

A Guide to the King George County (Va.), Health and Medical Records, 1885-1938

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1885-1938

A Collection in the Library of Virginia

Library of Virginia

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History

Processed by: LVA Staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the King George County (Va.), Health and Medical Records, 1885-1938

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Author: Tracy S. Harter

Publication Statement

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Profile Description

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

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Creator

King George County (Va.) Circuit Court

Extent

.9 cubic feet (2 boxes), 1 volume.

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 King George County Circuit Court under accession numbers 41900 and 42662.

Processing Information

Encoded by T. Harter: 2020; edited by V. Brooks: July 2026

Preferred Citation

King County (Va.) Health and Medical Records, 1885-1938. Local government records collection, King George County Court Records, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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

King George County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional King George County Records may be found in the [Virginia Lost Records Localities Digital Collection at the Library of Virginia](#).

Historical Information

Context for Record Type:

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.

On February 13, 1872, the General Assembly passed legislation to create a State Board of Health made up of 7 physicians appointed by the Governor. The Board was responsible for communicating with local boards of health, the hospitals, asylums and public institutions across the state. Local boards of health had been established in some cities as early as 1780 (Petersburg). The local and state boards made sanitary investigations regarding disease outbreaks such as smallpox or scarlet fever, documented sources of mortality, and any other information deemed relevant to public health. The local boards gathered information and reported to the state board. The State Board of Health also acted as an advisory board to the state in all hygienic and medical matters concerning the location, construction, sewerage, and administration of hospitals, prisons, asylums, and other public institutions.

Locality History:

King George County was named in honor of King George I. The county was formed from Richmond County by a statute of 23 December 1720. The county court first met on 19 May 1721. The county seat is King George.

Lost Locality Note:

King George County has suffered considerable record loss. Most loose records prior to 1830 are missing. Volumes that record deeds, court orders, and wills exist.

Scope and Content

King George County (Va.) Health and Medical Records 1885-1938 consists of 2 boxes of Mental Health Records and 1 volume partially dedicated to Board of Health records for King George County. The mental health records primarily include warrants, orders, petitions, depositions, reports, etc. for or by justices of the peace and others regarding the mental condition of individuals who were released to the recognizance of a family member or who were recommended to be committed to mental hospitals in Williamsburg or Petersburg. Fiduciary records such as estate inventories of a person judged insane are occasionally present.

See other collections of King George County Fiduciary Records or Tax and Fiscal Records for mental-health-related materials that are not filed here.

Individuals who were referenced as "colored" or were recommended to the Central Lunatic Asylum or the hospital at Petersburg are noted: Baylor Hoskins, Annie Clopton, Nannie Morton, Margaret Dunlop, Mattie Washington, William Barnes.

The Board of Health records contain information pertaining to the activities of the King George County Board of Health. The board was tasked with preempting or addressing public health issues such as communicable disease outbreaks, sanitation, and vaccination programs.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into the following series:

- **Series I: Health and Medical Records, 1885-1938**

Loose records are arranged chronologically by year, with names of individual on paper folders. If an individual had more than one instance of suspected mental incapacity, there may be papers filed in more than one chronological location.

Contents List

Series I: Health and Medical Records 1885-1938

Barcode number 1059639: Mental Health Records 1885-1914

Barcode number 1059638: Mental Health Records 1915-1938

Barcode number 1168247: Board of Health Records 1892-1937 ca.