

**Stewart Bell Jr. Archives**  
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**Overseers of the Poor Collection**  
**77 WFCHS THL**

**ACCESS RESTRICTIONS:** Collection is open to all researchers.

**USE RESTRICTIONS:** Restrictions may apply concerning the use, photoduplication, or publication of items in this collection. Consult a member of the archives staff for information concerning these restrictions. The user assumes all responsibility for identifying and satisfying any claimants of copyright.

**PROCESSING INFORMATION:** Processed by Archives Staff. Last updated March 2023

**EXTENT:** 0.42 linear feet

**DATE:** 1750s to 1955; bulk 1750-1928

**SCOPE AND CONTENT:** This collection contains records of the Frederick Parish Overseers of the Poor, including a claim, reports, and finance records, covering a period from 1750 to 1928. The collection also contains a scholarly paper about policy responses to poverty in Frederick County.

**BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL:** The American Colonies adopted systems of relief for the poor and infirm, as well as orphaned children modeled on the Poor Laws of England. In earlier decades the work of administering these laws was done by members of the Church Vestry. After the Revolutionary War, and the disestablishment of the Church of England, the task of managing and providing relief for the poor shifted to appointed officials known as Overseers of the Poor.

The Overseers of the Poor for Frederick Parish provided financial and other forms of support to orphaned children, the poor, the disabled, the infirm, and the mentally ill in Winchester and Frederick County, Virginia. It operated from 1793 to the twentieth century.

**RELATED MATERIAL:** The Virginia Historic Landmarks Collection, 1350 WFCHS, folder #34-99, has a sketch of poor house in Winchester, VA. The account book of Drs. Macky and Dunbar (1752 THL) records treatment of people housed by the Overseers of the Poor. Transcriptions of the Frederick Parish Vestry Book, 1764-1818, compiled by genealogist Victor Dunn, are available in the *Magazine of Virginia Genealogy* in volumes 43 to 50.

**ACQUISITION INFORMATION:** Acquired as a gift.

**CONTAINER LIST:**

Claim concerning John Van Nesson and John Nagle, 1847, 1 leaf, manuscript

Finance County Home Expenses, 1928, ledger book, 1 item, manuscript

Finance Report, 1850, 4 pages, manuscript

Reports, Overseers of the Poor, 1910, 3 leaves, manuscript

Brewer, Holly. "Confronting Rural Poverty: The Transformation of Welfare Policy in Frederick County, VA 1750-1820." North Carolina State University, 1995, 21 leaves, typescript (photocopy)