

FOUND IN THE ARCHIVES, no. 65 – August 2020

General Register of Voters, 1902-1903

Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center



Greetings from the Historic Records Center! With August 2020 marking the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment – women’s suffrage – the Historic Records Center staff have been reviewing our voting records in earnest, striving to highlight this monumental period in our collective history.

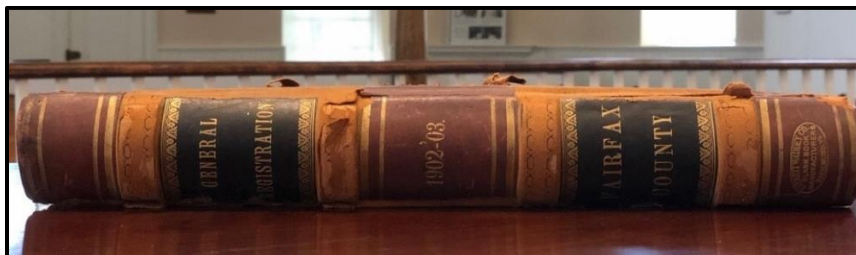
In our February 2020 edition of *Found in the Archives*, HRC staff discussed how women’s suffrage brought new opportunities for Fairfax County female citizens – from being able to subscribe their name to the Voter’s Registration and work as voting registrars themselves. The February edition utilized court records created after 1919 – fields for women were now included in registration and tax ledgers, but

women were registered *separately* from men.

The Historic records Center has recently begun indexing the *General Register of Voters*, from 1902 and 1903, in which African American male voters were registered separately from white male voters. Throughout the indexing process, we have discovered that the names of registered female voters from as late as 1933 were also included in this ledger, so we hope indexing both the 1902-1903 and 1902-1920 voters’ registration ledgers will provide a much more complete picture of all voters registered in the first 30 years of the 20th century.

Below, we will discuss how the *General Register* might assist those interested in genealogy, including African American genealogy, as well as women’s history, in Fairfax County.

* * *



In the 19th century, Fairfax County had been divided into precincts and magisterial districts in order to more easily govern and poll the citizens of the county. Residents of these precincts usually reported to the local tavern or store for legal matters, but also to register to vote.

The *General Register* is thus divided into precincts, some of which we can recognize on a map today, but many with names – and the taverns or store that accompanied them – long gone (please note that these locations are approximate, due to the lack of available maps):

- Accotink
- Annandale
- Baylis’ (located in Lee District – *do you know where Baylis’ Tavern was located? Email us!*)
- Burke’s Station

- Centreville
- Clifton
- Dranesville
- Forestville (modern-day McLean)
- Fairfax Court House
- Falls Church
- Gum Spring (north of Mount Vernon, on US Highway 1)
- Herndon
- Langley
- Moore's (close to modern-day Franconia)
- Pulman's (close to Huntington Metro Station)
- Swetnam's (modern-day Fairfax Station)
- Thornton's (near the intersection of today's Baron Cameron Avenue and Fairfax County Parkway)
- Thompson's (on West Ox Road, near Navy)
- The Lick (near modern-day Tyson's Corner)
- Vienna
- West End (Alexandria)
- Well's Store (far west on Route 29, close to the Prince William County line)
- Woodyard's (Makley's Corner, on today's Wolf Run Shoals Road)

The voting registrar would register voters at each polling location during September and October of each year, 1902 and 1903.

* * *

What information might we find in the *General Register*?

First, it is important to note that the *General Register of Voters* was segregated – White voters were registered on separate pages from “Colored” voters in each precinct. Once women gained suffrage, they were added as well, but usually separately from men.

Required information included the registrant’s name, registration number, date of birth, age, occupation, and residence.

