



1908-1930

F. D. RICHARDSON, ATTORNEY AT LAW

102 South Payne Street, Fairfax

The firm McCandlish & Lillard, a professional corporation, actually began with the practice of a single lawyer, Frederick Dawson Richardson ("Fred" or "F. D.") whose professional career commenced in the small town of Fairfax in 1908. F. D. Richardson was born in a farmhouse in Fairfax, located across from the Courthouse, and like his father before him, Fred was a lifelong Fairfax resident. His mother, Amelia Lee Buck ("Millie"), came from Warren County, Virginia. He had a brother Marcus, who died in a streetcar accident in Washington, D.C. in 1916, and a sister, Virginia ("Virgie"), who died in 1988. His father, F. W. Richardson, was the Clerk of Court of Fairfax County, as was his grandfather, Captain F. W. Richardson, a Confederate veteran.

Between the two of them, F. D. Richardson's grandfather and father occupied the office of Clerk of Court of Fairfax County for 104 consecutive years. It's true, you can look it up.¹

F. D. Richardson attended the old brick school, which is now the Fairfax Town Museum on Route 236, and Potomac Academy in Alexandria. He then attended the University of Virginia for two years and, for a time, lived in No. 13, West Range, the same room that Edgar Allen Poe had occupied more than 80 years before. He attended Georgetown University to study law, receiving his law degree in 1908. Before being admitted to the bar in June 1908, he was an educator. The population of Fairfax was reported as being a total of 413 in a 1910 census. What today is known as Fairfax City was then Fairfax C.H. (C.H. for Court House) or Providence Town. Either way, Fairfax consisted of a dirt crossroads surrounded by farmland.

Richardson's first advertisement for legal services appeared in the December 25, 1908 *Fairfax Herald*. The ad said simply, "F. D. Richardson, Attorney at Law". Some of the oldest books in the library of the Firm still bear his signature or stamp on the front page. From 1908 to 1912, F. D. Richardson practiced law on his own, conveying property, arguing cases in chancery and defending prisoners at the direction of the Court. In December 1912, F. D. Richardson was joined by J. W. Ballard, and in addition to advertising their legal services, Ballard and Richardson began to advertise money to lend.²

Richardson first owned the Chapman House, a frame house on the right side of what is now Chain Bridge Road as you travel into the Old Town of Fairfax from Route 50. In 1925, he purchased a large white house which still stands on Chain Bridge Road at the top of the hill before Cedar Avenue on the right side of the road when traveling south into Fairfax from Route

F. D. Richardson was an active member of the Fairfax County Democratic Party at a time when the South was solidly Democratic. His initials, F.D.R., were often joked about. It seems that there was "the Little White House" of F.D.R. in Fairfax and the "Big White House" of F.D.R. in Washington, D.C. Like many jokes, this one had an element of truth. Fred Richardson was a frequent invitee to political parties in Washington, and to the White House of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

On April 7, 1916, F. D. Richardson was appointed Commissioner of Accounts for Fairfax County, Virginia by Judge J. B. T. Thornton. The next day Richardson appeared before his father, the Clerk of Court, to take the oath of office prescribed by law. Richardson succeeded E. R. Holbrook who resigned.⁴

F. D. Richardson's involvement in the early improvement of the County infrastructure was covered in the local press of the day. On the criminal side was a report, circa 1914, that Richardson was paid \$20 out of the County levy for, "Defending prisoners per order of the court." By 1917 he had become an officer of the small local bar association, and in 1918, Ballard and Richardson moved into "new" offices on Payne Street. The move was from the upstairs to the downstairs of the Ballard Building following improvements. The Fairfax Red Cross moved into the former offices of Ballard and Richardson. In August 1919, Ballard and Richardson dissolved their relationship, and that same month F. D. Richardson purchased the Ballard Building on Payne Street from Captain J. W. Ballard.

In addition to being a prominent local attorney, F. D. Richardson was a bank officer, a director of an electric company, an appointee to the Town Council, and remained continuously an officer in various capacities of the local Fairfax bar association.⁵ In 1928 when a judgeship was made vacant, the local Bar urged F. D. Richardson's appointment. The newspapers of the day reported that he was a highly regarded attorney and a clear choice to be endorsed for the local judgeship. Richardson never opted for the judgeship, preferring instead to build his law practice.⁶

¹ Captain F. D. Richardson (Fred Richardson's grandfather) became Clerk of Court in 1834. He served in that capacity continuously for fifty (50) years until his death in 1884. He was succeeded by his son, F. W. Richardson (Fred Richardson's father), who served continuously in that capacity for fifty-four (54) years until his death in 1938.

² The practice of lending clients' money at the clients' direction secured by deeds of trust on real estate continued among the older Fairfax lawyers well into the modern era. Although no guarantees were given, the lawyer always felt duty bound to stand behind the loans and see that they were paid. In a few cases lawyers, or their surviving partners, experienced some heartburn from this practice.

³ W. T. Woodson was highly respected, and the high school on Route 236 bears his name.

⁴ A partner in the Firm served as Commissioner of Accounts of Fairfax County from the appointment of F. D. Richardson in 1916 until 2006. Richardson served thirty-eight (38) years until his death in 1954, when he was succeeded by Robert J. McCandlish, Jr. McCandlish served for thirty-three (33) years, when he was succeeded in 1989 by Jesse B. Wilson, III. McCandlish continued to serve as Deputy Commissioner of Accounts until his retirement from the practice of law in 1991. Wilson continued to serve as Commissioner of Accounts until his retirement in 2006. Wilson was succeeded by John H. ("Jack") Rust, Jr., a former principal in the Firm.

⁵ Among the many areas in which he served, **F. D. Richardson** was a corporal in the Virginia National Guard at the Alexandria Armory during World War I, was active in the community, a member of Henry Masonic Lodge in Fairfax, the Fairfax Rotary Club, the Country Club of Fairfax, and a member of the vestry at Truro Episcopal Church in Fairfax. He was also on the Board of Directors of Arlington Fairfax Savings & Loan.

⁶ **F. D. Richardson's reported cases:** *Times-Dispatch Pub. Co. v. Zoll*, 148 Va. 850, 139 S.E. 505, (1927); *Wilson v. Brown*, 136 Va. 634, 118 S.E. 88, (1923).