

George K. Fox, Jr.:
Faithful Guardian Of Loudoun County's
Court Records During The Civil War

Brenda S. Butler

The Fox Family Home, South King Street, Leesburg, Virginia

It was early December in 1872. Light snow accompanied the bitter cold of winter. George K. Fox, Jr., a third generation resident of the town of Leesburg, lay in his bed. He'd taken to his bed several days ago and not left it since. He was gravely ill. His wife of 18 years, Annie Littleton Fox, was making every effort to nurse him through a serious bout with typhoid fever. A devout woman, Annie frequently prayed that she, their four daughters, friends and relatives also would not be afflicted with the dreaded disease. But, most of her prayers were for George. He was 40 years old. Was he strong enough to survive the high fever, headache, stomach pains and rash?

Dr. Edwards had stopped by earlier in the day. He had seen his share of typhoid cases, and he could not in good conscience offer Annie

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false hope that George would recover. The spiking fever typically left a patient too weak to take nourishment and the victim usually progressed to a state of delirium. Dr. Edwards knew that the critically ill man lying on the bed before him would probably not live to see Christmas.

As the fits of fever came and went, there were periods when George was still cognizant of his earthly station. During lucid moments, he found himself reflecting on the events that had transpired during his forty years, both the happy and the sad times. If asked, George would have stated emphatically that he had a wonderful family, career and life. But these words were unspoken. He knew that he was edging closer to Death's door. But he was sure that he had a little time left. George wasn't ready to go just yet. Perhaps the ebb and flow of recollections was a natural part of the dying process? He decided not to fight it. For the next few days, the moments in his life would continue to float by like a parade that occasionally broke ranks. The best moments were interwoven with the bittersweet. His life was passing him by, and what a life it had been!

As his feverish mind wandered aimlessly, George tried to recall significant and precious moments that were his alone. He thought of his friend, John D. Alexander, and how they had journeyed together to Campbell County in 1862, taking wagons full of Loudoun court records with them to safety. George remembered how John continued to support him while he remained in Campbell County during the Civil War. He recalled the awesome responsibility Asa Rogers, the presiding Justice for the Loudoun County Court, placed on his shoulders when he ordered then twenty-eight year old George, to "take the court records to a place of safe keeping."¹

Justice Roger's directive was far easier said than done. Sixty percent of the Civil War would be fought on Virginia soil, —in the case of Loudoun County, on Virginia red clay. Between 1861 and 1865, it would be a rare occasion when a battle or skirmish did not take place somewhere in the Old Dominion on any given day.

However, George knew the power of a court order. He first ran for the office of Clerk of the County Court in the election of 1858. He won the election and became the official guardian of the Loudoun

County Court records. George was proud of his profession and dedicated to his calling. He was determined to prove that he was worthy of the trust Loudoun citizens had bestowed upon him as their Clerk.

Still, when the court mandated the removal of the records in the May 14, 1861, order George's world was turned upside down. Many soldiers and their families would have understood his feelings at that time. Few would witness the difficult scene that unfolded several months later, as George packed the court records in wagons, along with a few personal items, then said goodbye to his pregnant wife, Annie, and two small daughters, ages five and two. Thank goodness for friends and family. He would always be grateful for the support and encouragement of those who loved him.

It's a strange thing how a man cannot remember his earliest moments on this earth. George Kilgore Fox, Jr., was born on August 14, 1832, in Loudoun County, Virginia. He was the firstborn son to George K. Fox, Sr. and his second wife, Frances Edwards. His father and mother were married in Loudoun County in 1831.² George K. Fox, Sr. had one surviving child from his first marriage to Jane Gill Hamilton, a son named Erasmus Hinton Fox. George K. Fox, Jr. was born into a life of genteel comfort and respectable affiliations. By virtue of almost 100 years of intermarriage between the Foxes and other upper crust Loudoun families, they could count among their cousins and in-laws family members with surnames like Edwards, Hamilton, Gill, McCabe, Knox, Kilgore, Mason, Sheetz, Littleton, Hanvey, Harrison and Marlow.

