

"Finding a Variety of Pre and Post-Civil War Records on Your Virginia Ancestors, Including Plantation Records."

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Virginia is one of the original States that was established early in the United States History. In researching pre-civil war, post-civil war, and plantation records, these records can be challenging; but, Virginia records go back as far as the 15th century.



These records were established when each county in Virginia was formed. Some of the older counties that started in the 1600s were: Gloucester County (1651), Elizabeth City County (1634), and Henrico County (1634). The older counties' land were divided to make way for other counties. These early counties based their recording system after their European ancestors. We owe these early immigrants gratitude for their dedicated record system. Due to the early recording systems of records in Virginia, we are able to research the early Europeans as well as free and

enslaved African Americans.

This lecture will not cover all the records that can be obtained through researching a Virginian ancestor, but this lecture will discuss records that are less used in researching your Virginia family.

We will cover the following records and where you can find these records, as well as how these records can be used to gain additional information on your pre and post-civil war ancestors and their plantation.

Church Records: A lot of information can be found in Church records pertaining to your ancestors. Churches can reveal family relationships, enslaved individuals, migration, verifying ages, and verifying births and deaths, and family secrets. These records can be used for pre and post-civil war era.

Bible Records: Can be found in many places for example: in the private hands of a relative, at the county historical society, at the Virginia Historical Society, at the Daughter of the American Revolution, at the State Archives, at the University depository, at Ebay or/and at estate sales. A bible record can reveal personal vital statistics on the family as well as any enslaved person that the family owned prior to the civil war. This record can also reveal migration.

Personal Property Tax Lists: This record can be used for pre and post-civil war research. Most local court houses and the State Archives have the earlier personal tax records. This record can reveal when an individual started buying personal property (slaves) in the county and also when that individual stop paying personal property taxes which could indicate when the individual died. This record also can establish a year-to-year census of adult individuals between the census years. Former slaves appeared by named on the personal property tax list, after they were emancipated.

U.S. Southern Claims: These records are at the State and Federal level. After the civil war, many property owners in Virginia put in a claim with the Federal government to be reimburse for damaged or stolen property. These records have a wealth of information on the owner, his plantation, his neighbors, his relatives, and his former slaves.

Civil War Pension Records: These records are at the Federal level and can be used for pre and post-civil war research. Pension records can contain a host of records on an individual which includes their marriages, identifying their children, information on their plantation, depositions from their neighbors, statements from their clergyman, and statements from their former slaves.

Deeds: These records are at the court house and at the State Archives. You will find a host of transactions concerning land, slaves, and deeds of gift. These records cover the pre and post-civil war era.

Probate Records: These records can cover pre and post-civil war era. You will find these records at the county court house, at the State Archives and in the personal papers of the individuals. You can get valuable information in the probate records for example, the names of the deceased person's children, the name and number of plantations, the list of slaves, the inventory, and accounting of the estate.

Court House Chancery Cases: These records can be found at the county court house and at the State Archives. If any of your ancestors fought over property or were sued, you will find that the Chancery cases hold a wealth of information from pre and post-civil war era. All financial information was discussed in many of the chancery cases. You will find family, in-laws, plantation records, land records, deed records, marriage licenses, probate records and land surveys. The State of Virginia has made many of the counties chancery records available on-line.

Conclusion: These eight record groups are just a small portion of records that are available to you. But in using these records, you will be able to enhance your research and provide new documentation on your ancestors.

Resources:

On-line Virginia Chancery Records:

<http://www.virginiamemory.com/collections/chancery/>

Library of Virginia Archives:

<http://www.lva.virginia.gov/>

Virginia Historical Society:

<http://www.vahistorical.org/>

Military Records and Southern Claim Records (paid site)

<https://www.fold3.com/>

Genealogy Bank Newspaper (paid site)

<http://www.genealogybank.com/>

Daughters of American Revolution

<http://www.dar.org/national-society/genealogy>