

## A Guide to Resources

The Library of Virginia was created by the General Assembly in 1823 to organize, care for, and manage the state's growing collection of books and official records. Today the Library houses a vast collection of materials on Virginia government, history, and culture. In addition to managing and preserving its printed, manuscript, map, and photograph collections, the Library supplies research and reference assistance to state officials; provides consulting services to state and local government agencies and to Virginia's public libraries; administers numerous federal, state, and local grant programs; publishes books on Virginia history; and offers the public a wide array of educational programs. An experienced staff is available to provide advice and assistance in using the rich and varied resources in the collections. For more on the Library's history and holdings, see *The Common Wealth: Treasures from the Collections of the Library of Virginia*, edited by Sandra Gioia Treadway and Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr. (1997).

## Manuscript Sources

As the repository of the commonwealth's historically valuable records, the Archives houses a wealth of materials containing genealogical source material. Among these holdings are records of the colonial and state governments; copies of extant county court records such as wills, deeds, orders, and marriage bonds; church records; personal papers; business records; organization records; cemetery records; Bible records; and genealogical notes and charts. There is no comprehensive index to these holdings, but researchers may consult the online Archives & Manuscripts catalog, as well as a variety of published archival guides. Researchers may also consult a series of research notes compiled by the Archives staff.

## Tax Records

While there are some extant colonial tithable records, the collection generally begins in 1782 and is composed of personal property and land tax lists arranged by county/city, which are stored on microfilm up to the year 1900. These include counties now in West Virginia. They are unindexed and contain the names and/or numbers of taxable persons. An in-house guide to tithable records is available. Personal property tax lists for 1787 were published in *The 1787 Census of Virginia* (1988), compiled by Netti Schreiner-Yantis and Florene S. Love.

## Military Records

The Archives holds documents attesting to the military service of some Virginians during the colonial period (mainly the French and Indian War), the American Revolution, and the Civil War, as well as limited information about Virginia's participants in the War of 1812, World War I, and other wars. Most records of military service contain only the name of the individual and the unit in which he served; rarely do they contain either genealogical or biographical information.

**Colonial service.** Very few muster rolls of colonial militia units are extant. Most of those that survive are printed in such secondary sources as *Virginia Colonial Militia, 1651–1776* (1905; reprint, 1973), edited by William Armstrong Crozier; *Colonial Soldiers of the South, 1732–1774* (1983), by Murtie June Clark; *Virginia's Colonial Soldiers* (1988), by Lloyd DeWitt Bockstruck; local county histories; and various volumes of the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, indexed through 1930 in Swem's *Virginia Historical Index* (1934–1936; reprint, 1965).

Some muster rolls of units that participated in the French and Indian War, 1754–1763, and Dunmore's War, 1774, have survived. Additionally, volumes seven and eight of *Hening's Statutes at Large* (reprint, 1969) contain individual references to the names of many participants.

Because veterans of the French and Indian War were eligible for bounty lands in the western and southwestern parts of Virginia, affidavits regarding their military service, having been accepted by a county court, eventually came to the Land Office. Abstracts of some county court orders regarding veterans' claims also are preserved in the Land Office records.

The most comprehensive index to these sources is Hamilton J. Eckenrode's *List of Colonial Soldiers of Virginia* (1917; reprint, 1980). Eckenrode's list does not reflect information contained in the county court order books or the *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia* (1925–1966). A thorough search of these sources occasionally reveals the commissioning of an officer, but neither the order books nor the council journals contain rosters of company members.

**American Revolution.** Military service records for Virginians who fought with either a state or Continental Line unit include account books, pay and muster rolls, and affidavits testifying to a person's service. Almost no records have survived for those men who served in county militia units. Revolutionary War records are indexed in *Virginia Soldiers of the American Revolution* (1912–1913; reprint, 1989), compiled by Hamilton J. Eckenrode; and John H. Gwathmey's *Historical Register of Virginians in the Revolution: Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, 1775–1783* (1938; reprint, 1979). These compilations include references to secondary material and to items not in the Library of Virginia's collection, as does *A Guide to Virginia Military Organizations in the American Revolution, 1774–1787* (1978), compiled by E. M. Sanchez-Saavedra.

