

A Guide to the Mathews County (Va.) Election Records, 1848-1965

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1848-1965

A Collection in the Library of Virginia
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2012

Author: Sam Walters

History

Processed by: S. Walters

Title Statement

A Guide to the Mathews County (Va.) Election Records, 1848-1965

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Author: Sam Walters

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Profile Description

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Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

2013-11-21 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Mathews County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

1.35 cu. ft. (3 boxes), 22 volumes.

Location

Library of Virginia, State Records Center - Archives Annex

Repository

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 a shipment of court papers from Mathews County.

Processing Information

The historical term "Colored" has been retained in the titling of the voter registration volumes to illustrate the racial divisions inherent in the process of registering for and casting a vote in Virginia prior to the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965. Updated terms have been utilized elsewhere in the description.

Election Records, 1861-1965 were processed by S. Walters 2012.

Encoded by S. Walters: April 2012; updated by V. Brooks, September 2025

Preferred Citation

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Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Mathews County Records can be found on microfilm at the Library of Virginia. Consult ["A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm."](#)

See the [Lost Records Localities Digital Collection](#) available at Virginia Memory.

Historical Information

Context for Records: The election records group encompasses all of the documents dealing with public elections and is related to voters and voting. The franchise in Virginia has varied in its extent. Prior to the revolutionary war, white male freeholders (real property owners) over 21, were the only individuals entitled to vote. This condition was continued by the 1776 Constitution. Alterations in the extent of the franchise could only be made by constitutional change. There was an attempt in 1829-30 to extend the franchise as well as to reapportion the representation to the general assembly. The right to vote was extended to potential property owners (reversioners or remaindermen of freehold estates) and long term leaseholders, as well as white males over 21 who have resided in a locality for at least twelve months and paid taxes. The constitution of 1850-51 widely extended the suffrage. All white males aged 21, residents of Virginia for two years, and resident for one year in the locality in which they were living at the time of the election were now eligible to vote. The 1867-68 Constitution extended the vote to include Black males.

Several attempts were made to restrict the suffrage by imposing educational requirements and making the ballot secret. These acts included the Anderson-McCormick law and the Walton law of 1893-94. The 1902 voter registration books were created following the passage of the 1902 Virginia state constitution. The purpose of the 1902 state constitution was to maintain white suffrage while eliminating Black voters by means of literacy tests as well as property and poll tax requirements. The Nineteenth Amendment was granted the right to vote to women. It was proposed on June 4, 1919 and ratified on August 18, 1920. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed discriminatory voting practices that had been responsible for the widespread disenfranchisement of Black voters in the United States. The Act prohibited states from imposing any "voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure ... to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color." Congress intended the Act to outlaw the practice of requiring otherwise qualified voters to pass literacy tests in order to register to vote, a principal means by which southern states had prevented Black citizens from exercising the franchise.

Locality History: Mathews County was named for Thomas Mathews, of Norfolk, the Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates when it was formed from Gloucester County by a statute passed on 16 December 1790 to take effect on 1 May 1791.

Lost Locality Note: Most Mathews County records were burned in Richmond on 3 April 1865, where they had been moved for safekeeping during the Civil War.

Scope and Content

Mathews County (Va.) Election Records, 1848-1965, primarily consists of white and Black ("Colored") voter registration volumes for Westville District, Chesapeake District, and Piankatank District. Also included are a poll book, appointments, orders, commissioner lists, petitions for election precincts, and notices of candidacy.

Arrangement

For descriptive purposes, the collection has been divided into two series:

- Series I: Processed Election Records, 1861-1965
- Series II: Unprocessed Election Records, 1848-1903

Box List

Series I: Processed Election Records 1861-1965

Extent

2 folders, 22 volumes

Physical Location Library of Virginia, State Records Center- Archives Annex

Scope and Content

This series consists primarily of white and Black ("Colored") voter registration volumes for Westville District, Chesapeake District, and Piankatank District. Loose records consist of a poll book, appointments, orders, commissioner lists, petitions for election precincts, and notices of candidacy.

Arrangement

Volumes arranged by precinct; Loose records roughly chronological.

Barcode 1208351: Election Records 1861, 1882-1903

Barcode 1006146: Voter Registration (White), Westville District 1902-1924

Barcode 1006152: Voter Registration ("Colored"), Westville District 1902-1944

Barcode 1006149: Voter Registration (White), Westville District 1902-1944

Barcode 1006150: Voter Registration (White), Westville District 1902-1955

Barcode 1006140: Voter Registration ("Colored"), Chesapeake District 1902-1956

Barcode 1006142: Voter Registration (White), Chesapeake District 1902-1956

Barcode 1006141: Voter Registration (White), Chesapeake District 1902-1965

Barcode 1006137: Voter Registration (White), Piankatank District 1902-1965

Barcode 1006147: Voter Registration (White), Westville District 1902-1965

Barcode 1006159: Voter Registration ("Colored"), Westville District 1908-1965

Barcode 1006136: Voter Registration (White), Piankatank District 1911-1964

Barcode 1006145: Voter Registration (White), Westville District 1915-1964

Barcode 1006138: Voter Registration ("Colored"), Piankatank District 1916-1964

Barcode 1006151: Voter Registration (White), Piankatank District 1925-1964

Barcode 1006139: Voter Registration ("Colored"), Chesapeake District 1928-1965

Barcode 1132385: Voter Registration ("Colored"), Westville District 1936-1949

Barcode 1006153: Voter Registration ("Colored"), Piankatank District 1936-1964

Barcode 1006154: Voter Registration ("Colored"), Westville District 1936-1964

Barcode 1006144: Voter Registration (White), Westville District 1940-1955

Barcode 1006148: Voter Registration ("Colored"), Westville District 1949-1952

Barcode 1006158: Voter Registration ("Colored"), Westville District 1956-1965

Barcode 1006143: Voter Registration (White), Westville District 1956-1965

Series II: Unprocessed Election Records 1848-1903

Extent

2 boxes

Physical Location State Records Center- Archives Annex

Arrangement

Unarranged.

Barcode 1006120: Election Records 1848-1950 circa

Barcode 1188536: Election Records: Notices of Candidacy 1895, 1901, 1903