you spot the one that should have gone into the hole and you see how much better the fit really is. History can be a lot like that puzzle. You may find a long-lost document that seems to perfectly fit in a worrisome gap in an historical narrative, and you have been looking for it for so, so long. You may have to pound it in a little, but it has to be the correct piece—right? Some historians have done this and then, with further research, have discovered their error. Sometimes someone else will find the right piece. Sometimes the piece is forever lost to history and we will never discover those missing details. This happens to most, if not all, historians. In this issue of the *SCHS News* we are starting a new series about some accepted historical events for which further research reveals that some of the pieces have been incorrectly forced into place. We hope this series causes you to reflect and, perhaps, be more inclined to ask, "Where did that information come from?"

We thank Mark Burton and Steve Hilker for their work on the new *SCHS News* masthead. This incorporates the distinctive courthouse cupola that we now use as our logo.

Thank you all for your generous support. We wouldn't be here without you.

Rick MacGregor

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Cover Illustration: The Stafford County estate account book, 1764 – 1822 as it arrived back home in Stafford.

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FEATURE ARTICLE: THE WORLD TRAVELS OF A STAFFORD COUNTY COURT RECORD BOOK

From April of 1862 until June of 1863, Stafford was occupied by the Union army. While the numbers varied from day to day, as a rough estimate, some 130,000 northern troops called Stafford home, albeit, temporarily.

The effects of this occupation were profound, are still felt today, and have been well documented. It is not the writer's intent to re-hash them. Yet, a recent event draws our attention back to that period in our history.

By their own accounts, some of which were published in northern newspapers, the Union soldiers made at least two devastating raids on Stafford's courthouse and clerk's office. In June of 1862, members of Ord's Division descended upon the courthouse. One artillerist wrote:

Stafford Court House stands almost alone in the woods. It is a quaint old building, and contains many curious records. Some date back over 200 years. Our men immediately seized them. I regretted it, as it smacks of vandalism to deface or destroy the records of a court; yet as I saw everything going I seized a few old documents. They are in the style of 'ye ancient tyme' when all accounts in this colony were kept in tobacco. For instance 'wun quarte of wyne, 12 lbs tobacco, wun yarde of flannel 87 lbs etc.' Among other things were the bonds entered into by Geo. Washington to marry Mrs. Custis. They were very heavy. I have been told by inhabitants that George had the frailties of his sex. The gibbet [gallows] and jail were the only surroundings (*Columbia Democrat*, June 14, 1862).

In December 1862, an article in a New York newspaper described some of the damage done to the courthouse:

...the Judge's bench [was] a target for the 'expectorating Yankee'; the circular inclosure [sic] occupied by the jury was besmeared with mud, and valuable documents, of every description scattered about the floor and yard...In one corner of the yard stands a house of records, in which were deposited all the important deeds and papers pertaining to this section for a generation past. When our advance entered the building, they were found lying about the floor to a depth of fifteen inches or more around the door-steps and in the door-yard. It is impossible to estimate the inconvenience and losses which will be incurred by this wholesale destruction of deeds, claims, mortgages, &c. (*New York Times*, Dec. 11, 1862).

Over the course of their little fourteen-month visit in Stafford, enemy troops stole or destroyed about two-thirds of the then existing court records. This included nearly every loose paper generated between 1664 and 1862 and dozens of bound volumes containing deeds, wills, estate inventories, court minutes, surveys, etc. Also lost at this time was the county's colonial seal and the courtroom Bible. The effects are still felt today as researchers attempt to discover information about their ancestors and are thwarted by the losses.

After the peace, Stafford officials learned of the whereabouts of a few of the missing books and were able to recover them. Almost immediately, they became aware of a deed book that had been left in Maryland and a man was sent to retrieve it. In 1903, "Senator G. M. Wallace this day returned to the Clerk's office a Minute book embracing the periods as follows 1664 – 1668 – 1669

– 1693 which was obtained from the Library of the State of New York and the same is ordered retained in the Clerk’s office as one of the official records of this Court” (Stafford Circuit Court Minutes, 1898-1904, p. 190).