Records pertaining to service in Virginia Continental Line, State Line, and miscellaneous units were abstracted by the U.S. War Department and are available at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C. The Library has microfilm copies of these records for reference use. Photocopies may be ordered from the National Archives.

The National Archives and Records Administration  
700 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20408  
<http://www.archives.gov/index.html>

Additionally, Land Office, state pension, and public service claim records contain information on American Revolutionary War service. Only those men (or their heirs) who served for three or more years in a state or Continental Line unit or who died in service were entitled to bounty land. The amount of land depended on the individual's rank and length of service. Lands awarded for such service were located in the Virginia Military Districts of Kentucky and Ohio. Virginia kept no record of bounty land grants after issuing the warrant that entitled the individual to a grant. The number of the warrant issued to a specific person can be found through an index to the Land Office military certificates. The bounty warrants and land office certificates are available on microfilm at the Library of Virginia, as are rejected claims for bounty land. Searchable databases and digitized documents are available on the Library's Web site. To determine the disposition of a particular warrant, researchers must write to either of the following:

Kentucky Department for Library and Archives  
P.O. Box 537  
Frankfort, Kentucky 40602  
<http://www.kdla.ky.gov/>

Ohio Historical Society Archives  
1982 Velma Avenue  
Columbus, Ohio 43211  
<http://www.ohiohistory.org/contact.html>

Virginia had no general pension law for veterans of the American Revolution. Each individual case was brought before the legislature for action. Approximately six hundred acts for the relief of specific persons were passed by the legislature and are available in the published *Acts of Assembly*. The records of federal pensions awarded for Revolutionary War service are in the custody of the National Archives. The Library has microfilm copies of these pension applications for reference use.

To keep the state and Continental troops supplied, it was necessary to obtain goods and services from residents. These public service claims can be located through an online database on the Library's Web site. Court booklets and lists were abstracted and published in *Virginia Revolutionary Publick Claims* (1992), by Janice L. Abercrombie and Richard Slatten.

**War of 1812.** Proof of military service during the War of 1812 may be found in two printed volumes: *Pay Rolls of Militia Entitled to Land Bounty under the Act of Congress of Sept. 28, 1850* (1851) and *Muster Rolls of the Virginia Militia in the War of 1812, Being a Supplement to the Pay Rolls* (1852), reprinted as *Virginia Militia in the War of 1812 from Rolls in the Auditor's Office at Richmond* (2001). A searchable index to these rolls is available on the Library's Web site. Virginia did not grant bounty land or pensions for War of 1812 service. Since many soldiers serving in the War of 1812 ultimately were paid by the federal government, records of their service may be on file in the National Archives. A useful index to these records is Patrick G. Wardell's *War of 1812: Virginia Bounty Land and Pension Applicants* (1987).

**Civil War.** At the end of the Civil War in 1865, most surviving Confederate War Department records were confiscated by the Union armies. The National Archives in Washington, D.C., preserves the original service records created for Union and Confederate soldiers from each state. The Library of Virginia has microfilm copies of the following service records for reference use: Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Virginia, Compiled Service Records of Confederate General and Staff Officers and Non-Regimental Enlisted Men, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations Raised Directly by the Confederate Government, Compiled Records Showing Service of Virginia Military Units in Confederate Organizations, and Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Virginia. All requests for copies should be directed to the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C.

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Washington, D.C. 20408  
<http://www.archives.gov/index.html>

In 1888 the General Assembly of Virginia passed the first of several acts providing pensions to Confederate soldiers, sailors, and marines disabled in action and to the widows of those killed in action. Subsequent acts broadened the coverage to include all veterans, their widows, and their unmarried or widowed daughters and sisters. Applications contain statements pertaining to the service record of the applicants and may include medical evaluations, information about the income and property of the veterans or their widows, and the date and place of marriages in the case of widows. The collection also includes claims submitted by more than five hundred African Americans who worked as cooks, herdsmen, laborers, servants, or teamsters in the Confederate army.

