

The CHRONICLE

Friends Hold First Event in 18 Months and Raise \$12,000 for Thomas Balch Library Lectures, Seminars, and Virtual Programs



Dr. Don Cooper, president of Friends of Thomas Balch Library, presents Annual Event hosts Julie and Steve Chapin with the history of their Leesburg home.

Thank You, Thomas Balch Library Staff!

The Friends of Thomas Balch Library give heartfelt thanks to Library Director Alexandra S. Gressitt, Curator of Manuscripts and Archives Laura Christiansen, and Genealogy Associate Norah Schneider for their remarkable dedication and creativity these past 18 months.

Faced with extraordinary challenges, they found ways to keep the Library open virtually with remote outreach. Somehow they also responded to more than 61,000 reference questions.

As Gressitt wrote in the *Balch Column*, "As we were forced to close our physical doors, we opened our virtual gates...for which we have been hugely rewarded with overwhelming responses from across the United States."

Perhaps when you visited Thomas Balch Library two or three years ago, you might have been just a little curious about all the construction work underway at the Cornwall Street home behind the Library.

On September 19, Friends of Thomas Balch Library at last got to see for themselves when Julie and Steve Chapin opened their backyard for the Friends' annual event—the first since fall 2019.

During the event—"A Teaser for the 2022 Library Anniversary"—Julie Chapin also related the unusual history of the residence going back to 1722 when it was built for prominent Leesburg resident Thomas Birkby.

Nearly 200 years later—and two years before the Thomas Balch Library was built—the house became a popular inn and tea room called the Black Cat Inn. Shortly after the Black Cat closed, Alice Tyler Mills acquired the house only to see it go up in flames with the remaining structure torn down by the Leesburg Volunteer Fire Department. In 1950, Mills replaced that home with the present residence. From the Chapins' home, guests walked to the Library for a tour by Library Director Alexandra S. Gressitt, followed by a presentation. *(continued on p. 4)*

**FRIENDS OF THOMAS BALCH
LIBRARY, INC.**

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Leesburg, VA 20177
www.balchfriends.org

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Renew Your Friends Membership Today!

The deadline for renewal—December 1—will be here before you know it. So take a few moments now to check the status of your membership in Friends of Thomas Balch Library.

To learn whether you owe dues for this annual renewal cycle, look at the back of this *Chronicle* and see if the number above and to the far right of your name is *Dec 2022 or *Dec 2023.

If so, your dues have already been paid for the coming year. If the date is *Dec. 2019-2021, then you owe dues. If you're not already a member, please join us! Below is a form to fill out and send to us to renew or join.

See page 6 for the form to renew or join



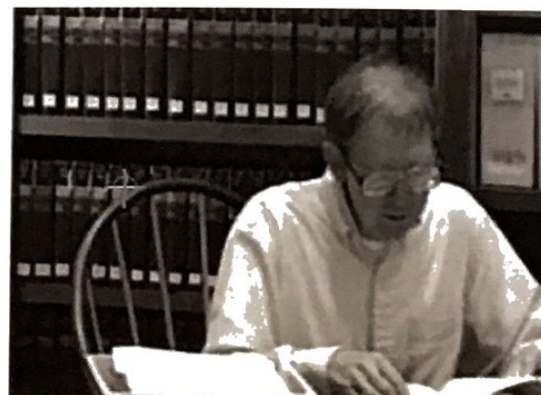
***In-Person Friends Annual Meeting Set for Sunday,
January 9, 2022***

Friends of Thomas Balch Library Annual Meeting will be held in



person on Sunday, January 9, in the downstairs meeting room of the Library from 2-4 PM. In case of inclement weather, the make-up date will be on Sunday, January 23.

The meeting will honor historian Wynne Saffer in a video history created by former Board members Patty Rogers-Renner, Sarah Huntington, and Rich Gillespie.