Slowly, images of his brothers and sister, along with his parents, came into focus. The early years were good years. He loved his older half-brother Erasmus, almost 11 years his senior. His younger siblings were Addison, Samuel, William and Anna. Local acquaintances would describe the Fox brood as curious, intelligent and very energetic. They had a doting father in George Fox, Sr. He had suffered the heartbreak of losing both of his wives, Jane Gill Hamilton and Frances Edwards, while each was only in her thirties. George's thoughts suddenly turned to his mother. George wondered if he were outwardly crying while seeming to be asleep, as the pain of losing her when he was just 16 had

1. Loudoun County Court Order Book, May 14, 1861, p. 534.

2. Vogt, *Loudoun County Marriages, 1760-1850*, p. 64.

seemed more than he could bear at the time. He saw a shadow: Annie was close by, checking on him. She probably thought his tears were evidence of a spike in the persistent high fever.

Once again, his mind floated back to a time when the young Foxes lived their lives in the shadows of the Leesburg Courthouse. The Fox children could easily point out local government officials, along with the business and professional "movers and shakers" in the county seat of Leesburg during the 1840s and 1850s. George Kilgore Fox, Sr. was named after his grandfather, George Kilgore; a well-respected and influential man in Loudoun County. George Jr. never met his great-grandfather. But he remembered admiring the smooth-bore gun that his grandfather left to George K. Fox, Sr. in his will in 1817.³

For a fleeting moment, George Fox, Jr. remembered the first time it registered in his mind just how proud the family was of the Kilgore name. He was proud of his own father, too. George K. Fox, Sr. was elected and served as Commissioner of Revenue, for Loudoun County's District #1, beginning in the 1850s up to the Civil War. George recalled being present when his father became Commissioner of Revenue. He took note of his father's serious demeanor as he swore the oath of office and posted his bond. George knew how hard his father worked on the revenue reports he routinely prepared for the court. He recalled that his father was required to collect various types of revenue in the years before the war. Taxes were assessed on businesses, like taverns and ordinaries, and on personal property, such as farm animals, gold, silver, watches, clocks, furniture, houses and land. He also was responsible for the assessments levied on slave owners and free Negroes.⁴

George Fox, Jr. recalled how, as far back as he could remember, he always had been interested in the life his father led as a public servant. He always had admired his father's skill at putting people at ease no matter what kind of situation presented itself. The tax collector was not exactly the most popular person, but George K. Fox, Sr. seemed to receive a warm welcome by his friends and neighbors alike.

3. Loudoun County Will Book N, 1818-1821, p. 70.

4. Loudoun County Minute Book, 1840-1841, p. 7.

5. *The Mirror*, Vol. XVII, No. 26, December 18, 1872, p. 3.

A Promising Young Man

About the time of his mother's death in 1848, George K. Fox, Jr. found himself working in the courthouse, assisting the Clerk of the Superior Court, Thomas P. Knox, and Charles P. Janney, the County Court Clerk.⁵ Fox would run errands and he spent a large part of his day transcribing documents and organizing court records. He had thought about going to law school, but it was not possible considering his mother's recent passing. His father needed him to help with his younger siblings, all still at home. Although George Fox, Sr. made a good living, he would prove to be a poor manager of the family finances and as the years wore on, this made for an increasingly difficult situation. Besides, assisting the Court was a very honorable position and it paid a decent wage.

Many friends and local officials recognized early on that George K. Fox, Jr. displayed some fine personal qualities. But one quality in particular had made him an excellent choice for the deputy clerk position. From his earliest days in school, he had faithfully practiced ciphering and penmanship. The result was that he developed a clear and beautiful hand. Excellent penmanship was a valuable asset when transcribing public records.

On September 28, 1852, Thomas P. Knox made George K. Fox, Jr. a Deputy Clerk.⁶ On that day, George was the one taking the prescribed oaths and posting bond, just as he watched his father do many years before. George remembered feeling intensely proud when he was appointed Deputy Clerk. He would be forever grateful to Mr. Knox for taking him under his wing. George worked hard and Mr. Knox recognized that the young man showed important attributes such as intelligence and dependability. He had just turned 20 a month prior to his appointment. Of course, it didn't hurt that Mr. Knox was a close friend of George Fox, Sr. For almost a decade, Mr. Knox acted on behalf of George Sr., as his bondsman, each time he was re-appointed as Commissioner of Revenue. The bond amounts were set by the Court as a protection and guarantee for the citizens. Honesty and integrity were required attributes for those who served the public, but a bond was extra insurance.

