

A Guide to the F.W. Richardson Papers, 1858-1943

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A Collection in the Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center
Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center
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History

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Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Creator

Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center

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Unit 51, Top Shelf, Boxes 1-3; Oversize in Unit 26, Drawer #6

Repository

Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

The Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

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Biographical Information

Frederick Wilmer (F.W.) Richardson and his father, Ferdinand Dawson (F.D.) Richardson, held the positions of Clerk of Fairfax County Court and Fairfax Circuit Court, variously, from 1833 to 1935.

F.D. Richardson was born on November 9th, 1808. He began his career as an assistant or deputy clerk in 1826; he was County Court Clerk from 1833-1835, 1867-1869 and 1870-1880. F.D. served as Circuit Court Clerk from 1835-1880, apart from a hiatus during the Civil War.

Prior to the Civil War, F.D. was a Captain in the Virginia Militia. He was also an avid farmer, as evidenced by his farming journal found in this collection, and is listed as Recording Secretary on the 1848 Constitution of Fairfax Agricultural Society. Post-Civil War, F.D. was a founding member of Central Farmers' Club which began in February 1874. He was also Clerk to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors throughout the 1870s.

Not much is known about F.D.'s activities during the Civil War. He voted for secession from the Union in 1861, and courthouse lore has it that he took George Washington's will down to Richmond for safe-keeping. Physical evidence places him in Richmond in December 1861 and January 1862.

F.D. died on October 13th, 1880. His wife and F.W.'s mother, Mary Posey (Grigsby) Richardson, died on December 12th, 1889.

F.W. Richardson was born on October 16th 1854. He married Amelia (Millie) Lee Buck in 1883 and had four children, Frederick Dawson (1884 - 1954), Marcus Bayly (1886 - 1917), Mary Buck (1889 - 1890) and Virginia Fairfax (1891 - 1988).

In 1871, F.W. became his father's deputy as Assistant Clerk in the Office of the Clerk of County Court. On his father's death, he became temporary Clerk of County and Circuit Courts. In 1881, F.W. was voted in as Clerk of County Court, a position he held until County Court was abolished in 1903. F.W. held the office of Clerk of Circuit Court from 1904 to 1935.

During his working life, F.W. held many other prominent positions within Fairfax County and his local community. He was Clerk of the Board of Supervisors from 1880 - 1935 and County Treasurer in the 1890s; according to the Fairfax Herald, he served as a Probate Judge in 1904 and 1906; he was also a notary public, a real estate buyer, a member of the Chamber of Commerce and a delegate to the Prison Association in 1908. He served on many boards and committees, notably the County Health Board, the Fairfax Confederate Monument Association and Confederate Reunion Committee in 1900, the Great War Memorial Fund Committee, the Bicentennial Committee, the Farmers' Institute Committee and the Homecoming Day committee. In 1917, F.W. served as clerk for the Local Board for the Selective Service System Draft (WWI military service), and was Secretary and President of the Town Hall Association, Secretary and President of the Cemetery Association, Secretary and Treasurer of Henry Masonic Lodge, President of the Democratic Club and Wilson Club in 1916, elected Providence Lodge Good Templars Officer in 1873, elected Fairfax Lyceum Recording and Corresponding Secretary in 1874 and elected to the Zion Church Vestry in 1931. He was also a member of the Red Cross.

In addition to his monumental public service, F.W. made large donations to the Confederate Reunion, Fairfax fairs and agricultural shows, roads, the War Relief Fund, the YMCA Fund, the Library building, the Fire Department and a new school building. He was much in demand as a public speaker, newspapers of the time list him as addressing Army draftees in 1917, the Civic League, the Rotary Club, Herndon Church of Christ and the Fairfax Lyceum.

Newspapers from F.W.'s time also record his active social life, attending many dinners and other functions, especially notable are the bank and Bar Association dinners.

The collection offers a little insight into F.W.'s personal life. He was financially astute, as his many tax returns, insurance papers, Christmas club and bank books show. The collection shows that F.W. held shares in the Silver Butte Mines Corporation, the Mercantile-Railway Building and Loan Association of Alexandria, Virginia Title Company, Falls Church Bank, Incorporated, Fairfax and Loudoun Light and Power Company and Baltimore Building and Loan Association of Baltimore City. He even assumed some financial responsibility for his sister, Madge Pierce, after her husband's death. In the collection are copies of deeds of lands bought by F.W. and his real estate partners, James Love (also a Judge) and R.W. Moore. F.W. also seems to have had some interest in the arts, he was Secretary of the Olio Theatrical Troop in 1874 and held some shares in the Cosmos Theatre Co., Inc.

F.W.'s son, Frederick Dawson, had a legal career and was very active in the business and social affairs of Fairfax County. His other son, Marcus Bayly worked for him as deputy clerk. Tragically, Marcus was killed when his car hit a streetcar in August 1917. Amongst F.W.'s papers was a newspaper cutting of the accident, this has been copied onto acid-free paper.

