

# X BEACON

STATEWIDE ARCHIVING EFFORT

## SCANNING THE WAR

*Residents turn up at library with all sorts of paper documents for the Civil War 150 Legacy Project*

By Irene Bowers  
Correspondent

### BAYSIDE

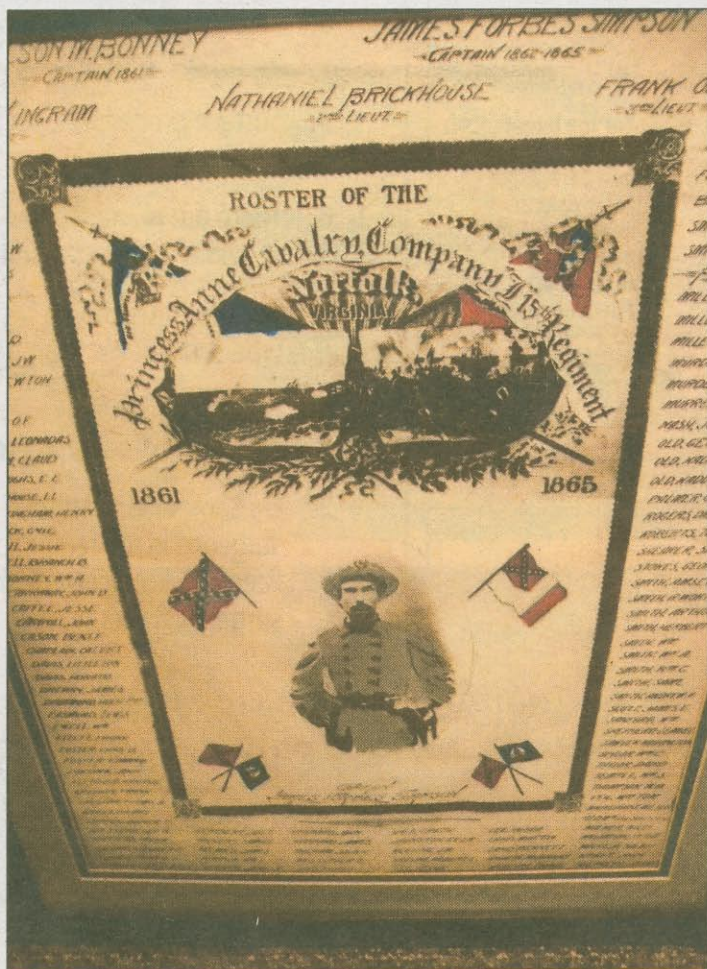
Customers received the white-glove treatment at Meyera E. Oberndorf Central Library when they participated in the first of a statewide effort to archive Civil War memorabilia.

Funded by the Library of Virginia and The Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission, the Civil War 150 Legacy Project kicked off its campaign in Virginia Beach on Sept. 18.

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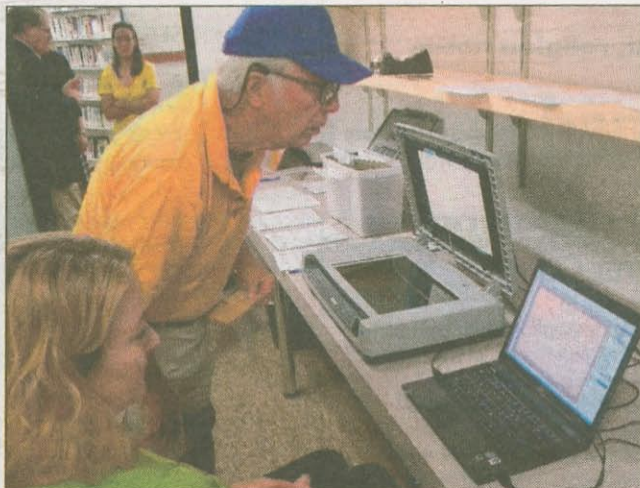


Library of Virginia's Lyn Hart, left, and Virginia Beach resident Robert Rogers take a close look at a Confederate service record containing the name of Rogers' great-uncle James Langhorne Tayloe.



IRENE BOWERS PHOTOS

A roster of the Princess Anne Cavalry Company, 15th Regiment from Norfolk, 1861-1865, awaits scanning. Capt. James Forbes Simpson is pictured at center.



**Fred Benham peers at the digitized version of his great-grandfather Gilbert Sackett Benham's draft notice in Hamden, Conn. Archivists like Renee Savit, left, can digitally repair some portions of damaged materials that are scanned.**



IRENE BOWERS PHOTOS

## CIVIL SCANS

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Library of Virginia Description Services Director Lyndon Hart said the 150th anniversary of the war prompted renewed efforts at collecting materials.

"Typically, there is a life span of about 150 years for

family papers, letters, diaries, photos, hand-drawn maps and military documents before they are lost," he said. "We are trying to digitally capture and preserve those original documents while we can."

Pilot programs in Danville and Winchester enabled state archivists to assess the project's feasibility. When the call went out to municipal libraries,

Central Library Manager Pat Cook was able to facilitate their earliest date.

"We didn't plan to be the inaugural event, but it's exciting it worked out that way," she said, keeping a watchful eye on the cardboard boxes of letters, framed paintings and daguerreotypes held in customers' hands.

Cook noted that the city's Central Library also main-

tains an archive and welcomes both physical and digitally scanned original documents and printed materials. "It is the best way to share and preserve our collective history," she said.

Project coordinator Renee Savits carefully handled each tissue thin doc-

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# CIVIL SCANS

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ument, placing it in the scanner for digitalization. Once back in Richmond, the archivists will digitally repair some of the damage done by time and temperature, as well as transcribe the spidery handwriting and uncommon spellings. White gloves are used for materials such as leather, which Savits said suffers from red rot.

Virginia Beach resident Dorothea Laughlin brought letters written to her great-great aunt, living in Troy, N.Y., from a Union soldier stationed in the South. Among his missives is a recounting of the battle between the Monitor and the Merrimac, which he witnessed from the shore.

"I just think it's fascinating to read a firsthand account of a historical event," Laughlin said. "I liked the idea that the letters would be online for historians and students to read. And, the handwriting is absolutely beautiful!"



IRENE BOWERS PHOTOS

**Ginny Cranford holds a family portrait, recently given to her husband, Page Cranford, that depicts his relative, Brevet-Major Henry Cranford, and bride Margaret Cranford. Henry served in the Army of the Shenandoah from 1861 to 1865, writing home detailed letters of battles to his beloved wife.**

Information on how to preserve precious family papers was distributed to all participants. Another scanning session

is planned at Central Library for April 2.

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## interested?

■ For information about the **Civil War 150 Legacy Project** or for a list of upcoming scan sites, visit [www.virginia.civilwar.org/legacy](http://www.virginia.civilwar.org/legacy).

■ For information on the **care of personal collections**, visit the Library of Congress site at [www.loc.gov/preserv/careothr.html](http://www.loc.gov/preserv/careothr.html).