6. Loudoun County Order Book, 1846-1853, p. 472.

7. Loudoun County Court Order Book #17, January 14, 1862, p. 62.

George could picture Mr. Knox's friendly face in his mind. It was the face of a great mentor. George was pleased for Mr. Knox when he was chosen as the Superintendent of Loudoun Public Schools in 1862, but he also felt that it was a great loss for the Court.⁷

As he lay dying, George continued in fits of restless sleep. Memories can be exhausting, or was it just that he hadn't been out of bed or eaten anything except broth for days? How many days? He'd lost all track of time.

Miss Annie Henderson Littleton

How long had he slept? Was that one of the girls he heard? He missed them. He dearly loved his four daughters. Annie frequently sent them over to spend time with her family so that she could give her full attention to nursing George. Annie is special, she always has been, he thought proudly. The Foxes and the Littletons had known each other forever, or so it seemed. In a quick flash, George thought of Annie's brothers, Edgar and Francis. Both had served in the Confederate Army. Edgar came home from the war and previously he worked for George as a Deputy Clerk after the election in 1858.⁸ Sadly, Lt. Francis (Frank) Littleton died at Shepherdstown, West Virginia, on September 24, 1862, from wounds he received at Antietam.⁹

It was strange how one stray thought could lead his mind in a totally different direction. He fought a painful headache for hours, but he wanted to resume his thoughts about Annie.

Their wedding day rose to the front of his mind, in spite of the throbbing in his head. They were married on a Tuesday, October 24, 1854.¹⁰ George was 21 and Annie was 19. Her father, Thomas Littleton, was present at the ceremony to verify Annie's age and give her away. Mr. Littleton was a good father-in-law, a local carpenter and undertaker, known for the quality of his craftsmanship. He also had served as a deputy under Sheriff Selden M. Gibson.¹¹

The first addition to their family was Fannie Edwards Fox, named in honor of George's late mother. Fannie was born in 1856, about eighteen months after George and Annie were married. Orra Lee Fox

8. *The Roster of Confederate Soldiers*, Vol. IX, p. 504.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Loudoun County Marriage Register, 1850-1866, p. 36.

11. Loudoun County Court Order Book, #16, p. 457.

arrived in 1859. Imogene Ventress Fox was born in 1861, and Flora A. Fox was born in 1866.

His stomach pains now were unrelenting. Was it his imagination that the pains worsened every time he thought of his 16-, 13-, 11- and six-year-old daughters? If only he could live long enough to see them grow up. George knew that he was in no position to bargain with the Devil or God, but the very thought of not seeing his girls grow up into young women was worse than any pain.

From 1854, until his departure for Campbell County in February 1862, George K. Fox, Jr., and his young family had lived a busy, bountiful life. He was involved in many community activities and organizations. He became a Freemason. He served as a clerk for the 57th Regiment of the Virginia Militia; keeping the records of each muster and recording the names, infractions and fines assessed on each delinquent when the Courts of Enquiry were held.¹² His half brother, Erasmus, and his brother-in-law, Edgar Littleton, served in the Loudoun Guard. All members of the Fox family were dedicated and active members of St. James Episcopal Church in Leesburg. George served on the St. James vestry.

On November 9, 1857, George Kilgore Fox, Jr. was appointed Clerk pro tem, by the Justices of the County Court, to complete the term of Presley Saunders, who had died in office. On May 27, 1858, George was elected to a six-year term as Clerk of the County Court. Thinking back to his early days in the Clerk's Office, he remembered how confusing the Virginia court system was back then and continued to be even now in 1872.

Prior to 1831, each county in Virginia had a County Court and a Clerk. After 1831, the General Assembly mandated that each county should have a Circuit Court as well as a County Court, and there should be a Clerk for each court. To complicate matters, Superior Courts were established in each jurisdiction in 1809, and continued to function. George's early mentor, Thomas P. Knox, was the Clerk of the Superior Court.

Lying in his bed, George wished he could laugh, but laughing would be too painful. In his younger days, he would often chuckle as

12. *Loudoun County Militia, 57th Regiment*, p. 12.

he made a sincere attempt to explain the difference between each of the courts to those unfamiliar with the ever-changing court system in Virginia.

The "Anything But Civil" War

As he lay reminiscing, George thought he heard someone say that it was December 12th? The days were passing by so slowly and his condition continued to decline. He was alert, for now, and he felt a pang of guilt. Christmas was almost here. How was Annie supposed to make all the preparations for Christmas when she spent most of her day tending to him? She would need time to make presents for the girls.