Roll of <u>Colored</u> Voters Registered at <u>Vienna</u> Precinct in					
BY THE BOARD OF REGISTRARS FOR SAID					
Date of Registration	Number	NAME	Date of Birth	Age Years	Occupation
Oct 1 1902	1	Alexander Eugene	Mar 1869	34	Farmer
Oct 1 1902	2	Burke Melrose	Dec 1846	56	Farmer
Sept 30 1902	3	Grant Geo E	Feb 1832	70	Farmer
Oct 1 1902	4	Corquo Elias L.	Jan 1857	44	Farmer
Oct 1 1902	5	Cary Nathan	Jan 1842	60	Farmer
Oct 2 1902	6	Carter John C.	Dec 1853	49	Stonemason
Oct 2 1902	7	Carter Augustus	May 1840	62	Farmer
Oct 2 1902	8	Dixon Jackson	Oct 1836	66	Labourer

Excerpt from *Roll of Colored Voters Registered at Vienna Precinct in Providence Magisterial District... in General Register of Voters, 1902-1903*

One column that is of interest is the one titled "Length of Residence," with sub-columns "In State," "In County" and "In Precinct." At this time, one had to be at least 21 years old and a resident of their precinct between six months to one year to register to vote. To account for this, the registrar questioned the registrant on their length of residence, which today, can provide very useful information to genealogists seeking to understand how long their ancestors resided not just in their precinct, but also in Fairfax County and the state.

For example, Clifton resident John W. Elgin, born in 1827 and a farmer by occupation, stated that he had lived in the state for 75 years, but had lived in Fairfax County for 50 years. He registered to vote in 1902, putting his move to Fairfax County around the year 1852. With a ten-year gap between each United States Census, this information could help a genealogist pinpoint exactly when Elgin moved to Fairfax County.

2	27	Edwards H. C.	1830	67	Minister of the Gospel	"	16	16	16	Geo
0	→ 28	Elgin Jno. W.	1827	75	Farmer	"	75	50	50	"
"	29	Ernst Elijah	1865	37	"	"	5	5	5	"
14	30	Elgin S. D.	1876	26	Huckster	"	26	26	5	"
"	31	Elgin Jno. C. et	1842	60	Farmer	"	27	27	27	Geo
"	32	Elgin S. C.	1869	33	Huckster	"	28	23	12	Geo

Excerpt from Roll of White Voters Registered at Clifton Precinct in Centreville Magisterial District... (Gen Reg. of Voters)

In the Fairfax Court House precinct, John F. Jerman, farmer, indicated that he was 42 years old, and had lived in Virginia and Fairfax County for 40 years. This might mean that Jerman was born in another state and came to Virginia as a toddler, or that he had moved away for two years and returned. Another resident, A. C. Bleight, had lived in Virginia all his 51 years, in Fairfax County for 33 years, and only 7 years at Fairfax Court House.

Length of time in both the state and the county might be of particular interest to those researching African American genealogy. From their birthdates, several Black residents had been born during the era of slavery. Some of those registering to vote had been free before the Civil War, but for others, their story is as-yet unknown, due to missing or undiscovered records. Undoubtedly, many born in the two decades after the Civil War were the children of formerly enslaved residents of Fairfax County. Some registrants who had lived under the institution of slavery do not appear to have been residents of Virginia for their entire lives.

