

Following is a list of all the Virginia counties created by 1775, including extinct or renamed counties, together with a summary of their principal surviving public records. The parents of each county are also indicated.

A few counties have gone wholly extinct, replaced by others with different names. The surviving counties all have an ancestral pedigree leading back to a set of original SHIRESs, created in 1634, all hugging the Atlantic or Chesapeake coastline, or embracing the major tidewater rivers. The words FROM, RENAMED, and in some cases TO, show the parent(s) or children of each county. In cases where later additions were made to a county after the date of its original creation, the names of the counties ceding supplemental land are listed [within square brackets]. Because my focus here is genealogical, the TO and RENAMED references may be relevant because typically the records of (partially) superceded counties end up in the new jurisdictions.

## Miscellaneous Colony Records

In addition to the standard types of county records (probate, deeds, and county court order, or minute, books), there are many other kinds to be found at both county and colony level, the most important of which are the colonial patents (after 1775 these were called land grants), and the surviving chancery records.

The [Virginia land grants](#) have now been digitized, abstracted, indexed, and places online by the Library of Virginia.

Chancery cases can be rich sources of genealogical information, but during the colonial period chancery activity was minimal and such cases as arose were handled by the county courts. Between 1802-1831 (inclusive) Superior Courts of Chancery at Staunton, Richmond & Williamsburg were organized to supplant the single High Court of Chancery at Richmond, and besides that some counties began to keep separate records of their chancery cases, so it is always worth keeping an eye out for these kinds of records, whatever the venue one is exploring. The LVA is also in the process of gathering up and digitizing the surviving records from this period.

Throughout the colonial period the Colony General Court also heard both chancery and law cases on appeal, but unfortunately most of these and other Virginia colonial records were destroyed when Richmond was burned and looted by Yankee barbarians at the end of the Civil War. At the county level, one often finds county survey books, a smattering of tithables lists, and sometimes separate series for probate administration bonds, and guardianships. The fact that I have in this report included only the standard county records types that are the principal resource of the genealogist, should not deter anyone from looking for other records.

## Virginia Parish Records

Pretty much the only public vital records (births, marriages, deaths) that were kept in colonial Virginia, were the parish records of the established Anglican church, and the majority of these vanished in the aftermath of the Revolution. However, there are quite a number of surviving parish vestry books with valuable genealogical evidence. I will be addressing the parish records situation in a separate compilation.

## Virginia Counties and their Records

Where known, the county birth date in the list below has been supplemented by the date on which the first county records series began. Often, the first book, or series of books, for a county would include a jumble of all the records for which the county clerk was responsible. Eventually, most counties evolved separate series for (at least) deeds, probate records, and general county court order

(or minute) records. The kinds of records actually recorded in each of these series of books varied considerably from one jurisdiction to another, and not infrequently books of the same or different series overlapped either in content or chronology. Since in so many cases, the various titles that have been applied to these books by clerks or archivists of different periods are misleading or inappropriate, I have stuck to a generic naming system of: Records (for the miscellaneous early jumbled record book series), Probate, Deeds, and Orders (once these begin to occur as separate series), and in some cases, where I have studied the particular records structure of a county in more depth, I have broken these series down into individual sets of books, and indicated their chronological date ranges.

My principal source for information about county records is the online LDS [Family History Library Catalog](#). Over the past 7 or 8 decades the Mormons have microfilmed most of the early records in all the county courthouses of America, and all of these films can be borrowed through the nearest Family Search Center, usually no more than an hour away. In addition, the LDS is deep into the digitization of their some 3 million microforms. Unfortunately, though, interpreting the entries one finds in the catalog is something of a high art, given the inconsistency of records titling and description, and one often needs a deep familiarity with the kinds of records to be found at the county courthouses, and their variations, in order to be able to make a good guess as to what is on the films. And at the end of the day, there is no substitute for examining and analyzing the actual records books, whether live at the courthouse, or on film—a task that even accomplished genealogists often neglect.

In cases where continuous mixed record book series gave way to separate series for probate records, deeds, etc., I haven't bothered to note the end dates for the mixed records books. I have, though, made note where (as is usually the case), mixed record books series came to be supplemented by separate court order book series.

