

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library

COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

RESEARCHING SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY VIRGINIANS

In researching the lives of seventeenth century immigrants to and settlers in the colony of Virginia, one will need to look at a variety of records. Some of the most useful ones in the Rockefeller Library are described below.

I. GENERAL RESOURCES

For an introduction to the full range of genealogical resources in Virginia, and especially how they differ from other colonies, see the following publications:

Grundset, Eric. *Research in Virginia*. Arlington, Va.: National Genealogical Society, 1998. **Ref. F 225.G78**

McGinnis, Carol. *Virginia Genealogy : Sources & Resources*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1993. **Ref. Z 1345.M38**

Schweitzer, George Keene. *Virginia Genealogical Research*. Knoxville: G. K. Schweitzer, 1995. **Ref. Z 1345.S38 1982**

II. NAMES OF INDIVIDUALS

Almost no ship passenger lists have survived from the seventeenth century, and no official census was taken of all colonists after 1625. A few early immigrants are mentioned in the official records of the Virginia Company of London, the private company that was commissioned to operate the colony between 1606 and 1624. There are, however, three surviving lists, two from the decade of the 1620s and one at the turn of the eighteenth century, which often substitute for a seventeenth-century census.

Following the 1622 Indian massacre, two lists were compiled, one entitled "Lists of the Living and Dead in Virginia, 16th February, 1623" and published in J. C. Hotten's *Original Lists of Persons of Quality...* A second list, entitled "The Muster of the Inhabitants of Virginia" and dated January-February, 1624/25 has been published in John F. Dorman's *Adventurers of Purse and Person, Virginia, 1607-1624/5*, which publication features proven descendants of individuals on this list through six generations. The "Muster" gives a year of arrival and the name of a ship for most, but not all, of the persons named. A single complete quitrent list survives from 1704 and can be found in Annie L.W. Smith's *Quit Rents of Virginia*. Quitrents were taxes paid to the king for land owned; therefore this list is one of landowners, not all inhabitants.

Additionally, some immigrants have been identified from documents found at the Public Record Office, Kew and at Magdalene College, Cambridge in England. See the following publications based on a variety of primary seventeenth-century sources:

Coldham, Peter Wilson. *Complete Book of Emigrants*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1987-1993. **E 184.B7 C59**

Dorman, John Frederick, ed. *Adventurers of Purse and Person, Virginia, 1607-1624/5*. 4th edition. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2004. **Ref. F 225.A7 2004-**

Hart, Lyndon H. III. "Some Clues to Wives of Virginia Residents at the Time of the Muster." *Magazine of Virginia Genealogy*, vol. 34, no. 1 (Winter 1996), pp. 51-54.

Hotten, John Camden. *Original Lists of Persons of Quality;... Who Went from Great Britain to the American Plantations, 1600-1700*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1968. **Ref. E 187.5.H7945 1968**

McCartney, Martha W. *Documentary History of Jamestown Island*. Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and College of William and Mary, 2000. **Ref. F 234.J3 M333. 2000**

McCartney, Martha W. *Virginia Immigrants and Adventurers, 1607-1635: A Biographical Dictionary*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2007. **Ref. F 225.M33 2007**

Ransome, David R. "Shipt for Virginia": The Beginnings in 1619-1622 of the Great Migration to the Chesapeake." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 103, no. 4 (Oct 1995), pp. 443-458.

Ransome, David R. "Wives for Virginia, 1621." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., vol. 48, no. 1 (Jan 1991), pp. 3-18.

Records of the Virginia Company of London. Edited by Susan Myra Kingsbury. Washington: Govt. Print. Off. 1906-35. **Ref. F 229.V86**

These records have been digitized by the Library of Congress as part of the Thomas Jefferson Papers: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/mtjhtml/mtjser8.html>

Smith, Annie Laurie Wright. *Quit Rents of Virginia: Copy of the Rent Rolls ...for the Year 1704*. Richmond: Expert Letter Writing Co., 1957. **Ref. F 225.S63 1957**

Thorndale, William. "Maids for Virginia in 1621 as Described in the Ferrar Papers." *The Virginia Genealogist*, vol. 39, no. 4 (Oct-Dec 1995), pp. 243-252.

Thorndale, William. "The Passenger List of the *James* of 1622." *The Virginia Genealogist*, vol. 42, no. 4 (Oct-Dec 1998), pp. 272-280.

III. LAND RECORDS

Land patents are another means of identifying who was in Virginia by what date and, for some, where they lived. These patents record the first ownership of “new,” i.e. not previously owned, land. They also record lists of persons who had emigrated sometime prior to the date of the patent being issued, and whose removal to Virginia created the entitlement to land. Land between the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers was distributed through the Fairfax family rather than a government agency and these grants are published separately. Without census records, and particularly when researching a county with significant early record loss, the land patents can be helpful in locating individuals and identifying family migration patterns. See the following publications:

Gray, Gertrude E. *Virginia Northern Neck Land Grants*. Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1987-1993. **F 232.N86**

Joyner, Peggy S. *Abstracts of Virginia's Northern Neck Warrants & Surveys*. Portsmouth, Va: P.S. Joyner, 1985-1995. **F 225.J76 1985**

Nugent, Nell Marion. *Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants, 1623-1800. Vols. 1-3*. Richmond: Press of the Dietz Print Co., 1934- **Ref. F 225.N842 1934**

Nugent, Nell Marion. *Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants: Supplement, Northern Neck Grants, no. 1, 1690-1692*. Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1980. **Ref. F 225.N842 1934 Suppl .**

Petty, James W. “Seventeenth Century Virginia County Court Headright Certificates.” *The Virginia Genealogist*, vol. 45, no. 1 (Jan-Mar 2001), pp. 3-22; vol. 45, no. 2 (Apr-June 2001), pp. 112-122.

