

# COLLABORATION IN THE COURTHOUSE ARCHIVES

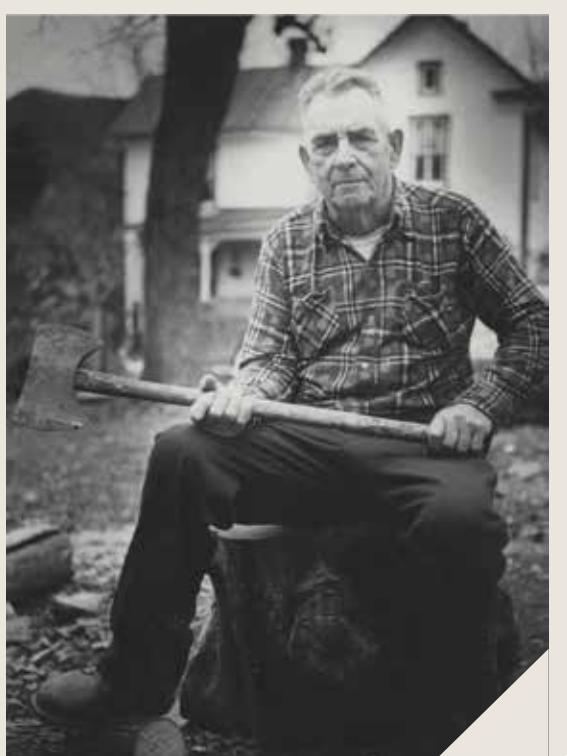
## BUILDING A DIGITAL ARCHIVE OF LEGAL RECORDS THAT ILLUMINATE LOCAL STORIES OF DISPLACEMENT

### The Vision

To promote and build a shared understanding of the past in an effort to foster an inclusive future and sense of place in Rockingham County, Virginia.

### The Mission

To serve as the foundation for a multi-year public history project that will preserve and make available select historical court records that document the diverse history of Rockingham County within the larger context of the Shenandoah Valley, the South, and the nation.



### Project Overview

Exploring Rockingham's Past (ERP) is an ongoing collaboration between JMU's History Department, JMU library staff, and the Circuit Court Clerk of Rockingham County. One year ago, a history graduate student began a summer internship in the Courthouse archives under the guidance of the Clerk and a history professor. Library staff provided space, equipment, and mentorship for what became an ambitious digitization project. The inaugural ERP collection consists of 6,207 digitized legal documents from the 1930s that reveal 364 stories surrounding Virginia's condemnation of private land within Rockingham County to create the Shenandoah National Park (SNP). These documents have been released into the public domain as keyword searchable and fully described PDFs. The project was unveiled at a large public event where the Clerk, SNP staff, descendants of displaced families, and JMU folks came together to announce the project, share the documents, and engage in some emotional truth and reconciliation.

