

Virginia Research Facilities—Shenandoah Valley—Clarke County



Clarke County Historical Association

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Open Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and by appointment

The Repository

Tucked away in the northern Shenandoah Valley, the Clarke County Historical Association (CCHA) is dedicated to preserving the historical resources and records of one of Virginia's unique counties fostering their use, enjoyment, and understanding. Just a stone's throw from the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, CCHA maintains a state-of-the-art Museum, genealogical Library, and extensive Archives in Berryville, Virginia, and the Burwell-Morgan Mill — a circa-1785 operating gristmill — in nearby Millwood.

CCHA is the primary repository for records of historical and genealogical significance related to Clarke County, formerly part of Frederick County and home to the estate of Thomas, Lord Fairfax. In the Archives of the Association, researchers can access land records, documents, and other research materials of great interest in regard to the division and early settlement of the Northern Neck Proprietary and the Shenandoah Valley.

Home to related families from the Tidewater Region of Virginia, Clarke County developed unique characteristics and demographics very different from surrounding counties. Wheat production on a massive scale led to the development of numerous prosperous estates and the introduction of a large slave labor force.

By the 1840s Clarke County's slave population was the largest in the lower Valley. CCHA holds many valuable records that help to trace this community of African Americans following the Civil War. In the early part of the 20th century, wealthy industrialists seeking to escape northern cities purchased historic homes and properties in Clarke. This helped to preserve the physical buildings and became the impetus behind saving local history and culture.

Be Prepared

The Archives and Library of the Clarke County Historical Association are available to the public Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., as well as by appointment. Visit our online catalog at <http://www.clarkehistory.org/archives.html> before your visit—over 9,000 items in our collection are cataloged online. Nonmembers of the Association pay a \$5 research fee. Photography is allowed with prior permission. Photocopies and scans made online are 24¢ each. Researchers may bring a flash drive. There is no fee to visit the onsite Museum.

While you are in the area, plan a visit to the Mill. The Burwell-Morgan Mill is open March through November on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Stop by on a Saturday between 12 noon and 4 p.m. and watch the Mill grind flour just as it was done in 1785 when the Mill began operating.

Holdings

CCHA's Library is home to more than 1,200 volumes of history, genealogy, and biography related to Clarke County and the surrounding counties. Visitors may also peruse microfilm collections that include all volumes of *The Clarke Courier*, Clarke County's newspaper dating from 1869 through 1997 and tax, birth, and death records.

Collections

CCHA's Archives hold a wide variety of materials such as original Fairfax land grants, photographs, fair programs, and genealogical materials on local families, but they also include collections that appeal to researchers with far-reaching interests. Some examples of the latter follow.

- Among the papers saved from the attic of a 1780s county home are the 1786 York County, Va., will of Nathaniel Nelson and papers documenting Col. Nathaniel Burwell's late 18th century administration of estates in the Tidewater. Also among the retrieved items are three small leather-covered notebooks that document life in Clarke during 1861 to 1865. No one can fail to be moved by Randolph's stark entry for 23 October 1864 after the Battle of Cedar Creek, when he wrote simply, "My boy is dead."
- A stack of pencil-covered lined sheets details the memories of a young boy whose house sat in the middle of the town of Gettysburg, during those fateful 3 days in July 1863. Early in the 20th century, government clerk Kenton Harper summered with a Clarke County Confederate veteran named Ammi Moore and apparently wrote these memories during his visit.

Publications for Sale

CCHA has published an annual journal, *Proceedings*, since 1942 presenting articles, transcribed documents, and other information of interest to researchers studying Clarke County history. Past issues of *Proceedings* are available for purchase or can be found online at <http://www.clarkehistory.org/publications/>.

Laura Christiansen, Director

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