Elton Richardson Holbrook, F.W.'s nephew, also worked for F.W. as a deputy clerk; his signature appears on multiple papers. Unfortunately, he committed suicide in the 1931.

F.W. retired from Circuit Court in 1935 and was succeeded by John M. Whalen, a couple of whose papers appear in the collection. F.W. died on 23rd April, 1936.

Sources: The collection, the Historical Newspaper Index at Fairfax County Public Library Virginia Room, correspondence from local historian, Lee Hubbard, [Find a Grave](#)

Scope and Content

Series 1: Personal, 1861-1936, contains personal papers from both F.D. and F.W. Richardson. F.D.'s papers include receipts from Richmond merchants dating to 1861 and 1862 showing that F.D. and another man listed as Howard were buying large quantities of foodstuffs, cooking, serving and eating implements, tobacco products and pipes and other sundries such as candle molds and needles. There is no evidence-based explanation for these purchases. A possible explanation is that F.D. was outfitting a Confederate unit, but this is conjecture. F.D.'s papers also include a farming journal, other bills and receipts, some court papers and claims on his estate.

F.W.'s papers include a number of deeds and other property papers, insurance certificates and papers, investments papers, bank books and checks, tax returns, masonic membership cards and papers, other club membership cards and papers and papers pertaining to his work on the local board of the Selective Service System Draft in 1917 during WWI. The most poignant of these papers are chits stating whether local men (identified by serial numbers) passed their physical examinations for the draft. Some of the serial numbers correspond to entries in the Local Board Selective Service System Draft Records Book 1917, found in the archives. These entries state whether the men were allowed exemption from service due to dependents or occupation. See Appendix IV for details.

Series 2: Professional, 1881 - 1935, contains documents pertaining to F.W.'s position as Clerk of County and Circuit Court. These documents include land records such as deed, lease, bill of sale, contract, mortgage, survey and certificate of title paperwork and correspondence; personal property records such as sales and conditional sales contract, loan, lien and chattel mortgage paperwork and correspondence; copies of wills, administrator and executor appointments, inheritance tax and fees paperwork and correspondence; tax records such as delinquent tax lists, receipts, sales paperwork and general tax correspondence; term papers records for commonwealth and civil cases such as Justice of the Peace statements, warrants of arrest, bail paperwork, jury summonses, case proceedings, judgements, divorce notices, insane asylum commitment papers, motions and petitions, pardon and parole forms, lists of court costs and clerk's fees, lawyers correspondence and receipts; other court records such as a jail condition report, hunting and fishing licenses, corporation directors and officers lists, names for the WWI Memorial and election candidacy papers; clerk's office documents such as reports, budget, salary lists, bank account information and receipts and correspondence with the State Auditor, attorneys and others. This series also has documents pertaining to F.W.'s position as Clerk of the Board of Supervisors such as a record of the County Levy in 1914 and correspondence concerning Board matters and bills. Of particular note is the correspondence concerning Prohibition laws and the Reports of Clerks of Court showing the special importance given Prohibition cases.

Series 3: Posthumous Papers, 1936 - 1943, contains paperwork created by/ for John Whalen, Clerk of Circuit Court. The documents include a docket of cases for the November term 1937, letters from Courthouse supply manufacturers, general correspondence and a postcard.

[Click here to view Appendixes I through IV \(See pages 8-11\).](#)

Index Terms

Frederick Wilmer (F.W.) Richardson, Ferdinand Dawson (F.D.) Richardson, Fairfax Circuit Court, C. Lee Moore (State Auditor of Public Accounts), Elton R. Holbrook (Deputy Clerk), John M. Whalen (Clerk after F.W.) Frank L. Ballenger (Secretary of the Board of Supervisors)

Land and personal property, taxes, wills and estate paperwork, divorce, term papers, general court papers, election records, laws and acts, Board of Supervisors, Prohibition, WWI Exemption Board and Memorial, clerk's budget, salaries and reports, personal banking and insurance, Civil War, Reconstruction, WWI, Prohibition, Great Depression, life events of Richardson family

Primarily Fairfax County.

Deeds, certificates of title, wills, receipts, checkbook and checks, booklets, correspondence, farming journal, naturalization certificate, divorce notices, reports, tax bills and receipts, term papers and related paperwork, pardon, corporation papers, plats, blueprints, WWI Exemption Board chits, insurance certificates, promissory notes, election nomination papers, oaths of office, arrest and bond warrants, petitions, delinquent tax lists, vehicle insurance policies

Paper, cardstock, leather, photographic material, ink, graphite

State Auditor of Public Accounts, Deputy Clerk, Secretary of the Board of Supervisors

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Folder 3: Personal Miscellaneous, 1867 - 1871

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