Applications for these pensions, which were limited to Virginia residents, are indexed and available on microfilm in the West Reading Room and on the Library's Web site, along with an online database of Confederate Disability Applications and the R. E. Lee Camp Soldiers Home.

## Land Office Records

Records of the Virginia Land Office constitute the oldest continuous series of state records held by the Library. Those most frequently used for genealogical research are the recorded copies of land patents and grants. A patent is the document by which the Crown gave or sold lands; a grant is the same kind of instrument issued by the Commonwealth. To obtain land, a person first paid money into the treasury and was given a warrant (called a right or certificate under the Crown). After the desired land was surveyed, all papers were returned to the Land Office, where the claim was examined and recorded. It then was sent to the governor to be signed. Before the final document was signed, the warrant or survey could be transferred or assigned to another party. After it was signed, the land involved could be transferred only through action in either the county court or General Court. Patents and grants both contain the name of the person receiving the land, the county in which it was located, the number of acres, the metes and bounds, and the date of issuance. A survey provides the number of acres, the metes and bounds, and usually includes a plat. The warrant gives the person's name, the date of issuance, and the amount of land to which the warrantee was entitled.

The Archives does not have a comprehensive index to all Land Office records, but the patents and grants are indexed by the name of the patentees or grantees. The index and the patents and grants are available in the West Reading Room and on the Library's Web site. To search for a specific patent or grant, it is necessary to know the name of the patentee or grantee, the county in which the land was located, and the approximate date of the document. Neither warrants nor surveys are extant prior to 1779. It also is difficult to determine the exact location of lands issued by patent or grant. A helpful published source is the multivolume *Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Office Patents and Grants*, abstracted by Nell Marion Nugent.

The area between the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers, extending westward to their sources, is known as the Northern Neck. This area, which included lands now in West Virginia, was held by proprietors from 1649 until it reverted to the commonwealth in 1781. After 1690 and until 1874, grants in the Northern Neck were entered in a separate series of volumes, for which there is an index. Many colonial Northern Neck surveys and warrants are extant. Helpful published sources are Gertrude E. Gray's *Virginia Northern Neck Land Grants, 1694–1862* and Peggy S. Joyner's *Abstracts of Northern Neck Warrants and Surveys*.

Warrants issued on the basis of military service during the French and Indian War and the American Revolution and preemption certificates issued to early settlers in the far western areas of the state complete the major series within the Land Office records.

## Vital Statistics

Early official records of births and deaths in Virginia are almost nonexistent, although sometimes such information can be located through church registers, family Bibles, or county court records. Few marriage records prior to 1730 survive in parish registers or county court record books, even though marriage bonds were required by law as early as March 1661. As a rule, these records list only names of the bride and groom, the names of the security, and the date issued. The names of parents and the ages of the couple seldom are found in pre-1853 marriage records.

Although an act passed in 1853 mandated that the state record vital statistics, birth and death records were not kept by the commonwealth from 1896 through 1912. Microfilm copies of births (1853–1896), deaths (1853–1896, 1912–1939), and marriages (1853–1935) are available in the Archives for reference use. Certified copies are available *only* from the Office of Vital Records and Health Statistics, P.O. Box 1000, Richmond, Virginia 23218-1000 and [www.vdh.state.va.us/Vital\\_Records/index.htm](http://www.vdh.state.va.us/Vital_Records/index.htm). Researchers who visit the Library can make copies from microfilm and borrow microfilm through interlibrary loan.

## County Records

Microfilm copies of extant Virginia court record books from the dates of county formation up to 1865, as well as some later volumes, are available for research and many are also available through interlibrary loan. County records generally include wills, deeds, court orders or minutes, and marriage bonds. For some localities there are guardians' records, survey books, and various other records. Many of these volumes contain individual indexes, which frequently are incomplete. General indexes usually are available for wills, deeds, and marriages.

The Library has a limited number of microfilm records from counties in the present states of West Virginia, Kentucky, and North Carolina. These are available for use in the West Reading Room only.