With no provocation, George's mind wandered back to the events in May 1861, and one day in particular, that changed his life forever. The increasing talk of secession during the late 1850s was disturbing for Loudoun County citizens on many levels. Many Leesburg residents, like George's mother-in-law, had family up North. Elizabeth Buffington was born in Pennsylvania in 1803 and she still had family and friends in the Philadelphia area.

The growing idea of a Civil War was as romantic to some as it was horrific to others. The talk throughout Leesburg was that a Secession Ordinance poll was about to be taken. Loudoun would go on record as a county in support of Virginia seceding from the Union, if there were enough votes for secession. In May of 1861, men of all ages had already begun to enlist. Local militias, including the Loudoun Calvary, Loudoun Guard, Loudoun Artillery, Leesburg Calvary and the Potomac Greys were all mustered into Confederate service. On the morning of May 14, 1861, all thirty-five justices, led by Presiding Justice Asa Rogers, met for a special session of the Loudoun County Court. They spent a short time reading and signing orders from the previous day. Then all the justices entered several new orders. The language in the first order was simple. The listing of all the justices' names took up more space than the actual order. It read as follows:

Ordered, that the Clerk of this Court, (at the expense of this County) remove to a place of safety, and there keep

in his custody, the records of this Court, for the last 20 years, upon the approach of the public enemy.¹³

George experienced one of the strangest feelings of his life during the court session that day. He understood the meaning of the court order only too well. The court had just recruited him as a "soldier". But unlike his counterpart in the military, who was enlisting to protect Southern citizens and a passing way of life, he had orders to guard the court documents and take them to safety, if that day came. Preliminary arrangements were made for his departure if or when "the approach of the public enemy" appeared imminent. Until that time, George refrained from using his well-known signature in the court order books. If he did not copy teste orders or make other entries in the order books, it could be perceived that the Clerk was not available, at the court, from May 1861 forward.

George's life was immediately altered by a few short lines on a page. Important personal matters had to be considered and plans put into action. Annie was expecting. The baby was due in late December, and he certainly did not want to leave before the baby was born. He wanted to be certain that they were both in good health. He knew that his in-laws, the Littletons, would help Annie in every way possible, but they had two sons who had enlisted and were making their preparations to fight for "the cause." Emotions were on edge; anticipation and dread filled the once peaceful Loudoun County air.

How many wagons would it take to move the order books? Along with the original deeds, wills, marriages, births and deaths that were neatly tied in bundles using red tape? The order required that he remove only the records from the last 20 years. Why would he leave the earliest records behind? There were documents signed by Founding Fathers like Washington and Monroe. Where was he supposed to go? George understood that the highest level of discretion must be maintained once his destination was chosen. If more than a few select people knew where he was hiding, it could mean the destruction of the court records, and personal danger, or even imprisonment, for him.

In 1865, after the war was over, he divulged a few minor details about his journey because he understood the intense curiosity of those who seemed to have the impression that he had enjoyed some kind of great adventure. But some time ago he had decided that crucial details

13. Loudoun County Court Order Book, May 15, 1861, p. 531.

about his trip would go with him to his grave. It might seem odd to others that he would leave no personal writings behind, because writing was his life.

When he returned from his journey, he was 33 years old. By his own appraisal, he had witnessed some of the most uncivil and horrific events he could have ever imagined. George, like many soldiers he knew, had a strong desire to return to a simple and peaceful life. He had two objectives: to be with his family and to resume his position as a court clerk. Writing his memoirs was not a high priority—earning a living was.

Returning to the present from those memories of long ago, George thought it may be December, but the house that he once thought was drafty and in desperate need of weatherproofing, was much too warm today. Memories began fading in and out again, in no particular chronological sequence.

George remembered a premonition he had during the Christmas season of 1861. The Battle of Ball's Bluff was fought in Leesburg's backyard in October of '61, and several new Confederate forts were situated nearby. He sensed with a heavy heart, that the life his family had known for three generations at the foothills of the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains was about to change forever. His premonition was coming true.

