

Services Available

Note To the Researcher: Archives and History traces its origins to the West Virginia Historical and Antiquarian Society, a quasi-public/private group that performed many of the current programs and services from 1890 to 1905. In 1905, the Bureau of Archives and History was created; in 1925 it was made a department, which it remained until 1977. Archives and History has always performed as the state archives and has responsibility for state and public records and publications. It collects and provides access to these and all types of historical materials that document and tell the history of the state and its people.

Until June 20, 1863, the area now known as West Virginia was part of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Archives and History Library collections include some materials on Virginia, but most pertain to West Virginia counties. The Library is the premier resource for West Virginians and those with possible "roots" in the state.

Genealogical research in West Virginia should be approached with as much specific information as possible. A knowledge of geographic locations is essential as most materials are arranged by county. Staff members are available to assist with reference sources, research procedures and the use of records.

Resources

Web Site

Before visiting the Library, researchers should check the Archives and History Web site at www.wvculture.org/history. This site contains information on Library holdings of state- and county-government, military, and naturalization records; maps and manuscripts; and recent additions to the microfilm, photograph, state publications, and special collections. Also available are guides to research methodology for adoptions, Revolutionary or Civil War ancestors, and others.

The Web site offers several searchable databases. Among those in the West Virginia Memory Project are databases on the Civil War Union militia, the West Virginia Veterans Memorial, the Photograph Collection, and the John Brown/Boyd B. Stutler Collection. Another Web site offering is the Vital Research Records Project. This collaborative venture between West Virginia Archives and History and the Genealogical Society of Utah is placing select West Virginia county birth, death, and marriage records and state death records online in searchable databases linked to digitized images of the records.

Other features of the Archives and History Web site include trivia quizzes on the state and its citizens, historical material on various West Virginia topics, and a genealogy surname exchange list. Information on Archives and History publications is also available online.

The Library has extensive holdings of primary and secondary resources supporting family and local historical research. A listing of resources as they relate to West Virginia includes:

Printed Sources

A number of reference guides to records dating from the 1700s, useful for initial genealogical research, are available. Among these are:

- *Index to Land Grants in West Virginia*, by Sims
- *Making of a State*, by Sims
- *West Virginia Estate Settlements, 1753-1850*, by Johnston
- *Index to Printed Virginia Genealogies*, by Stewart
- *Virginia Historical Index*, by Swem
- *Atlas to County Boundary Changes in Virginia*, by Doran
- *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920*, by Thorndale and Dollarhide
- *West Virginia Gazetteer*, by the WV Geological and Economic Survey.

The Library holds a broad selection of histories of West Virginia counties and communities, published court and census records, cemetery readings, and newspapers. An extensive collection of family histories, many donated by researchers and compilers, are available, as are some family and local histories for adjacent states.

Primary State Records

When West Virginia became a state, county records remained within each county. Microfilm copies of original records, filmed by and obtained from the Genealogical Society of Utah, are an important resource at the Library. All West Virginia counties are included; however, some records are incomplete. Records include births and deaths (since 1853), marriages, wills, deeds, surveys, estate records, and some circuit court and naturalization records. A limited number of very early records for contiguous Virginia counties is available.

Tax records include land tax books and personal property tax records. Land records, originally maintained by the State Auditor's Office and prepared by county assessors, date from the counties' formations to the 1930s, and for almost one-half the counties through 1959. Personal property tax lists for pre-statehood years are available on microfilm for select West Virginia counties. The original lists are at The Library of Virginia, 800 E. Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219.

The Library has land grants copied from the Virginia Land Office and indexed by Sims. Available on microfilm from The Library of Virginia are Northern Neck grants (Fairfax proprietorship) and Virginia land surveys (1779-1861), which include some present-day Virginia and Kentucky areas.

Some vital statistics, including death certificates (1917-1973) and delayed and regular birth certificates (c. 1880-1929), are available. More recent records are maintained by the Vital Registration Office, 350 Capitol Street, Room 165, Charleston, WV 25301-3701.

Census Records

Most West Virginia and Virginia census records are available on microfilm prepared by the National Archives. The census of Virginia, which includes those counties now in West Virginia, is available for the years 1790 and 1810-1860. Also available are the Virginia census for 1870 and slave schedules for 1850 and 1860. West Virginia census records include the years 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, and the *1890 Special Census of Union Veterans and Widows*.

