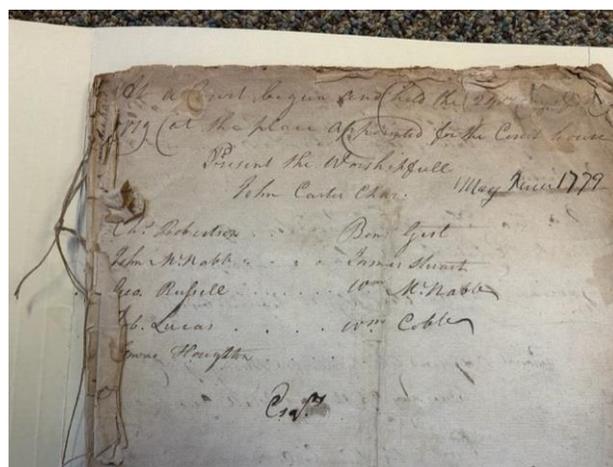




## THE CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

Had someone told me that I would become a collector of paperclips, I would have said that there was no way. But here I am today, writing an article about my paperclip collection!

This strangest of collections began in 2017 when we here at the archives began to earnestly process the earliest court records of Washington County. With this being the oldest county in the state, we had records dating back into the 1770's. There were court cases in which several small pieces of paper were folded up together into small rectangles. These were simple—just unfold, flatten, and file. Other records were tied with bits of string or even sewn together as seen on the 1779 County Court minute book shown below.



We began to find straight pins pushed through two or more documents to hold them together. Using a magnifying glass, we looked at these straight pins and realized that the pins were likely from the same time period as the documents. It seemed a shame to lose this tiny bit of history, so I began tossing them into my desk drawer, many with a date scribbled on scrap paper and attached.



When the collection grew too large for the tray in the drawer, it was moved into a gallon-size plastic bag and it stayed in the bottom desk drawer for several years. I once mentioned on Facebook that I had a paperclip collection and was really surprised at the number of people who wanted to see it. With a little encouragement from the County Archivist, our Archives Assistant and I undertook the task of sorting the dated items and mounting the items on cardstock. Only dated items were used, and only a few of each type pin or clip.

It was surprising to note that we only had straight pins until the 1860's when manufactured clips began to appear on county documents. We still occasionally saw a straight pin or two, but not the hand-made variety. Straight pins were used more predominately during the 1880's and 1890's. Beyond straight pins, there were not many other types of fasteners. These new straight pins were manufactured, not hand-made.

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My favorite items were the tiny straight pins that were found from the 1920's up through the 1950's.



At the beginning of the 1900's, there were many different types of manufactured clips, brads and fasteners. Safety pins were used and we found copper and brass paperclips.



Along the way, we have found a lot of odd items in the files, including gum, empty gum packets, a bullet, coins, a peanut shell and flower seeds. Volunteers and staff still bring me odd paperclips occasionally, and I still enjoy seeing the different types. One just never knows what they will find next!



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