

A Guide to the Mecklenburg County (Va.), Health and Medical Records, 1802-1904

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia 0007795340
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History

Processed by: T. Harter

Title Statement

A Guide to the Mecklenburg County (Va.), Health and Medical Records, 1802-1904

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Collection Number

0007795340

Language

English

Creator

Mecklenburg County (Va.) Circuit Court

Extent

.225 cf; legal-sized half-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 Mecklenburg County Circuit Court.

Preferred Citation

Mecklenburg County (Va.) Health and Medical Records, 1802-1904. Local government records collection, Mecklenburg County Court Records, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Mecklenburg County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Mecklenburg County Records may be found in the Virginia Lost Records Localities Collection at the Library of Virginia. Search the [Lost Records Digital Collection](#).

For more information and a listing of lost records localities see [Lost Records research note](#).

Additional Mecklenburg 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.

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 January 1825 the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation providing for the construction of an asylum in the western part of the state. The institution, which became known as Western Lunatic Asylum, was constructed close to the town of Staunton, west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, was the second mental health facility built in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The buildings and surrounding gardens were designed to embrace the idea of "moral therapy" for mentally ill patients by providing an aesthetically pleasing and tranquil atmosphere in which patients lived comfortably, exercised and worked outdoors.

Western Lunatic Asylum opened in 1828, accepting both male and female patients suffering from a variety of mental disorders. It should be noted that the hospital underwent a short-lived name change between 1861 and 1865, when it was known as Central Lunatic Asylum. (It should not be confused with an asylum of the same name later built in Petersburg, Virginia to house African American patients). From 1865 to 1894 the name was again Western Lunatic Asylum. However, in 1894 the General Assembly passed legislation changing the name to Western State Hospital.

The Medical Society of Virginia, formed in 1870, sponsored a bill to create a State Board of Health and Vital Statistics to supervise sanitation matters and to prevent the spread of contagious diseases. This bill was enacted into law by the General Assembly on February 13, 1872, but no funding was provided the Board, which functioned intermittently until 1896. The General Assembly passed an act on March 3, 1896, establishing and funding the Board of Health. An act passed on March 7, 1900, created local boards of health in every country and city and gave the State Board authority over them.

Mecklenburg County was named for Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Stralitz, consort of King George III. The county was formed from Lunenburg County in 1764. The county court first met on 11 March 1765.

Scope and Content

Mecklenburg County (Va.) Health and Medical Records 1802-1904, consist of two folders of Mental Health Records, and one folder of Smallpox Epidemic Records.

Mental Health Records: Commitment Papers includes the commitment of Armstreat Davis, who was recommended to the hospital at Williamsburg. His estate consisted of "about two thousand acres of land, between twenty and thirty slaves...of the yearly value of five or six hundred dollars."

Mental Health Records: Miscellaneous includes a standard form letter dated July 15, 1828 ostensibly sent to all clerks regarding the opening of the new Western Lunatic Hospital.

Smallpox Epidemic Records includes one letter dated Feb 9, 1904 from J.A. Gregory and R.H. Moody to Dr. Leigh as president of the local Board of Health regarding dispatching guards for quarantine or of two

households reputed to have smallpox outbreaks.

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by series, then chronologically.

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