Military Records

Records of service in the colonial wars, the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 can be found in lists of pensioners and in printed sources such as:

- *Virginia's Colonial Soldiers*, by Bockstruck
- *The Soldierly of West Virginia*, by Lewis
- *West Virginians in the Revolution*, by Johnston
- *West Virginia Revolutionary Ancestors Whose Services were Non-Military*, by Reddy.

Archives and History houses a large collection of Civil War material in the West Virginia Adjutant General's Papers. These papers consist of letters and documents primarily related to the service of West Virginia Union regiments and militia, with a few non-West Virginia and Confederate documents included. The Library also has microfilm of service records, with index, to West Virginia Union troops. Arranged by regiment and company, information consists of name, age, date and place of enlistment and discharge, and brief notes concerning some men's service. Confederate records of Virginia and West Virginia, with index, are available on microfilm. Other records on microfilm include the veterans' burial file, containing information on some servicemen interred in the state prior to 1936. Many printed Civil War regimental histories are also available.

Spanish-American War records are in the printed Report of the Adjutant General, 1899-1900. Records from the Adjutant General's Office provide muster information on men in the National Guard from 1890 through World War I, as well as other World War I enlistments. World War I draft cards and World War II "Old Men's Draft" cards for West Virginians are available on microfilm from the National Archives.

The West Virginia Veterans Memorial Archives document the military men and women who died during 20th-century conflicts and whose names are inscribed on the Veterans Memorial at the Capitol Complex. A searchable database of these records is available online. Additional military records for U.S. service, especially for 20th-century engagements, are kept by the Office of the Adjutant General, 1703 Coonskin Drive, Charleston, WV 25311-1085; the [National Archives](#), Washington, D.C. 20408; and the Military Personnel Records Center, 9700 Page Ave., St. Louis, MO 63132.

Public Records, State Documents, Private Papers, and Audio-Visual Collections

Archives and History houses state printed document and public records collections, most created in the 20th century but some dating to the formation of the state in 1863 or earlier. The Library also holds extensive photograph, moving

images, manuscript, and map collections. In addition, thousands of newspaper clippings on historical places, people, and events are on file. Access to some of these collections requires advance notice.

Research Requests and Fees

Photocopying is done by the Library staff within the limits of the Copyright Law and the condition of the material. The standard fee for regular and legal size black and white photocopies is 25 cents per page; 11" x 17" copies cost 50 cents. Oversize document copies require additional fees. Reader-printer microfilm letter size copies are 50 cents per exposure if copied by staff and 25 cents if copied by patrons at coin-operated machines. Separate fees exist for birth and death certificate copies, certification of copied records, and land grants.

Research conducted by staff is limited to one-half hour, and requests must be submitted in writing. Telephone and e-mail requests will not be accepted. A non-refundable fee of \$20 must accompany each out-of-state request. In-state patrons must enclose a non-refundable fee of \$10. Both fees cover up to \$2.50 in copies and postage. Additional costs will be billed.

Inquiries must be limited to two SPECIFIC requests and should provide full name, county of residence, approximate dates and documents requested. For example, "Send me anything on the Smith family" is not a serviceable request. Names of individuals who conduct research for a fee will be supplied when requests require more extensive research.

Research Requests

Effective November 15, 2017

A non-refundable fee of \$20.00 must accompany each out-of-state research request. The fee covers up to \$2.50 in copies and postage. Additional costs will be billed. There is a \$10.00 research fee for in-state patron requests.

A fee of \$8.00 must accompany each out-of-state copy request for a copy of an obituary, newspaper article, land grant, or uncertified county record or state certificate as defined in 82-6-6.2. There is a \$5.00 fee for an in-state copy request. See [Archives and History Library Services and Fee Guidelines](#) for complete information.

The Archives will not answer e-mail research requests. All research requests must be submitted in writing to the Archives and History Library; 1900 Kanawha Boulevard East, Building 9; Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Please do not send copies of drivers licenses and other forms of ID with your research requests.

Current fees are subject to change. A listing of all Library fees is available upon request.

The Library staff is unable to do more than limited research through correspondence. Inquiries must be limited to two SPECIFIC requests. Inquiries should provide full name, county of residence, approximate dates and documents requested. For example, "Send me anything on the Smith family" is not a serviceable request. Requests requiring more extensive research will be sent [names of individuals who perform this service for a fee](#).