

# A Guide to the Lancaster County (Va.) Health and Medical Records, 1787-1922

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia 1134992  
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## History

**Processed by:** T. Harter

## Title Statement

A Guide to the Lancaster County (Va.) Health and Medical Records, 1787-1922

**Subtitle:** Lancaster County (Va.), Health and Medical Records, 1787-1922

**Collection:** 1134992

**Author:** Tracy S. Harter

## Publication Statement

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## Profile Description

**Creation:** Machine-readable finding aid created in EAD by Tracy S. Harter, 9 July 2020

**Language Usage:** Description is in English

## Descriptive Summary

### Collection Number

1134992

### Language

English

### Creator

Lancaster County (Va.) Circuit Court

### Extent

.225 cf; five folders in a regular hollinger box

### 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 Lancaster County Circuit Court.

## Preferred Citation

Lancaster County (Va.) Health and Medical Records, 1787-1922. Local government records collection, Lancaster County Court Records, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

# Adjunct Descriptive Data

## Related Material

See also: "[Lancaster County \(Va.\) Coroners' Inquisitions, 1787-1926](#)".

Additional Lancaster 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.

Virginia's General Assembly enacted very strict laws governing the practice of smallpox inoculation by 1792. The new act required a license from the county court to administer vaccinations. It also included a penalty of \$1,500 or six months' imprisonment for anyone willfully spreading smallpox in a manner other than that specified by the act.

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.

In 1868, the Freedman's Bureau acquired land known as Howard's Grove, (or Howard Grove), located one half mile east of the city of Richmond, on the Mechanicsville Turnpike, in Henrico County. Through a lease from Mr. Bacon Tait (or Tate), the Bureau renovated several barrack-type structures that had been used as a Confederate hospital during the Civil War. The new facility became known as Howard's Grove Freedman's Hospital.

The hospital was turned over to the state by way of General Order number 136 issued by Major General Canby, Military Governor of Virginia in December 1869. Beginning January 1, 1870 all African American patients at Eastern Lunatic Asylum in Williamsburg, (the only state institution at the time to accept black patients), as well as all blacks jailed for lunacy from across Virginia, were to be removed to Howard's Grove for treatment. The General Assembly passed legislation in June 1870 renaming the facility the Central Lunatic Asylum and designating it the official "reception and treatment facility for colored persons of unsound mind." This legislation was enacted with the stipulation that the Howard's Grove location was to be temporary.

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. An early institutional history notes that treatment at Central Lunatic Asylum during the 1890s was humane and emphasized the value of work and the benefits of recreation. However, practices at the facility also included seclusion, mechanical restraints, and the administering of hypnotics.

In 1894, Central Lunatic Asylum was officially renamed Central State Hospital. This piece of legislation also altered the names of the other mental health facilities in Virginia in an attempt to inspire a more positive image of the institutions, and of mental health treatment in general. 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 later was changed to Western Lunatic Asylum, and is a separate facility with no connection to the Richmond/Petersburg hospital for African Americans.

Lancaster County was named for the English county. It was formed from Northumberland and York Counties sometime between 26 March and 16 September 1651. The county court first met on 1 January 1652. The county seat is Lancaster.

## Scope and Content

Lancaster County (Va.) Health and Medical Records 1787-1922, consist of four series: Accounts Allowed, 1787-1900; Mental Health Records, 1827-1900; Smallpox Epidemic Records, 1858-1922; and Other Epidemic Records: Tuberculosis information, 1908.

Accounts Allowed, 1787-1900, include accounts and claims from doctors and/or other individuals for services rendered. These often pertain to house calls, prisoner visits, childbirths, post-mortems, supplies, etc. Items relating to mental health are housed with the Mental Health Records series in this collection. Items associated with coroners' claims are foldered separately here.

Mental Health Records, 1827-1900, may 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 a mental hospital. Fiduciary records such as estate inventories of a person judged insane may also be present. Some individuals were recommended to the hospital in Williamsburg which later became Eastern State Hospital. Individuals who were referenced as "colored" or who were recommended to a Central Lunatic Asylum or the hospital at Petersburg or Richmond are noted. See Documents of Interest list below.

Smallpox Epidemic Records, 1858-1922, consist of papers relating to quarantines and hospitals for the containment and/or treatment of smallpox outbreaks in Lancaster County. See Documents of Interest list below.

