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The History of HENRICO COUNTY

LOUIS H. MANARIN
and
CLIFFORD DOWDEY

University Press of Virginia
Charlottesville

The Henrico County Bicentennial Commission
has sponsored the publication of this work.

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This book is dedicated
to the children of
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ing them with food, they had to appeal to the county for help. Arrangements were made by the superintendent of the poor to house some of the more destitute citizens in the city's Alms House, but the county had to devise a program to help those in greater need. To fund a local program, the overseers of the poor decided not to subsidize the farmers who were taking advantage of those citizens who were "easily imposed upon." When the county levy was determined in November 1870, \$13,000 was set aside for the poor. By comparison, the levy for administering the rest of county government for the same period of one year was \$10,523.93. Each township overseer of the poor was given funds from the general levy and given responsibility for helping the poor in his district while the county superintendent of the poor sought to place destitute cases with citizens who were willing to provide assistance. Township overseers placed some cases with citizens in the district and reimbursed them for their expenses. When smallpox broke out in January 1873, the county turned to the city for use of the city's hospital for treatment of patients, but when no agreement could be reached, the county board authorized a levy of \$1,000 for a hospital for treating patients and vaccinating those unable to pay. After the townships were abolished in 1875, the board assumed responsibility for levying for the poor. A system was established whereby those in need appeared before the board to apply for aid. Tickets for supplies were issued, and the county purchased quantities of supplies or arranged for dealers to redeem the tickets. This system worked so well that by the end of the decade the county took steps to sell the old poorhouse property and to purchase a farm site on Nine Mile Road to cultivate and grow crops for distribution to the poor.

One problem that confronted the board was the suit brought by Stuart, Buchanan and Company for salt provided during the war. The company had won a judgment against the county in the amount of \$5,941.99. Believing that the city should pay a portion of the judgment because of the annexation, the board employed E. C. Minor to bring suit against the city. The board's efforts apparently were not successful, because on June 12, 1875, it authorized the payment of \$2,500 to Stuart, Buchanan and Company as the first install-

ment of the amount due. In 1880 the General Assembly provided relief on the salt payment debt by passing legislation granting the county "a right to contribution against the city of Richmond in proportion to the amount of taxable property of the said county taken within the limits of the said city . . . For all debts contracted . . . before the passage of said [annexation] act."¹²

Before they were abolished, the townships had responsibility for the secondary roads, but the major thoroughfares and bridges came under the jurisdiction of the Board of Supervisors. The concept of township and later district road authorities survived into the twentieth century, but the responsibility for all the public roads was transferred to the board when the townships were abolished in 1875. To provide a labor force to maintain the roads, a chain gang of jail inmates was made available in 1876. Major construction work was contracted out, and in 1877 the General Assembly authorized the governor to hire out convicts to the county for work on public roads.

A special levy of 15¢ on each \$100 taxable value was passed by the board to raise \$3,000 for expenses involved in transporting, guarding, and providing medical needs of convicts hired. The final arrangements called for the county to hire twenty convicts at a range of 35¢ to 40¢ a day each. The convicts were picked up at the penitentiary in Richmond in the morning and returned to it at night. They were fed at the penitentiary in the morning and evening. Their noon meal was supplied by the state, but the county had to provide the pail for each man to carry it in. All guards hired by the county had to provide their own guns and ammunition, and they received \$1.25 a day in wages. The county purchased a plow, two scoops, eight picks, twenty shovels, two axes, and two grubbing hoes and contracted for the use of several wagons. Gustavus G. Carter was elected by the board to superintend the work that began on September 17, 1877, on the old Westham Plank Road. On October 6 the board agreed to hire ten additional convicts and to house them in the county jail after the sheriff notified the board that it would cost 20¢ a day to do so. On that day, the board authorized the use of convict labor on Creighton Road. In December an annual contract was entered into with the state for