Roll of "Colored" Voters Registered at <u>Gum Spring</u> Precinct in <u>Mount Vernon</u> Magisterial District, BY THE BOARD OF REGISTRARS FOR SAID MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT IN SAID COUNTY										
Date of Registration	The Year	NAME	Date of Birth	Age Years	Occupation	RESIDENCE	LENGTH OF RESIDENCE			In-Service as of 1st day of 1870
							In State	In County	In Precinct	
Oct 21 1892	1	Alexander Smith	Mar 1850	42	Farmer	Gum Spring	72	37	37	Geo
Oct 20 1892	1	George J. Thomas	Jan 15 1847	45	Laborer	Gum Spring	24	24	24	Geo
4 1 1892	2	George Jno	Apr 1847	55	"	"	27	16	16	"
1 2 1892	1	Chase Jno	Feb 20 1844	58	Laborer	Gum Spring	26	26	26	Geo
1 2 1892	1	Nate. Curry	Mar 1845	47	Farmer	Gum Spring	13	13	13	Geo
4 26 1892	1	Ford Jno B.	Oct 1 1847	45	Farmer	Gum Spring	45	45	45	Geo
"	2	Ford Geo	Jan 1844	51	"	"	41	41	41	Geo
"	3	Ford Jas Geo	Nov 9 1847	45	Laborer	"	27	27	27	Geo
4 1 1892	2	Ford Saml L.	Apr 9 1842	50	Farmer	"	27	27	27	Geo
1 1 1892	3	Ford Peter	Feb 1844	48	"	"	28	13	13	Geo
1 2 1892	6	Burgess Chas	Mar 1844	48	Laborer	"	24	24	24	Geo
4 2 1892	1	Gray Hamilton	May 1848	44	Laborer	Gum Spring	50	25	25	Geo
4 1 1892	1	Roberts Chas B.	Mar 1846	46	Farmer	Gum Spring	9	9	9	Geo
4 2 1892	1	Johnson Smith	Jan 1841	51	Farmer	Gum Spring	51	37	37	Geo
4 1 1892	2	Johnson C. Smith	Jan 1840	52	Barrenear	"	9	9	9	Geo
4 1 1892	3	Jasper Jno W.	Jan 1844	48	Laborer	"	28	28	28	Geo

At left is an excerpt of the first page of "Colored" registered voters from the Gum Spring Precinct, Mount Vernon Magisterial District.

Roll of <i>White</i> Voters Registered at <i>Herndon</i> Precinct in		BY THE BOARD OF REGISTRARS FOR SAID			
Date of Registration	Number	NAME	Year of Birth	Age	Occupation
<i>Sept 1st 1882</i>	1	<i>And L. G.</i>	<i>1879</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	2	<i>Wrought Smith</i>	<i>1873</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	3	<i>Smith G. A.</i>	<i>1874</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	4	<i>Robert Richard</i>	<i>1868</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	5	<i>Andrew Kelly</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	6	<i>Andrew Williams</i>	<i>1844</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	7	<i>Andrew Thomas</i>	<i>1878</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Engineer</i>
	8	<i>Richard Hubert</i>	<i>1879</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	9	<i>John Robert D.</i>	<i>1850</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Dentist</i>
	10	<i>John C. E.</i>	<i>1872</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	11	<i>Richard J. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Mechanic</i>
	12	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Real Estate Agent</i>
	13	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	14	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	15	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	16	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	17	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	18	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	19	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	20	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	21	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	22	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	23	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	24	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	25	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	26	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	27	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	28	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	29	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
	30	<i>Richard C. H.</i>	<i>1870</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Farmer</i>

The *General Register* also provides insight into societal changes, reflected in the wide variety of old and new professions listed. For example, in the Herndon precinct, one can see a “Real Estate Broker,” “Real Estate Agent,” “Dentist” and “Insurance Agent” listed alongside “Farmer” and “Carpenter.”

