

# BALCH COLUMN

Thomas Balch Library ■ 208 W. Market Street ■ Leesburg, Virginia 20176  
703-737-7195 ■ Fax: 703-737-7150 ■ Email: balchlib@leesburgva.gov



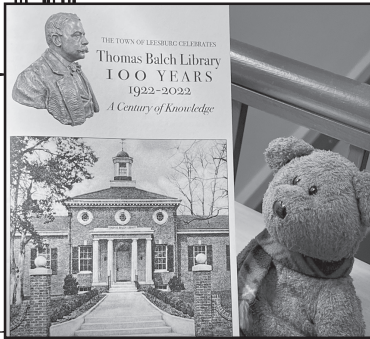
## News FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

The Library is celebrating its centenary! On 6 May 2022, the Town of Leesburg hosted a celebration for the Library in recognition of its 100 years of operation. A Proclamation was read by Mayor Kelly Burk at the ceremony and representatives



of the Town, Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission, Black History Committee, and Thomas Balch Library Endowment Foundation presented remarks on the history and future

of the Library. The ceremony included the dedication of a Lavender Twist Weeping Redbud planted on the grounds of the Library. To mark the centennial the Library has published a booklet, funded by the Thomas Balch Library Endowment Foundation, entitled *The Town of Leesburg Celebrates Thomas Balch Library 100 Years 1922-2022 A Century of Knowledge*. This illustrated booklet documents the Library's rich heritage as seen through eyes of longtime supporters and library users. Complimentary copies are available from the Library as well as commemorative bookmarks and wallet magnifiers. During the month of May the Library presented an exhibit on the life and times of Thomas Balch Library. This exhibit will be



repeated and shown at Loudoun Museum during March and April 2023 and during May of 2023 the Library will present an exhibit "Highlights of 100 Years of Collecting at Thomas Balch Library" in the Margaret Mercer Room of the Library.

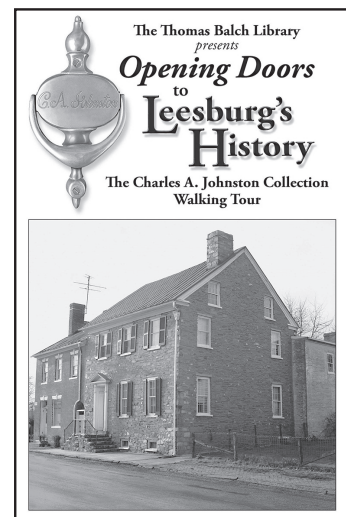
This year's Loudoun History Award ceremony will be held Sunday, 6 November 2022. The Thomas Balch Library Advisory commissioners will recognize both the 2021 and 2022 Loudoun History Award recipients.

**Mark your calendars!** After a pandemic hiatus of two years, we are planning our next genealogical seminar, sponsored by Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, for Wednesday, 22 March 2023. Fintan Mullen and Gillian Hunt will be here on an Ulster Historical Foundation Tour.

Our highly lauded tour guide *The Thomas Balch Library presents Opening Doors to Leesburg's History: The Charles A. Johnston Collection Walking Tour*, has been revised and republished. Complimentary copies are available at the Library.

Since my last letter, there has been a change in staffing. Joanna C. Lee, Senior Library Associate, while still on our roster, has accepted a full-time position at George Mason University. Norah Schneider, Library Genealogy Associate; Patricia Di Filippo, Senior Library Associate; and Isabella Meier, Library Associate, have all accepted full-time employment in private industry or academia. Hillary "Echo" Rue joined the Library in May as a Library Assistant and in August was promoted to Senior Library Associate.

We thank you for your ongoing interest in and support of the Library's mission. As always, we at the library look forward to welcoming you when next you are able to visit the Library.



Alexandra S. Gressitt, Library Director

Although most Thomas Balch Library programs are presented in person, pre-registration for all events, virtual or in-person, is required: <https://tinyurl.com/TBLEvents>. Be sure to check the library website for the latest event information.

## THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

**Friends of the Thomas Balch Library Annual Event  
Sunday, 11 September 2022, 4-7PM**

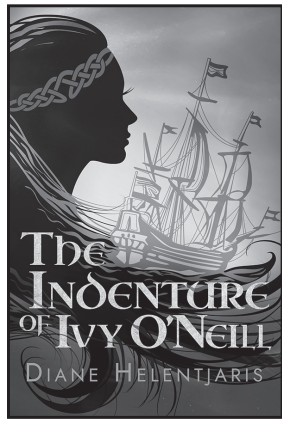


Friends of the Thomas Balch Library will hold its annual event on Sunday, September 11 at the residence of Steve and Julie Chapin—209 Cornwall Street Leesburg, Virginia, from 4 to 7 PM; you may visit Thomas Balch Library from 3 to 4PM. Light refreshments will be served. The cost is \$100 per person. Invitations to the event will be sent to members of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library. If you are not currently a member and want to attend, contact the Friends at [www.balchfriends.org](http://www.balchfriends.org).

## THE INDENTURE OF IVY O'NEILL

**Diane Helentjaris**

**Sunday, 25 September 2022, 2-4PM**



Stuck researching the women in your family tree? Would you like to know more about the lives of women in the past? Or other marginalized folks? Helentjaris will share innovative tips and tools from her experience as a writer. Learn how the lives of an Irish girl in the 1690s and a Wild West broncho-riding woman in 1913 are brought to life. Copies of her historical novel *The Indenture of Ivy O'Neill* will be available for purchase.

Diane Helentjaris is the author of the new historical fiction book set in late 1600s Ireland and Colonial

Maryland, *The Indenture of Ivy O'Neill*. The novel offers the fact-inspired story of a young girl, kidnapped, transported to America, and sold into servitude.

It has been nominated for the National Library Association's Alex Award. Helentjaris, a 2020 Iceland Writers' Retreat Alumni Award finalist, often writes for local magazines. Her writing is featured in the international anthology *Strife & Harmony* and in *Glimpses of Our World, a Bilingual Anthology of Greek American Poetry*. Her poetry chapbook *Diaspora* is centered on the impact of immigration. She received her BA cum laude in Interdisciplinary Humanities, her MD from Michigan State University, and her Master's in Public Health from the University of Michigan. She worked as a clinical physician and public health administrator before returning to her humanities roots. As a physician, she was elected national president of the American Medical Women's Association and for many years did advocacy work for women's health on their behalf at the national level.



## EXPLORING THE ELAINE E. THOMPSON COLLECTION

**Laura Christiansen and Meghan Glasbrenner  
Sunday, 2 October 2022, 2-4PM**



Join Laura Christiansen, Curator of Manuscripts and Archives, and Meghan Glasbrenner, Project Archivist, to explore the papers of educator, historian, and author Elaine Eppie Thompson. Featuring a guided tour through three recently processed collections donated by Thompson's family: Elaine E. Thompson Collection (M0134), Loudoun County Emancipation Association, 1890-2015 (M0145), Thompson Funeral Program and Memorial Collection 1900-2015, (M0146), this program will focus on the photographs and visual materials collected by Thompson and her family. Thomas Balch Library is actively seeking assistance identifying unidentified people, places, and events in this extensive collection of photographic history. Come learn more about this remarkable resource and how you can help.

## LEESBURG TOUR

**James P. Roberts**

**Saturday, 15 October 2022, 9-12PM**

James Roberts, a native of Leesburg, former member of Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission, 2008 recipient of a Loudoun History Award, and recognized in 2011 by Loudoun Laurels, will lead a walking tour of Leesburg. The tour is an insider's commentary of local people, places, and points of interest both in and around Leesburg. Particular detail is paid to how Leesburg has grown and evolved through the years architecturally, economically, and racially. Factual, historical, and anecdotal information is intertwined and presented in storytelling fashion as only someone who lived through it and thoughtfully observed it, can do. This unique tour will leave from Thomas Balch Library parking lot at 9AM. Note: This tour requires good walking shoes.



### SEASON TICKET PROGRAM REGISTRATION

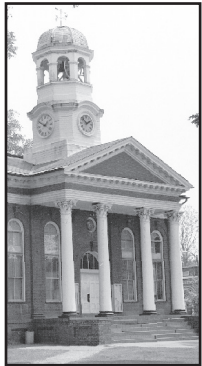
To reserve a seat in all of Thomas Balch Library's upcoming classes and programs at one time, sign up for a season ticket. Visit our event registration page (<https://tinyurl.com/TBLEvents>) and select "Season Ticket" in the drop-down box. Fill out the rest of the form with your contact information. Information about each program will be sent to your inbox when it is available.



