



VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Story of Virginia

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Jennifer Guild, Senior Officer for Public Relations and Marketing
(804) 342-9665, jguild@vahistorical.org

Virginia Historical Society Slave Name Database Wins Award Free Online Resource Honored as Innovative Tool for Promoting Archival Materials

Richmond, VA—At the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC) meeting in Richmond October 25-27, 2012, the Virginia Historical Society (VHS) was recognized for *Unknown No Longer: A Database of Virginia Slave Names*. The Conference's Arline Custer Memorial Award Committee presented the VHS with the 2012 C. Herbert Finch Online Publication Award, which included a \$250 gift, for its work on the slave name database.

“Such recognition from our peers is particularly gratifying when many other institutions and organizations are developing useful and innovative tools for online researchers as well, against which the *Unknown No Longer* database has now been successfully measured,” E. Lee Shepard, VHS vice president for collections and Sallie and William B. Thalhimer III Senior Archivist, said.

In September 2011, the VHS launched *Unknown No Longer: A Database of Virginia Slave Names* with more than 1,500 names of enslaved African Americans gleaned from manuscripts in the society's collection. The free online resource currently includes more than 10,000 names and 1,400+ digital images of documents from which the information was extracted. As much information as is available—name, gender, age, occupation, relatives, and plantation location—is added to the database.

The creation of *Unknown No Longer* was made possible by a \$100,000 grant from Dominion Resources, awarded to the VHS in January 2011. VHS archivists review material in the society's collection and add names and documents to the keyword-searchable database every week.

MARAC, created in 1972, is a volunteer, regional consortium of archivists who live and work in the District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Virginia.

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Post Office Box 7311
Richmond, Virginia 23221
www.vahistorical.org



The C. Herbert Finch Online Publication Award honors online publications, including virtual exhibitions, websites, and web pages, devoted to the promotion and use of archival materials that were created by individuals or institutions in the MARAC region. The annual award was established in 2006 to honor C. Herbert Finch, former Assistant Director of Cornell University Libraries, who passed away in April 2005.

“We have been particularly encouraged by the public’s response to this new research tool,” said VHS President and CEO Dr. Paul Levensood. “With comments such as ‘a fantastic resource for people looking to find some evidence of their roots,’ ‘just wanted to say how impressed I am with this website,’ and ‘I’ve sat here and cried reading these letters, bill of sale, etc. Thank you for this site because these beautiful individuals will never be forgotten!’ it is a reminder about how important it is for African American resources in the VHS collection to be available to researchers across the globe free of charge. We are eternally grateful to Dominion for helping us make that happen.”

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For more than 180 years, the **Virginia Historical Society** (VHS) has been connecting people to America’s past through the unparalleled story of Virginia. The VHS—a history museum and research library—features award-winning exhibitions that are entertaining and educational for visitors of all ages. The Society is the only museum with all of Virginia’s history under one roof—all centuries, all regions, and all topics are covered. Although designated the Official State Historical Society, the VHS is a privately funded non-profit organization that relies on contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations to sustain its operations. The VHS is located at 428 North Boulevard in Richmond’s Museum District. Admission is free. Museum hours are Monday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m.–5 p.m. Library hours are Monday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. For more information, call (804) 358-4901, visit www.vahistorical.org, or find the VHS on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).