Chancery records can provide information useful in genealogical research since they often address the division of estates, the dissolution of business partnerships, the resolution of land disputes, and divorce. Check the chancery database on the Library's Web site, where cases from selected localities are indexed.

Court records for a number of Virginia counties have been lost through fire, war, or other disasters. The greatest losses occurred in Appomattox, Buchanan, Buckingham, Caroline, Charles City, Dinwiddie, Elizabeth City, Gloucester, Hanover, James City, King and Queen, King William, Mathews, Nansemond, New Kent, Prince George, Prince William, Rockingham, Stafford, and Warwick Counties. Many other counties have suffered partial losses of records. Check the Burned Record Counties Database on the Library's Web site for a growing collection of local court records, principally deeds and probate records, found by staff members while processing chancery cases and other materials.

## Census Records

Neither the 1790 nor the 1800 federal census returns for Virginia have survived. A substitute 1790 census for thirty-nine of the commonwealth's then-eighty counties was compiled from the 1782–1785 state enumerations and published in *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790. Records of the State Enumerations: 1782–1785* (1908; reprint, 1990). Those counties not included in this publication are covered in Augusta B. Fothergill's *Virginia Tax Payers, 1782–1787* (1940; reprint, 1978).

Federal census returns for Virginia (and their indexes) are available in the West Reading Room for 1810 through 1880 and for 1900 through 1930. Before 1850 the returns name only the heads of household and give statistics for the sexes and ages of other household members. Beginning with the returns of 1850, the name, race, sex, age, and birthplace of each member of the household are given. Special non-population schedules are also available for Virginia. Census records for states adjacent to Virginia and some other states also are available on microfilm, and records for all states and years to 1930 are available on databases in the reading rooms.

## Church Records

*A Guide to Church Records in the Library of Virginia* lists these records in the Archives collection, some of which date from the colonial period and most of which are administrative. They contain very few references to births, deaths, or marriages. Represented denominations include Baptist, Christian (Disciples of Christ), Episcopal, Jewish, Lutheran and German Reformed, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Society of Friends (Quakers), and Unitarians. There is no master index to information recorded in the materials in this collection, and individual volumes usually are not indexed. Records of a small number of churches have been transcribed and published.

As administrative units of the established church in Virginia until 1786, the Anglican parishes were charged by law with keeping records of births or baptisms, marriages, and deaths or burials. Few of these registers are extant, and all that survive have been published. Each parish also was required to keep minutes of the meetings of the vestry as a record of the administrative affairs of the church. Such vestry books generally do not contain vital statistics. *The Hornbook of Virginia History* contains convenient cross-referenced lists of parishes of the established church of Virginia between 1607 and 1785.

Other denominations were not required by law to record births, deaths, and marriages; therefore, the types of records and the information recorded therein vary. Although some churches did record vital statistics, most kept only records of business meetings and financial affairs. Published church records can be located by searching the Library's online catalog.

## Private Papers

The Archives has a collection of personal papers, such as correspondence, journals, and diaries, as well as collections of business, organization, cemetery, and military records. These materials generally are not prime genealogical sources. Consult the Library's online Archives & Manuscripts catalog for holdings information and the *Guide to the Personal Papers Collection at the Library of Virginia* (2008), compiled by Trenton E. Hizer.

## Bible Records and Genealogical Notes

Photocopies of pages of family data recorded in Bibles and unpublished genealogical notes and charts pertaining to Virginia families are served in the Archives Reading Room, where special rules governing use and copying apply. These collections may be searched through the online catalog, and published guides are also available. The bible records may be viewed on the Library's Web site through the Archives & Manuscripts catalog.

## State Records

The Archives holds many records of Virginia's state government dating from 1776. Records that may be helpful in genealogical research include Legislative Petitions; governors' papers; and records of the Auditor of Public Accounts, Departments of Corrections and Mental Health, Secretary of the Commonwealth, and Board of Public Works. Some finding aids are available.

