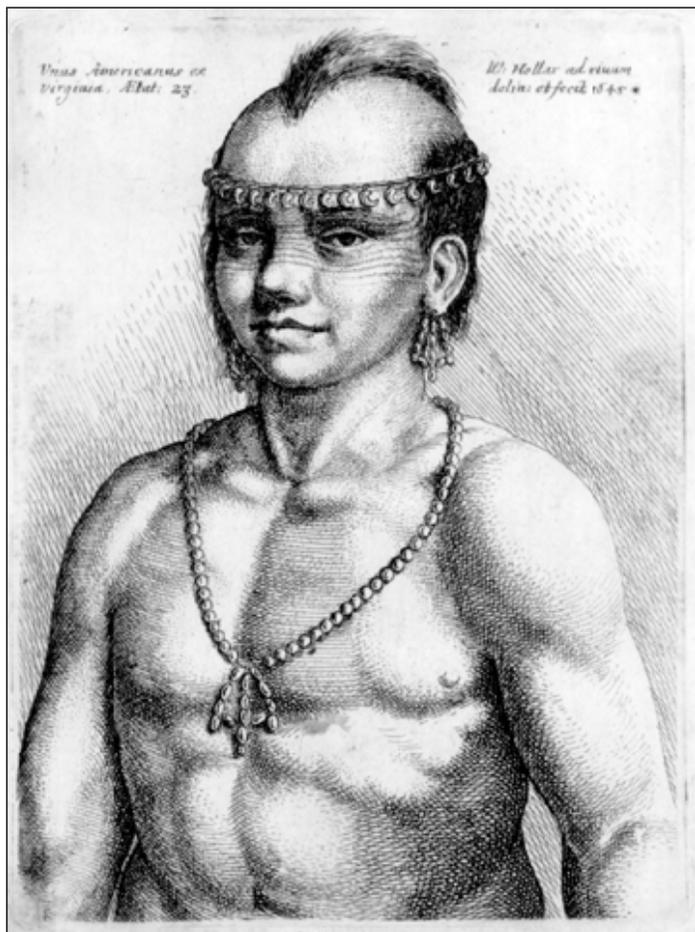


Records concerning the first Virginians—Native Americans—are scattered throughout the collections of the Library of Virginia. Indians appear in a variety of sources, including state records, local records, maps, personal papers, and church records. This bibliography describes selected archival sources on Virginia's Native Americans.

Archival holdings pertaining to Native Americans document the ongoing clash of cultures that the English colonists set in motion in 1607. Increased challenges faced the commonwealth's Indian population in 1924 with the passage of Virginia's Racial Integrity Act. It created two racial categories: pure white and everyone else (those with one-sixteenth or more African American, Native American, Asian, or southern European heritage). Walter Ashby Plecker, the first registrar of the state Bureau of Vital Statistics (1912–1946) and a proponent of eugenics, was one of the act's most vocal supporters. As registrar, he issued birth, death, and marriage certificates, and routinely changed the race of applicants from "Indian" to "Negro" (making exceptions only for the descendants of Pocahontas). Armed with the power of the state and a list of Native American surnames, Plecker aimed to reclassify every Indian in the commonwealth as African American. He intimidated midwives, wrote threatening pamphlets, and trained a generation of county clerks and health workers in his methods until his retirement in 1946. The United States Supreme Court finally struck down Virginia's Racial Integrity Act in 1967.



For a detailed listing of Indian-related materials, see the “Resources on Native Americans at the Library of Virginia” binder in the Archives Research Room.

Governor's Office, Letters Received

Early governors, like Benjamin Harrison and Edmund Randolph, employed agents, former soldiers, or itinerant merchants to traverse the frontier and keep them apprised of Indian activity and the state of Indian-settler relations. From the 1770s to the 1790s, Joseph Martin and Arthur Campbell worked for several governors, reporting on meetings of the Cherokee, Creek, and Chickasaw and occasionally sending descriptions of Indian life and culture. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, letters from Virginia's Indians to the governor asked for assistance, often entreating the chief executive to preserve their landholdings and to appoint more sympathetic tribal trustees. In a letter to Governor Henry H. Wells written in 1868, for example, the Mattaponi complained that the locals had prohibited the tribe from using the public road between their reservation and the main highway. In the first half of the twentieth century, most of the letters on Indian relations were written to seek relief from the effects of racial discrimination. In 1921, Chief George Nelson sent a letter containing a tribal roll of the Rappahannock people to Governor Westmoreland Davis, and in 1942 the Chickahominy tribal council explained in a letter to Governor Colgate Darden that their young men were eager to enlist in the military, but were resolved to serve as Indians, rather than African Americans.