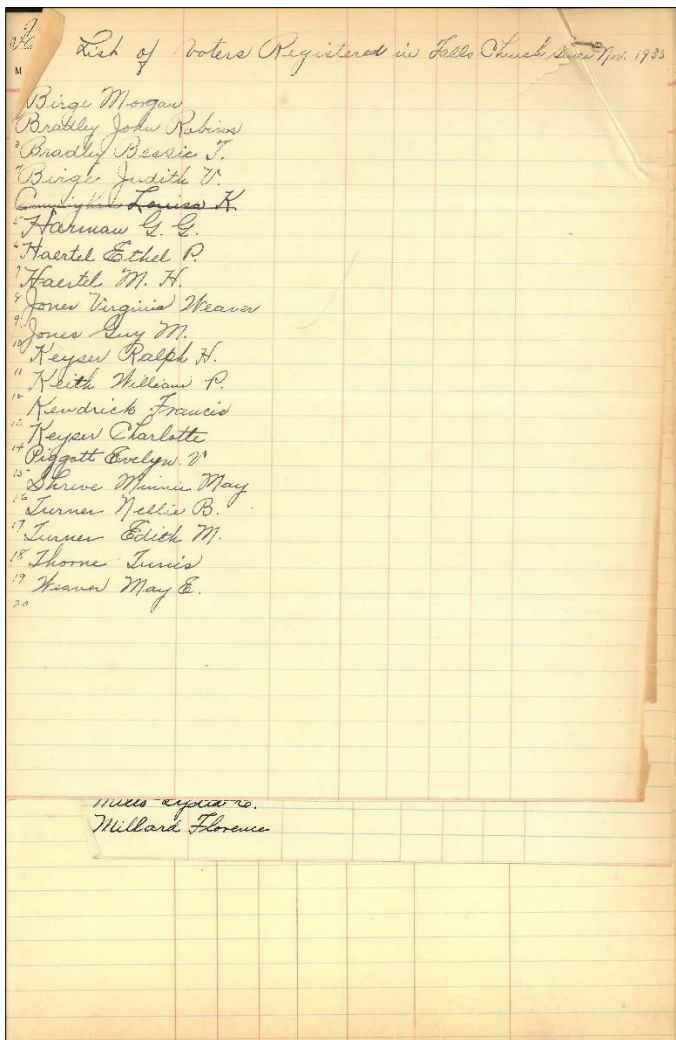
The oldest person registered to vote in this volume is John D. Cross, who was 86 – he was born in 1815 and lived in Centreville. Cross indicated that he had lived his entire life in Fairfax County, Virginia.

Excerpt from Roll of White Voters Registered at Herndon Precinct, Dranesville Magisterial District... (Gen. Reg. of Voters)

After the ratification of the 19th Amendment, this volume was used to register women to vote. Sometimes, the Clerk hand-wrote the new registrants into blank space, as with new Herndon registrants in 1931 and 1932:

4	Stanley B.	1873	30	Labour	Herndon	18	18	
1	Stanley R. G.	1847	36	Labour	Herndon	56	56	10 Exempt
1	Alterbach Ernest	1867	36	Horseman	Herndon	36	36	
Registered since Nov. 1931								
Annfield Ralph F.			Hiram J. H.			Suice Nov. 1932		
Brent Dorothy			Robert Wm. B. Jr			G. W. Jones Bowman		
" Stapp Colly			Popovich Donald D.			G. H. Foreman Jr.		
Brent Susan			Parrell Paul T			Elna J. Kalls		
Burger Joseph			Pie Joe H			Willy M "		
Farr A. J.			Shipley Marie Lucy			David E. Hull		
Filly Thome W			Tamm James D.			By transfer		
Franking Sam			Wenzel Erby Greta			Hannah A. Wren		
Glass Geo. M			Ph transfer			John J. Young		
Brown Davis M. Rev.			Eppes G. Wm J.			J. G. "		
Flynn Walter			Wells Emily S. A					
John R. L.								

Excerpt from Roll of White Voters Registered at Herndon Precinct, Dranesville Magisterial District... (Gen. Register of Voters)



Or, lists of new voters were stapled onto the page of the precinct the voters lived in, as with Falls Church (at left):

If supplies were scarce, the Clerk would have needed to make do with the materials on hand.

Two additional columns might assist researchers with questions about their ancestors' citizenship and military service. The first is a column provided for naturalization, including the year and the Virginia court in which citizenship was finalized.

The second column is for military service, either for the registrant or the son of a registrant, for either the United States or Confederate States during the Civil War, as well as those men who had fought in the recent Spanish-American War. This notation was likely made for the purposes of poll tax payments.

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The *General Register of Voters, 1902-1903* is currently being indexed and the index will be made available online soon for your perusal! As always, if you have questions about these or other records found at the Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center, please email CCRHistoricRecords@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-246-4168.

Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records has reopened *by appointment only*. To schedule an appointment, please call 703-246-4168. We can also assist with research requests over the phone!