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Governor's Office, Letters Received

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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.


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

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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 eugenist 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.

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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.


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.


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.


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.


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.


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.
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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.

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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.


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, 1853–1835, 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 orders, 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, Goode land, 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
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**Governor’s Office, Letters Received**

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