Robinson, Walter Stitt. *Mother Earth: Land Grants in Virginia, 1607-1699*. Williamsburg: Virginia 350th Anniversary Celebration Corporation, 1957. **F 229.R62**

IV. GOVERNMENT RECORDS

Legal records that identify individuals also include those produced by various parts of the colonial government. See the following:

Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia. Edited by H.R. McIlwaine. Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1925-. **Ref. J 87.V67**

Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1619-1776. Vols. 1 –3. Edited by H. R. McIlwaine. Richmond: The Colonial Press, E. Waddey Co.,1905-1915. **Ref. J 87.V65**

Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia.. Edited by H. R. McIlwaine. Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1979. **Ref. KFV 2418.2 1622b**

Statutes at Large... The Laws of Virginia, from ...the Year 1619. Vols 1 -3. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1969. **Ref. KFV 2425.2 1809b**

V. COUNTY, PARISH AND CHURCH RECORDS

Once a county of residence has been established, one may look for surviving legal or church records, deeds, wills and probate records, inventories, court orders, parish registers and vestry books, for that county. County and parish boundaries changed over time as lands were settled further inland, so a family might be recorded in several different counties without ever moving. The maps in the three titles by C. F. Cocke listed below are especially helpful in understanding these changes. See the following published sources:

Cocke, Charles Francis. *Parish Lines, Diocese of Virginia*. Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1978. **Ref. BX 5918.V8 C6 1978**

Cocke, Charles Francis. *Parish Lines, Diocese of Southern Virginia*. Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1979. **Ref. BX 5918.S92 C6 1979**

Cocke, Charles Francis. *Parish Lines, Diocese of Southwestern Virginia*. Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1980. **Ref. BX 5918.S922 C6 1980**

Hidden, Martha Woodroof. *How Justice Grew: Virginia Counties: An Abstract of Their Formation*. Williamsburg: Virginia 350th Anniversary Celebration Corporation, 1957. **Ref. F 226.H53**

MacDonald, Edgar. "The Myth of Virginia County Formation in 1634." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, vol. 92, no. 1 (March 2004), pp. 58-63. **Reference Files: "Counties—Virginia"**

Robinson, Morgan Poitiaux, 1876-1943. *Virginia Counties: Those Resulting from Virginia Legislation*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1992. **Ref. F 226.R62 1992**

Torrence, Clayton, 1884-1953. *Virginia Wills and Administrations, 1632-1800: An Index of Wills Recorded in Local Courts of Virginia*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1972. **Ref. F 225.T85 1972**

Of local interest to the Williamsburg focus of this library, the *York County Records Project* compiled a Biographical File on microfilm of names found in the colonial court records of York County. Both the Biographical File and matching microfilm of the original county records are available in Special Collections. Since the colonial court records of neighboring James City County do not survive, these are especially important for Williamsburg research.

VI. MILITARY RECORDS

Very few records of specific military rank or duty survive from the seventeenth century. Organized armed civilians, known as the militia, were the colony's only protection against Indian raids, internal revolt and the threat of Spanish and Dutch invasion. During the early years of the century all able-bodied men, including indentured servants and slaves, were expected to participate in militia activities. By the end of the century membership in the militia was more restricted. Participation in Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 is slightly better documented than for other conflicts. See the following:

Bockstruck, Lloyd DeWitt. *Virginia's Colonial Soldiers*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1988. **Ref. F 225.B63 1988**

Crozier, William A. *Virginia Colonial Militia, 1651-1776*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1982. **Ref. F 229.C94 1982**

Eckenrode, H. J. *List of the Colonial Soldiers of Virginia*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1961. **Ref. F 229.V94 1961**

Horowitz, Lois. *Bibliography of Military Name Lists from Pre-1675 to 1900*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1990. **Ref. Z 5313.U5 H67 1990**

Neville, John Davenport. *Bacon's Rebellion: Abstracts of Materials in the Colonial Records Project*. Jamestown, Va.: Jamestown Foundation, 1976. **Ref. F 229.N52**

Shea, William L. *Virginia Militia in the Seventeenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Pr., 1983. **F 229.S53 1983**

Washburn, Wilcomb E. . *Governor and the Rebel; A History of Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Pr. 1957. **F 229.W28**

VII. PRIVATE RECORDS

Letters, diaries, business records and other privately created documents are all part of our Special Collections. Many may be available in published or transcript format, as well as photocopy and original. One of the most useful for genealogical research is the collection of family bible records searchable at the Library of Virginia's web site

<http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwehave/bio/index.htm>.

VIII. VIRGINIA COLONIAL RECORDS PROJECT

The VCRP, also located in Special Collections, is a microfilm series of early records obtained from institutions and record offices in Great Britain and Western Europe. The abstracted survey reports of these records are available in print, but are more easily searchable through the digital images at the Library of Virginia's web site at

http://ajax.lva.lib.va.us/F/?func=file&file_name=find-b-clas27&local_base=CLAS27 .

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Revised 4/07