## CLERK'S OFFICE TOUR, LOUDOUN COUNTY COURTHOUSE HISTORIC RECORDS

**Eric S. Larson**

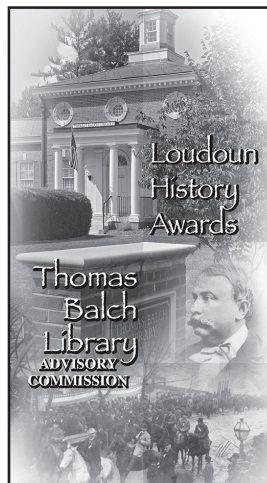
**Tuesday, 4 October 2022, 3-5PM**



Meet in the parking lot of Thomas Balch Library by 2:45PM. Eric S. Larson, Historic Records Manager for the Clerk of the Circuit Court, will lead a tour of the Clerk's Office and the Historic Court Building. He will discuss the extent of Loudoun County's records holdings, where to look for records of births, deaths, marriages, and deeds, and how to use these records in research. You will need to pass through security so the group will leave the library promptly at 2:45PM.

Reminder: Cell phones and cameras are not allowed in the Court House.

## LOUDOUN HISTORY AWARDS Sunday, 6 November 2022, 2-4PM



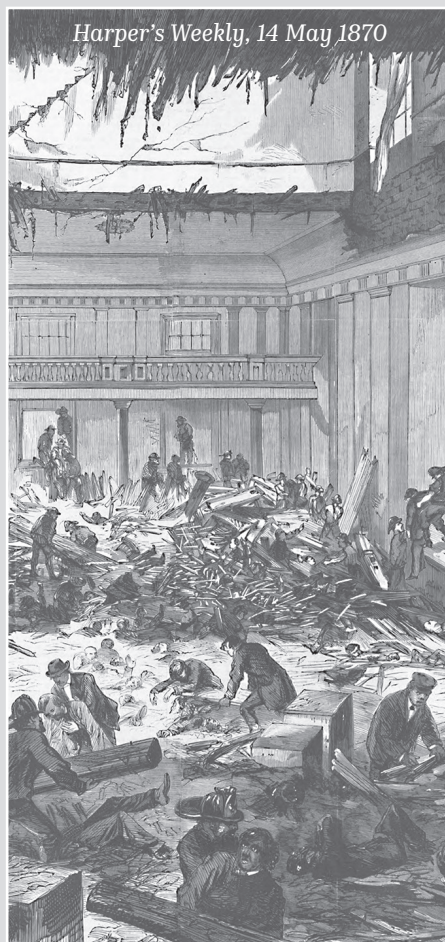
Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commissioners will present the twenty-ninth and thirtieth annual Loudoun History Awards on Sunday, 6 November 2022. This event honors individuals who have made significant contributions to preserving Loudoun's past through collection of county documents and memorabilia, preservation of historic landmarks, visual arts, writing, and long-time commitment to local history organizations. For a brochure or information on nominating individuals, contact the Library Director at 703/737-7195.

## A YEAR OF FRIGHTFUL CALAMITIES: DISASTERS AND RECONSTRUCTION IN RICHMOND, 1870

**Alyssa Fahringer**

**Sunday, 23 October 2022, 2-4PM**

In 1870, Richmond, former capital of the Confederacy, endured three disasters. On 27 April, over sixty people died when the Capitol courtroom gallery and floor collapsed; the James River flooded on 30 September, resulting in thousands of dollars of damage; and eight people perished when Spotswood Hotel caught fire 25 December. This presentation will discuss how Richmonders experienced, responded to, and remembered the 1870 calamities, as well as how the disasters affected a community in a time of extreme political and racial upheaval. The five years following the end of the Civil War represented a time of hope for many Black Richmonders, while some white Richmonders viewed Radical Reconstruction as a threat to white supremacy. Richmonders' responses to the disasters were shaped by the political and racial contexts in which they occurred: despite significant tensions between white and Black Richmonders, journalists perpetuated a false narrative of racial harmony between the two communities; after the flood decimated the primarily Black neighborhood of Rocketts, few reporters detailed their suffering; and the Spotswood Hotel fire victims received less laudatory press



coverage because they were poorer and less socially prominent than the Capitol disaster dead. Northerners provided aid to their former enemies in the wake of the Capitol disaster, prefiguring eventual reconciliation between the North and South. Lost Cause adherents later co-opted the Capitol disaster and argued that it exemplified the failure of Reconstruction.

