



Digital Access Project

Fayette County Clerk

University of Kentucky Commonwealth Institute for Black Studies

Central Kentucky Slavery Initiative

Lexington Black Prosperity Initiative

Blue Grass Community Foundation & Knight Foundation Donor Advised Charitable Fund

LexPark



What is the Digital Access Project (DAP)?

- Project to digitize and make publicly available Fayette County's property records from the late 1700s – 1865 and forward, approximately 91,000 pages to date.
- Records contain the names of those enslaved persons who were sold, purchased, transferred, emancipated, listed as fugitives, and used as collateral to secure debts.
- Funded through the Blue Grass Community Foundation & the Knight Foundation Donor Advised Charitable Fund.



DAP Directors & Staff

- Co-Director: Dr. Vanessa Holden, UK Associate Professor, Dept. of History, Director of UK African American and Africana Studies, Director of the Central Kentucky Slavery Initiative
- Supervisor & Co-Director: Mr. Shea Brown, Fayette County Deputy Clerk, Special Projects, Land Records Department
- Evolving group of paid workers and volunteers, both UK students and community members.



Statistics May, 2022 – December, 2023

Number of Books Digitized	176
Approximate # of Pages Scanned	91,000
Number of Community Workers	7
Number of UK Student Workers	13
Avg. # Books Digitized Per Week	2.3
Avg. # Pages Scanned Per Week	1,150



Primary Source Books Digitized

- Deed Books A – 70, and continuing (late 1700s – 1884)
- Will Books A – Z (1793 – 1867)
- Burnt Records 1 – 8 (late 1700s – 1803)
- County Court Orders 1 – 20 and O (1803 – 1878)
- Old Fayette Surveys (1780s and 1817 – 1876)
- Declaration of Marriage Books (entries can be prior to 1866 for African-American marriages)



Endless Possibilities: How Can We Use the Records?

- Central Kentucky History
- Genealogy
- Researching Enslaved People & Slavery
- Chain of Title Search
- Geography & Preservation Research
- Legal Concepts Education
- Colonial Style Handwriting Transcription Training

DAP in action

Digitization Specialist

Bookeye 4 Scanner Station



SLAVE RECORD TRANSACTION

Colonial Style Handwriting Image

*Culberson
To { Cert
Slaves
Examined*

Fayette County Sct.
Personally appeared before a Justice
of the peace for said County Alexander Culberson
and made oath that sometime about the 20th March
last he imported to this State and County aforesaid
from the State of South Carolina the following Slaves
(to wit) Ceaser, William, Hauer and Samson all of
which he purchased for his own use and not for
merchant use Given under & seal this 23rd day
of April 1819.
Matthew Elder J.P.C.

Sample Transcription of Image

Fayette County Sct

Personally appeared before a Justice of the Peace for said County, Alexander Culberson and made oath that sometime about the 20th March last he imported to this State and County aforesaid from the State of South Carolina the following slaves (to wit), Ceaser, William, Hauer and Samson all of which he purchased for his own use and not for merchant use. Given under and seal this 23rd day of April 1819.

Matthew Elder, J.P.F.C.

[This Proof of Ownership of Slaves is recorded in Deed Book S Page 339].



Groundbreaking Project with Challenges

- Sheer magnitude of total page volume being digitized and made available through a free online portal.
- Time period of the records – Fayette County is the first in Kentucky to engage in a project of this type and one of only a few nationwide.
- Sensitive information found documented in government records.
- Level of digitization challenges in completing the scans.
- Team relationships and partnerships being formed to enlighten & educate our community.



What's Next for DAP?

- Community engagement and education – designing community programming.
- Digital Humanities Portal – designing a series of digital exhibits.
- Transcription Initiative – designing a metadata transcription project that will make high quality transcriptions of documents available.
- Module Pilot – designing constructive conversations with county clerks throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky.
- Continued fundraising through the Blue Grass Community Foundation, bgcf.givingfuel.com/DAP.



Special Recognitions

- Recipient of the 2023 Barbara Hulette Award, presented by the Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation, for efforts in preserving Central Kentucky history, heritage, environment, sense of community or other significant endeavors.
- Featured in the Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation 2024 educational DeTour video detailing work on the economic wealth of John Wesley Hunt through the work of enslaved persons.
- Featured in the Lexington Herald-Leader, Nov. 14, 2023, and Smiley Pete Southsider and Chevy Chaser Magazines, January, 2024.



How To Access

- Visit the Fayette County Clerk's Online Land Records Portal:

<https://fayettedeeds.com>

Click on Land Records Search/ Non-Indexed Documents

- For Instructions & Glossary of Terms/Useful Information resources visit:

www.fayettecountyclerk.com

Land Records/ Digital Access Project



Questions?

Contact Mr. Shea Brown, DC, Fayette County Clerk's
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