### County Name Abbreviations

For convenience of note-taking or citation, I have constructed a set of unique (mostly) four-character abbreviations for each of Virginia's counties (and later for its independent cities). To minimize the need to memorize these abbreviations, my first rule for constructing them was to simply use the first four letters of the name, or where this didn't suffice to make the abbreviation unique, I used the first four consonants instead. For multiple word names, I have generally used the first two consonants of each word. I also collapse common name parts, like "North" into just "N", and there are a few other rules that I systematically bring into play, but for my purposes here, it should be enough to make clear that these abbreviations are unique for Virginia to the present date, although not necessarily unique for Virginia's two spinoff states: Kentucky and West Virginia, which in a few cases have overlapping county names and abbreviations.

I myself use one of two abbreviated formats when referring to counties, partly because the formats themselves are indicative that a county name is being referenced. I have a different abbreviation format for cities or towns, and I always use State ZIP codes to abbreviate the names of the original colonies from which they derive.

Where space is not at a premium, I would generally refer to Lancaster County, Virginia, as "LancasterCoVA", or, where it is, I write just "LancVA", relying on the structure of these abbreviations to indicate that a county jurisdiction is the referent. The Commonwealth of Virginia founded at the time of the Revolution, also (uniquely) has "independent cities" that are not subordinate to any county, and these I refer to as, e.g. "RoanC-VA" (Roanoke City, Virginia) to distinguish it from "RoanVA" (Roanoke County, Virginia). Interestingly, as it happens, the Roanoke County courthouse isn't even located in RoanC, its in SalemC (the independent city of Salem) that lies adjacent to RoanC.

Virginia Counties Organized By 1775, and Their Records<sup>[1]</sup>

Abbr	County name (official birth date : earliest records date - death date) Records (dates) “-“ with no following date means “from that point on” In some cases, where the records aren’t at the original courthouses, I have indicated as much.
Acca	Accawmack (SHIRE) (1634-1642/3) TO Northampton See NorthamptonCo, below
Acco	Accomack (bef23Mar1661/2:21Apr1663-) Records (1663-), Orders (1666-1670, 1676-1678, 1690-)
Albe	Albemarle (1Jan1744/5:28Feb1744/5) FROM Goochland [Louisa-1762, Augusta-1770] Records (1748-1752), Deeds (1758-), Orders (1744-1748, 1783-1785, 1791-), Probate (1752-)
Amel	Amelia (25Mar1735-) FROM PrinceGeorge + Brunswick Deeds (1734-), Orders (1735-), Probate (1734-)
Amhe	Amherst (1May1761-) FROM Albemarle [Augusta-1770] Deeds (1761-), Orders (1761-), Probate (1766-)
Augu	Augusta (15Dec1738:30Oct1745(justices commissioned/9Dec1745(1st court) FROM Orange records from 1738-1745 are in OrangeCo books Deeds (1745-), Orders (1745-), Probate (1745-)
Bedf	Bedford (10May1754-) FROM Lunenburg, [Albemarle] Deeds (1754-), Orders (1754-), Probate (1763-)
Berk	Berkeley (15May1772-) FROM Frederick This county became part of West Virginia during the Civil War Deeds (1782-), Orders (1772-1786, after which gaps open up), Probate (1772-)
Bote	Botetourt (31Jan1770-) FROM Augusta [+ Rockbridge 1785] Deeds (1770-), Orders (1770-), Probate (1770-)
Brun	Brunswick (1May1721:2May1732-) FROM PrinceGeorge [Surry-1733, IsleOfWight-1733] Records (1732-1740), Deeds (1740-), Orders (1732-), Probate (1739-)
Buck	Buckingham (1May1762-) FROM Albemarle NONE until Deeds (1869-), Orders (1869-), Probate (1869-)
ChCt	CharlesCity (SHIRE) (1634-) Only fragmentary early records
ChRv	CharlesRiver (SHIRE) (1634-1642/3) RENAMED York See YorkCo
Char	Charlotte (1Mar1765-) FROM Lunenburg Deeds (1765-), Orders (1765-), Probate (1765-)
Caro	Caroline (1May1728-) FROM Essex + King&Queen + KingWilliam Orders (1732-), otherwise only fragmentary before the mid-1800s
Chst	Chesterfield (26May1749-) FROM Henrico Deeds (1749-), Orders (1749-), Probate (1749-)