Alyssa Toby Fahringer has a PhD in American history with minor fields in digital humanities and public history from George Mason University. She holds a faculty appointment as the Digital Scholarship Consultant at George Mason University Libraries' Digital Scholarship Center. In this role Alyssa collaborates with students and faculty on digital humanities-based methods and projects. She teaches classroom instruction sessions, leads workshops, and provides consultations to researchers who are engaging in digital scholarship. Alyssa is affiliated with the Center for Mason Legacies, an interdisciplinary and collaborative research center established by the University Libraries and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences whose mission is to preserve and examine the legacy of George Mason IV (1725-1792), his ancestors and heirs, and the people he enslaved.



## THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Thomas Balch Library launched a YouTube channel in 2021 where you will find video content of our workshops, author talks, informative short pop-up programs, and Wallace the Bear's video debut. To find the library's channel online go to <https://tinyurl.com/VideoTBL> or search for "Thomas Balch Library" in the YouTube search bar. You may subscribe to our channel to access new content as it becomes available.

## DARK QUEEN OF DONEGAL

Mary Pat Ferron Canes

Sunday, 4 December 2022, 2-4PM



*Dark Queen of Donegal*, historical fiction, tells the compelling story of Ineen Dubh, Celtic warrior queen, and her son Red Hugh, legendary prince of Donegal. It captures the spirit of sixteenth century England as Elizabeth sought to assert her power over Ireland and Scotland.

Mary Pat Ferron Canes heard tales of Donegal, Ireland, while in kindergarten from her grandmother, and became intrigued by her Irish heritage. She holds a graduate degree in anthropology from George Washington University where she focused her research on Irish heritage and Gaelic men and women and an undergraduate degree from St. Catherine University. While an adjunct faculty member at Rochester Institute of Technology, Canes continued researching and writing on Irish history. She has written a series of booklets, poems, and articles which have appeared in numerous

journals and is a member of the National League of American Pen Women. Raised in the Midwest, she has lived most of her life in Virginia. *Dark Queen of Donegal* will be available for purchase at the event.

## FRIENDS OF THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY

### ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, 11 December 2022, 2-4PM

(Snow date Sunday, 8 January 2023)

Friends of the Thomas Balch Library will hold its 26th Annual Meeting and Election of Officers on Sunday, 11 December 2022, at Thomas Balch Library beginning at 2 PM. This year's program will be "Oral History Series: Interview with Wynne Saffer" presented by Patty Renner-Rogers, Sarah Huntington, and Rich Gillespie.



## NEWS ABOUT COLLECTIONS AND EXHIBITS

**Exhibit featuring Elaine E. Thompson, educator and Loudoun County Historian will be on display September 2022**

Thomas Balch Library acquired the papers of Elaine Eppie Thompson, noted Loudoun County historian and educator, shortly after she passed away on October 9, 2016. In February 2022, Loudoun County School Board members voted unanimously to name a new elementary school in her honor. To celebrate the dedication and start of the first full new school year at Elaine E. Thompson Elementary School, Thomas Balch Library will present an exhibit in September to honor Thompson and culminate the processing of three important collections related to her life and work. Thompson, a native of Purcellville, was a leading chronicler of Loudoun's African American community. With the Black History Committee of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Thompson published *In the Watchfires: The Loudoun County Emancipation Association, 1890-1971*, documenting the history of the Loudoun County Emancipation Association. She procured a Virginia historical highway marker for the Emancipation Grounds in Purcellville, Virginia, won multiple local NAACP awards, and was recognized by the Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission with a Loudoun History Award in 1998.

The exhibit will highlight materials from three new collections donated by Thompson and her family:

- Elaine E. Thompson Collection (M0134)
- Loudoun County Emancipation Association, 1896 - 2015 (M0145)
- Thompson Funeral Program and Memorial Collection 1900-2015, (M0146)

Processing of these materials was made possible through grant funds from The Clarence L. Robey Charitable Trust, The Mildred T. Nichols Trust, and the Loudoun Library Foundation. Thompson made it her life goal to see the history of African Americans in Northern Virginia recognized and documented. Now available to researchers, these extensive collections not only document Thompson's career and contributions to African American and local history, but also provide valuable materials for future researchers for generations to come.