### ERP BY THE NUMBERS

6207  
Legal documents scanned at 600 dpi

364  
Skyline Drive Condemnation cases

70+  
Participants at the community event



11  
Experts from JMU Libraries

3  
Epson flatbed scanners

2  
History professors

1  
Clerk of Court

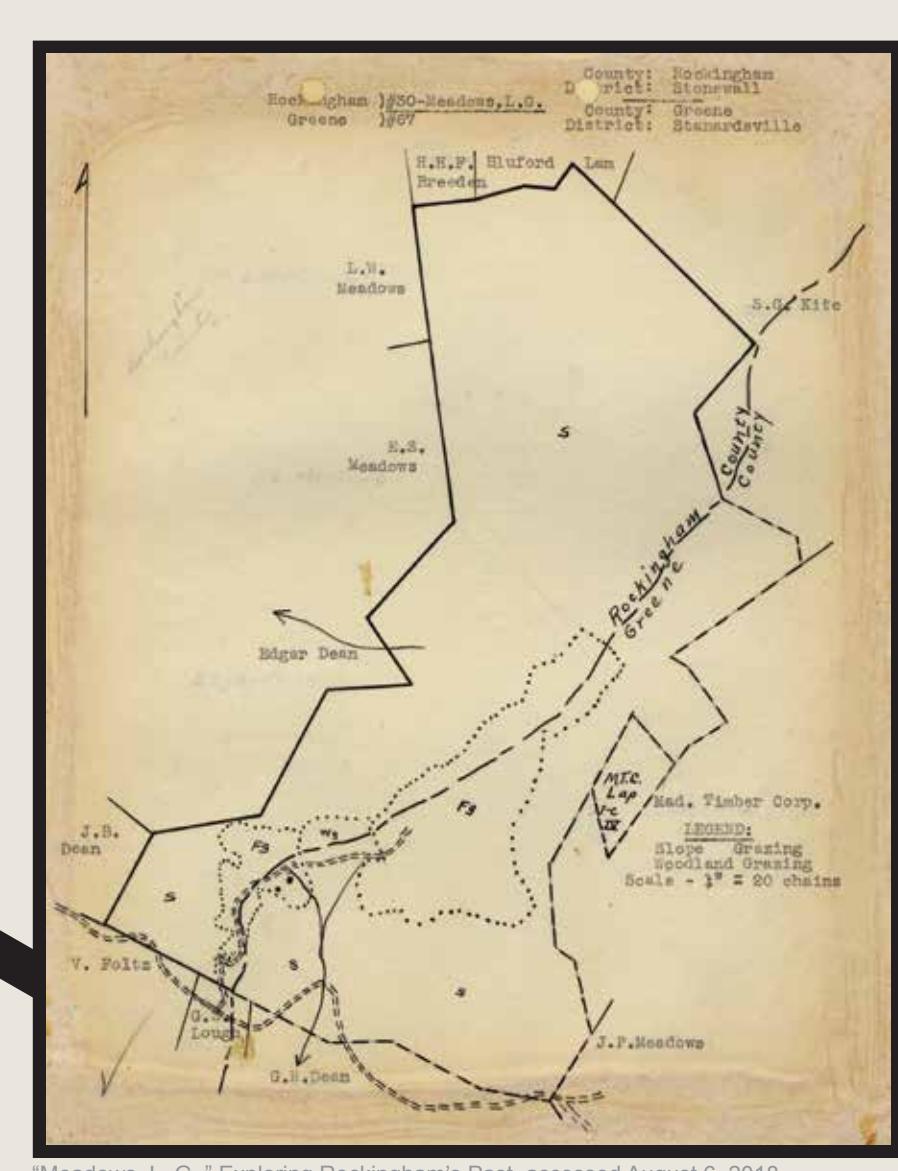
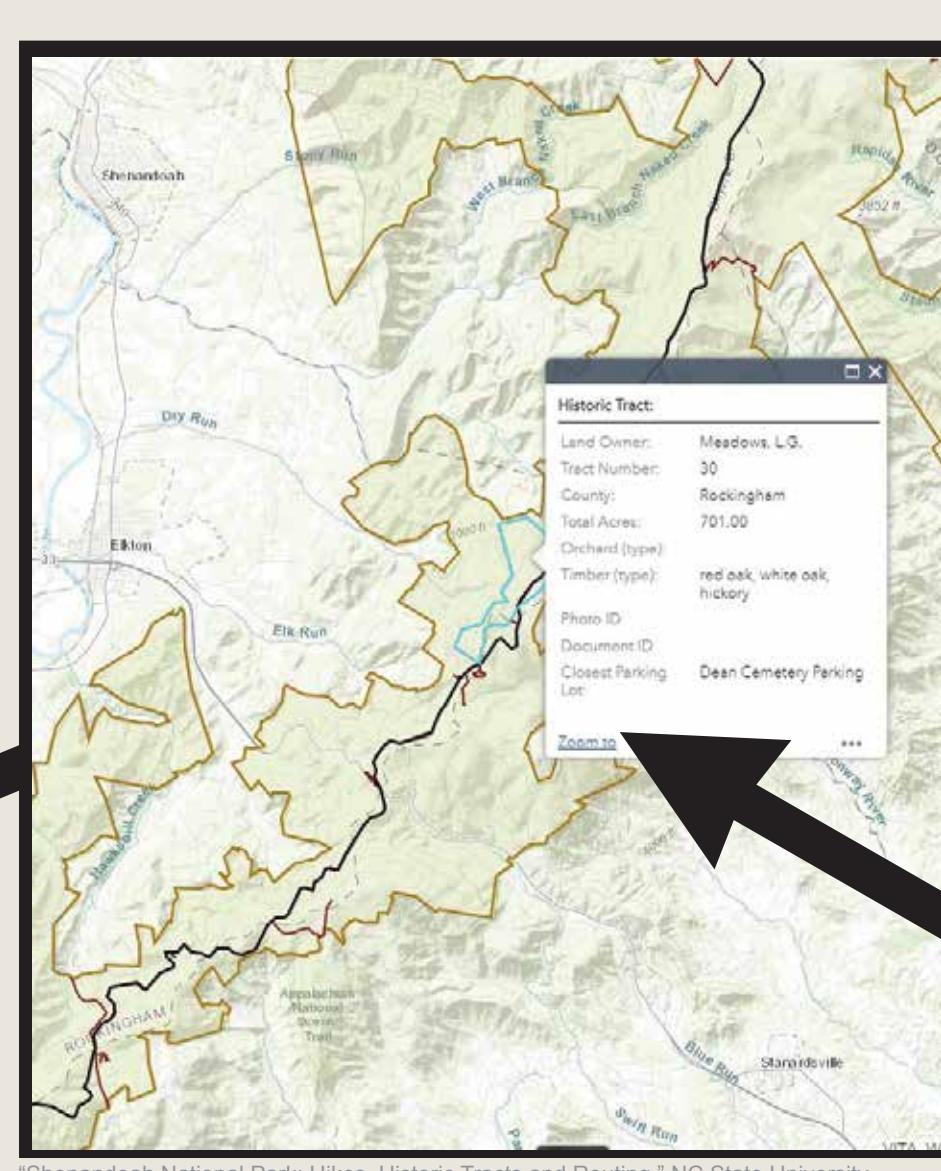
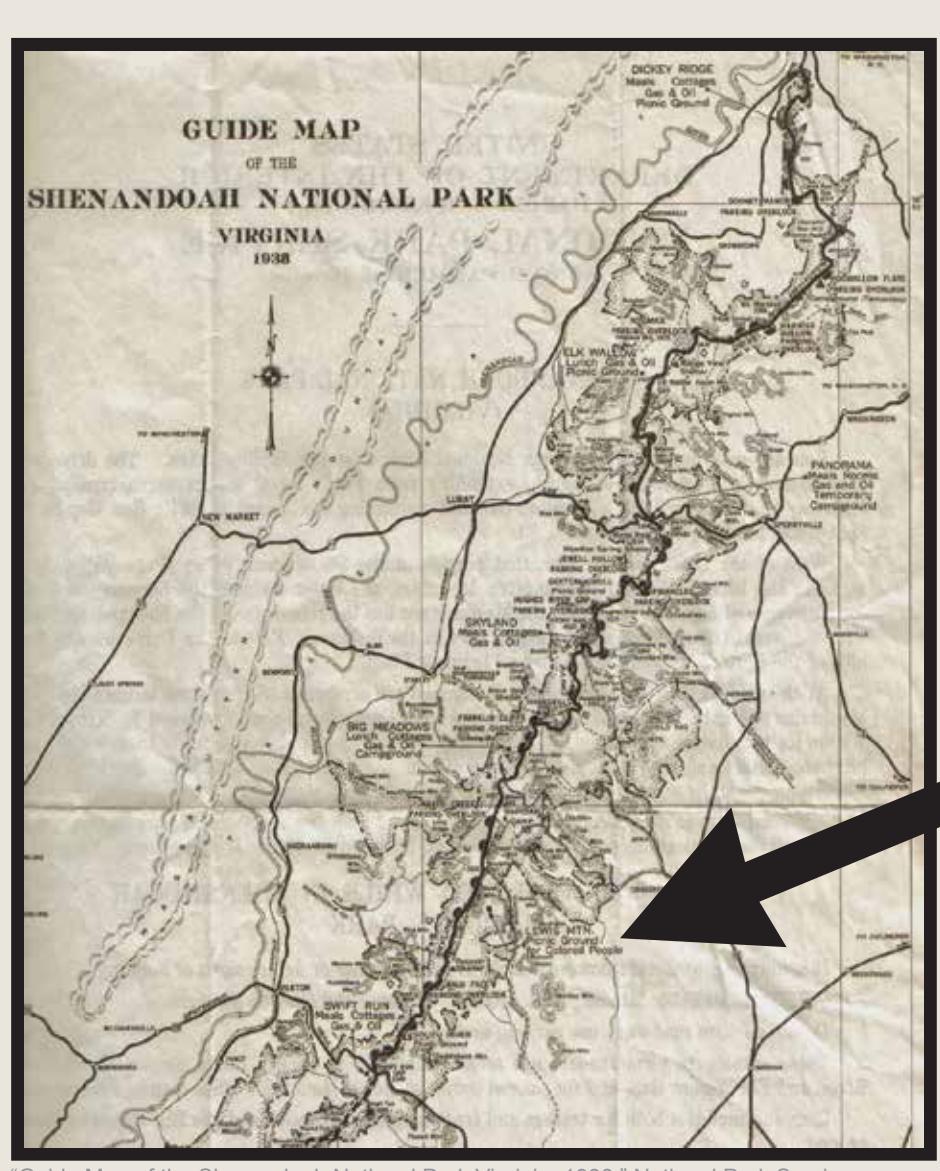
1  
Public History Intern

