

1811 Ledger
Mary Eleanor RANSON journal

Leather bound ledger: The name Mary E. Ranson¹ with the date 1860 written below—both written in ink. Near the top middle is the date 1860 which is actually the date 1811 which has been altered.

Inside is written 1860—Mary E. Ranson—Mary E. Ranson, Charlestown, Jeff. Co., Va.

Loose handwritten note:

Presented to H. S. by Mrs. Van B. Wilson—great granddaughter of Matthew Ransone. He cut the E from his name saying he had to write his name too often to fool with any extra letters.

This ledger was used by Jefferson County Clerk George Hite to record the personal and real property taxes owed by landholders in Jefferson County in the year 1811. The accounts recorded in the ledger match the transcription of personal property taxes done by Patricia Duncan in her book *Jefferson County Virginia—1802-1813 Personal Property Tax Lists* published by Heritage Books in 2009. Each entry is marked “By cash in full; settled in full; or Delinquent” depending upon the taxpayer’s status. In 1811 the taxes collected were a levy on white free males 16 years and older; enslaved males 12-16 years old; enslaved males 16 and older; and horses and mares. A “Lott & land” tax was also levied. White landowners were required to participate in the Virginia militia, and if they missed a required meeting they were fined. Militia fines were also recorded in the account book.

There is a tabbed index in the front of the ledger which lists the taxpayers by surname followed by given name. Each tab contains two (2) letters of the alphabet. The first tab in this ledger begins with letters “J”² and “K.” The names of tax payers which begin with the letters “J” and “K” are written in hand on the index tab and assigned a page number which corresponds to a page in the ledger. The page numbers are consecutive. The surnames are not arranged alphabetically on the tab. The tabs for letters A through H are missing.

Beginning with page number 189, entries start over with surnames which begin with the letter B. These taxpayers were either missed when tax assessments were done, or they moved into the county after the assessment was complete. The names of these taxpayers appear in the indexed tab. With few exceptions, these taxpayers are entered alphabetically by the last letter of their surname. Again, although surnames beginning with the same letter are grouped together, they are not listed in alphabetical order. The final tax entry appears on page 203 of the ledger. Pages 12-15, 26-27, 68-79, 132-135, and 182-183 are missing.

¹ Mary Eleanor Ranson (b. 1850) was the daughter of James Matthew (1817-1892) and Mary Eleanor Baldwin Ranson (1817-1880). She married John H. Guy in 1871. In 1860 Mary E. Ranson was 10 years old.

² In the early 19th century the letter “J” did not appear in the alphabet and was instead represented by the letter “I.” That was so in this ledger. The “IK” tab list surnames which started with the letter “J.”

XXXXXXXXXX

Presumably, Mary Eleanor RANSON (or someone) has hand copied in pencil:

1. "Gay & Happy."³ Lines of a song. Last word is "Chorus." Unsigned and undated.
2. "The Anniversary" Handwritten note: "1 verse of a piece by Mrs. J [?]"
3. Handwritten in pencil. "A Journal." First entry is "Mond. May 12th": Mentions the Union capture of Norfolk VA. Entries for Wednesday and Thursday undated.
4. "Biography of Solomon." Handwritten entry in pencil is crossed out. School exercise [?].
5. "Biography of Solomon." Handwritten entry in pencil. School exercise [?].
6. "Biography of Solomon." A more complete handwritten entry. School exercise [?].
7. ~~"Lyttie Aisquith"~~ ~~"Mary Ranson"~~ Final entry.

³ The words are from the "Camp Song of the Maryland Line." The first stanza of the song is "We are the boys so gay and happy." Published in Baltimore by R. M. Chambers during the Civil War, this broadside became the camp song for Confederate Maryland soldiers who considered themselves the modern representatives of the "Old Line" state. Digital Maryland <https://collections.digitalmaryland.org/digital/collection/mdbv/id/256/> 06052020.

⁴ On Saturday, May 10, 1862 the Union Army forced the surrender of Norfolk VA. In 1862, May 12 was a Monday. Ranson's mention of the capture of Norfolk indicates that her journal starts May 12, 1862.