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<sup>1</sup> I have a much longer list for all Virginia counties but without the summaries of extant records. I may expand this report at some point to encompass all the counties that were ever part of Virginia (including those ceded to Kentucky and West Virginia)

- Culp** Culpeper (18May1749-) FROM Orange  
Deeds (1749-), Orders (1763-1765 (badly damaged), 1798-), Probate (1749-)
- Cumb** Cumberland (21May1749-) FROM Goochland  
Deeds (1749-), Orders (1749-), Probate (1749-)
- Dinw** Dinwiddie (1May1752-) FROM PrinceGeorge  
Except for Orders (1789-1791, NONE until Deeds (1833-), and Probate (1830-)
- Dunm** Dunmore (15May1772:26May1772-1778) RENAMED Shenandoah 1Feb1778 FROM Frederick  
Deeds (1772-), Orders (1772-), Probate (1772-)
- ElCt** ElizabethCity (SHIRE) (1634-1Jul1952) TO Hampton (CITY)  
Only fragmentary early records
- Esse** Essex (26Apr1692-) FROM (Old)Rappahannock  
Records (1692-)
- Fair** Fairfax (1Dec1742-) FROM PrinceWilliam  
Deeds (1742?/1750-), (Orders 1749-), Probate (1742-)
- Fauq** Fauquier (1May1759) FROM PrinceWilliam  
Deeds (1759-), Orders (1759-), Probate (1759-)
- Finc** Fincastle (1Dec1772-31Dec1777) FROM Botetourt TO Washington + Montgomery + Kentucky  
Deeds, Orders, and Probate (1773-1777) form the first part of the MontgomeryCo records
- Fred** Frederick (15Dec1738:11Nov1743-) FROM Orange, [Augusta]  
records from 1738-1743 in OrangeCo books  
Deeds (1743-), Orders (1743-), Probate (1743-)
- Glou** Gloucester (1651-) FROM York  
NONE before 1821
- Gooc** Goochland (1May1727-) FROM Henrico  
Records (1728-1867), Orders (1728-), Probate (1868-)
- Hali** Halifax (10May1752-) FROM Lunenburg  
Deeds (1752-), Orders (1752-), Probate (1752-)
- Hamp** Hampshire (1May1754-) FROM Augusta + Frederick, [Augusta-1778, Hardy]  
This county became part of West Virginia during the Civil War  
Deeds (1757-), Order (1765-); Probate (1756-, except that many books seem to be missing)
- Hano** Hanover (1May1721:1733-) FROM NewKent  
Records (1733-1735), Orders (1831-1844, 1869-1876), Probate (1851-)
- Hnrc** Henrico (SHIRE) (1634:1677-)  
Records (1677-), Orders (1678-1701, 1707-1709, 1719-1723, 1737-1746, 1752-)
- IsOW** IsleOfWight (1637-) RENAMED FROM Warrosquyoake(SHIRE), [UpperNorfolk, Nansemond]  
Records (1643-, with the early books having overlapping date ranges), Orders (1693-1695)
- JmCt** JamesCity (SHIRE) (1634-) TO/FROM [NewKent, York]  
NONE before 1854
- Loui** Louisa (1Dec1742-) FROM Hanover  
Deeds (1742-), Ordrs (1742-1748, 1766- ; overlapping order and minute book series), Probate (1745-)
- Kn&Q** King&Queen (12May1691-) FROM NewKent  
NONE before 1782
- KnGr** KingGeorge (23Apr1721-) FROM Richmond, [Westmoreland]  
Deeds (1721-1783, 1794-), Orders (1721-), Probate (1721-1780, 1805-)
- KnWl** KingWilliam (12Apr1702:1885-) FROM King&Queen  
NONE before 1885