## Exhibits 2022-2023

### MARGARET MERCER ROOM

#### September 2022:

Thomas Balch Library  
Elaine Thompson Collections

#### October 2022:

Morven Park

#### November 2022:

Loudoun County Public Schools  
in conjunction with the Douglass High  
School Commemorative Committee  
History of Douglass High School

#### December 2022:

Donna Bohanon  
The 1883 Mass Meeting Delegation

#### January 2023:

Temple Hall

Curated by Paul McCray for  
Northern Virginia Parks

#### February 2023:

Black History Committee

#### March-April 2023:

History of Loudoun Museum

Lori Wysong

#### May 2023:

Highlights of 100 Years of Collecting at  
Thomas Balch Library

#### June 2023:

Loudoun County Clerk of the Circuit  
Court, Historic Records Division

#### July-August 2023:

John Creamer

Loudoun County Civil War Artifacts

#### September 2023:

Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area  
Association

#### October 2023:

Loudoun County Public Schools  
Student Artwork

#### November 2023:

Thomas Balch Library, Selections from  
the Rust Archives

#### December 2023:

TBD



### LOWER-LEVEL MEETING ROOM

#### July-September 2022

"Hooked Rugs: Traditional and  
Contemporary" Goose Creek Ruggers

#### October-December 2022:

Friends of Leesburg Public Arts

#### January-March 2023:

Photography - Heather Lynn Overheu

#### April-June 2023:

Gertrude Evans

#### July-September 2023:

Mike and Anne Marie Chirieleison

#### October-December 2023:

Sabina Puppo Art



# THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY CLASSES

# 2022-2023

## RESEARCHING HISTORY AND GENEALOGY AT THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY

Although most Thomas Balch Library classes are presented in person pre-registration for all events, virtual or in-person, is required: <https://tinyurl.com/TBLEvents>. Be sure to check the library website for the latest event information

### PRESERVATION OF HOME ARCHIVES

**Thursday, 6 October 2022, 10AM**

**Gabrielle Sanchez**, Contract Archivist and former Library Reference Associate at Thomas Balch Library, will introduce participants to the basics of preservation and discuss the best ways to house and protect personal archives. Topics will include proper ways to handle letters, books, photographs, and other media; common conservation needs; threats to paper and electronic media; and the dangers of non-archival storage products.

### HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

**Thursday, 3 November 2022, 10AM**

Curious about the history of photography? Join Curator **Laura E. Christiansen** to explore the history and technology of photographic media from daguerreotypes to digital images. This class will focus on tips and tricks for identification and dating of photographs.

### CARE AND PRESERVATION OF PHOTOGRAPHS

**Thursday, 1 December 2022, 10AM**

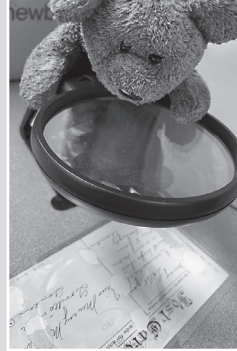
**Laura E. Christiansen**, Curator of Manuscripts and Archives, will guide participants through a practical approach to proper handling, care, and long-term preservation of your photograph collections. Best practices for safely sharing and displaying photographs will be included.

### AFRICAN AMERICAN GENEALOGY

**Thursday, 2 February 2023, 10AM**

**Lori Kimball**, a member of the Black History Committee of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, co-researcher of the Enslaved Community of President James Monroe, and researcher of the enslaved community at Oatlands, will discuss resources available at Thomas Balch Library and the Loudoun County Courthouse and use of online resources. **Steve Hammond**, a 7th generation member of the Syphax family of Washington, DC, a line moved by force to New Orleans and then by choice to Denver, will share his efforts to make

the field more relatable and relevant to the public at large, particularly as interest in and access to DNA/ancestry/genealogy data becomes more available.



### DIGITAL HISTORY

**Thursday, 2 March 2023, 10AM:**  
**Virtual only; recorded for posting to YouTube**

What new digital tools are available to help access and understand historic documents and data? **Stephanie Seal Walters, PhD**, former Senior Library Associate at Thomas Balch Library, will introduce the digital side of historical research and explore different digital humanities' methodologies that are accessible and friendly to all users. Dr. Walters taught digital humanities courses at both George Mason University and the University of Southern Mississippi. She currently works in Education Technology as a Customer Enablement Manager at SchoolStatus.

### RESEARCHING COURT RECORDS

**Thursday, 6 April 2023, 10AM**

**Jeanette Irby**, Loudoun County Circuit Court Judge and former Leesburg Town Attorney will discuss how to use court records and other resources for data that are frequently overlooked in genealogical and historical research. Irby will demonstrate how to mine court records for clues that can be used to collect information for genealogical research. Examples of these records include real estate records, chancery suits, estates, and indexes. Jeanette Irby has researched land records dating from the 1700s and participated in genealogical seminars sponsored by the Warrenton Court House Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution of which she is past Regent. Irby currently serves as secretary of District VI of the Virginia DAR Chapters. She holds a BS from

Central Michigan University and a JD from Thomas Cooley Law School in Lansing, MI.

### PRESERVING HISTORIC TEXTILES

**Thursday, 4 May 2023, 10AM**

**Lori Wysong, Loudoun Museum**

### RESEARCHING USING NORTHERN NECK LAND GRANTS

**Thursday, 1 June 2023, 10AM**

Life-long Loudoun resident **Wynne Saffer** will discuss the history of land grants of the Northern Neck Proprietary and how to locate the grants using resources available at Thomas Balch Library. Saffer has completed numerous local research projects, mapped the county by land ownership in 1860, and written several books about Loudoun's history, including *Loudoun Votes 1867-1966*, *A Civil War Legacy* and *Mount Zion Cemetery, Aldie, Virginia*. Saffer is a recipient of the Thomas Balch Library's Loudoun History Award.

### USING DNA IN GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

**Thursday, 3 August 2023, 10AM**  
**Shannon Bennett-Combs**

### PRESERVATION OF HOME ARCHIVES

**Thursday, 5 October 2023, 10AM**

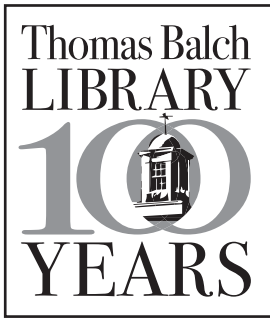
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### HISTORICAL FINANCES

**Thursday, 2 November 2023, 10AM**  
**Alison Herring**

### LOCATING PLACES

**Thursday, 7 December 2023, 10AM**  
**Wynne Saffer**

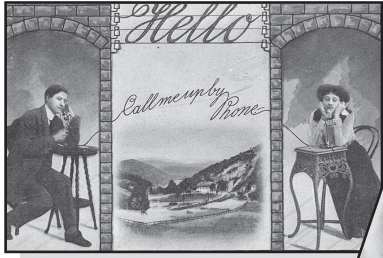


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## *Fall 2022 & Winter/Spring 2023 Lectures and Events*

# Other Activities

## AT THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY

**Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission** sponsors the annual Loudoun History Awards. It meets at the library the second Wednesday of each month at 7PM. The public is always welcome. Visit their webpage at: <https://tinyurl.com/e9vac4pf>

**Thomas Balch Library Endowment Foundation** a 501c3 established in 2015 to receive, maintain, and administer assets in perpetuity to support programs and outreach services of the Thomas Balch Library. It meets the third Tuesday of alternate months commencing January. Visit their webpage at: <https://tinyurl.com/xu55dx6w>

**Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc.**, a 501c3 organized to provide support for Thomas Balch Library, meets at the library every other month, sponsors an annual fundraiser, and publishes a quarterly newsletter The Chronicle. For more information, visit [www.balchfriends.org](http://www.balchfriends.org) or call 540/579-2825.

**Loudoun County Civil War Round Table** meets the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30PM except January and February. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in Loudoun County's history during the American Civil War. Guests are welcome to attend two meetings without charge. Annual family dues are \$25. For further information visit: <http://lccwrt.wordpress.com>

**The Virginia Forum** – The Virginia Forum will hold its 2023 annual conference, in-person, at Shepherd University in Shepherdstown, WV, 16-18 March 2023. The Virginia Forum, an interdisciplinary conference, offers an opportunity for scholars, teachers, writers, museum curators, historic site interpreters, archivists, librarians, and all those interested in Virginia history and culture to share their knowledge, research, and experiences. Additional information, including previous conference programs, is available online at [www.virginiaforum.org](http://www.virginiaforum.org).

**Black History Committee of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc.**, meets at the library the first Saturday of every month at 10AM. The public is always welcome. For more information, visit [www.balchfriends.org](http://www.balchfriends.org) or call 540/579-2825.

### SAVE THE DATE Genealogical Seminar

#### The Ulster Historical Foundation Tour Wednesday, 22 March 2023, 10 AM-4 PM

Fintan Mullan and Gillian Hunt

This event is sponsored by Friends of the Thomas Balch Library  
Cost: members \$30; nonmembers \$40;  
at the door \$60

Join experts Fintan Mullan and Gillian Hunt from the Ulster Historical Foundation for a full day of learning how to get the most out of Irish resources and records. Whether you are just beginning your Irish research or have been at it for years, you won't want to miss this workshop.

**Attendance is limited,  
advance registration is required.**