

A Guide to the Wise County (Va.) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1873-1917

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Descriptive Summary

Barcode numbers

0007332023

Language

English

Collector

Wise 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 Wise County.

Preferred Citation

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Historical Information

Wise County was named for Henry Alexander Wise, governor of Virginia from 1856 to 1860. It was formed in 1856 from Lee, Scott, and Russell Counties.

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

Wise County (Va) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1873-1917, 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. 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.

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Wise County (Va.) Circuit Court

Subjects:

Coroners--Virginia--Wise County

Death--Causes--Virginia--Wise County

Infanticide--Virginia--Wise County

Murder--Investigation--Virginia--Wise County

Murder victims--Virginia--Wise County

Suicide--Virginia--Wise County

Women--Virginia--Wise County

Geographical Names:

Genre and Form Terms:

Death records--Virginia--Wise County

Local government records--Virginia--Wise County

Reports--Virginia--Wise County

Arrangement

Chronological by date coroner filed inquisition in the court.

Selected Coroners' Inquisitions of Interest

1873 April 18, Death of the infant child of Lucy Boling:

Scope and Content

Died in the hands of T.J. Coffee immediately after its birth.

1889 September 20, Death of Albert Johnson:

Scope and Content

Died from a gunshot wound in the right side of his neck received while fighting U.S. Marshals over whiskey.

1891 October 15, Death of John Taylor:

Scope and Content

Died by being run over while in a state of intoxication by a train of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad.

1895 December 14, Deaths of George Beeton, William H. Harden, P.L. Huffman, and Daniel Payne:

Scope and Content

Killed by being crushed under a mass of rock which fell from an overhanging cliff under which they were taking their dinner. Deaths were caused by an inevitable accident.

1896 July 22, Death of B.F. Jones:

Scope and Content

Died from a falling stone from the roof of the Dale Ridge Coal Company mines. Death was an unavoidable accident.