

# A Guide to the Lynchburg (Va.) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1811-1887

Lynchburg (Va.) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1811-1887  
1811-1887



A Collection in the Library of Virginia 0007326017  
Library of Virginia  
2012  
**Author:** Laura Travis

## History

**Processed by:** Ed Jordan

## Title Statement

A Guide to the Lynchburg (Va.) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1811-1887

**Subtitle:** Lynchburg (Va.) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1811-1887

**Collection:** 0007326017

**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, created by Laura Travis, 12 March 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**

0007326017

**Language**

English

**Collector**

Lynchburg (Va.) Circuit Court

**Physical Characteristics**

.45 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 Lynchburg.

**Preferred Citation**

Lynchburg (Va.) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1811-1887. Local government records collection, Lynchburg Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA 23219.

## Historical Information

Lynchburg was named for John Lynch, the owner of the original town site. It was established in 1786, was incorporated as a town in 1805, and became a city in 1852. Parts of Campbell and Bedford Counties were annexed to the city in 1976.

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

Lynchburg (Va) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1811-1887, 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:**

Lynchburg (Va.) Circuit Court

**Subjects:**

African Americans--History

Coroners--Virginia--Lynchburg  
Death--Causes--Virginia--Lynchburg  
Free African Americans--Virginia--Lynchburg  
Infanticide--Virginia--Lynchburg  
Murder--Investigation--Virginia--Lynchburg  
Murder victims--Virginia--Lynchburg  
Slaveholders--Virginia--Lynchburg  
Slaves--Virginia--Lynchburg  
Suicide--Virginia--Lynchburg  
Women--Virginia--Lynchburg

## **Geographical Names:**

Lynchburg (Va.)--History

## **Genre and Form Terms:**

Death records--Virginia--Lynchburg  
Local government records--Virginia--Lynchburg  
Reports--Virginia--Lynchburg

## **Arrangement**

Chronological by date coroner filed inquisition in the court.

## **Selected Coroners' Inquisitions of Interest**

### **1811 Nov. 3, Death of Billy Wichet (slave):**

#### **Scope and Content**

Billy, a slave owned by General James Breckenridge of Botetout County, was feloniously killed and murdered by John Cumminger by an assault with a stone to the side and top of his head.

### **1834 Nov. 18, Death of Rice Parker:**

#### **Scope and Content**

Died of various wounds inflicted upon the body, thighs, and legs by the dogs of George W. Pettijohn. Said dogs were willfully and maliciously set upon said Parker by Pettijohn.

### **1845 Jan. 12, Death of Barney (slave):**

#### **Scope and Content**

Barney, a slave, was feloniously killed and murdered by Gustavus, a slave.

### **1846 May 9, Death of Franky (slave):**

#### **Scope and Content**

Franky, a slave, died from some cause not absolutely known to the jury because the court refused to pay surgeons' fees. The jury's strong suspicion rest upon Oliver, the slave of Albon McDaniel.

### **1865 May 1, Death of Frank M. Almy:**

#### **Scope and Content**

Died from a pistol shot fired by Stanton Terry. Almy was a Federal soldier.

### **1869 December 25, Death of William P. Boley:**

#### **Scope and Content**

Died from a gunshot wound inflicted by a Federal soldier named James Madison, alias Slim Jim.

### **1872 Mar. 27, Death of an unknown infant:**

#### **Scope and Content**

Died by violence at the hands of its mother, aided and abetted by Judy Flood and Harry Johnson.

### **1885 Dec. 26, Death of Thomas Wade:**

#### **Scope and Content**

Died by making a mistake and drinking carbolic acid when he thought he was drinking whiskey. Both bottles were together on his dresser.

### **1887 Mar. 22, Death of Nettie Miller:**

#### **Scope and Content**

Died by the hands of her husband, Moses Miller, who struck her on the jaw with a hot poker and choked and strangled her to death.