

# *John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library*

COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

## **RESEARCHING WILLIAMSBURG AREA VIRGINIANS**

The City of Williamsburg, established as Virginia's capitol in 1699 and incorporated in 1722, lies squarely on the boundary line between two counties, James City County and York County. Finding information on individuals who lived in this area depends largely on which county your ancestors lived in and when, because of the destruction of court records during the Civil War. Successful research will probably need to cover both counties.

Before 1722 Williamsburg city records were not kept separately from the counties, and legal issues were recorded in an individual's county of residence. A Hustings Court was set up when Williamsburg was incorporated, but the records of that court were burned during the Civil War.

James City County was one of the eight original counties created in 1634 and at that time extended both north and south of the James River. Boundary changes include Surry County formed from James City in 1652, a portion transferred to Charles City County in 1720, and a land swap with New Kent County in 1766. James City County has a history of significant record loss. All county court records were destroyed by fire in 1865.

Also one of the eight original counties, York County was first named Charles River County in 1634 and renamed York in 1642/43. New counties formed out of York were Gloucester in 1651 and New Kent in 1654. York's court records are intact from 1634, and are especially important to local research, since all adjacent counties are "burned counties" with nearly complete court record loss.

Therefore, with only the exceptions noted below, the early records of the City of Williamsburg are either well preserved (if on the York side of the boundary) or missing (if on the James City side). Research on James City County families is hindered by the loss of court records, but this may be compensated for by using the few remaining resources (such as land patents, church records or tax lists), supplemented by looking in York County records. Research on York County families is easier; however, any surviving records from other counties should be used for a more comprehensive picture.

Suggested sources which include information pertinent to both James City and York are listed in the first section below, subdivided by type of record, and annotated to point out any differences for each county. The last two sections are additional sources which are specific to a single county, also grouped by type of record.

For a brief discussion of the founding of Williamsburg, see Jennifer Jones' "Middle Plantation in 1699," *The Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter*, vol. 20, no. 2, Summer 1999, pp. 2-3.

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## RECORDS WHICH INCLUDE BOTH JAMES CITY AND YORK:

### *Land Records:*

Nugent, Nell. *Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants, 1623-1800*. Richmond: Dietz Press, 1934---. **Ref F 225.N842 1934**

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

Patents record the ownership of “new” (previously unowned) land. Once the ownership was recorded, land transfers were recorded in the deeds. Patents cover land in both counties, while deeds only exist for York County. Sometimes patents recording first land ownership give enough details to locate early settlers in a specific geographic area.

House Histories for CW properties. **Located in the Lektriever; ask for assistance at the Reference Desk.**

These unpublished reports are descriptions of land ownership and usage for properties now owned by Colonial Williamsburg and located in the “Historic Area.” Less information is known about James City County sites than those in York County.

### *Tax Records:*

Smith, Annie L. W. *Quit Rents of Virginia: Copy of the Rent Rolls ...for the Year 1704*.

Richmond: Expert Letter Writing Co.: 1957. **Ref F 225.S63 1957**

A single surviving colony-wide list of landowners obligated to pay this land tax to the king. Gives number of acres taxed and identifies county.

### *Church and Cemetery Records:*

Chappelear, Nancy. *Bruton and Middleton Parishes, James City County, Va. Parish*

*Register 1662-1797*. Washington: Chappelear & Baird, 1966. **Ref F 232.J15 C5**

Middleton Parish, formed in 1658 from earlier parishes lying in both James City and York counties, combined with Marston Parish of York County in 1674 to form Bruton Parish. This register includes baptisms from 1739-1797 from Bruton Parish and deaths from 1662-1751, beginning when the area was known as Marston, later Middleton and extending into the time it was known as Bruton.

*Bruton Parish Churchyard and Church: A Guide to the Tombstones, Monuments, and Mural Tablets*. Williamsburg: Bruton Parish Church, 1976. **Ref F 234.W7 B73**

Goodwin, W. A. R. *Record of Bruton Parish Church. Williamsburg, Virginia*. Richmond: Dietz Press, 1941. **Ref F 234.W7 G53**

Includes extracts from the vestry book 1674-1769 made during the nineteenth century before the original book was destroyed in a fire, as well as lists of baptisms and deaths from the surviving register.

Hinshaw, William Wade. *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1936-50. **E 184.F89 H5 v.6**

Volume 6 is Virginia records; chapter on Henrico Monthly Meeting covers geographic area that included both James City and York counties.

