The Library of Virginia maintains a collection of published materials—books, newspapers, periodicals, and electronic resources—which can provide invaluable resources for genealogical research, especially when used in conjunction with archival materials. Many of these published materials are guides, summaries, or finding aids to the primary documents and records found in the archives, here and elsewhere. In addition, many authors have published their research on family lines or local and institutional histories. Further, because of the age and depth of the Library’s collection of Virginia materials, it is often possible to find materials relating directly to an individual of some prominence, such as speeches, broadsides or biographical sketches.

“How Books Are Arranged at the Library of Virginia” provides a brief overview of the Library of Congress classification system and a map of the reading rooms; however, the materials in the reading rooms of the Library of Virginia comprise only a fraction of the library’s collections. The rest are housed in closed stacks and must be requested and sent to the circulation desk. Patrons in the library may request their selections through the online catalog themselves or request assistance from staff at the reference desks.

The Library has an old and varied collection of materials; however, this depth and variety sometimes make it difficult to identify the items you want. Any of the reference staff will be happy to assist in searching the catalog or locating items. Telephone (804-692-3777) and email reference (refdesk@lva.lib.va.us) is also available for information about the collections. Please do not hesitate to ask for assistance whenever necessary.

FAMILY HISTORIES OR GENEALOGIES

The Library of Virginia owns a number of published family histories, primarily for families with Virginia connections. Although the documentation in these books varies widely, many useful leads can be obtained for filling in blanks in genealogical charts.

Family histories are located in the closed stacks and must be requested through the online catalog. They can be found in the catalog by performing a subject search on the family name always followed by the word family (e.g., Carter family).
Published Materials for Genealogists

In addition, there are titles that cover a number of Virginia families such as:


COUNTY AND CITY HISTORIES AND RECORD ABSTRACTS

These materials include local histories; abstracts of local record books, including wills, deeds, and order books; marriage records; compilations of census records for a locality; and a variety of other local history compilations. The advantages to searching these books are that they can be easier to read than the original records, they may provide a compilation of materials from more than one source, they are often indexed, and they give direct citations to the original sources. Some disadvantages are that these compilations have not been done for every locality, they vary in quality, there are often gaps in the years covered, and sometimes the compilers have made errors. Thus, these sources can be valuable tools when used in conjunction with the local records, but they are not a substitute for searching the primary sources.

Most of these resources for Virginia localities can be found in the Library reading rooms (and online catalog) in the F232 – F234 call number range. They are arranged alphabetically by county and then by city. Similar materials for localities in surrounding states are found in the call number ranges immediately preceding and following the Virginia materials. Most of the books about Virginia localities can be found in the reading rooms; however, it is a good idea to do a subject search on any locality being researched (e.g., Henrico County, Va.—genealogy sources) to call down any items housed only in the stacks.

Sometimes, a researcher does not know which county to look for family records in. For the post-1800 time period, checking the census indexes may be helpful in determining a county to review. In addition, there are some compilations of county records for both the pre- and post-1800 periods that may be helpful for identifying a locality to research. These compilations include:

  Reflecting and expanding Torrence’s work is the digital Index to Wills and Administrations prepared by Library of Virginia staff members at <http://eagle.vsla.edu/torrence/>.


**CITY DIRECTORIES**

City directories often provide information about urban residents, including place of employment and names of other household members. Individual entries may be arranged alphabetically by surname as well as by address and, more recently, by telephone number. Sometimes it is helpful to “follow” a person across a number of years and take note of neighbors and other people with the same surname. The Library of Virginia has an extensive collection of directories for Virginia cities and towns, including some dating back to the early 19th century. Availability may be determined by conducting a subject search in the online catalog: *Locality Name—directories*. A guide to these materials and their locations is available at the reference desks.

**AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCES**

Guides to resources and special methodologies for locating African American ancestors include:


Record indexes and abstracts pertaining to African Americans are included with the Local histories and record abstracts. To view many of these titles perform a subject search for “African Americans—Virginia—County name.”