Years passed with nothing more being recovered. Finally, in 2011, a court minute book spanning from 1749 to 1755 was returned to Virginia, it having spent years in a New Jersey archives. It had been stolen on Mar. 30, 1862 by Capt. W. A. Treadwell of the 4th New York Regiment. He mailed the volume to his home in Boston and continued his service in the Union army. Conveniently (from an historical standpoint), he wrote on the inside cover how he came to have the book and what he did with it after the war. Time passed and, eventually, it ended up in the New Jersey archives that subsequently sent it back to Virginia.



In June of 2021, Mr. Bob Hammond of New Mexico contacted the Stafford County Historical Society to inform them that he had some type of very old ledger book from Stafford County. It turned out to be an estate account book that spans the years 1764 to 1822. The story of how the book came to be in New Mexico is worth repeating.

This seems to have been one of the volumes stolen by Union soldiers and taken home. While the name of an individual, possibly the man who removed the book, has been very thoroughly marked through with pen and ink, it is possible to make out “Alleghany County, Pennsylvania” below the name. Mr. Hammond’s grandfather, Charles Carrell Krusen (1894-1933), was a country doctor in Pennsylvania. He rendered medical care to someone there who had no money with which to pay him and, instead, offered him the old estate account book. Dr. Krusen accepted the book, kept it, and, at his death, it passed to his

daughter who treasured it. After her marriage, she and her husband moved from New York to Manila where he worked as Mission Chief for CARE. Mrs. Hammond took the book with her to the Philippines. During the Korean War, Mr. Hammond was transferred to Hong Kong and then to Geneva, before returning to Manila and then to Seattle Washington in 1958. The book was tenderly carried from duty post to duty post before coming back to the United States.

Sometime later, it was given to Mrs. Hammond’s son, Bob Hammond, who made his home in New Mexico. Over time, his father became increasingly insistent that his son return the book to its place of origin. This past June, Bob carefully boxed the treasured book and mailed it to your writer in Stafford—almost exactly 160 years after it was stolen. Upon delivery of the box, the writer eagerly opened it and was shocked to discover a case of diapers, not the ledger book. The delivery person had misread the address on the box, which was very similar to the destination for the diapers. Fortunately, the two addresses were within a few miles of each other and the switch was made. In all likelihood, the person who ordered the diapers was as relieved to receive her package as the writer of this account was to get the court book!

On January 28, 2022, the estate account book was given to the Stafford County Clerk of Court, Kathy Sterne. It was a joyous reunion. The book is too tattered to be used for research at the moment and will require conservation to stabilize it. In the meantime, it has been transcribed and indexed and this will be published, making it of use to researchers who will benefit from the information contained in the long-lost volume.

SEEKING TRUTH IN HISTORY: THE 1666 MASSACRE OF THE PATAWOMECK INDIANS

Have you ever read or heard something about history and wondered where the information originated? Have you ever taken the initiative to track down the original source material behind it? Few of us have and the more compelling the story, the less inclined we may be to question it. For the many ones of us who have no formal training in historical research, the thought of chasing down centuries-old sources would never enter our heads – where does one even begin? A good starting point is to understand the difference between oral history/tradition and primary source documentation.

Oral history, while sometimes bearing a thread of truth, tends to change over time and cannot reasonably be depended upon for documentable facts. While often compelling and engaging, it is rarely accurate on its face. For the true historian, “Granddaddy always said...” or “I grew up knowing...” are woefully inadequate in the search for historical truth. While oral history should always be considered in the exploration of past events, the serious researcher demands solid paper documentation to validate it. In the absence of verifiable original documents, oral history is little more than entertaining story telling. Difficulties may arise when people want so badly to believe something that they are willing to ignore anything that draws their long-held beliefs into doubt.

A primary source is defined as a “first-hand or contemporary account of an event or topic. They are the most direct evidence of a time or event because they were created by people or things that were there at the time or event. These sources have not been modified by interpretation and offer original thought or new information” (Seaton Hall University Library). Careful use of primary source documents may confirm oral tradition, refute it, or illuminate certain facts that have become muddled with the repeated telling. A good general rule is: You cannot KNOW what you cannot DOCUMENT. And, as White House historian Dr. William Seale said, “Now and then you just have to say, ‘I don’t believe that’ or discount it because it is obviously slanted, illogical, or not true or just glitz.”