Letters to the governor (and in-house guides) are available in the Archives Research Room; for a detailed listing, see the “Resources on Native Americans at the Library of Virginia” binder in the Archives Research Room. For more information on the Governor’s Papers, see Research Note 11.

Legislative Petitions

Beginning in 1776, Virginians petitioned the General Assembly to redress specific grievances. Petitions from King William County dated 23 June 1779 and 6 November 1779 listed revolutionary soldiers’ wives and their children—members of the Pamunkey and Mattaponi tribes—who had been granted a government stipend. Although the state auditor had disallowed many of the claims, John Quarles, the clerk of King William County, petitioned the General Assembly to overrule the auditor. The petition was granted.

In the early nineteenth century, many of the petitions written by Indians, or submitted on their behalf, related to disputes over land. Two of the most provocative petitions also originated in King William County. In January 1843, Thomas Gregory and forty other citizens of the county petitioned for the sale of the Pamunkey and Mattaponi reservation lands, accusing the inhabitants of being free and runaway mulatto African Americans. A counter petition from the ruling councils of the two tribes (supported by many of their white neighbors) presented evidence refuting all of the charges and asked for protection from the local landholders. The legislature upheld the Powhatan tribes’ right to their reservations.

Legislative petitions are arranged by locality and then by date. Those that concern Indians are concentrated in counties where the Indian population was considerable, including Augusta, Amherst, King William, Nansemond, Northampton, and Southampton. For more information on legislative petitions, see Research Note 18. Finding aids for the legislative petitions are located in the Archives Research Room and on the Library’s Web site; the petitions are available on microfilm in the West Reading Room.

Indian School

Indian school files, 1936–1967. Virginia Department of Education. Accession 29632.

Contain teachers’ monthly reports, catalogs, applications, school lunch program records, and correspondence. Arranged chronologically. Other sources related to Indian schools include:

Office of the Second Auditor. Accounts with city and county treasurers, 1916–1928, entry 9, concerning vocational education, Indian schools, and high schools.

State Board of Education. Account registers, 1871–1914. Accession 23350. The account registers contain chronological lists of expenses arranged by type of expenditure, including Indian school teachers.

State Board of Education. Disbursement registers of general funds, 1914–1940. Accession 23350. A chronological list of expenses paid from the General Fund, including the salaries of Indian school teachers. Arranged alphabetically by locality.

Virginia Colonial Records Project

The VCRP was established in the mid-1950s to reconstitute the record of Virginia’s rich colonial history. Repositories in Europe were surveyed for key documents, and in many cases, the documents were microfilmed. The survey reports can be searched on the Library of Virginia’s Web site. Microfilm of the records is available at the Library of Virginia and through interlibrary loan. Copies, however, must be obtained from the originating repository. See Research Note 7 for additional details.

These records contain a variety of material, including correspondence and reports between British and colonial officials (including treaties); material concerning trade, customs revenues, and shipping; and British chancery proceedings. The collection includes a report from a missionary of the Society for Propagation of the Bible on the Brafferton School in Williamsburg, the 1677 Treaty of Middle Plantation, and a sketch of the York River showing Indian towns. For a more detailed listing, see the “Resources on Native Americans at the Library of Virginia” binder in the Archives Research Room.

Colonial Papers

A collection consisting of colonial government records, including letters and petitions to the royal governors, legislation, and orders (miscellaneous microfilm reels 609–612). An in-house finding aid is available. The collection includes a 1706 petition from the “Queen and great men” of the Pamunkey tribe (folder 17, item 27), a 1766 ferry pass for seven Nansemond Indians (folder 46, item 17), and the 1744 Treaty of Lancaster (folder 41, item 14). The petition from Ann, queen of the Pamunkey, is pictured and described in *The Common Wealth: Treasures from the Collections of the Library of Virginia* (1997). For a detailed listing of Indian-related materials, see the “Resources on Native Americans at the Library of Virginia” binder in the Archives Research Room.

Other State Records

Auditor of Public Accounts. Vouchers on account, correspondence, orders, and receipts, 1779–1864. APA 17.

