

A Guide to the Elizabeth City County (Va.) Commonwealth vs. Virginia Christian, 1912

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1912

A Collection in the Library of Virginia 1178717
Library of Virginia
2010

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History

Processed by: Catherine G. O'Brien

Title Statement

A Guide to the Elizabeth City County (Va.) Commonwealth vs. Virginia Christian, 1912

Subtitle: Elizabeth City County (Va.) Commonwealth Cause vs. Virginia Christian, 1912

Collection: 1178717

Author: Catherine G. O'Brien

Publication Statement

Date: ©2010 By The Library of Virginia. All Rights Reserved.

Publisher: Library of Virginia

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from being created directly into EAD, created by Catherine G. O'Brien, 29 September 2010

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

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

Descriptive Summary

Barcode number

1178717

Language

English

Collector

Hampton (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

0.15 cu. ft. (1 folder)

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 a transfer of records from Hampton Circuit Court.

Preferred Citation

Elizabeth City County (Va.) Commonwealth Cause vs. Virginia Christian, 1912. Local government records collection, Hampton/Elizabeth City County (Va.) Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional records pertaining to the Christian case can be found at the Library of Virginia in the Virginia State Penitentiary Collection, 1796-1991 (Accession 41558). These records are currently closed for processing, but selected records from the case have been digitized and are available on the [Library of Virginia's "Out of the Box" blog](#) 2010 Sep. 14 entry. The coroner's report from the case can be found in Hampton/Elizabeth City County coroner's records available at the Library of Virginia.

Historical Information

Virginia Christian was the first woman executed by the Commonwealth of Virginia after the General Assembly centralized executions at the Virginia State Penitentiary in 1908.

Elizabeth City County (extinct) was named for Elizabeth, daughter of James I, and was one of the eight shires established in 1634. It became extinct in 1952, when it was incorporated into the city of Hampton, which was the county seat. Isle of Wight County was most likely named for the Isle of Wight off the south coast of England. It was first known as Warrosquyoake and was one of the eight shires established in 1634. The present name was given in 1637. Part of Nansemond County was added in 1769.

Hampton takes its name from Hampton Creek, earlier called Southampton River in honor of the earl of Southampton, an important figure in the Virginia Company of London. An Indian village stood on the site in 1607, when John Smith visited the area. The English established a village there in 1610 and a trading post in 1630. Hampton was established by an act of assembly in 1680 and was designated as a port in 1708. It was first incorporated as a town in 1849, then incorporated again in 1852, but the act of incorporation was repealed in 1860. The General Assembly again incorporated the town of Hampton in 1887, and it became a city by court order in 1908. It was greatly enlarged in 1952 by a merger with Elizabeth City County and the town of Phoebus; the county and town thereby became extinct.

Scope and Content

Elizabeth City County (Va.) Commonwealth versus Virginia Christian, 1912 Apr.-1912 Aug. 16, contains the Commonwealth Cause against Virginia Christian. Christian was convicted 1912 May 15 of murdering her employer, Ida V. Belote, 1912 Mar. 18 and sentenced to death by electrocution. According to evidence submitted by the Commonwealth, Christian was 17 years old at the time of the murder. She petitioned the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals for a writ of error, requesting that she be committed to a reformatory because she was a child under the age of seventeen years when the crime was committed. The motion was denied 1912 Jun 12, and Christian was executed 1912 Aug. 16.

The materials consist of the grand jury presentment against Christian, instructions to the jury, a list of witnesses who testified in the case, a summary of evidence, consisting mostly of testimony introduced by the Commonwealth; motions for the defense, petitions for a writ of error, telegraphs informing the Elizabeth City County clerk of the denial of the petitions for a writ of error, and a letter, 1912 Aug. 16, informing the clerk of Christian's electrocution at the Virginia Penitentiary in Richmond.

Index Terms

Personal Names:

Belote, Ida V.
Christian, Virginia.

Corporate Names:

Hampton (Va.). Circuit Court.
Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals.

Subjects:

Capital punishment -- Virginia.
Murder -- Virginia -- Elizabeth City County.
Trials (Murder) -- Virginia -- Elizabeth City County.

Geographical Names:

Elizabeth City County (Va.) -- History -- 20th century.
Hampton (Va.) -- History -- 20th century.

Genre and Form Terms:

Letters (correspondence) -- Virginia -- Elizabeth City County.
Local government records -- Virginia -- Elizabeth City County.
Petitions -- Virginia -- Elizabeth City County.
Telegraphs -- Virginia -- Elizabeth City County.
Testimonies -- Virginia -- Elizabeth City County.
Transcripts -- Virginia -- Elizabeth City County.
Trials -- Virginia -- Elizabeth City County.
Writs -- Virginia -- Elizabeth City County.