

A Guide to the Powhatan County (Va.) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1777-1904

Powhatan County (Va.) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1777-1904
1777-1904

A Collection in the Library of Virginia 0007308135
Library of Virginia
2012
Author: Laura Travis

History

Processed by: Library of Virginia staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Powhatan County (Va.) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1777-1904

Subtitle: Powhatan County (Va.) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1777-1904 0007308135

Author: Laura Travis

Publication Statement

Date: © 2012 By The Library of Virginia. All Rights Reserved.

Publisher: Library of Virginia

[Conditions of Use](#)

Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from being created directly into EAD, (updated 4/17/2023 by T. Harter) created by Laura Travis, 10 January 2012

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

2013-11-21 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Barcode number

0007308135

Language

English

Collector

Powhatan County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

.35 cu. ft. (1 box)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These items came to the Library of Virginia in shipments of court records from Powhatan County.

Preferred Citation

Powhatan County (Va.) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1777-1904. Local government records collection, Powhatan County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA 23219.

Historical Information

Powhatan County was named for the paramount chief of the Powhatan Indians in the tidewater region of Virginia in the late sixteenth and early years of the seventeenth century. It was formed from Cumberland County in 1777, and part of Chesterfield County was added in 1850. The county seat is Powhatan.

The separate office of coroner appeared in Virginia about 1660. The judicial duty of the office is to hold inquisitions in cases when persons meet sudden, violent, unnatural or suspicious death, or death without medical attendance. The coroner would summon a jury to assist him in determining cause of death. Prior to November 1877, the jurors numbered twelve. Between November 1877 and March 1926, the jurors numbered six. The jury viewed the body of the deceased and heard the testimony of witnesses. The coroner was required to write down witness testimony. After seeing and hearing the evidence, the jury delivered in writing to the coroner their conclusion concerning cause of death referred to as the inquisition. After March 1926, only the coroner determined cause of death. He could require physicians to assist him with determining cause of death. If a criminal act was determined to be the cause of death, the coroner was to deliver the guilty person to the sheriff and the coroners' inquests would be used as evidence in the criminal trial.

Scope and Content

Powhatan County (Va) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1777-1904, are investigations into the deaths of individuals who died by a sudden, violent, unnatural or suspicious manner, or died without medical attendance. Causes of death found in coroners' inquisitions include murder, infanticide, suicide, domestic violence, exposure to elements, drownings, train accidents, automobile accidents, and natural causes, or as commonly referred to in the 19th century, visitation by God. Documents commonly found in coroners' inquests include the inquisition, depositions, and summons. Criminal papers such as recognizance bonds can be found in coroner inquisitions. Information found in the inquisition include the name of the coroner, the names of the jurors, the name and age of the deceased if known, gender and race of the deceased, and when, how, and by what means the deceased came to his or her death. If the deceased was African American, the inquest would identify the deceased as a slave or free person if known. If the deceased was a slave, the inquest would include, if known, the name of the slaveowner and the slaveowner's residence. Information found in the depositions include the name of the deponent and his or her account of the circumstances that led to the death of the deceased. Slaves were deponents in coroner investigations.

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Powhatan County (Va.) Circuit Court

Subjects:

African Americans--History

Coroners--Virginia--Powhatan County

Death--Causes--Virginia--Powhatan County

Free African Americans--Virginia--Powhatan County

Infanticide--Virginia--Powhatan County

Murder--Investigation--Virginia--Powhatan County

Murder victims--Virginia--Powhatan County
Slaveholders--Virginia--Powhatan County.
Slaves--Virginia--Powhatan County.
Suicide--Virginia--Powhatan County
Women--Virginia--Powhatan County

Geographical Names:

Powhatan County (Va.)--History

Genre and Form Terms:

Death records--Virginia--Powhatan County
Local government records--Virginia--Powhatan County
Reports--Virginia--Powhatan County

Arrangement

Chronological by date coroner filed inquisition in the court. Some coroners' inquisitions were found in unprocessed Powhatan court records and interfiled in April 2023.

Selected Coroners' Inquisitions of Interest

1777 December, Death of Daniel, a slave:

Scope and Content

Died when he fell from a horse and was dragged half of a mile due to the rope halter being tied around his left arm.

1784 July 27, Death of John Eggleston:

Scope and Content

Suicide. Died after cutting his own throat with a pen knife.

1793 June, Death of Frank, a slave:

Scope and Content

Whipped to death by Robert Self.

1805 October 17, Death of Rose, a slave:

Scope and Content

Died from cruel treatment by her owner's wife, Sarah Tucker. Tucker had Rose beaten and administered medicine to her improperly and maliciously with the intention of killing Rose.

1807 February, Death of Joseph Archer:

Scope and Content

Died from exposure to the cold after falling from his horse in a very muddy part of the road. Archer was unable to get up due to the fact that he was intoxicated at the time of his fall.

1808 April, Death of James, a slave:

Scope and Content

Burned to death after his clothing caught fire while he was making a fire near the side of the road "by which to lye."

1815 January 18, Death of Tom, a slave:

Scope and Content

Death was facilitated and hastened in consequence of being beaten with a cow hide by James Satterwhite, his owner.

1820 December 21, Death of Sukey, a slave:**Scope and Content**

Died from assault, mortal wounds, and bruises to the head and body inflicted by her owner, Anderson Blanton and his wife, Elizabeth Blanton.

1894 February, Death of Scott, Mary:**Scope and Content**

Died between December 13 and 14 1893 as teh result of blows received on her head from Branch Scott. Depositions detail husband's abuse. Includes order to apprehend him, which may have resulted in a Commonwealth cause.