This series contains material concerning expenditures made by the state for a variety of temporary accounts. Also included are materials regarding contacts with Indian tribes. Arranged chronologically.

Auditor of Public Accounts. Defense of Southwestern Virginia, Col. William Preston Papers, 1774–1783. APA 223. Miscellaneous reel 655. Correspondence concerning the defense of southwestern Virginia from Loyalists and Indian allies of the British.

Commissary of Stores. Public Store (Richmond). Daybook, 14 June 1780–30 November 1780. Miscellaneous reels 406, 636. The daybook records the daily issue of items stocked in the public store to a variety of customers, including Cherokee Indians (who purchased ribbon, rum, and nails).

George Rogers Clark Papers, 1776–1795. APA 204. West Reading Room microfilm.

This is an artificial collection of records concerning George Rogers Clark and the conquest of the Old Northwest during and after the Revolutionary War. The papers contain numerous references to Indians among general correspondence, accounts, and vouchers. An index is available in-house and on the Society of Colonial Wars Web site.

King William County Marriage Register, 1853–1935, Bureau of Vital Statistics (reel 27), West Reading Room.

The register includes many Pamunkey and Mattaponi marriages listed through the years.

Virginia General Assembly. House of Delegates, Speaker, Executive Communications, Papers, 1789 October 19. Accession 36912. Misc. reel 5376. Enclosure No. 13 includes a letter from Griffin Stith enclosing a patent of the Gingaskin Indians in response to a notification of Thomas L. Savage to petition the Assembly for a law vesting these laws in himself. Also included is a list of Indians belonging to the Gingaskin tribe.

County Court Records

County court records are one of the largest and richest collections of archival material. A guide to Virginia local court records on microfilm may be found on the Library’s Web site. Through the records of the county court, researchers discover the unvarnished daily life of Virginia’s citizens. The public life of the county was recorded in detail—births, deaths, and marriages were registered, claims and counterclaims were brought, depositions were taken, judgments were rendered, and oaths were made.

Native Americans appear frequently in county court records, especially in the early years of the colony. The indexes to order books, deeds, marriage registers, and court records of judgments and chancery cases may be searched for specific names. Examples abound in counties where the Indian population was considerable, including Accomack, Charles City, Elizabeth City, Essex, Goochland, Henrico, Isle of Wight, King William, Lancaster, Middlesex, Norfolk, Northampton, Northumberland, Old Rappahannock, Richmond, Rockbridge, Southampton, Stafford, Surry, Westmoreland, and York.

Brunswick County, Superior Court of Law, Judgments, April Court 1825, *Amos, a pauper v. Hobbs*.

Lynchburg City, Superior Court of Law and Chancery, Case #1821-033 (file #236), *Charles Evans et al. v. Lewis B. Allen*.

These two cases are representative of several in Virginia, in which slaves sued and won the right to regain their freedom, based on

their ability to show descent from an Indian woman, a condition that legally turned their enslavement into assault, battery, and unlawful detainment.

Middlesex County Court Order Book 2, 1680–1694 (reel 35).

One thousand pounds of tobacco was paid as a bounty “to Captain John, an Indian in the County Levy On 5 December 1681, for killing a Wolfe.”

Northampton County, land records relating to Gingaskin Indian lands, 1795–1815.

Documents concerning a 1795 investigation of persons including free negroes living on Gingaskin land, and an 1814–1815 settlement of costs and report of commissioners appointed to terminate the reservation and divide the land between official tribe members (Accession 44548).

Rockbridge County Clerk’s correspondence [A. T. Shields with Walter A. Plecker], ca. 1912–1943.

This collection includes Plecker’s thoughts on the 1924 Atha Sorrells case, along with copies of a pamphlet distributed to county clerks by the Bureau of Vital Statistics, *Eugenics in Relation to the New Family and the Law on Racial Integrity* (1924). Plecker scrutinized county vital statistics records and regularly chastised the clerk for issuing licenses to individuals whose ancestry he considered suspicious. Plecker often threatened midwives like Mary Sorrells, who had listed the mother of an illegitimate child as white. Plecker disagreed in a letter written 15 August 1924: “We want to again warn you of the trouble you are liable to get yourself into if you do not give the correct color. It is my duty to see that this [Racial Integrity] law is obeyed and I expect to do it.” He concluded ominously, “I am waiting for someone who violated this law to have them in Court. If you want to be the first one, we will give you a chance.” Arranged chronologically. Related materials concerning the Racial Integrity Act are located in the papers of Dickenson County registrar of voters Fitzhugh Lee Sutherland (Accession 36707, box 1, folder 10).