## Maps

The large collection of maps in the Archives primarily consists of state, county, and regional maps of Virginia. Although the earliest authentic engraved map of Virginia dates from 1590, few detailed county maps were made prior to 1820. The Library does not have indexes to every place-name, watercourse, town, or plantation identified on the maps, nor does it have property ownership atlases, with rare exceptions. Consult the Library's Web site for map holdings. Useful reference works are:

Earl Gregg Swem, *Maps Relating to Virginia* (1989).

Ray O. Hummel Jr., ed., *A List of Places Included in Nineteenth-Century Virginia Directories* (1960).

Virginius Cornick Hall Jr., ed., "Virginia Post Offices, 1798–1859." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 81 (1973): 49–97.

Joseph Martin, *A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of Virginia* (1835; reprint, 2000).

Richard W. Stephenson and Marianne M. McKee, eds., *Virginia in Maps: Four Centuries of Settlement, Growth, and Development* (2000).

## Records of Areas Once Part of Virginia

Local court records, such as deeds, wills, and marriage bonds, were maintained by local officials in each county. When the states of Kentucky and West Virginia were established in 1792 and 1863, respectively, their local records were retained in the counties. Therefore, they are not part of the Archives collection. The Archives does have certain Virginia state records pertaining to these areas, including personal property tax lists, land grants, and legislative petitions. West Virginia land tax lists, 1782–1900, are available on microfilm. Consult the guide in the West Reading Room for the exact dates available for each county. Published abstracts of some county records may also be available.

Fragmentary West Virginia vital statistics (1853–1896) are available on microfilm in the West Reading Room. These are arranged by county and are not indexed. Selected microfilm copies of West Virginia, Kentucky, and North Carolina county records have been purchased by the Friends of the Archives and are available in the West Reading Room. An in-house guide to these county holdings is available.

## African American Family Research

Handbooks for African American family research are available at the Library, including *African American Genealogical Sourcebook* (1995), edited by Paula K. Byers; *Local Sources for African-American Family Historians: Using County Court Records and Census Returns* (1993), by Joan W. Peters; and *Finding a Place Called Home: A Guide to African-American Genealogy and Historical Identity* (1999), by Dee Parmer Woodtor. Researchers may also wish to consult vital statistics, census schedules, and county and city court records, and to search the online catalog. An in-house guide to Free Black Records is available in the Archives Research Room. Selected materials are described in a pamphlet, "Resources for African American Genealogical Research," available in the Reading Rooms.

## Printed Sources

### Virginia Genealogical Research

Published genealogies of individual families are found in the Library's online Books & Journals catalog under family names, as well as under the names of authors or compilers. Most local histories are accessible under the city or county name. Search the online catalog for family histories, local histories, court abstracts, and genealogical and historical periodicals.

Eric G. Grundset, *Research in Virginia* (1998).

Carol McGinnis, *Virginia Genealogy: Sources and Resources* (1993).

### Virginia History

Emily J. Salmon and Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr., eds. *The Hornbook of Virginia History: A Ready-Reference Guide to the Old Dominion's People, Places, and Past* (4th ed., 1994).

This source provides the names and dates of formation for counties and independent cities, as well as parishes before 1785. The *Hornbook* also contains general information about the state's history, landmarks, institutions, executive officers, and major national officeholders.

Martha W. Hiden, *How Justice Grew; Virginia Counties: An Abstract of Their Formation* (1957; reprint, 1992).

Morgan P. Robinson, *Virginia Counties: Those Resulting from Virginia Legislation* (1916; reprint, 1992).

Earl Gregg Swem, comp., *Virginia Historical Index* (1934–1936; reprint, 1965).

An index to the following publications: *Hening's Statutes at Large*, volumes 1–13 (1619–1792); *The Lower Norfolk County Virginia Antiquary*, volumes 1–5 (1895–1906); *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, volumes 1–10 (1919–1929); *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, volumes 1–11 (1652–1869); *Virginia Historical Register and Literary Advertiser*, volumes 1–6 (1848–1853); *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, volumes 1–38 (1893–1930); and *The William and Mary College Quarterly Magazine*, first series, volumes 1–27 (1892–1919), and second series, volumes 1–10 (1921–1930).