- Lanc** Lancaster (1651:1Jan1651/2-) FROM Northumberland, York  
Records (1652-, with the early books having overlapping date ranges), Orders (1656-)
- Loud** Loudoun (1Jul1757-) FROM Fairfax  
Deeds (1757-), Orders (1757-), Probate (1757-)
- Lune** Lunenburg (1May1746-) FROM Brunswick, [Charlotte-1777 re-cession]  
Deeds (1746-), Orders (1746-), Probate (1746-)  
almost uniquely has titheables lists for most years from 1746-1781
- Meck** Mecklenburg (1Mar1765-) FROM Lunenburg  
Deeds (1765-), Orders (1765-), Probate (1765-)
- Msex** Middlesex (:2Feb1673/4-) FROM Lancaster  
Deeds (1679-), Orders (1673-) Probate (1698-, plus a collection of earlier loose wills from 1675)
- Nans** Nansemond (1642-Jul1972) RENAMED FROM UpperNorfolk TO Nansemond (CITY)  
Only fragmentary and some reconstructed records survive from the colonial period
- NwKn** NewKent (1654:1850-) FROM York, [JamesCity]  
NONE before 1850
- NwNf** NewNorfolk (1636-1637) FROM ElizabethCity TO UpperNorfolk + LowerNorfolk  
NONE known, except what may be found in the inheriting jurisdiction
- Norf** Norfolk (16May1691-1936) FROM LowerNorfolk TO Chesapeake (CITY)  
Records (1637-), Orders (1675-1686 - others in the mixed Records books) at Chesapeake CITY
- Namp** Northampton (1642-) FROM Accamack  
Records (1632-), Orders (1655-)
- Numb** Northumberland (Oct1648: Feb1645-)  
Records (1642-), Orders (1652-)
- Oran** Orange (20Sep1734:21Jan1734-) FROM Spotsylvania  
Deeds & Orders (1734-), Probate (1735-) also bundles of loose court records from 1734
- Pitt** Pittsylvania (1Jun1767-) FROM Halifax  
Deeds (with Wills (1767-1780), Deeds (1780-), Orders (1767-), Probate (1767-)
- PrEd** PrinceEdward (1Jan1754-) FROM Amelia  
Deeds (1754-), Orders (1754-), Probate (1754-)
- PrWl** PrinceWilliam (25Mar1731-) FROM Stafford + KingGeorge  
Deeds (1731-1741, 1745-1746, 1748-1752, 1761-1771, 1774-),  
Orders (1752-1757, 1761-1769, 1804-1806, 1812-1814, 1833-), Probate (1734-1744, 1778-)
- PrAn** PrincessAnne (16May1691-1Jan1963) FROM LowerNorfolk TO ViginiaBeach (CITY)  
Records (1691-), Orders (1691-) at VirginiaBeach CITY courthouse
- Rich** Richmond (26Apr1692-) FROM (Old)Rappahannock  
Deeds (1692-), Probate (1699-), Orders (1692-)
- RappO** Rappahannock (Dec1656:11Dec1656-1692) FROM Lancaster TO Essex + Richmond  
Records (1656-1692, with gaps), Orders (1683-1692) - at EssexCo
- Samp** Southampton (21May1749-) FROM IsleOfWight, [Nansemond-1786]  
Deeds (1749-), Orders (1749-1763, 1768-1789, 1802-1807, 1811-1824, 1835-1849, 1870-); Probate (1749-)
- Shen** Shenandoah (15May1772:26May1772-) RENAMED from Dunmore 1Feb1778  
Deeds (1772-), Orders (1772-), Probate (1772-)
- Spot** Spotsylvania (1May1721-) FROM Essex + KingWilliam + King&Queen  
Deeds (1722-), Orders (1724-), Probate (1722-)
- Staf** Stafford (:27May1664-) FROM Westmoreland  
Records (1664-1668, 1680, 1689-1693, 1699-1709, 1722-)

- Surr** Surry (1652?:Apr1652-) FROM JamesCity  
Records (1652-), Orders (1671-, including tithables lists from 1668-1703)  
almost uniquely has titheables lists for frpm 1668-1703
- Suss** Sussex (1Feb1754-) FROM Surry  
Deeds (1754-), Orders (1754-), Probate (1754-)
- Wrrs** Warrosquyoake (SHIRE) (1634-1637) RENAMED IsleOfWight  
See IsleOfWightCo
- Warw** Warwick (1642/3-1952) RENAMED FROM WarwickRiver (SHIRE) TO Warwick (CITY)  
NONE before 1865
- WrRv** WarwickRiver (SHIRE) (1634-1642/3) RENAMED Warwick  
See WarwickCo
- Wmor** Westmoreland (Jul1653-) FROM Northumberland, [KingGeorge]  
Records (1653-), Orders (1662-)
- York** York (1642/3-) RENAMED FROM CharlesRiver  
Records (1633-1732, including orders and probate), Deeds (1729-), Probate (1811-)