Saffer can usually be found deep into research at the Library, left below, but he's also a regular at Friends events. Left above, he joins fellow Friends at a recent fundraiser, sporting a cap from historic Ball's Bluff Regional Park.

The meeting will also include the election of the 2022 directors of the Friends Board.

The New Normal: When, Where, and How to Access the Library

Thomas Balch Library Hours

With more individuals vaccinated and indoor masking requirements set, Thomas Balch Library's schedules are firming up.

As *The Chronicle* goes to press in late October, the Library hours are:

Monday and Friday – 10 AM to 12 PM; 1 to 5 PM

Tuesday and Thursday – 10 AM to 12 PM;
1 to 8 PM

Wednesday – 2 to 8 PM

Saturday – 11 AM to 4 PM

Sunday – 1 to 5 PM

Note:: The Library will be closed for lunch from 12 to 1 PM Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.

Although Thomas Balch Library staff members are unable to do extensive research for patrons, they are happy to provide 15 minutes of free general research for patrons who are unable to visit in person.

How Library Staff Can Help You

You can expedite your research request and make it easier for staff to fulfill if you first visit the Library's primary website at <https://www.leesburgva.gov/departments/thomas-balch-library>. There you will find forms to fill out and send to the Library with details on your research needs.

Be prepared! Thomas Balch Library staff may contact you with a request to narrow the scope of your questions. Staff may ask you to take advantage of remote reference services instead of visiting the Library. Please work with them to help make the most of the investment of their time and yours.

Please be patient and polite with Library staff before, during, and after your visit. Staffing is limited, and response times may be longer than usual. Everyone will do their best to help you; nevertheless, some services are limited or may not be available.

Questions? Call the Library's Main Desk at 703-737-7195 or email balchlib@leesburgva.gov for more information.

New Faces at the Library

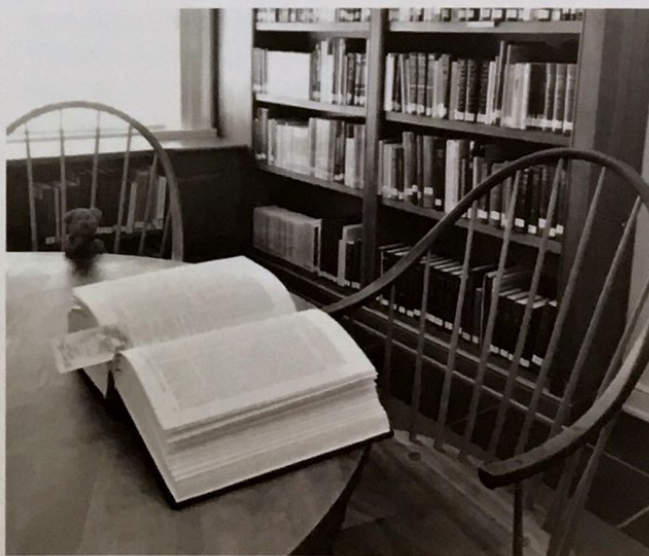


Victoria Summers, left, and Isabella Meier

In June, the Library welcomed Victoria Summers as administrator. In August, Isabella Meier joined the staff as Library associate.

Summers is taking up the duties of Jennifer Calamos Smith, administrator, who left the Library in April to explore new opportunities.

Welcome Back!



"We saved your place!" the Thomas Balch Library website proclaims. Staff and their new little mascot, Wallace the Bear (barely visible in the rear chair), can't wait to see you. Just be sure to double-check the hours—and don't forget to mask up.

Panel at Friends Annual Event Shares Library's History

The Friends Annual Event included a panel discussion with Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission chairman Jim Hershman, James Roberts, and Wynne Saffer, opposite, left to right. Ron Rust served as the moderator. Hershman talked about Thomas Balch, the Library's namesake, and the 1922 construction of the Library. Rust, who was instrumental in developing an endowment for the Library, described how the Library originally was funded by paid subscription.