*James City and York Counties*

***Families and Individuals:***

Online Catalog

Search the family or individual name under SUBJECT in our online library catalog.

[http://lion.wm.edu/uhtbin/cgiisirsi/x/0/0/57/49?user\\_id=CWRPUB](http://lion.wm.edu/uhtbin/cgiisirsi/x/0/0/57/49?user_id=CWRPUB)

Hotten, John Camden. *Original Lists of Persons of Quality ...* Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1968. **Ref E 187.5 .H7945 1968**

Includes the "List of the Living and the Dead" taken in 1623/4.

Jester, Annie Lash. *Adventurers of Purse and Person, Virginia, 1607-1624/5*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., revised and edited by Virginia M. Meyer & John Frederick Dorman. Richmond: Order of First Families of Virginia, 1987. **Ref F 229.J4 1987**

Traces the first three generations of descendants of 132 individuals who appeared in the 1625 "Muster of Inhabitants," taken of the survivors of the 1622 Indian massacre. Many settlers have date of arrival and ship's name recorded here.

Abercrombie, Janice L. *Virginia Revolutionary Publick Claims*. Athens, Ga.: Iberian Pub., 1992. **Ref F 225.A23 1992**

Reimbursement claims against the state of Virginia for non-military patriotic service performed during the Revolutionary War. Divided by county.

Ward, Roger G. *1815 Directory of Virginia Landowners (and Gazetteer)*. Athens, Ga.: Iberian Publishing Co., 1997-. **Ref F 225.W368 1997 v. 3**

Gives distance and direction from the courthouse for each landowner.

Research Query File

Letters and memos which mention individual names and the accompanying index. Contact a reference librarian for assistance ([libref@cwf.org](mailto:libref@cwf.org)).

***Census Records and Census Substitutes:***

Tax lists are frequently recognized as a useful substitute for missing federal census records.

Generally, when this substitution has been published, the attempt has been made to find the tax list closest to the date of the missing census. See also the section "*Tax Records*."

United States. Bureau of the Census. *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790 ...* Spartanburg, S.C.: Reprint Co., 1961. **Ref F 225.U54 1961**  
City of Williamsburg residents from a 1782 tax list.

Fothergill, Augusta B. *Virginia Tax Payers, 1782-1787...* Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1986. **Ref F 225.F6 1986**

Includes 1782 personal property tax list for James City County, and 1784 list for York County.

Schreiner-Yantis, Netti. *1787 Census of Virginia*. Springfield, Va.: Genealogical Books in Print, 1987. **Ref F 225.Y36 1987**

Based on tax lists for James City for 1787, City of Williamsburg for 1786 and 1788, and York for 1786 and 1788.

Felldin, Jeanne R. *Index to the 1820 Census of Virginia*. Baltimore: Genealogical Pub., 1976. **Ref F 225.F4**

James City County, York County and City of Williamsburg all listed separately.

### ***Other Government Records:***

Hening, William Waller. *Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, From ... 1619*. Charlottesville: University Pr. of Va., 1969. **VA Ref KFV 2425.2 1809b**

Indexed in Earl Gregg Swem's *Virginia Historical Index*. **VA Ref F 221.S93**

Some early laws mention individuals or families. For example, the breaking of entailed estates lists names and relationships to the land owner.

McIlwaine, H. R., ed. *Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1619-1776*. Richmond: The Colonial Press, 1905-1915. **Ref J 87.V65**

Minutes of the colonial legislature.

McIlwaine, H. R., ed. *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia*.

Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1979. **Ref KFV 2418.2 1622b**

Most General Court records burned in 1865. Those remaining cover the years 1622-1632 and 1670-1683.

### ***Virginia Colonial Records Project (VCRP):***

Abstracts of European records which pertain to colonial Virginia. Abstracts are available in "survey reports" in the Special Collections section of the library. Both the survey reports and their index are available on the internet site for the Library of Virginia at

<http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwehave/gov/govhist.htm>. Many of the original VCRP documents are available on microfilm at the Rockefeller Library.

### ***Maps:***

Reproduction maps of the area are located in the Special Collections reading room. Please ask for reference assistance in locating them. Written permission may be required from the institutions which own the originals in order to make copies from this collection. Early twentieth century Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of the City of Williamsburg from the originals at the Library of Congress are available on microfilm **M-2030**.