George and Annie's third daughter, Imogene, was born on December 30, 1861. January passed with a cold calm. However, by late February 1862, after spending several months occupying the forts they had built "on the heights," the Confederate troops began evacuation procedures. Any raw materials, foodstuffs and supplies that might benefit the Union troops were destroyed by the Confederates as they pulled out. Confederate scouts had discovered that Col. John Geary was crossing the Potomac near Harper's Ferry and headed in the direction of Leesburg. The public enemy was close by and that was the signal to George K. Fox, Jr. that it was time to load the wagons with the court records, bid his family goodbye, and head in the opposite direction from the encroaching Union forces.

14. Amnesty Papers, 1865-1867, #M1003

A skewed image of his cousin, Fenton M. Henderson, flashed quickly before George's mind. On April 19, 1867, Fenton was charged with the unpopular assignment of taking George's second amnesty deposition. Fenton asked him to explain when the Confederate forces retreated from the County of Loudoun and what became of him at that time. George calmly responded "Sir, On the 7th and 8th days of March, 1862 . . . I left with the Confederate forces and carried the records with me".¹⁴

He had always thought that Fenton was in on the plan. Perhaps not. The plan had been in the making since the summer of 1861. Captain John D. Alexander was one of the "conspirators." Alexander spent the latter part of 1861 and early 1862, recuperating in Leesburg from wounds he'd received during the Battle of 1st Manassas on July 21, 1861. Often called "Captain Jack," John Alexander was the leader of the Campbell Rangers. He was known, as a civilian, as the Honorable John D. Alexander, a third generation Clerk of the Court in Campbell County. The county seat was located in Rustburg, Virginia. John was older than George, already in his early 40s. Despite the age difference, they became good friends. During the eight months he spent in Leesburg, John Alexander reportedly was recognized as "a gentleman of fine social qualities".¹⁵

Was it John Alexander who suggested that George retreat to Campbell County? He couldn't remember. If John was not the one, he was definitely included in the final decision and he offered to assist George during his journey. The Campbell Rangers were one of several Confederate companies to retreat from Leesburg in early March 1862.

George K. Fox, Jr. was a man of books and the law. He was not a soldier. He possessed a quick mind, common sense and enough courage to stand for what was right. However, he was not keen on the idea of traveling across Virginia by himself, especially since there was a strong possibility he could happen upon a skirmish or even a full-fledged battle. When it was suggested to him that he should be escorted out of Leesburg by the departing Confederate troops, he was relieved to be in the company of soldiers, many of whom were friends.

15. *The Mirror*, Vol. X, No. 33, January 24, 1866, p. 2.

Friday, December 13, 1872

The cool, damp cloth Annie laid on his forehead felt wonderful. If only that same cool comfort could be wrapped around his entire body! He felt so weak, so limp. He could barely hold his eyes open. He slept most of the time, always in a fitful state. Annie still was making valiant attempts to encourage him to sip water or a little broth. She was putting up a brave front, but they both knew what was to come. He considered himself a spiritual man, a man of God. He wasn't afraid to die, but he was not ready. Though he was incoherent much of the time, that didn't mean that his cloudy mind could stop the river of recollections.

George thought about the day when he arrived in Rustburg with John Alexander. The trip to Campbell County was relatively uneventful, considering that there was a war going on. Mother Nature, however, proved feisty. There were late winter snows mixed with heavy spring rains. They heard about action in Kernstown, near Winchester, and the engagement between the ironclads near Norfolk. George always listened carefully for any news of action in or near Leesburg. The good people of Campbell County gave him a reasonably warm welcome in Rustburg.

Of course, coming into town in the company of a local hero did not hurt his situation. John Alexander was a local celebrity, even though he saw very little action after 1st Manassas. George reasoned that the citizens of Campbell County were excited just to have a local son come home alive. The bodies of so many soldiers never made it home for burial. But John Alexander had returned safely, and his homecoming was something to celebrate.

Deputy Clerk in a New County

On May 19, 1862, George K. Fox, Jr. became John D. Alexander's Deputy Clerk for the Circuit Court of Campbell County.¹⁶ The order book entry reads:

At the instance of John D. Alexander, Clerk of the Circuit Court, of Campbell, I consent that he may

16. Campbell County Court Order Book, May 19, 1862, p. 447.
17. *Northern Virginia's Own, 17th Virginia Infantry*, pgs. 173, 195.

appoint George K. Fox, Jr., his deputy, as Clerk of the Court aforesaid. Given under my hand, as Judge of the said Court, this 19th of May, 1862.