James P. Roberts, an African American historian who grew up in Leesburg, recalled how he and his friends would play on the Library's front lawn but not be allowed to go inside and check out a book. Only with the construction of Douglass High School, a segregated school, did Blacks in Leesburg have access to a library.

Wynne Saffer presented a brief history of the creation of the Loudoun County library system in the early 1970s and how the town of Leesburg acquired the Thomas Balch Library from the County.

The event contributed \$12,000 to the endowment, which helps to fund Library programs. The Friends give heartfelt thanks to hosts Julie and Steve Chapin, and to sponsors Jeff and Laura Bolyard, W. Perry Epes, Judy and Chris Gerow, Rosalie and Lewis Leigh, Jr., Jim and Mary Grace Lucier, James and Martha Marks, Judy Kozacik, George Webber, and Suzanne and Travis Worsham—Riverside on the Potomac. The Friends thank Rochelle Myers Catering and also Tuscarora Mill Restaurant for three \$100 gift certificates for this year's raffle.



Photos clockwise from top: (1) Panelists Jim Hershman, James Roberts, Wynne Saffer, (2) Suzi Worsham, Susan Webber, Rosalie Leigh, (3) Alexandra Gressitt, Library Director, and (4, at left) Lewis Leigh, Jr., Susan Webber, and Ron Rust. Among the other guests were Eugene and Annette Scheel, Travis Worsham, Lori Kimball, Robert Patton, George Webber, Judy Kozacik, and Don Cooper.

Virtual and In-Person Programs & BHC News

While Thomas Balch Library has resumed its pre-pandemic hours, unless otherwise noted, all programs at the Library will be conducted on a virtual platform through December 2021. Pre-registration for all classes is required. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/TBLEvents> to sign up. In-person lectures, tours, and seminars resume winter 2022. Thomas Balch Library's doors will open again soon and welcome you to in-person programs.

VIRTUAL

Thursday, 2 December 2021, 10AM
Researching Using Deeds

Wynne Saffer, author of *Loudoun County, Virginia 1860 Land Tax Map*, will use a case study to demonstrate how to establish chain of title using deed indexes and other types of land ownership changes such as wills, marriages, old advertisements, and chancery cases.

Wednesday, 15 December 2021, 1PM
***A Quiet Cadence*—Mark Treanor**

Mark Treanor's first novel, *A Quiet Cadence*, the story of a young Marine in combat and dealing with its aftermath, was published by the Naval Institute Press in 2020. The book won the William E. Colby Award as the best solo work of fiction or nonfiction of 2020 for making a major contribution to military history, intelligence operations or international affairs, as well as the American Library Association's W. Y. Boyd award for the best military fiction published in 2020.

Thursday, 3 February 2022, 10AM
African American Genealogy

Steve Hammond and Lori Kimball will use case studies and examples from their research. Kimball, a member of the Black History Committee of Friends of Thomas Balch Library, co-researcher of the Enslaved Community of President James Monroe, and researcher of the enslaved community at Oatlands, will discuss use of online resources, resources available at Thomas Balch Library, Loudoun County Courthouse, and repositories throughout the country. Hammond, a 7th generation member of the Syphax family of Washington, DC, will share his efforts to make the field of genealogy more relevant and interesting to a wider Black audience.

IN PERSON

Sunday, 9 January 2022, 2PM

Friends of Thomas Balch Library Annual Meeting

Friends of the Thomas Balch Library will hold its 26th Annual Meeting and Election of Directors on Sunday, January 9, 2022 at Thomas Balch Library beginning at 2 PM. This year's program will be "Oral History Series: Interview with Wynne Saffer" presented by Patty Renner-Rogers, Sarah Huntington, and Rich Gillespie. The snow/ice make-up date will be Sunday, January 23, 2022.