Of special note is a resource that contains family histories or genealogies for the majority (perhaps more than 80 percent) of those counted as “all other free persons” in the 1790 and 1800 censuses:


**CHURCH RESOURCES**

The Library of Virginia has a large collection of church histories that includes broad overviews of denominations as well as narratives of specific churches within a denomination, for example:

*Encyclopedia of the Brethren* or
*History of Daleville Church of the Brethren*

Generally denominations are grouped alphabetically (e.g., Episcopal Church, Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church).

It is particularly helpful to perform both subject and keyword searches in the online catalog when looking for these types of materials as they may be classified in a variety of subject areas depending on the primary focus of the work.

Colonial Church of England parishes and their descendant institutions are described in a set of three works:


**Published Materials for Genealogists**

A list of published registers and vestry books, identifying the parish, dates, call numbers, county, and type of record is available at the reference desks.

**GENEALOGICAL MAGAZINES**

Local historical and genealogical societies often publish articles of genealogical interest in their bulletins, newsletters, and journals. The Library tries to collect all these materials from Virginia organizations. They are a valuable source of genealogical information that is often ignored. The Periodical Source Index (PERSI), indexes such articles by place (county and state), family name, and type of information (e.g., cemetery records, military records, biography, etc.). The print version of PERSI consists of two parts: a retrospective compilation from 1847 through 1985 and yearly updates from 1986 forward. An online version of PERSI is available on the AncestryPlus subscription database available in the Library of Virginia reading rooms.

Another index to genealogical periodicals and other materials, the American Genealogical–Biographical Index or AGBI (Z5313 U5 A55) is located in the West Reading Room. At present there are around 220 volumes, (A - Z and Supplements). Full citations to the materials indexed are available only in Volumes 1, 6, 10, 34, and 54. This index is aimed more toward sources for New England families, but the Library of Virginia does own a number of the materials indexed. In particular, the genealogical columns from the Boston Transcript (Fiche 52) are indexed and copies of these columns are available in the microfiche section of the East Reading Room. A searchable electronic version of AGBI is also available on AncestryPlus in the Library of Virginia reading rooms.

If a source identified in these indexes is not available in the Library, a patron may be able to obtain a copy through the interlibrary loan service.

**THE VIRGINIA HISTORICAL INDEX**

Also known as Swem's Index after the name of its compiler, this is one of the most important research guides for Virginia historical and genealogical researchers. It provides a comprehensive index to eight publications:

- Calendar of Virginia State Papers
- Hening's Statutes at Large
- Lower Norfolk Antiquary
- Virginia Historical Register
- Tyler's Quarterly Magazine
- Virginia Magazine of History and Biography
- William & Mary Quarterly, First Series
- William & Mary Quarterly, Second Series

The index is outstanding because it lists not only general subjects and important names, but also every name mentioned in every article. Because the articles in these periodicals cover a wide range of topics, abstracts, and transcriptions, this is a good source for locating a personal or family name in a locality.

There are copies of the Virginia Historical Index and all the volumes of the titles indexed in both the East and West reading rooms near the reference desks.

**VIRGINIA NEWSPAPERS**

The Library of Virginia has an extensive collection of historical and current newspapers. Unfortunately, locating specific genealogical information in them can be difficult, because, for the most part, few indexes exist for these papers. There are, however, a number of finding aids to various newspapers that may be useful. A bibliography, “Selected Indexing of Virginia Newspapers,” compiled by locality, is available at the reference desks and on the Library of Virginia Web site in the “Newspapers and Periodicals” section under “What We Have” <http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwehave/news/guide_selectindex.htm>. Electronic, full-text indexes of the Richmond Times Dispatch (1986–Current), the Newport News Daily Press (1989–Current), the Norfolk Virginian Pilot (1990–Current), the Roanoke Times (1990–Current), the Staunton Daily News Leader (2002–Current), and the Washington Post (1977–Current) are available in the reading rooms.

Back issues of newspapers are generally available in microfilm and can be located by executing a title search (e.g., Virginia Herald) in the online catalog or the “Newspapers in Virginia Database.” Some very commonly used titles are located in the microfilm cabinets in
the West Reading Room. Others must be requested from the stacks in the same manner as books. A listing of newspapers by locality is available at each reference desk.