Southampton County Court Records. Indian Records, filed in Tax and Fiscal Records, bar code 1119712; Southampton Chancery Cases: 1830-064, 1835-038, 1837-054, 1837-055, 1840-027, 1841-043, 1849-045, 1851-032, 1851-033, 1856-048, 1870-042, 1871-076, and 1871-077. The Southampton Chancery Causes are available on microfilm at the Library of Virginia and are available through interlibrary loan. Information pulled from court records concerning the Nottoway and Nansemond tribes.

Other Manuscript Collections

Bass Family Bible Record, Norfolk County, 1613–1699. Accession 26371.

This family Bible documents some of the earliest Anglo–Native American marriages in Virginia.

Jane Douglas Summers Brown. Papers, 1963–1993. Accession 34568.

Titled “Beyond the Blackwater,” this collection contains excerpts from printed and original sources pertaining to the history of the Meherrin and Nottoway Indians, as well as other associated tribes in Southside Virginia.

Clark Family Genealogical Chart. Accession 35980.

Information on the descendants of Joe Clark Sr., of Rockbridge County. The chart was compiled for a court case in which Atha Sorrells challenged the denial of a marriage license because of her alleged mixed racial lineage. The county clerk had refused to grant the marriage license, arguing that Sorrells was not of “pure white race.” State records (provided by Walter A. Plecker, the registrar of the Bureau of Vital Statistics) referred to her family as “free colored,” when in fact they were of Indian descent. Much to Plecker’s dismay, circuit court judge Henry Holt decided in Sorrell’s favor, and the license was granted.

James R. Coates. Records Concerning the Ancestry of Indians in Virginia, 1833–1947. Accession 31577.

Material on Indian genealogies that was gathered to oppose the eugenicist Walter A. Plecker, registrar of the state Bureau of Vital Statistics. The collection includes railroad passes from the early twentieth century used to identify members of the Chickahominy tribe (and distinguish them from African Americans) when they traveled by train.

Company for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England and the Parts Adjacent in America. Letter Book, 1688–1761. Accession 29408. Miscellaneous reel 562.

Letters discussing the Company's efforts to convert Indians to Christianity, establish schools, and translate religious texts. The Company sponsored missionaries in America until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War.

Draper Manuscripts. Accession 32996. West Reading Room microfilm.

Microfilm of originals housed at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Private papers, reminiscences, correspondence, maps, and genealogies collected by Lyman Copeland Draper (1815–1891). The collection is focused the history of the frontier, particularly the trans-Allegheny West. Josephine L. Harper's *Guide to the Draper Manuscripts* (1983) indexes the collection and contain numerous references to Indians. Photocopying restricted.

Elizabeth City Parish (Elizabeth City County, modern city of Hampton). Register, 1824–1889. Accession 20792.

Included with the baptisms, marriages, burials, and confirmations are entries for Indians sent from the Dakota Territory to study at Hampton Institute in the 1880s.

Joseph Sawin Ewing. Research files on Old Rappahannock County. Accession 31871, box 4.

Material gathered by Ewing on Native American towns and tribes along the Rappahannock River in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Augusta B. Fothergill. Papers, 1925–1955. Accession 35204, box 20.

Fothergill's miscellaneous subject files include information on Virginia Indians.

John Thomas Guernsey Papers. Accession 30677.

This small collection contains three items mentioning the possible origin and daily problems of the Indian community in Amherst County.

Patrick Henry. Letters, 1777–1778. Accession 20745.

Includes a letter written by Thomas Jefferson to George Rogers Clark with instructions for military plans against the Indians in the Northwest Territory.

Thomas Jefferson. Letter, 4 January 1806. Accession 20752.

Letter of greeting to a delegation of Indian tribes on their visit to Washington, D.C.

Thomas Jefferson. Letter, 8 May 1808. Accession 20769.

Typescript of a letter to the chiefs of the Upper Cherokee on their visit to Washington, D.C.

Margaret Lynn Lewis. Reminiscences, 1730–1800. Accession 33960.

Memoirs of the Indian attacks and settler counterattacks in western Augusta County, as well as captivity stories.

Nansemond Indian Tribe. Papers. Accession 32462.

