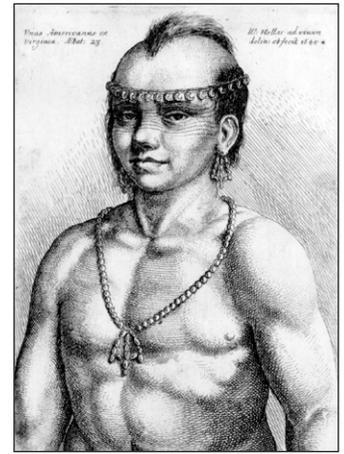


RESOURCES ON NATIVE AMERICANS AT THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA



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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. The commonwealth's Indian population faced increasing challenges 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, ex-soldiers, or itinerant merchants to traverse the frontier and keep them apprised of Indian activity and the relative temperature 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 land holdings 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.

“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, 1773–1871, filed with Free Negro and Slave Records, 1733–1864. 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 of 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 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 Sorrells’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 and opposing 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-Appalachian 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 upon 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 upon their visit to Washington, D.C.

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

Memoirs of the Indian attacks and Anglo 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.