

# A Guide to the Henrico County (Va.) Health and Medical Records, 1830-1896

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1830-1896



A Collection in the Library of Virginia 0007784065  
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2020

## History

**Processed by:** T. Harter

## Title Statement

A Guide to the Henrico County (Va.) Health and Medical Records, 1830-1896

**Subtitle:** Henrico County (Va.) Health and Medical Records, 1830-1896

**Collection:** 0007784065

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## Publication Statement

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## Profile Description

**Creation:** Machine-readable finding aid created in EAD by Tracy S. Harter, 19 October 2020

**Language Usage:** Description is in English

## Descriptive Summary

### Collection Number

0007784065

### Language

English

### Creator

Henrico County (Va.) Circuit Court

### Extent

.225 cf; 3 folders in 1/2 hollinger box

### Repository

The Library of Virginia

## Administrative Information

### Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

## Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

## Acquisition Information

This collection came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Henrico County Circuit Court.

## Preferred Citation

Henrico County (Va.) Health and Medical Records, 1830-1896. Local government records collection, Henrico County Court Records, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

# Adjunct Descriptive Data

## Related Material

Additional Henrico County court records can be found on microfilm and in the Chancery Records Index at the Library of Virginia. Consult ["A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm"](#) and [The Chancery Records Index](#).

Henrico County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Henrico County Court Records may be found in the Virginia Lost Records Localities Collection at the Library of Virginia. Search the [Lost Records Localities Database](#) found at the Library of Virginia web site.

## Historical Information

Mental Health Records may consist of a variety of documents that historically were referred to as lunacy papers in the courthouses of Virginia localities and municipalities.

See also: Fiduciary Records. A fiduciary is an individual who enters into a confidential and legal relationship which binds them to act on behalf of another. Guardians are legally invested to take care of another person, and of the property and rights of that person. Thus, some records referred to as insanity papers are housed with fiduciary records and not with mental health records.

First known as commissions, the Justice of the Peace office originated with the county quarterly court in 1623. Commanders of Plantations (1607-1629) were predecessors of the commissioners, who since 1662 have been called justices of the peace. They have traditionally had both civil and criminal jurisdiction, and have served other functions, including performing coroners' and lunacy inquisitions. Until 1869 justices served both as judges of the county court and as individual justices; since then they have had only the latter function.

During its session begun in November 1769, the House of Burgesses passed an act establishing a hospital in Williamsburg for the mentally ill. The Eastern Lunatic Asylum (now Eastern State Hospital) was the first institution in America constructed as a mental hospital. The first patients were admitted in October 1773.

Henrico County was named for Henry, Prince of Wales, eldest son of King James I. It was one of the eight original shires, or counties, first enumerated in 1634. The county seat is in the western part of the county.

Recognized in 1634 as an original shire. All county court records prior to 1655 and almost all prior to 1677 are missing. Many records were destroyed by British troops during the Revolutionary War. Postrevolutionary War county court records exist. Almost all circuit superior court of law and chancery and circuit court records were destroyed by fire during the evacuation of Richmond on April 3, 1865, during the Civil War. The county's circuit court held its sessions at the state courthouse in Richmond.

## Scope and Content

Henrico County (Va.) Health and Medical Records 1830-1896, consists of three folders: Mental Health Records, Smallpox Epidemic Records, and Other Public Health Records.

Mental Health Records primarily are commitment papers, 1830-1896, pertaining to 21 persons whose mental condition was in question. These may include warrants, orders, petitions, depositions, reports, etc. for or by justices of the peace, physicians, and others regarding the mental condition of individuals who were released to the recognizance of a family member or who were committed to a mental hospital. Fiduciary records such as estate inventories of a person judged insane may also be present.

Smallpox Epidemic Records consist of papers relating to a smallpox outbreak in Henrico County and the City of Richmond in 1848 and 1856, the latter of which includes orders by local justices of the peace for three individuals diagnosed with smallpox to be admitted to the local smallpox hospital that year: Warner Morris in June 1856, and two free persons of color: Lizzy Smith in March 1856 and Peter Robinson in February 1856.

Other Public Health Records consist of reports of the county board of health and another special committee regarding public health issues in Henrico County and the City of Richmond in 1866, especially relating to stagnant water from former military trenches and drainage of water from city slaughterhouses, as well as a quarantine in 1878 for an unnamed sickness.

## Index Terms

### Corporate Names:

Henrico County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Eastern State Hospital (Va.).

### Subjects:

African Americans--Mental Health--Virginia--Henrico County.

County courts--Virginia--Henrico County.

Free African Americans--Virginia--Henrico County.

Insanity--Jurisprudence--Virginia--Henrico County.

Jails--Virginia--Henrico County.

Medical laws and legislation--Virginia--Henrico County.

Mental illness--Virginia--Henrico County.

Physicians--Virginia--Henrico County.

Psychiatric hospitals--Virginia.

Public health--Virginia.

Public health administration--Virginia.

Public records--Virginia--Henrico County.

Quarantine--Virginia--Henrico County.

Smallpox--Virginia--Henrico County.

Water Quality Management--Virginia--Henrico County.

### Geographical Names:

Henrico County (Va.)--History--19th Century.

Richmond (Va.)--History--19th Century.

### Genre and Form Terms:

Health and Medical--Virginia--Henrico County.

Local government records--Virginia--Henrico County.

## Arrangement

Chronological.

## Documents of Interest

### Mental Health Records: Commitment Papers

#### **Nathaniel Carter, March 1830.**

##### **Scope and Content**

Deemed harmless and therefore unnecessary to keep him from going at large.

#### **Madison Ford, June 1830.**

##### **Scope and Content**

Sent to hospital in Williamsburg.

**Mary Griffin, Dec. 1841.**

**Scope and Content**

Confined to jail.

**John Cottrell, Jan. 1845.**

**Scope and Content**

To be sent to hospital in Williamsburg; Estate includes an unnamed enslaved woman and her two children.

**Edward F. Petticolas, March 1853.**

**Scope and Content**

Certificate of John M. Galt, Superintendent of Eastern Lunatic Asylum, admitting patient, who is from Richmond.

**William Powell, July 1854.**

**Scope and Content**

Sent to Eastern Lunatic Asylum.

**James A. Tucker, July 1860.**

**Scope and Content**

Sent to Lunatic Asylum at Williamsburg.

**Mary E. Conway, Jan. 1882.**

**Scope and Content**

Found not to be insane.

**[Seven persons], June 1886.**

**Scope and Content**

Richmond Hustings Court order for seven people who were refused admittance to asylums were committed to custody and care of N.M. Lee of Richmond. Two white persons: Emma Pemberton, Caspar Marston. Five "colored persons": Mary J. House, Nannie Hall, Louisa Meekins, Henry Harris, George Holcomb.

**William Allen, June 1890.**

**Scope and Content**

Residing in a private sanitarium in the county of Baltimore in Maryland.

**Samuel Coleman, Aug 1892.**

**Scope and Content**

Richmond jail physician Charles N. Chalkley recommends him discharged as recovered.

**Martha Adams, Sept. 1892.**

**Scope and Content**

African American; Richmond jail physician Charles N. Chalkley recommends her discharge as recovered.

**James Clayton, Oct 1892.**

**Scope and Content**

Richmond jail physician Charles N. Chalkley recommends him discharged as recovered.

**William W. Ruffin, May 1896.**

**Scope and Content**

Brother seeking to become committee.