### State of Virginia v. L. G. Meadows

The State of Virginia initiated this case and many others like it against Lloyd Gruver Meadows, a person who owned land on what is now the Shenandoah National Park. In collaboration with the Federal Government, Virginia used condemnation to seize 52,561 acres of private property for public use without the owner consent.

The map on the far left is a guide to the Shenandoah National Park published in 1938. If you look carefully, you can see Dean Mountain (labeled "Dean Mtn."). Mr. Meadows owned tract number 30, a tract of 701 acres on Dean Mountain spanning Rockingham and Greene Counties. The land was used mostly for harvesting timber. The state valued this land at \$3,274, which was paid to Mr. Meadow's creditors.

Moving from left to right, the next map shows the boundary of tract number 30 on a current map published by NC State University. This map depicts the park as it is today along with parking lots, mile markers, hikes, roads, park boundaries, and historic tracts.



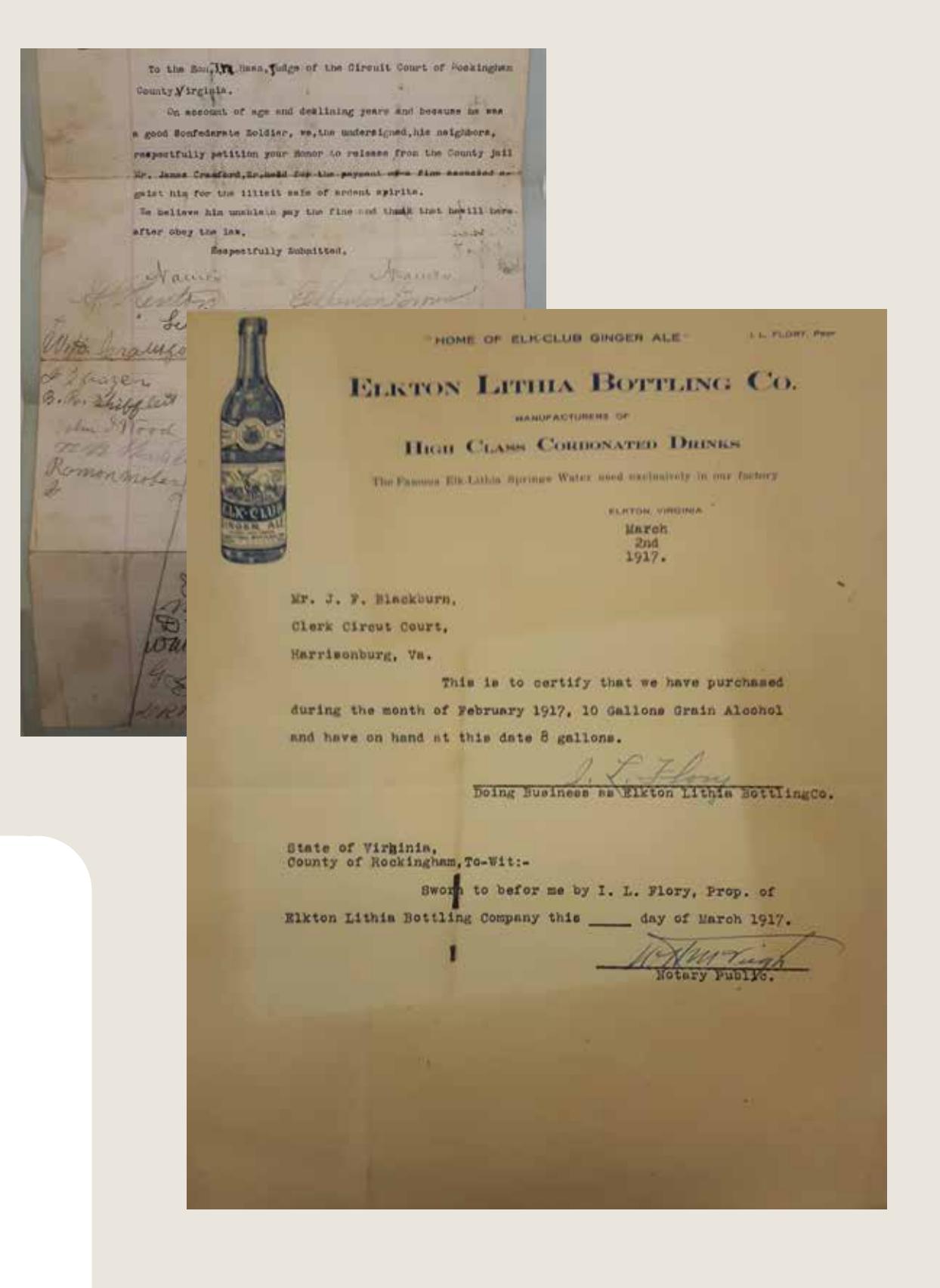
### Next Steps

Phase 2 of the ERP project is underway. A graduate student from JMU's Public History program is collecting and flat-filing Rockingham County Court records from the period of Prohibition. These records document infractions and licenses related to alcohol production, sales, and possession during the 1920s. This student will collaborate with a graduate student in the Writing and Technical Communication program to refine the interface and narrative for an interpretive online essay that draws on these records.

Three additional Virginia circuit court offices as well as the Shenandoah National Park want to add their SNP condemnation records to the collection. The ERP team is researching grant opportunities to support these collaborations.

### Acknowledgments:

Kevin Hegg extends his sincere gratitude to Art Pekun for organizing and designing this poster and to Kevin Borg, Chaz Haywood, and Tristan Nelson for their help writing the text that appears on this poster.



### Contact Information:



Chaz W. Haywood  
Clerk of Court  
Rockingham County, Virginia  
clerkchaz@rockinghamcountyva.gov



Kevin Borg  
Professor, Department of History  
James Madison University  
borgkl@jmu.edu