The most complete and detailed catalog of Virginia newspapers has been developed by the Virginia Newspaper Project, sponsored by the Library of Virginia with the direct participation of the University of Virginia, the College of William and Mary, and the Virginia Historical Society. The goal of the Project is to locate, identify, catalog, and preserve newspapers with American imprints housed in repositories throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Newspapers in Virginia Database generated by the project includes catalog records for almost 6,000 individual newspaper titles and identifies the holdings of these newspapers in libraries around the state. This database is also available on the Library of Virginia Web site in the “Newspapers and Periodicals” section under “What We Have.”

**SHIPS’ PASSENGER LISTS**

Tracing ancestors back across the ocean is a source of frustration for many researchers. It is especially difficult for those whose ancestors immigrated to colonial Virginia because Virginia had no main port of entry. Thus, lists of passengers arriving in the colony have not survived as they have for other ports such as Philadelphia or Boston. One source of implied immigration to Virginia is *Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants* (F225 N84). These records provide important documentation of immigration because of the policy of granting land (50 acres), called a “headright,” for each person transported to the colony at private expense. The necessity of naming the persons transported in order to receive the grants has resulted in records indicating early immigrants. The seven-volume set covers the period from 1623 through 1776.

In addition, LVA does have published compilations of passengers to America such as:


Similar publications can be found by performing a subject search for the term “ships—passenger lists.”

**MILITARY RECORDS AND UNIT HISTORIES**

The Library of Virginia has a range of books indexing or outlining military records and rosters for Virginia from colonial times through World War II and other Twentieth Century conflicts.

**COLONIAL SOLDIERS**

Published Materials for Genealogists

**REVOLUTIONARY WAR**


Contains Appendix B. “Lists of the Revolutionary War Veterans Buried or Recognized at Specific Locations in Virginia”: B-1, Index of Veterans; B-2, Veterans by Locality of Burial (Counties); B-2, Veterans by Locality of Burial (cities); B-4, French Memorial Cemetery.


**WAR OF 1812**


**MEXICAN WAR**


**CIVIL WAR**


*Virginia Regimental History Series*. Lynchburg or Appomattox, Va.: H. E. Howard Publishing, 1982–. E581.5 1st–


**THE POST CIVIL WAR PERIOD**

On the Library of Virginia Web site, the “Virginia Military Dead Database,” <http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwehave/mil/vmd/vmdintro.htm>, contains data on more than 6,300 Virginia men and women who have died in service in peacetime and in war since 1898. The database pulls together information from a wide variety of sources to make it more accessible.

**SPANISH AMERICAN WAR**


*A guide to units and a review of Virginia unit events in the Spanish American War.*


*Muster out rolls for Virginia units serving in United States Service during the Spanish American War (pp. 172–414). These contain names, date mustered in, and place of residence, as well as losses and cause of loss.*


**WORLD WARS I AND II**

Virginia. Adjutant General’s Office. *Initial Muster Rolls, Organizations Virginia National Guard Called into Federal Service for War against Germany, and Discharged from Virginia National Guard by Draft into Federal Service on August 5, 1917*. [Richmond, 1920]. UA502 A4 1919

*Reports for 1920 and 1921 contain lists of Virginians who died in World War I.*


**VIRGINIANA**

In 1975, the Virginia State Library published a two-volume bibliography, *Virginiana in the Printed Book Collections of the Virginia State Library.* Although many materials have been added in the last 25 years, this compilation of 22,000 titles still provides a useful insight into the depth and nature of the collection different from that comprehended from a catalog screen.

**ONLINE COLLECTIONS**

In addition to the many print materials outlined above, the Library of Virginia Web site <http://www.lva.lib.va.us/> provides a number of databases of genealogical interest in the “What We Have” section. These databases include images of archival materials and card files formerly available only by visiting the Library. Examples include the Land Office Patents and Grants Database, the Virginia Historical Inventory, and the Confederate Pension Rolls, Veterans and Widows Database among many others.

Gail Tatum
Reference Services
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