H. H. Marshall

George qualified for his new post by taking an oath on May 19, 1862, before Justice of the Peace James Organ.¹⁷ A few local citizens were not pleased that John "at his instance" gave the Deputy Clerk position to an outsider. Exactly one year had passed since the justices in Loudoun County entered the order granting leave to remove the court records. George received good news from Annie in late May. The girls were doing well. Little Imogene was growing fast. However, his concern grew during the latter part of May as battles and skirmishes unfolded at Front Royal, Winchester and Fair Oaks. This was much too close to home.

George wished he could have one more visit with his half-brother Erasmus. Erasmus had always approached life in his own special way; he just did things differently. They were almost complete opposites in personality, but George loved him just the same. When George's mother died, Erasmus understood his pain, his own mother also having died young. Erasmus enlisted in the Confederate forces as a Private, on April 22, 1861.¹⁸ He was almost 40 years old. He joined the 17th Infantry, Company C., but he was not destined to finish the war in uniform. He received a disability discharge on October 8, 1861, at Camp Harrison.¹⁹

Shortly after his honorable discharge for distinguished service, Erasmus joined George in Campbell County for a visit. The change of scenery would ultimately change the course of his life. While in Campbell, he met and became good friends with the Moorman family. As the years went by, Erasmus became smitten with young Mary Otey Moorman and they had married just two years ago, George recalled.²⁰ Erasmus was almost 50 years old. Mary was 19. At first, George was concerned about the wisdom of this union. But, he understood that there was a shortage of available younger men. Many young men

18. *The Roster of Confederate Soldiers, 1861-1865*, Vol. VI, p. 94.

19. Hairston, pgs. 460-465.

20. Campbell County Marriage Register #2, p. 148.

had gone off to war, and a significant number never returned home. Erasmus and Mary now lived in Evington, Virginia, in southern Campbell County, and they had an infant son named Hubert. By all accounts, they were very happy. Erasmus' father-in-law was Thomas B. Moorman, a wealthy Campbell farmer. Prior to the war, Mr. Moorman had owned slaves, whom he used to help him work his large farm. That seemed strange to George, because the Moorman family were Quakers. They were long-standing members of the South River Meeting.²¹ George wondered if little Hubert looked like Erasmus. He knew that would never meet his young nephew.

Floating back in his memories, George recalled how on October 19, 1864, he, once again, was sworn in as Deputy Clerk for John D. Alexander, Clerk of the Campbell Circuit Court.²² After living in Rustburg for two and a half years, he was much more comfortable in 1864 as opposed to when he first arrived in March of '62. But George missed his family terribly. The news that trickled in from Leesburg was generally good. His family and friends were coping as well as might be expected, considering the war was never far away. The troops were always searching for food and supplies. He recalled his distress when he received word that his beloved father, George K. Fox, Sr., was ailing. George Fox, Sr. was 69 years old in 1864. During his lifetime, George Sr. had lost two young wives and one small daughter. He had served as Commissioner of Revenue for many years, but he was far from being a shrewd financial manager. The burden of his growing personal debts was taking a physical and mental toll on him.

George Jr. knew that his father was overwhelmed by the painful effects of the war on his family and close friends. Frank Littleton's death had been especially hard to take. George Sr.'s three eldest sons were forced to leave Leesburg in 1861-62 for very different reasons. None was serving on the front lines in 1864, but still their father constantly worried about George, Jr., Erasmus and Addison. He wished that they could all return home. George, Jr. and Erasmus were reasonably safe, while Addison was in Richmond fighting a different kind of battle altogether.

21. Hairston, pgs, 460-465.

22. Campbell County Common Law Order Book, Vol. 9, p. 485.

Addison C. Fox had wanted to be a doctor since he could remember. George, Jr. always admired his younger brother's talent. Even at a young age, Addison was able to calm and treat an injured animal. In 1862, Addison began serving as an Assistant Surgeon for the Confederate army. He was 27 years old. General Hospital #22 was located on the south side of Main Street in Richmond; it was also known as Howard's Factory Hospital. "#22" had 44 employees with as many as 100 wounded soldiers under their care at any given time. When #22 closed in July 1864, Dr. Fox was commended for his efficient administration of the hospital and "praised for his good work with desperate cases".²³ Confederate doctors worked under destitute and unsanitary conditions. A chronic lack of medical supplies forced surgeons to conduct surgery with dirty instruments and anesthesia was not available. After the war, Dr. Addison Fox advertised the opening of his new medical practice in Waterford, Virginia, by placing a "business card" ad in the local paper.²⁴ Like Erasmus, Addison moved away from his native Leesburg in 1870.