Kevin Hegg  
Director, Digital Projects  
JMU Libraries  
heggkj@jmu.edu

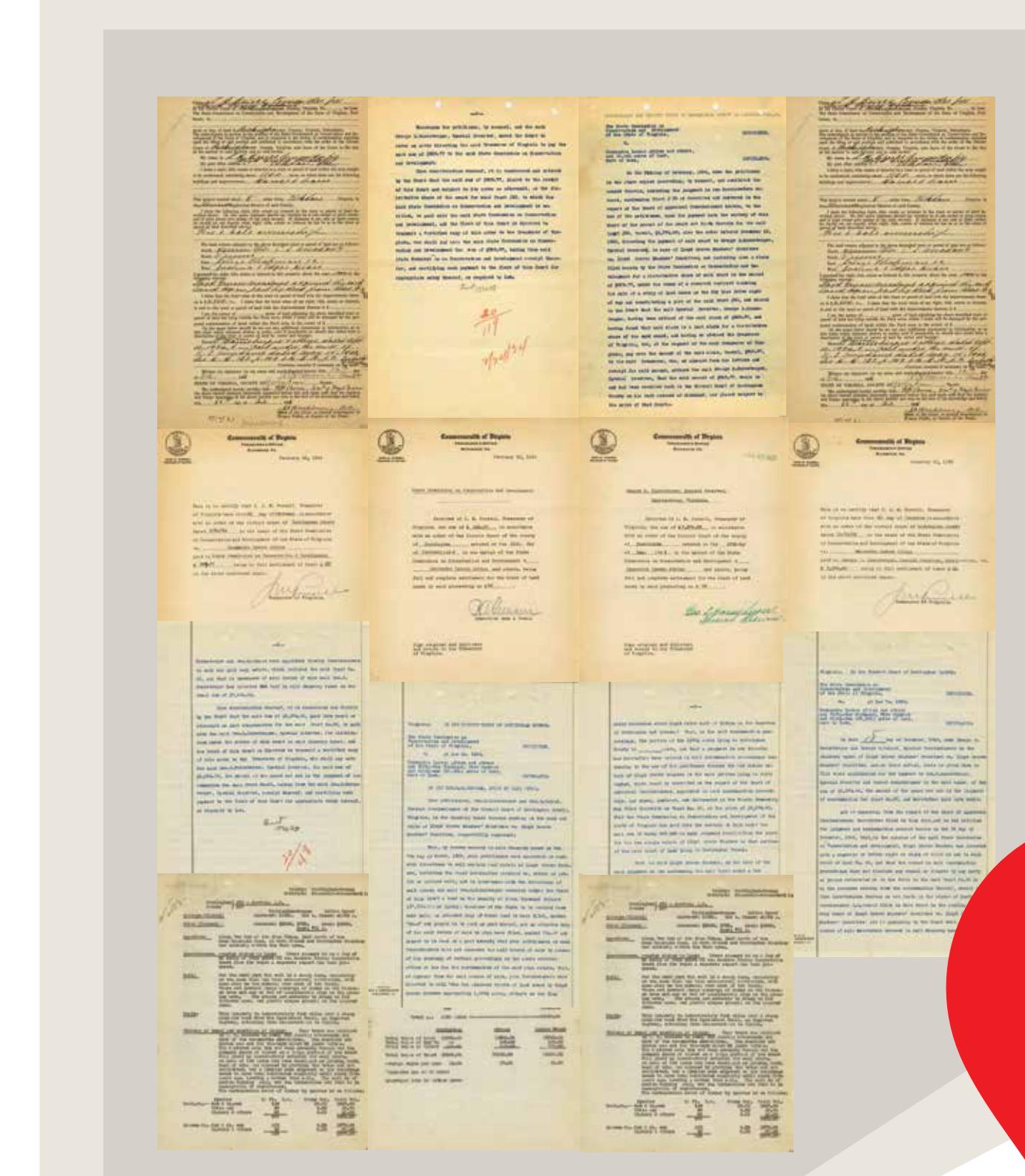
"Collaborating with James Madison University faculty, staff and students has opened up to the public records that have not seen the light of day in 100 years or more. As a JMU grad myself, I'm grateful to be able to provide real life experience to students as they work with records dates from 1778 till the present as we look to tell stories and preserve the records for future generations."

"ERP's strength is that it links graduate students and faculty with professional staff in JMU Libraries, the office of the Rockingham County Court, and the wider Harrisonburg and Rockingham County