Black History Committee Update

BHC Chair Donna Bohanon shared this update on the Committee's recent activities:

- Jackie Branch represented the BHC on the Loudoun County Public Schools Naming Committee established by the LCPS and tasked with naming an Alternative School located in Sterling. The selected and approved name is William Obediah Robey, African American blacksmith, schoolteacher, and minister who lived in Loudoun County.
- James Roberts is the BHC representative on the Douglass Alumni Commemorative Committee established by the LPSC and School Board to determine remodeling and commemoration of the historic African American High School located in Leesburg. Meetings are ongoing.
- On June 19, Bohanon represented the BHC and the Heritage Commission at the Juneteenth Celebration at Claude Moore Park.
- On June 26, BHC members Lori Kimball, Mike Napper, Phyllis Cook-Taylor, Donna Bohanon, and Shannon Fuller represented the BHC at the Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area Association Anniversary Event at Goose Creek Bridge.
- Martha Mason Semmes joined Cook-Taylor, Kimball, and Bohanon to represent the BHC at the Middleburg Sporting Library concert on August 27.
- Members Larry and Jackie Branch and Donna Bohanon represented the BHC at the 2021 Sterlingfest on October 9.
- BHC cosponsored the NOVA Parks – Aldie Mill and Loudoun County Public Libraries program featuring Dr. Deborah Lee, founding member of the BHC. Dr. Lee's program discussed the Loudoun freedom seeker Daniel Dangerfield.

Join the Friends Today

Become a Friend of Thomas Balch Library and play a vital role in supporting its invaluable collections, educational seminars, and expanding virtual programming.

To become a member, please fill out this form completely and send it with your tax-deductible membership dues and/or contribution to:

**Friends of Thomas Balch Library
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If you have questions, please call 540-579-2825 and leave a message, or email us using the Contact Us form at balchfriends.org

Membership Dues

- Legacy Society.....\$500+
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- Each Volume: \$ 20
- All 5 volumes plus Eugene Scheel's Historical Map of Loudoun County** \$ 100
- Individual copies of the Historical Map** \$ 10
- The Essence of A People: Portraits of African Americans Who Made a Difference in Loudoun County, Virginia* \$ 15
- The Essence of A People II: African Americans Who Made Their World Anew in Loudoun County, Virginia, and Beyond* \$ 15
- Loudoun County's African American Communities: A Tour Map and Guide** \$ 5
- In the Watchfires: The Loudoun County Emancipation Association, 1890-1971* by Elaine E. Thompson \$ 20
- George Washington Carver: Scientist, Artist, Musician* by Lemoine D. Pierce \$ 10
- Journey Through Time by Black History Committee of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library* \$ 5
- Billy Pierce: Dance Master, Son of Purcellville* by Lemoine D. Pierce \$ 15
- Loudoun 1757: On the Border of Mayhem—Loudoun County 250th Anniversary Lecture Series** \$ 15
- Leesburg 250th Anniversary Lecture Series** (2008) hosted by Thomas Balch Library, includes booklet plus 2 DVDs \$ 15

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Programs & Exhibits

Programs and Events

***Lost in the Ice*—Andrew Jampoler**

Virtual

11/17/2021 1:00 PM

Researching Using Deeds—

Wynne Saffer

Virtual

12/2/2021 10:00 AM

***A Quiet Cadence*—Mark Treanor**

Virtual

12/15/2021 1:00 PM

Friends of Thomas Balch Library

Annual Meeting

In Person

1/9/2022 2:00 PM

***Bitter Roots*—Ellen Crosby**

In Person

4/24/2022 2:00 PM

Tours and Exhibits

Margaret Mercer Room

Exhibit: Selections from the Rust Archives

November 2021

**Exhibit: Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area
Association**

December 2021 & January 2022

Exhibit: Black History Committee

February 2022

Lower Level Meeting Room

Jim Hanna—Photography

Through December 2021

Forrest Holbert

Friends of Leesburg Public Arts

January—March 2022