George thought about Addison and his travels. Addison maintained his medical practice in Waterford until the late 1860s, when he moved to Petersburg, Virginia. Recently, George had heard that Addison was talking about moving to Atlanta, Georgia. Was he, George, the only one who wanted to stay in Loudoun? What was wrong with the beautiful foothills of the Blue Ridge? Yes, the ravages of war were evident everywhere, the land was ruined and people had been changed forever. And more changes were to come . . .

George remembered overhearing a passionate discussion at the 1872 Agricultural Fair back in September about the fact that the war had given many veterans an opportunity to "see places" they would have never seen otherwise. George could understand the appeal of travel, but he had spent enough time away from home and he had no desire to live anywhere other than Loudoun County. While others debated the topic, George concentrated on the matter at hand. He was asked to judge the

23. *Civil War Hospitals in Richmond*, (On-line article, www.vcu.edu), p. 13

24. *The Democratic Mirror*, Vol. X, No. 17, October 5, 1865, p. 4.

25. *The Mirror*, Vol. XVI, No. 12, September 6, 1871, p. 1.

poultry category at this year's fair and he was about to select the Blue Ribbon winner!²⁵

His entire body felt clammy with fever, yet he was shaking with chills. He had not gone over to the Clerk's Office in days. After what he had been through with the court records; they were much more to him than simply bound pieces of paper. He took his "guardian" title very seriously. A few days ago, he had heard that Edgar Littleton, his Deputy Clerk, was doing a good job managing the workload at the Clerk's office during George's absence.

He reflected on the difficult times after the end of the war. As the fighting drew to a close, George had begun cautiously to hope that a summons would arrive very soon ordering him to return to Loudoun County with the Court records. He would miss the friends he had made in Rustburg, especially his good friend, John Alexander, but he couldn't wait to go home.

General Robert E. Lee surrendered in Appomattox on April 9, 1865. It was right after the surrender that George came to the awful realization that he could not return home immediately. President Andrew Johnson issued an Amnesty Proclamation on May 29, 1865. The proclamation required that citizens who had taken an active part in the rebellion must be repatriated; a process that involved giving a deposition and taking an oath of allegiance to the United States government. If George went home before taking the required steps towards repatriation, he would not be permitted to resume his position as Clerk of the County Court. For the time being, George's status was in limbo; he was not an American citizen and he did not have a job.

Congress passed the Confiscation Act on December 8, 1863. Accordingly, the United States government was granted the authority to seize the home of any citizen who was deemed to have taken an active part in the rebellion. George traveled to Lynchburg on May 23, 1865, to take the required oath of allegiance.²⁶ His next stop was Richmond. He appeared at the Provost Marshal's office to take a second oath. This one was similar to the one he took in Lynchburg, but with one significant difference. The final clause of the oath ended as

26. Amnesty Papers, 1865-67, #M1003

27. Amnesty Papers, 1865-1867, #M1003.

28. Ibid.

follows: "I will, in like manner, abide by and faithfully support all laws and proclamations which have been made during the existing rebellion with reference to the emancipation of slaves."²⁷ George took this oath on July 20, 1865. He also gave a deposition, in which he stated emphatically that, as a Constitutional officer, he was exempt from military service, and his actions during the conflict were purely those of a guardian, following a directive from the Court.²⁸ He did not complete the pardon process until September 9, 1865. By this time, the Loudoun County Court had entered the order he had been long waiting for, on July 11, 1865. It read as follows:

"George K. Fox, Jr. as Clerk of this Court, having removed from this County, the records of this Court, under an order of Court, heretofore made, he is now ordered to return the said records to the Clerks office of this County, at the expense of the county as soon as possible."²⁹

George K. Fox, Jr. and the Loudoun County Court records arrived in Leesburg on the evening of Friday, August 4, 1865. His round trip covered a span of thirty-nine months. He was three years older. The *Democratic Mirror* announced his return in the Local column of the August 9th edition. The piece read as follows:

"George K Fox, Esq., late Clerk of the County Court of Loudoun, reached home on Friday night last, direct from the Devil's Kitchen", with the records of the county, which were removed more than three years ago by order of the Court. They were returned in good condition without the loss of a single paper or even so much as the rubbing of the binding on the books. The office is now open and in good 'running order' except a few minor pages which were left behind, and which have been more or less injured"³⁰

It was a bittersweet homecoming. George had to take time to get reacquainted with his three young daughters. He gave special attention to three-year old Imogene, who was just a newborn when he left Leesburg in 1862. Annie was not used to having him around the

29. Loudoun County Order Book, July 11, 1865, p.75.

30. Loudoun County Order Book, July 11, 1863, p. 75.

house—she had become more independent by necessity. His status was still being investigated under the Confiscation Act. It wasn't until 1867 that he was finally fully restored as a United States citizen.

Once repatriated, George was permitted to serve as a Deputy Clerk for the Court. He chose to run in the election for Clerk in the fall of 1870. He easily won the election. After an eight-year intermission, George K. Fox, Jr. was Clerk of the Loudoun County Court once more.

And now it was Christmas. He could hear singing? Carolers were outside. If everything were as normal, he should be enjoying another Christmas season. He loved all the festivities that came with the holidays. Instead, he desperately wanted relief from his pounding head and it was becoming more painful and difficult to breathe . . .

While campaigning for Clerk during the fall of 1870, George was often asked about his journey to Campbell County during the war. Loudoun citizens wanted to know about the perils of the trip and where he stored the records during his stay in Campbell County. Many asked, "Where is this 'Devil's Kitchen' place that was mentioned in the newspaper?"³¹ George would smile each time the question was posed to him. There were Fox cousins living over in Rockbridge County, close to the "Devil's Kitchen" cave at Goshen, Virginia. However, leaving the Loudoun court records there never once entered George's mind. As long as he was responsible for the court records, he wasn't leaving them on the western side of the Blue Ridge Mountains while he took personal refuge on the eastern side.

Few would know that there was another Devil's Kitchen located in Roanoke County, and even a third situated on the James River near Richmond. George thought that he had made it very clear to his cousin, Fenton M. Henderson, in April 1867, in his final amnesty deposition: "I carried the records to the County of Campbell, where I kept them there until after the termination of the war."³²

Why didn't they believe him? He thought that it was common knowledge that the City of Lynchburg and surrounding area had a reputation for seedy activity and had been referred to as a devil's playground for many years. He hoped that Erasmus would always keep

31. *The Democratic Mirror*, Vol. X, No. 9, August 9, 1865, p. 2.
32. Amnesty Papers, 1865-1867, #M1003.

their secret. After all, he still lived within a few short miles of an isolated area in southern Campbell county called "Hell's Bend".

The carolers were gone now. When did they leave? He wasn't sure. Slowly, hours passed as he slipped into a silent, deep sleep. It was almost noon on the 14th of December, 1872. Somehow, though in a minimal state of consciousness, George knew that he was now ready to go. He thought he felt Annie's hand gently squeeze his, and then he felt nothing more. There was no more pain, only peace. The memories he had relived in recent days would remain with him like precious engravings on his eternal soul. Today, December 14, 1872, George K. Fox, Jr. was beginning a new journey to a better place. Only this time, he would relinquish custody of the court records and proceed alone.

George K. Fox Jr. was born on August 14, 1832, in Loudoun County, Virginia. The Court order that sent him on his journey to Campbell County, Virginia, was entered on May 14, 1861. He died at home on King Street, in Leesburg, Virginia, on December 14, 1872.

He is buried in Union Cemetery in Leesburg, Virginia. The citizens of Loudoun County are fortunate beneficiaries of a written historical legacy transported, protected and preserved by George K. Fox, Jr., Clerk of the Loudoun County Court.

Writer's Note: The general facts described in this paper were found in Loudoun County Court records, Campbell County Court records, articles from local newspapers and other original sources. I started the project with the hope of solving the mystery of whether or not the court records were truly stored in a cave called the Devil's Kitchen. However, as I continued my research during the spring of 2006, I quickly discovered that there were more questions than answers regarding this matter. I contacted professional cavers and talked to local historians in Campbell County, only to discover that there is no site called or commonly known as Devil's Kitchen in Campbell County.

I've decided to accept George's deposition statement from April 1867, at least until I find proof to the contrary. Yes, I'm still searching.

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