

Research Facilities of Virginia—Shenandoah Valley—Winchester

Stewart Bell Jr. Archives

Handley Regional Library
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P.O. Box 58 (22604)
Winchester, VA 22601

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Handley Regional Library—Stewart Bell Jr. Archives is located in the basement

Open:

Mon. & Tues., 1–5 p.m.

Wed., 1–8 p.m.

Thurs., 10 a.m.–1 p.m.

Fri. & Sat., 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Repository

Winchester, Virginia, located in the lower Shenandoah Valley, is home to the Stewart Bell Jr. Archives. The Archives are located on the lower level at the Handley Library in historic downtown Winchester. For over thirty years, this has been a haven for genealogists looking for clues about their ancestors who lived in and migrated through the northern Shenandoah Valley.

In 2013 Archivist Rebecca A. Ebert received the Virginia Genealogical Society Commonwealth Award for Stewart Bell Jr. Archives. This award recognizes societies or organizations within the state for performing outstanding service in the promotion of genealogical study.

Be Prepared

You may locate holdings ahead of your visit on the library's online catalog at Handley Regional Library. Digital cameras, laptops, and external USB drives are permitted; the copier and two microfilm readers have USB ports. You can purchase books and maps with a check or cash. Photocopies cost 15¢ per any size copy. Bring single dollar bills, if possible. Take a look at the website before you arrive; find it at <http://www.handleyregional.org/>; go to "Our Services" then "Family & Local History."

General Holdings

In the Archives' reading room is a library of about 4500 volumes. Onsite finding aids help researchers locate the Archives' holdings, which include material on most counties in the northern Shenandoah Valley. The amount and depth varies from county to county.

Frederick County sources are predominantly pre-twentieth century and include family genealogies, county histories, atlases, maps, selected business records,

Winchester city directories, microfilmed copies of court order and minute books, census schedules, deed indexes, church records, cemetery inscriptions, obituary transcriptions, Bible records, newspapers, and birth, death, marriage, deed, and will records from 1743. Before 1743, records can be found in Orange County for which there are record compilations in the Stewart Bell Jr. Archives.

Maps. A notebook listing map holdings (mostly copies) is available in the research room. The subject headings used to organize these are Frederick County, Winchester City, Valley counties, state, Civil War, and topographical.

Newspapers. Microfilm of local newspapers includes *The Winchester Star* (1896-2013) and the *Clarke Courier* (1869-May 2009). Other earlier newspapers are captured on microfilm. Single issues of historical newspapers can be requested to view.

Manuscripts Collections

Researchers have access to over 650 linear feet of manuscripts, ephemera, and maps. The collections are described in 635 inventories. The full text of collection inventories can be searched on the Internet. If you enter a fairly specific term, such as "Thomas Fairfax," the corresponding collection inventory will appear in the results list. You can access inventories directly from the "family and local history" page at Handley Regional Library.

Not all information found at Stewart Bell Jr. Archives is online. The archives contain 1,722 collections, which include miscellaneous manuscripts. Finding aids for these treasures are found in an index in the reading room in old card catalog drawers.

Chancery Causes and Tax Records

Frederick County Chancery Court records (1745–1903) and personal property tax and land tax records (1782–1850) along with other county records are available on microfilm in our research room. Additional years are on microfilm at the Library of Virginia. Digital images of Chancery Court cases are online at the Library of Virginia website (1860–1912); Winchester City Chancery Court Cases (1787–1936) have also been scanned. You can access an interactive chancery court index online at Virginia Memory.

Photographs

Over 21,500 photographs of people, places, and events have been scanned into a searchable database. Researchers can search using keywords to find groups of photos. You can use this database only in the research room, not online. However, the Library website displays over 12,000 of these photographs on its website and adds more each week. Anyone can e-mail the Archives for information about obtaining copies and permission to publish.

Barbara Dickinson, Volunteer
Rebecca A. Ebert, Archivist

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