Papers relating to the reorganization of the Nansemond tribe in the 1980s.

James Patton. Letters, 1742. Accession 21603.

Letters from Patton to Lieutenant Governor William Gooch describing an armed confrontation between members of the Augusta County militia and a group of Iroquois Indians at Balcony Falls along the James River.

George W. Reid. Letter and sketches, 1881. Accession 34276.

On 9 May 1881, Reid wrote a letter describing his excavations of Indian burial sites in Goochland County, and included sketches of stone tools.

Peter Ross. Correspondence, 1805–1812. Accession 22044. Miscellaneous reel 8.

Letters from David Ross to his family in Fluvanna County, sharing news and reports of Indian activity in Logan County, Kentucky.

Virginia Writers' Project. Unfinished books, 1940–1942, boxes 255–256.

Contains rough notes and typed copy for several unfinished writers' project books, including a history of the Indian troubles in eighteenth-century Roanoke County.

Related Materials

Wood-Böye Maps, Board of Public Works (Record Group 57), entry 711.

County maps drawn from detailed surveys in preparation for the compilation of a state map in 1827. The preliminary maps show roads, bridges, mills, towns, and Indian burying grounds. They are available on the Library's Web site and on microfiche in the Map Reading Room.

U.S. Army Signal Corps Photographic Collection

The photographs in this collection document the arrival and departure of more than 1.5 million people in Hampton Roads during World War II. Among those pictured are Native American soldiers in the 179th and 180th Infantry Regiments and the 4th Engineers, including members of the Apache, Arapahoe, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Chippewa, Choctaw, Creek, Sioux, and Zuni tribes. A searchable database and images are available on the Library's Web site.

The Library's Picture Collection and Special Collections contain a variety of Native American images.

Printed Materials

Acts of the Assembly, 1776–present, and Henning's Statutes, 1619–1750.

Many of the acts, particularly in the early years, pertain to Virginia's Native Americans, either directly or by inference. The first three volumes of *Henning's Statutes* contain more than two hundred references to Virginia's Native Americans. See Shepherd's *Statutes at Large* (1792–1806) and the *Index to Enrolled Bills, 1776–1910*, for more laws relating to Virginia tribes. For a detailed listing, see the "Resources on Native Americans at the Library of Virginia" binder in the Archives Research Room.

Annual Report of the Attorney General.

Report issued, under various titles, beginning in 1836. Because the Office of the Attorney General is most closely charged with the protection of Virginia's tributary Native American tribes, the documents usually include information about Native American affairs of the previous year. A series of decisions made in the first two decades of the twentieth century reinterpreted the Treaty of Middle Plantation and clarified the rights and responsibilities in the treaty relationship between the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Powhatan tribes.

Annual Report of the State Board of Health and the State Health Commissioner.

Report issued, under various titles, beginning in 1909. The Bureau of Vital Statistics, a division of the State Health Department, was headed by the eugenicist Walter A. Plecker from 1912 until 1946. He fostered discriminatory practices against Virginia's Native Americans and was instrumental in the passage of Virginia's Racial Integrity Act.

Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1574–1736.

A multivolume collection of printed official documents concerning "our American colonies," with information and commentary on Indian rulers, tribes, religion, towns, language, and customs.

Calendar of Virginia State Papers.

A miscellaneous collection of papers belonging to Virginia's colonial government, printed in eleven volumes. It includes acts of the assembly, official correspondence, notes, reports from rangers, and correspondence between Virginia's government and the Native American tribes, as well as other colonial documents. The *Calendar* is indexed in Earl Gregg Swem's *Virginia Historical Index*.

The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents.

The reports, maps, and accounts collected in these 73 volumes document the travels and explorations of Jesuit missionaries in New

France. Although the *Jesuit Relations* relate largely to Canada and the Abenaki, Huron, and Iroquois tribes, the index also contains references to Virginia (where a Jesuit mission failed in the 1580s) and the Virginia Company.

Printed legislative reference materials include *Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1659–1776*; *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia, 1680–1775*; and *Legislative Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia, 1680–1775*. For treaties, see W. Stitt Robinson, ed., *Virginia Treaties, 1607–1722* (1983) and *Virginia Treaties, 1723–1775* (1983).

Cover image of an Algonquin Indian by Wenceslaus Hollar, *Unus Americanus ex Virginia*, 1645.

Revised by Patricia Ferguson Watkinson
Revised April 2010



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA