



News Release

CLV/#151/11
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: November 18, 2011
Contact: Cathy L. Vollbrecht
Phone: (540) 658-4894



STAFFORD COUNTY COURT LEDGER TAKEN DURING CIVIL WAR COMES HOME TO STAFFORD

Stafford, VA – An event to celebrate the return to Stafford of a 220-year-old Stafford court ledger by a public library in New Jersey will be held on December 1, 2011 at 11:00 a.m. at the Stafford County Courthouse, 1300 Courthouse Road. The ledger – an “order book” transcribed in 1791 that describes the activities of the Stafford County Court from 1749 through 1758 – is believed to have been removed from the Stafford Courthouse by a Union soldier during the Civil War.

“To get back something of such historical importance nearly 150 years after it was taken is incredible,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Mark Dudenhefer. “It will be of great value to anyone interested in Stafford’s and Virginia’s colonial and legal history and we’re thrilled to have it back.”

Clerk of the Circuit Court Barbara Decatur agreed. “This is the first time I can remember that such a unique historical document is being returned to Stafford,” she said. “I can only imagine the stories behind the entries in the ledger, stories that are now part of Stafford County’s history, and that we can pass down to future generations.”

Based on a hand-written note on the inside cover of the ledger, it appears to have been removed from the Stafford Courthouse by Capt. W.A. Treadway of the 4th New York Infantry. It was handed down several times over the years before being donated to the Hudson County, N.J., Historical Society, whose holdings – including the ledger – were eventually incorporated into the collection of the Jersey City Free Public Library’s New Jersey Room.

John Beekman, the New Jersey Room’s assistant manager, recognized that the book was inconsistent with the library’s collection policy and contacted the Library of Virginia to arrange for its return. In October, Carl Childs of the Library of Virginia’s Local Records Branch formally accepted the book on behalf of Barbara Decatur, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Stafford County, and Librarian of Virginia and Virginia State Archivist Sandra G. Treadway, in a ceremony held at the Jersey City Free Public Library.

The volume is being scanned, microfilmed and conserved by archivists at the Library of Virginia, where it will remain. Scanned images of the ledger will be presented to the Stafford County Circuit Court when they are completed.

###