

Research Tips

- To trace your family history, begin with yourself and work backward.
- Gather family data from surviving relatives and compile a genealogical chart.
- Search for family records in archives, libraries, courthouses and online.
- Always record the source of any information found.
- Visit our website at lva.virginia.gov and use the online catalogs and databases to investigate our holdings.

Basic Records at the Library of Virginia

Census Records: The first U.S. census was taken in 1790. A census has been taken every 10 years since, and records are available on microfilm, on AncestryInstitution.com and on FamilySearch.org.

Vital Records: Virginia recorded births and deaths from 1853–1896 and 1912–present, and marriages from 1853–present. Marriages prior to June 1853 were recorded at the local courthouse and may also be available. Copies of many of these records are available on microfilm, on AncestryInstitution.com and on FamilySearch.org.

County and City Records: Included in these records are deeds, wills, court records, marriages, tax records and other types of documents recorded at the local and state level of government.

Military Records: The Library of Virginia's collection contains a variety of manuscript, microfilmed and photographic copies of military records attesting to the service of Virginians during various conflicts in American history. Some are also available online on the Library's website and on fold3.com.

Private Papers: Included in these records are church, Bible, personal papers and business records.

Genealogical Notes and Charts: This collection consists of a wide variety of materials compiled by private citizens interested in recording their ancestry and making their research available to the public. The Library of Virginia continues to accept donations of genealogical materials, but we do not verify the accuracy of the information contained therein.

Published Resources: The Library of Virginia's collection contains a variety of published family and local histories and abstracts of county and city records.

Newspapers: Many Virginia newspapers are available on microfilm or online at viriniachronicle.com.

Note: There has been considerable records loss in Virginia over the centuries. Please consult with Library of Virginia staff members regarding the availability of specific records.

March 2023