Generational Staffordians have long shared orally what they understood to be the county’s history. The re-telling of these stories over a period of years engrained into the minds of the listeners what may be, in some cases, misinformation and, for some of them, it became fact. In more recent times, access to previously unknown original documents has enabled researchers to confirm or to disprove some of these long-held oral traditions.

An example of this involves an alleged 1666 massacre of the Patowomeck and Dogue Indians by the English. The account claims that most or all of the braves were killed and the surviving women and children were sold as slaves or taken in by local English families. Part of this is based upon an order recorded in the minutes of the Council and General Court of Virginia and dated July 10, 1666. It reads, “It is therefore ordered for revenge of the former and for the prevention of future mischiefs that the towns of Monzation, Nanzimond, and Port Tobacco with the whole nation of the Doegs and Potomacks be forthwith prosecuted with war to their utter destruction if possible and that their women and children and their goods or as much of it as shall be taken to be disposed of according to such instructions as shall be issued from the Right Honourable the Governor. And it is further ordered that the said war be managed by such officers with such numbers of men and by such ways and means as the Governor shall think fit” (McIlwaine, p. 488). That the English sought to be rid of the Indians once and for all is irrefutable. However, the problem is that there is no known follow-up information confirming that the order was actually carried out. Furthermore, the writer has seen no primary source documentation

regarding the capture and sale of Patawomeck Indian women and children made homeless by such an attack.

Despite Stafford's loss of records during the Civil War, the county's court records from 1664 to 1668 survive and they include no mention of such an event. In fact, the word "Indian" is mentioned five times in the volume. On Apr. 11, 1666 (before the alleged massacre), "Capt. Thomson the Indian" was involved with a load of tobacco. There are no elucidating details. On Aug. 23, 1667 (after the alleged massacre), three local residents petitioned the county court, each asking for permission to "Imploy an Indian...according to Act of Assembly in that case provided." A somewhat cryptic entry made on that same day reads, "The Court doth order that William Greene concerning the entertainment of Indians be reversed and that Liberty be given to all persons as in other places according to Act of Assembly" (Stafford County Court Order Book, 1664-1668, pp. 46, 83, 84). None of these 1667 entries make sense in light of the massacre story. Unless additional documents proving otherwise are brought forward, there seems to be no proof that the 1666 massacre actually occurred or that the surviving women and children were rescued by kind local families.

DESTRUCTIVE SPRING STORM

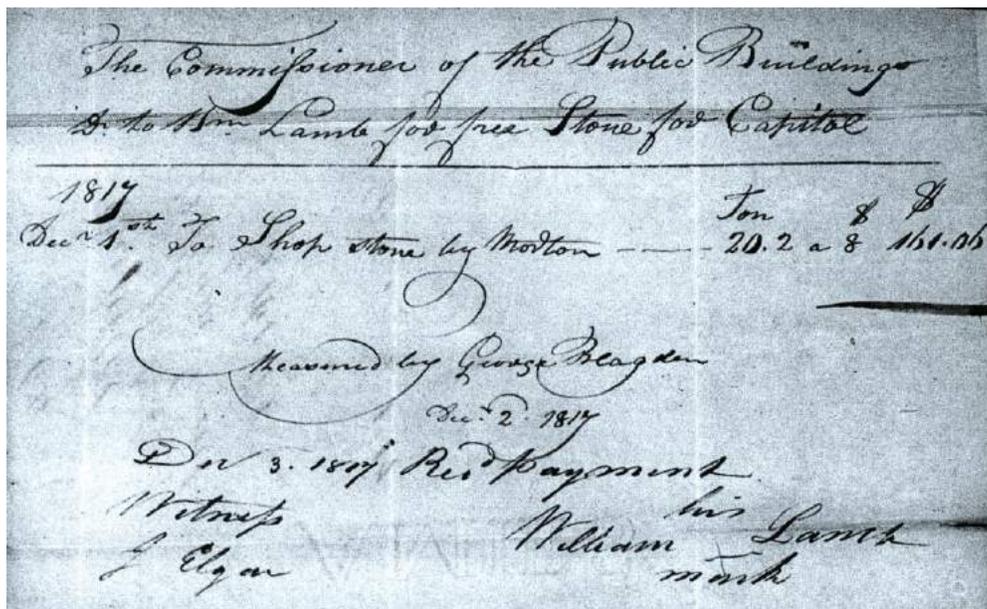
Freak of Lightning.—On Monday evening last, during the storm, the telegraph office of the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad Company at Aquia creek was struck by lightning. The telegraph wires were melted, and the bed of the operator set on fire, but, strange to say, he escaped unhurt, although sitting within a few feet of the instrument, reading. He had, fortunately, been thoughtful enough to put on the lighting-arrester, which, in all probability, saved his life and prevented the entire demolition of the office and splendid wharf of the company (*Daily Dispatch*, May 25, 1867).