***Newspapers:***

The *Virginia Gazette*, first published in Williamsburg in 1736, is available in photostat for the years 1736-1780 in the Reference section of the library, as is the index for those years. Copies of newspaper articles from these years must be made from the microfilm version located in Special Collections. The Reference section also holds bound original *Gazettes* from 1930-1977. These may not be photocopied due to their fragility.

***School Records:***

*Provisional List of Alumni, Grammar School Students, Members of the Faculty, and Members of the Board of Visitors of the College of William and Mary in Virginia, from 1693 to 1888.* Richmond: Division of Purchase and Printing, 1941. **Ref LD 6051.W51 P76**  
<http://swem.wm.edu/departments/special-collections/exhibits/exhibits/provlist/frame.htm>

**JAMES CITY COUNTY:**

***Land Records:***

Foley, Louise. *Early Virginia Families Along the James River.* Baltimore: Geneological Pub., 1979--. **F 225.F596 1979 v.3**  
This is a reprint of land patents taken from Nugent's volumes, separated by county. Volume 3 covers James City County.

Duvall, Lindsay O. *Virginia Colonial Abstracts—Series 2.* Easley, SC: Southern Historical Pr., 1978-79. **F 225.D88 1978 v.4**  
Miscellaneous land records and abstracts of land patents taken from manuscripts at the Library of Congress and from land patent books at the Library of Virginia archives.

***Court Records:***

Crozier, William A. *Williamsburg Wills.* Baltimore: Southern Book Co., 1954.  
**Ref F 230.C77 1954**  
Surviving wills from the Chancery Court in Williamsburg.

Hopkins, William Lindsay. *Some Wills from the Burned Counties of Virginia ...* Athens, Ga.: Iberian Pub. Co., 1995. **Ref F 225.H6697 1995**  
Wills found in neighboring county court records or located in public manuscript collections. Many previously published.

***Tax Records:***

Woodson, Robert F. *Virginia Tithables from Burned Record Counties.* Richmond: I.B.Woodson, 1970. **Ref F 225.W66**  
Tithable lists for 1768 and 1769.

Blackmon, Jean E. *James City County, Va. Land Tax Records, 1782-1813.* Athens, Ga.: Iberian Pub. Co., 1991. **Ref F 232.J15 B53 1991**

Taken from original manuscripts at the Library of Virginia.

James City County Land Tax Records, 1783-1861 (microfilm)  
Taken from the originals at the James City County Clerk's Office.  
**M-1-56, 57**

James City County Personal Property Tax Lists, 1782-1861 (microfilm)  
Taken from the originals at the James City County Clerk's Office.  
**M-1-53, 54, 55**

### ***Church and Cemetery Records:***

Chamberlayne, C. G. *Vestry Book of Blisland Parish ... 1721-1786*. Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1979. **F 232.B55 B5 1979**  
Covers the western part of James City County and part of eastern New Kent County.

Chamberlayne, C. G. *Vestry Book and Register of St. Peter's Parish ... 1684-1786*. Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1973. **F 232.N3 S14 1973**  
This parish is now in New Kent County, but originally included a part of western James City County.

### ***Families and Individuals:***

McClure, James P. *Littletown Plantation, 1700-1745*. Thesis (M.A.), College of William and Mary, 1977. **F 229.M23**.  
Discusses the Bray family.

### ***Marriage Records:***

Virginia Genealogical Society. *Some Marriages in the Burned Record Counties of Virginia*. Easley, S.C.: Southern Historical Pr., 1982. **Ref F 225.V85 1982**

### ***Census Records and Census Substitutes:***

"James City County, Virginia 1800 Tax List." *The Virginia Genealogist*, vol. 33, no. 3, July 1989, pp. 186-189.

Schreiner-Yantis, Netti. *Supplement to the 1810 Census of Virginia: Tax Lists of the Counties for Which the Census is Missing*. Springfield, Va.: Schreiner-Yantis, 1971. **Ref F 230.Y35**  
Includes James City County.