Other Epidemic Records: Tuberculosis information, 1908 consists folder of material generally related to tuberculosis.

## **Index Terms**

### **Corporate Names:**

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

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Mental Health--Virginia--Lancaster County.  
County courts--Virginia--Lancaster County.  
Insanity--Jurisprudence--Virginia--Lancaster County.  
Jails--Virginia--Lancaster County.  
Medical laws and legislation--Virginia--Lancaster County.  
Mental illness--Virginia--Lancaster County.  
Physicians--Virginia--Lancaster County.  
Psychiatric hospitals--Virginia.  
Public health--Virginia.  
Public health administration--Virginia.  
Public records--Virginia--Lancaster County.  
Quarantine--Virginia--Lancaster County.  
Smallpox--Virginia--Lancaster County.

### **Geographical Names:**

Lancaster County (Va.)--History--18th Century.  
Lancaster County (Va.)--History--19th Century.

### **Genre and Form Terms:**

Health and Medical--Virginia--Lancaster County.  
Local government records--Virginia--Lancaster County.

## **Arrangement**

Chronological within each series. The Mental Health Records are arranged chronologically, then alphabetically by last name of individual when applicable.

## Documents of Interest

### Mental Health Records (selected)

#### **John Dunaway, 1855**

##### **Scope and Content**

Estate referenced as having "one negro slave worth about \$500.00" as part of his estate.

#### **Leroy Chowning, 1874**

##### **Scope and Content**

A "freedman" to be sent to Central Lunatic Asylum.

#### **Paulina Robinson, 1878**

##### **Scope and Content**

Referenced as colored and to be sent to the lunatic asylum at Richmond.

#### **Mortimer Tomlin, 1897**

##### **Scope and Content**

Referenced as colored and to be sent to Central Lunatic Asylum.

#### **Elvia Carter, 1899**

##### **Scope and Content**

Race not referenced, but to be sent to the Lunatic Asylum at Petersburg.

### Smallpox Epidemic Records (selected)

#### **1858:**

##### **Scope and Content**

Account for Henry Edmonds' medical services in April.

#### **1863:**

##### **Scope and Content**

Reimbursements to Thad King for nursing, to Granville Harvey for nursing patient William Brown, and to Thomas S. Dunaway and Thomas Brown for making/providing clothing/bedding during March-April.

#### **1883:**

##### **Scope and Content**

Documents related to treatment of a smallpox outbreak and the use of the houses of Charles Nutt and (?) Nickens as hospitals in January, and W.B. Payne's in April; detailed inventory of food, clothing, toiletries, and supplies used in hospitals and for local families under quarantine, some under guard; Doctor James Simmonds' report re smallpox treatment and vaccinations and the lack of success of some early vaccinations; reported 19 cases, 7 deaths; patients include Hiram Kenner and Lizzie Moore; Superintendent L.C. Leland in charge of the hospitals; two nurses Presley Cox and William L. Smith; two messengers George Walker and B.S. Jacobs; Dr. W.J. Newbill involved at Payne's house and nursing Lizzie Moore as well as vaccinating six patients; reimbursements to individuals Nickens, Rice, Hughlett, and Payne, who lost or donated property to be used; Payne was reimbursed \$35.50 for loss of his home, which was "used as hospital & directed to be burned as it could not be cleaned."

#### **1900-1901:**

##### **Scope and Content**

Claims for reimbursement to individuals during smallpox outbreaks during summer 1900: to Milliam Johnson and Christiana Smith for various services at Captain Joseph Bellows'; to Richard Lee for nursing

Mr. Mullin 20 days and for destroyed clothing; to J.W. Brillheart for boarding four patients at Belle Isle for five weeks.

## **1906:**

### **Scope and Content**

Letter regarding cancelling meeting at "Queen Ester" due to prevalence of smallpox; claim of T.O. Smither for supplies to a smallpox patient; claim of C.S. Haynie regarding Leonard Jones, suspected of smallpox.

## **1907-1908:**

### **Scope and Content**

Regarding quarantine and treatment of Isaac Parks between July and Aug 1907.

## **1921-1922:**

### **Scope and Content**

Claims by Lawson & Dunton, Inc. for various services during smallpox epidemic near White Stone.