

Jottings from the Minute Book of the County Court of Alexandria County

No time was lost in setting up a government for the County of Alexandria, as Arlington County was known from 1801 to 1920, once the General Assembly had passed the necessary Act to extend the jurisdiction of Virginia over the area which had been retroceded from the District of Columbia.¹ The County Court was the governing body of the counties in those days, its members being appointed by the Governor. The County Court, which met monthly, sat for the first time on March 25, 1847, and the Minutes² record the names of the Justices.

March 25, 1847

Justices appointed by the Governor: William Minor, Turner Dixon, George White, George Wise, John Powell, Charles Koones, Lucien Peyton, Jonathan Ross, John H. Brent, Robert Crupper, Samuel Bartle, Joseph G. Carr.

Cassius F. Lee was elected Clerk, and Christopher Neale, Commonwealth's Attorney. [The law provided that all such elections should be *vive voce* in open Court].

William Minor, Turner Dixon, and George White were recommended to the Governor for appointment as Sheriff. [By tradition, the three names recommended to the Governor by the Court for appointment of one as Sheriff were those of the men first named in the list of Justices. The position of Sheriff rotated in accordance with the seniority of the Justices. It carried with it certain perquisites which made it valuable.]

April 5, 1848

Ordered that the County be laid off into two constable districts, the "corporation part" as District Number 1, and the "county part" as District Number 2. It was provided that four constables should be elected by the Justices for District Number 1, and one for District Number 2. Wesley Carlin was chosen for the latter post.

Three districts were established for the Overseers of the Poor, and it was provided that "the country part of the County be called Arlington District."

1. See articles by Harrison Mann in *Arlington Historical Magazine*. Vol 1, No. 1 and No. 2.

2. There are two volumes of Minute Books of the County Court in the Office of the Clerk of Courts of Arlington County. Volume 2 begins March 25, 1847, with the organization of the Court and must actually be the first volume in the series. It ends on July 3, 1852. Volume 3 begins July 26, 1852, and ends November 9, 1855.

[This may well be the first place on record where what we now know as Arlington County was styled by that name.] A. R. Frazer was placed in charge of the election in that District, and it was ordered that the voting was to be at Thompson's house at Ball's cross roads.

March 9, 1848

The following were appointed Commissioners of Election for the election to be held on the fourth Thursday in April for delegates to the General Assembly and to Congress.

At the Courthouse - Christopher Neale

John T. Johnson

Harrison Bradley

Peter G. Uhler

Lewis McKenzie

Thompson's Cross- Washington T. Harper

roads [sic] James T. Ball

Bazil Williams

James Roach

R. B. Alexander

October 3, 1848

The Court established six School Districts as follows: The Corporation of Alexandria to be divided into four Districts the same as those "which the town is now divided into for town purposes." The County of Alexandria to be divided into two Districts: all north of the Columbia road to be District 6, and all south of that road to the Corporation line to be District 5. William Minor was appointed School Commissioner for District 6, and James Roach for District 5.

December 4, 1848

Samuel Beach qualified as Constable, and Walter L. Penn as Jailer.

March 7, 1849

A petition was presented to the Court, "from more than one-third of the qualified voters of Alexandria County, who voted at the preceding election for delegate to the General Assembly praying that the sense of the people of said County may be taken upon the question of establishing District Schools in said County—and so ordered." [The record is silent upon whether the election was in fact held, and if so, what were the results.]

June 26, 1849

Richard Southern, Anthony R. Frazier [sic] and Wesley Carlin were elected Overseers of the Poor for the "northern or Arlington District."

September 4, 1849

William Minor resigned as School Commissioner and James T. Ball was appointed in his place.

November 28, 1849

The School Commissioners were appointed for the following year: Bazil Williams for District 5, and James T. Ball in District 6.

February 26, 1850

Election Commissioners were appointed for the elections to be held in April: for the polling place at Ball's Cross Roads - Washington T. Harper, Bazil Williams, Jas. T. Ball, R. B. Alexander, and James Roach.

April 26, 1850

William Ball was appointed Superintendent of Election in the Arlington District for the election to be held on the third Monday in May for Overseer of the Poor. [An entry for May 27, 1850, indicates that the election was not held and the Court appointed three Overseers: Benjamin Shreve, James T. Ball and Bazil Williams.]

June 24, 1850

Robert Donaldson petitioned the Court to open a road from the Fairfax and Georgetown Ferry road to the Falls-bridge road, commencing at a point 53 rods from the Georgetown ferry. The Court appointed the following as viewers: Horatio Ball, Wesley Carlin, William Marcey, William Minor, Bazil Williams, and Richard B. Alexander.

February 26, 1851

Colonel William Minor was appointed Overseer of the Poor for the "country part of the County" in place of Benjamin Shreve who had moved away.

June 23, 1851

The Court proceeded to lay the County levy when the whole County was made debtor:

To C. C. Bradley for expenses burying dead over whom coroner held inquests	64.00
Anderson Hepburn same service	5.00
W. L. Penn Constable summoning juries upon inquests	9.00
Mrs. Rebecca Higden making & putting down Carpet and matting at Court House	10.50
Lucien Peyton copying assessors book for C. M. Cas ⁿ 3	30.00
Levi Hindle work on public buildings	42.61
R. A. Sinclair for keeping Convention polls	5.00
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to to-morrow	166.11

June 24, 1851

The Court continued to lay the levy:	
To amount levied yesterday and brought forward	166.11
F. & M. Taylor for carpeting etc. for Court House & Jail	109.79
Isaac Kell & Bro for repairs on Court House	21.73
W. T. Harper keeping convention polls	4.00
Wm. H. Minor furnishing for jail	46.13
Wm. W. Hoxton services at inquests on dead bodies	10.00
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carried over	357.76

3. Lucien Peyton was Presiding Justice and Commissioner of Revenue at this time "C. M. Cas n" stands for Charles M. Castleman.