### ***Archaeological Site Reports and Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Research Reports:***

Goodwin, Mary R. M. "Kingsmill" *Plantation, James City County, Virginia*. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation research report, 1958. **F 232.J15 G66 1958**

Noel-Hume, Ivor. *Excavations at Tutter's Neck in James City County, Virginia, 1960-1961*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1966. **F 232.J15 N63 1966**

Stephenson, Mary A. *Record of the Bray Family 1658-ca. 1800*. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation research report, 1963. **CS 71.B72 1963**

### **History:**

*Heritage and Historic Sites: An Inventory and Description of Historic Sites in James City County*. James City Co, Va: Comprehensive Planning Team, 1975. **Ref F 232 .J15 H47 1975**  
Gives a brief description and location of a number of historic sites, including those on the National Register of Historic Places and on the Virginia Landmarks Register, as well as those less well known.

*James City County in Perspective: Papers Presented at a Series of Public Forums Celebrating the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of James City County*. Williamsburg: James City County, 1984. **F232.J15 J35 1984a**

Bradshaw, Nancy S. *Tales from James City County, Virginia Oral Histories*. James City County: James City County Historical Commission, 1993. **F 232.J15 T35 1993**

McCartney, Martha W. *James City County: Keystone of the Commonwealth*. Virginia Beach: Donning Co. Pub., 1997. **Ref F 232.J15 M38 1997**  
Comprehensive history from earliest settlement to the present.

Maccubbin, Robert P., ed. *Williamsburg, Virginia: A City Before the State, 1699-1999*. Williamsburg, Va.: City of Williamsburg, 2000. **Ref F 234.W7 W768 2000**  
Not indexed.

## **YORK COUNTY:**

### **Court Records:**

*“York County Records Project.”*

Microfilm of all existing deeds, court orders and wills is available in the Special Collections section of the library. There is also a microfilmed card index to these records, alphabetical by individual name. **M-1797, 1-152**

Fleet, Beverley. *Virginia Colonial Abstracts*. Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1988. **F 225.F58 1988**. Vol. 3 includes York County records from 1633-1657.

Duvall, Lindsay O. *Virginia Colonial Abstracts—Series 2*. Easley, S.C. 1978-79. **F 225.D88 1978 vol. 5**. Abstracts the years 1657-1659.

Weisiger, Benjamin B. *York County, Virginia, Records, 1659-1662*. Richmond: Weisiger, 1989. **F 232.Y6 W42 1989**

Weisiger, Benjamin B. *York County, Virginia Records, 1665-1672*. Richmond: Weisiger, 1987.  
**F 232.Y6 W45 1987**

Weisiger, Benjamin B. *York County, Virginia Records, 1672-1676*. Richmond: Weisiger, 1991.  
**F 232.Y6 W454 1991**

Dorman, John Frederick. *York County, Virginia, Deeds, Orders, Wills, Etc.* Washington, D.C.:  
Dorman, 1974-75. **KFV 2916.Y67 A7**.  
Several volumes abstract the years 1687-1697.

### ***Church and Cemetery Records:***

Bell, Landon C. *Charles Parish, York County, Virginia, History and Registers*. Richmond:  
Virginia State Library, 1932. **F 232 Y6 B3**.  
This register covers births 1648-1789 and deaths 1665-1787.

### ***Families and Individuals:***

Seaman, Catherine H. C. *The Lees of 17<sup>th</sup> Century York County, Virginia*. Sweet Briar, Virginia:  
Sweet Briar College Printing Pr., 1985. **CS 71 L48 1985**

### ***Marriage Records:***

Pollock, Michael E. *York County, Virginia Marriages*. Athens, Ga.: Iberian Pub. Co., 1994.  
**Ref F 232.Y6 P65 1994**. Covers the years 1769-1853.

### ***Census Records and Census Substitutes:***

Bentley, Elizabeth P. *Index to the 1810 Census of Virginia*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing  
Co., 1980. **Ref F 225.B45 1980**.  
Includes York County in alphabetical listing by head of household.

### ***Archaeological Site Reports and Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Research Reports:***

Thomas, Charles K. and Muraca, David F. *Archaeological Testing at Kiskiack*. [Henry Lee  
House Fund, Inc.], 1986. **F 232.Y6 T56 1986**  
Discusses the Henry Lee family of York County.

Samford, Patricia. *The Bates Site: Investigation of a Quaker Merchant*. Williamsburg:  
Department of Archaeological Research, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1990.  
**F 232.Y6 S25 1990**

Metz, John et al. "*Upon the Palisado*" and *Other Stories of Place from Bruton Heights*.  
Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1998. **F 234.W7 M48 1998**.  
Discusses the John Page archaeological site from prehistoric activity through two hundred  
years of colonial occupation.