community. It emphasizes training graduate students in collaborative networking while creating spaces where academics, community stakeholders, and local government can work together to explore the past to inform the present."

### PROJECT SPONSORS



This project owes a great deal of gratitude for the continued support from the Town of Harrisonburg, Rockingham County, The Circuit Court of Rockingham County, James Madison University, and JMU Libraries.



ERP Site URL:  
<https://omeka.lib.jmu.edu/erp/>

### Community Engagement Event

Private Land to National Park:  
Digitizing SNP Legal Records from Rockingham County, 1925-1936.

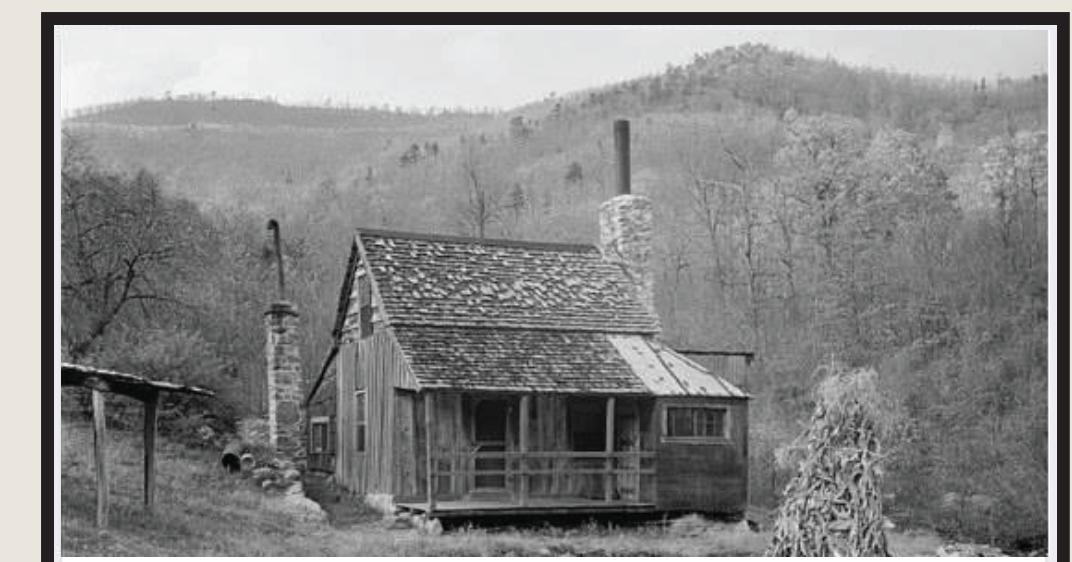
#### Speaker Panel:

Chaz Haywood  
Circuit Court Clerk of Rockingham County

Kristie Kendall  
Historic Preservation Manager at The Piedmont Environmental Council, Blue Ridge Family Descendant, Blue Ridge Heritage Project Board Member, Shenandoah National Park Author

Claire Comer  
Interpretive Specialist at Shenandoah National Park, Blue Ridge Family Descendant

Teresa Lam  
Rockingham County Blue Ridge Family Descendant, Blue Ridge Heritage Project Board Member



MAR 22	Private Land to National Park	Public - Hosted by Massanutton Regional Library
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Going		
Thursday, March 22 at 6:30 PM - 8 PM	about 4 months ago	
Massanutton Regional Library	174 S Main St, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22801	Show Map
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Invited by Paul Frankel		
Details		
Private Land to National Park: Digitizing Shenandoah National Park Legal Records from Rockingham County, 1925-1936		
Join Chaz Haywood and other local experts to discuss the creation of the Shenandoah National Park and its impact on local people as revealed by legal records housed in the Rockingham County Courthouse. This program is made possible through partnerships with Exploring Rockingham's Past ( <a href="https://omeka.lib.jmu.edu/erp/">https://omeka.lib.jmu.edu/erp/</a> ), JMU Libraries & Educational Technologies, and the Rockingham County Circuit Court.		

### An important note about the ERP collection

These court documents have a complicated past. They were taken soon after their creation to the other Virginia counties, who were also condemning land for the creation of the Shenandoah National Park, to serve as both precedent and an example for the court on the legal processes to follow. After returning from their multi-county tour, the documents largely remained at the Rockingham County Circuit Court for the next seventy-five years, rolled up in several scrolls and bound with a cloth string. In 2013 Chaz Haywood, Rockingham County Circuit Court Clerk, found the disorganized scrolls in boxes. Chaz then sent these scrolls to KOFILE Preservation, a records preservation company. They recommended several procedures including deacidification, mending and reinforcement of paper as necessary, resewing, and archival grade polyester encapsulation. The documents were returned to the courthouse archive with each page placed in an archival grade envelope. A Deputy Clerk and local genealogist reorganized and sorted the documents by case. These documents have been digitized and published on the ERP Omeka site. The organization and naming of the files match the arrangement provided by the Deputy Clerk and local genealogist. It is possible that some items within this collection are incomplete or incorrectly grouped.

### CONTRIBUTORS

Special thanks to Pake Davis and Liana Bayne for the long hours they endured in the basement of Carrier Library scanning the Skyline Drive documents.

Chaz Haywood, Circuit Court Clerk of Rockingham County  
Dr. Kevin Borg, History Internship Coordinator  
Tristan Nelson, JMU Student Intern  
Pake Davis, M.A. in U.S. History  
Liana Bayne, JMU Libraries Administrative Assistant  
Kevin Hegg, Director, Digital Projects, JMU Libraries  
Grace Barth, Head of Digital Collections  
Caroline Hamby, Digital Scholarships/Educational Technologist  
Lucas Wheeler, Innovation Services Specialist  
Kate Morris, Head of Special Collections  
Cheri J. Duncan, Director of Scholarly Resources & Discovery  
Lisa Hartman, Innovation Services Desk Manager  
Yasmeen Shorish, Data Services Coordinator  
Nicole Wilson, Senior Instructional Designer  
Eric Hansen, Learning Systems Administrator