County levy continued	
To amount brought over	357.76
John C. Parker for keeping Convention poll	4.00
J. M. Stewart for carpeting for Court House in 1849	17.50
William Ward	2.10
Chr. Neale coroner	10.00
Wm. A. Wharton for taking down evidence in Com. v. Crilley	10.00
John Williams, services at inquest for G. White	5.00
S. I. Saunders refreshments for Comms. at Convention el.	32.00
C. W. Richardson & L. Madella whitewashing Court House	8.00
James T. Ball Clerk at election	2.00
Edgar Snowden for public printing	34.25
F. M. Weedon for work on Court House & Jail	21.12
Charles Koonos for burying dead at inquest	7.50
Robert Ball dinner to Comms. at Cross Roads	5.00
Bell & Entwisle for record book	20.50
James T. Ball Clerk at election	2.00
John J. Hall two dinners at Cross Roads (\$15 for F. L. Smith) for Comms.	24.00
Isaac Kell & Bro for repairs on Court House (to be paid when Court is satisfied with the job)	100.00
Samuel U. Chipley summoning juries and attending	12.00
John Shakes for brushes for Court House	1.25
Clerk of the Circuit Court for stationery, etc.	25.00
Clerk of the County Court for stationery, etc.	30.00
Attorney for the Commonwealth in this Court, his salary	300.00
Clerk of this Court for public services	100.00
Jailor of this county for public services	50.00
Keeper of the Court House his salary	50.00
Sheriff of this county for public services	75.00
Creighton & McNair	1.23
John Muir for keeping Convention poll	5.00
J. W. Nalls repair on public buildings	18.60
John Hart work at the jail	65.25
B. H. Berry's bill for office	2.87½
carried over	1,298.93
To George Bouissart road bill	251.69
John Donaldson road bill	4.00
Samuel Birch	4.00
R. B. Alexander	3.00
Frances Swann	12.25
Thomas W. Swann	7.50
Francis Swann	2.62½
John Birch	9.50
E. Deeble	12.00
John Birch, Jr.	1.50
Samuel Birch	4.00
George Blesle [?]	3.00
Wm. E. Veitch	4.50
Thos. Birch	13.50
Henry Brown	8.15
Samuel Birch damages for road applied for by George Minor and ordered to be opened this day	145.00
Cost of application for said road	17.35
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	503.57

Amount brought up	1,298.93
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This sum fraction to pay Com ⁿ and delinquents	1,802.40
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	653.35
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	2,455.75
Credit by 2585 titheables at 95 cts	2,455.75

Ordered that the Sheriff of this County collect ninety five cents from each titheable therein, according to the book of the Commissioner of the revenue and pay the County levy aforesaid.

The following accounts were presented to the Court and ordered to be paid out of the fraction of the County levy for this year — to wit: an account of Chas. M. Castleman amounting to three dollars and an account of M. M. Lewis amounting to five dollars.

July 28, 1851

Robert Brockett was appointed Superintendent of Schools for indigent children.

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The Constitution of 1851⁴, provided that the Justices of the Peace be elected instead of appointed by the Governor as before. Other officers were also made elective rather than appointive. Four Justices were to be elected from each election district, and were to serve on the bench in rotation. The monthly County Courts were to be made up of no less than three nor more than five Justices: the Presiding Justice, elected by the other Justices, was to sit with each Court. The Court continued to be an administrative body as well as a judicial one, although its power was greatly curtailed since it had been stripped of the appointive power.

July 26, 1852

Present: Turner Dixon
 John H. Brent
 William H. Irwin
 Washington T. Harper
 D. Boyd Smith

B. H. Berry, Clerk

The following persons who have been elected Justices of the peace of Alexandria County, and duly commissioned by the Governor of Virginia, July 13, 1852, this day qualified:

4. The individuals named above who were paid for "Keeping the Convention Poll", or serving dinners to the Commissioners had acted at the election for selecting delegates to the Convention which drew up this Constitution.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA,

To all to whom these Presents shall come, Greeting:

Know Ye, That our Governor, having been certified of their election by the Voters of the *Fifth* District of *Alexandria* County, doth hereby commission, *George W. P. Custis, Wesley Carlin, Washington T. Harper, & Robert F. Ball Sr*

to be JUSTICES OF THE PEACE in and for the said County, who shall reside in their said District, and hold their Offices for the term of Four Years, commencing on the first day of August 1852.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, These our Letters are sealed with the Lesser Seal of the Commonwealth and made Patent.



WITNESS, JOSEPH JOHNSON, Esquire, our said Governor, at Richmond, this *thirteenth* day of *July* in the Year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and *fifty-two*, and of the Commonwealth the *seventy seventh*

J. Johnson

LETTER OF APPOINTMENT FOR JUSTICES OF THE PEACE FROM ARLINGTON COUNTY RECORDS

G. W. P. Custis, Wesley Carlin, Robert Ball, W. T. Harper, James A. English, James H. McVeigh, Daniel Cawood, Robert Hunter, William H. Fowle, Lucien Peyton, James W. Nalls, William N. Brown, Charles P. Shaw, Andrew Jamieson, George A. Tavenner, Jesse T. Ramsey, William H. Rogers, Edgar Snowden, Joseph D. Moore.

[Since there were to be four Justices from each of the five districts, one is missing from this list. He was J. T. P. Perry, of the Fourth District who qualified on August 24, 1852.]

William H. Fowle was elected Presiding Justice.