

A Guide to the Brunswick County (Va.), Health and Medical Records, 1799-1901

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History

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Descriptive Summary

Barcode number

1208256, 0007765232

Language

English

Collector

Brunswick County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

1/2 hollinger and 1 folder

Location

Library of Virginia

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 court papers from Brunswick County.

Preferred Citation

Brunswick County (Va.) Health and Medical Records, 1799-1901. Local government records collection, Brunswick County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Brunswick 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](#).

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.

In March 1882 a 300 acre tract of land was purchased by the City of Petersburg and given to the state for the purpose of constructing a permanent mental health facility for African Americans. Construction of the new facility near Petersburg was completed in early spring 1885. This later included a special building to house the criminally insane apart from the rest of the hospital population. In 1894, Central Lunatic Asylum was officially renamed Central State Hospital. It is important to note that another state institution located in Staunton, Virginia went by the name Central Lunatic Asylum between the years of 1861 and 1865. Its name was later changed to Western Lunatic Asylum, and is a separate facility with no connection to the Richmond/Petersburg hospital for African Americans.

In 1863, the Virginia General Assembly passed two pieces of legislation affecting persons committed to mental hospitals. In February, it passed legislation amending an 1836 act concerning John Haskins, Sr., of Brunswick County. This allowed for Haskins' committee to sell any stock owned by Haskins and for any proceeds beyond that necessary for his care to be invested in any stock, to include Confederate bonds. In March, the General Assembly widened the scope of this by passing legislation authorizing any fiduciaries such as the committee or trustee of the estate of any person to petition their circuit court to allow them to invest any part of estate funds in Confederate bonds or certificates.

In 1792, the General Assembly passed an act to consolidate previously passed acts regulating smallpox inoculation. The new act required a license from the county court to administer vaccinations. It included a penalty of \$1,500 or six months' imprisonment for anyone willfully spreading smallpox in a manner other than specified by the act.

Brunswick County was named for the duchy of Brunswick-Luneburg, one of the German possessions of George I. It was formed in 1720 from Prince George County, but, because of the sparse population, county government was not organized until 1732. In the latter year Brunswick County was enlarged by the addition of parts of Surry and Isle of Wight Counties.

Scope and Content

Brunswick County (Va.) Health and Medical Records, 1799-1901, consist of Mental Health Records and Smallpox Epidemic Records.

Smallpox Epidemic Records consist of one document: The minutes of a meeting of the justices concerning William Stokes inoculating for smallpox, 1799 Jul 2. The county justices of the peace met to decide whether

Doctor Stokes should be allowed to continue inoculating patients for the small pox at his hospital know by the name of White Oak Grove. They concluded he had opened the hospital contrary to law without obtaining consent of the majority of local residents within two miles of the hospital, and ordered him to discontinue inoculating patients until such consent was obtained.

Mental Health Records, 1802-1901 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 committed to a mental hospital. Fiduciary records such as estate inventories of a person judged insane may also be present.

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Brunswick County (Va.) Circuit Court.
Central Lunatic Asylum for Colored Insane, Virginia.
Central State Hospital (Petersburg, Va.).
Eastern State Hospital (Va.).
Western State Hospital (Va.).

Subjects:

African Americans -- Mental Health -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.
County courts -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.
Immunization -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.
Insanity -- Jurisprudence -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.
Jails -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.
Medical laws and legislation -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.
Mental illness -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.
Physicians -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.
Psychiatric hospitals -- Virginia.
Public records -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.
Slaves -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.
Smallpox -- Hospitals -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.
Smallpox Prevention.

Geographical Names:

Brunswick County (Va.) -- History -- 18th century.
Brunswick County (Va.) -- History -- 19th century.

Genre and Form Terms:

Health and medical records -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.
Local government records -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.

Arrangement

The Mental Health Records are arranged chronologically by year, then alphabetically by last name of individual.

Cases of Interest

Jacob Miller, 1802

Scope and Content

Estate inventory includes names and valuations of eight enslaved people: Sam, Peg, Milly, Billy, Sarah, Lucy, Lizy, and Bob.

John Wall, 1830

Scope and Content

Estate inventory includes names and ages of five enslaved people: Sophia, Suckey, Henry, Minerva, and Nancy; this file possibly related to file of same name in 1805.

William P. Allen, 1838

Scope and Content

Includes estate inventory.

David B. Kennedy, 1847

Scope and Content

Includes estate inventory.

Charles Powell, 1853

Scope and Content

Estate inventory of his father references 19 unnamed enslaved people.

John Haskins, Sr., 1863

Scope and Content

Paperwork beginning in 1836 references enslaved man named Tom who was to remain with Haskins, while the remainder of his estate was to be sold as per an 1836 Act of Assembly pertaining directly to Haskins, a copy of which is included in the file. Also includes 1863 paperwork regarding sales of specific local stocks for investment in Confederate bonds.

Edward Haskins, 1866

Scope and Content

Two estate inventories: 1866 and 1842; 1842 inventory references 24 unnamed enslaved people.

Elvira Marks, 1886

Scope and Content

African American woman confined in jail as a lunatic for 2 months, during which time she gave birth, to the surprise of the jailers, who claimed had not realized she was pregnant. Depositions reference her being from Prince George or Surry County. Recommendation to send her to the "Colored Lunatic Asylum" near Petersburg.