THEY CALLED STAFFORD HOME: WILLIAM LAMB, QUARRIER

Oral history should play a part in historical research, but there must always be an effort to find documentation to support it, at least in part. When the MacGregor family purchased Concord in 1859, they were told some of the oral history of the property. On the eastern end of the yard is a finely executed and inscribed Aquia freestone grave marker for Mary Lamb (c.1767-1815), the wife of William Lamb. The MacGregors were told that she had been a slave in the Waller family (the former owners) and that her husband, who worked in the nearby quarries, had made the tombstone for her. It is one of the few inscribed gravestones for a slave in the state of Virginia. Recently, documentation for at least part of the oral history was discovered amongst the records of the Commissioners who were responsible for the building of Washington, DC.

Whether or not William Lamb was ever enslaved is unknown. Certainly, by 1816, he was free as he received \$94.40 from the government as payment for 15 tons of freestone ordered for the President's House. In the fall of 1817, William participated in the firm of Holmes & Lamb, which sold some 73 tons of stone to the Commissioners for \$435.58 (Miscellaneous Treasury Accounts, rolls 225, 254). In December of that year, William sent another 20 tons to Washington for use in the Capitol. He signed the receipt for this payment with a mark. The following April, the Commissioners informed a group of nine quarriers that a "considerable quantity of freestone

will be required this season for the public buildings here.” William Lamb was amongst those invited to submit a proposal. The Commissioners asked the quarriers to estimate what quantity of stone they would be able to provide by November. “The stone must be fine, durable, and subjected to a nice inspection” (Washington Commissioners’ Records, Apr. 18, 1818). Between 1816 and 1822, the Commissioners paid Lamb \$791.78 for about 109 tons of freestone. This was used at both the President’s House and the Capitol. It’s not known to the writer if he was quarrying at Concord or elsewhere. Though he has no gravestone, William may be buried with his wife at Concord.



On Dec. 3, 1817, William Lamb was paid \$161.06 for just over 20 tons of “Shop stone” delivered to Washington by Stafford quarrier and shipper James Morton (1793-1860). This had been ordered for use in the Capitol. William signed the receipt with a mark. George Blagden, Superintendent of Masons, signed the receipt as having measured the quantity (Miscellaneous Treasury Accounts, roll 254). Shop stone was a lower grade material that was suitable for foundations, fill, etc.

While William Lamb wasn’t a major supplier of stone to Washington, he was the only African American quarrier the writer found named in the Washington Commissioners’ records as having received payment for freestone.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

- April 21—“Sherwood Forest” with John Hennessy
- May 19—Indian Archeology in Stafford with Dr. Lauren McMillan
- June 16—Update on Stafford Cemeteries with Anita Dodd

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DUES WERE DUE IN JANUARY!

Dues for 2022 were due January 1st. Membership benefits include a subscription to the newsletter and participation at special events. Please don't forget to renew your membership so you'll not miss out on any of our 2022 activities. Mail your check or money order made payable to Stafford County Historical Society (SCHS) to:

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