### Virginia Laws

*Hening's Statutes at Large*, volumes 1–13 (1619–1792).

Samuel Shepherd, ed., *The Statutes at Large of Virginia . . . Being a Continuation of Hening, 1792–1807*, volumes 1–3 (1835–1836; reprint, 1970).

Waverly K. Winfree, comp., *The Laws of Virginia, Being a Supplement to Hening's Statutes at Large, 1700–1750* (1971).

## Special Collections

The Library's Special Collections Department holds collections of photographs, prints, broadsides, rare books, and art work. The printed material is catalogued in the Library's online Books & Journals catalog; there are in-house guides to the visual collection. Researchers should contact Special Collections to search or view materials.

## State & Federal Documents

The Library is a depository for printed Virginia and federal documents, including many published by the United States Congress. The Documents Room is located on the second floor of the Library and staff members can assist in a search for these printed governmental records.

## Information by Mail

The Archives staff does not undertake genealogical research. A list of professional researchers acquainted with our holdings is available on the Library's Web site and by request. The Library does not make referrals. Please contact the researcher for information concerning fees and services. The researchers listed establish their own rates and work independently of the Library of Virginia. Any agreement entered into is a contract between private parties and does not include the Library.

Some archival materials may be copied, and others are available on microfilm through interlibrary loan. The Archives staff responds to specific requests including the full name of the individual concerned, the specific document desired, the locality in which the person resided or in which the document was recorded, and the approximate date of recordation. For Archives Record Request forms, and information on the cost of copies, check the Library's Web site ([www.lva.virginia.gov](http://www.lva.virginia.gov)) or call 804.692.3888.

Address inquiries about archival and manuscript research to Archives Research Services, The Library of Virginia, 800 East Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219-3491. Inquiries about research in published materials should be directed to Library Reference Services at the same address.

## Other Repositories

Other repositories in Virginia have collections from which genealogical information might be obtained, including:

Alderman Library  
University of Virginia  
P.O. Box 400114  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22904

Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives  
1109 West Franklin Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23220

Bull Run Regional Library  
Ruth E. Lloyd Information Center  
8051 Ashton Avenue  
Manassas, Virginia 20109

Central Rappahannock Regional Library  
1201 Caroline Street  
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22401

Danville Public Library  
511 Patton Street  
P.O. Box 3300  
Danville, Virginia 24543

Earl Gregg Swem Library  
College of William and Mary  
P.O. Box 8794  
Williamsburg, Virginia 23187

Fairfax City Regional Library  
Virginia Room  
10360 North Street  
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Handley Regional Library  
Archives Room  
100 West Piccadilly Street  
P.O. Box 58  
Winchester, Virginia 22601

John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library  
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation  
313 First Street  
P.O. Box 1776  
Williamsburg, Virginia 23187

Jones Memorial Library  
2311 Memorial Avenue  
Lynchburg, Virginia 24501

Roanoke Public Library  
706 South Jefferson Street  
Roanoke, Virginia 24016

Norfolk Public Library  
Sargeant Memorial Room  
301 East City Hall Avenue  
Norfolk, Virginia 23510

Valentine Richmond History Center  
1015 East Clay Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Virginia Baptist Historical Society  
P.O. Box 34  
University of Richmond  
Richmond, Virginia 23173

Virginia Beach Public Library  
4100 Virginia Beach Boulevard  
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23452

Virginia Historical Society  
428 North Boulevard  
P.O. Box 7311  
Richmond, Virginia 23221

William Smith Morton Library  
Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education  
3401 Brook Road  
Richmond, Virginia 23227

You may also wish to contact your local library or historical society, which may be able to provide information and assistance. Check the Library's Web site ([www.lva.virginia.gov](http://www.lva.virginia.gov)) for directories of historical societies and public libraries in Virginia.

**The Library of Virginia is open to the public between the hours of 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Saturday, except on state holidays.**

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