

Virginia Research: Four Centuries of History and Genealogy

20th Century – A State Transformed

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19th Century Virginia Recap

- Especially after the Civil War, emancipation and Reconstruction created new opportunities for previously enslaved people. At the end of the 19th century, the working class and Freedmen slowly migrated from traditionally rural counties in Virginia to urban cities and towns. Urbanization was result of:
 - An increase in manufacturing and processing for agricultural products like tobacco, textiles, and grains. This provided greater opportunities for people in urban areas.
 - Availability of marketplaces for agricultural producers to not only sell their goods, but to buy marketable goods in return.
 - The industrial revolution and expansion of railroads helped urban areas and port cities to boom.
 - The introduction of the electric streetcar in cities like Richmond provided better transportation and allowed the working class to live on the outskirts of town, but still work in the city.
 - Added luxuries like the telephone and electricity which were installed in cities like Norfolk and Richmond and likely hard to resist.

Regions of Virginia

- Whether you divide Virginia geologically or culturally, there are five distinct regions or provinces:
 - Coastal Plain province also known as the Tidewaters
 - Piedmont province, which is the largest of the five regions
 - Blue Ridge province
 - Ridge and Valley province
 - Appalachian Plateaus, which includes both the Cumberland Mountains and the Allegheny Mountains
- The regions of Virginia are further broken down and sometimes referred to as:
 - Northern Virginia
 - Chesapeake Bay
 - The Eastern Shore
 - Coastal Virginia also known as the Hampton Roads
 - Southern Virginia



- Central Virginia, which includes the Capital city of Richmond
- Shenandoah Valley
- Virginia Mountains
- Blue Ridge Highlands
- Heart of the Appalachia (Apple-a-cha)

20th Century Virginia

Urbanization

- Comparing the population of Virginia in the year 1800 and 100 years later at the start of 20th century, cities like Richmond and Norfolk increased in population while traditionally rural counties like Fredrick and Loudoun decreased:
 - The 1920 census revealed that more Americans were recorded in urban areas than rural ones, but the urban shift in Virginia would not happen for another thirty years.
 - The 1950 census was the first census to show that more Virginians lived in the city as opposed to small towns in rural Virginia.
 - By the end of the 20th Century, more than eighty percent of Virginians lived in one of the state's urban cities or towns and half the state's population lived in the Northern Neck and Hampton Roads areas.
 - By the end of the 20th century, less than one percent of Virginia's population were farmers.
- Urban sprawl in Virginia during the 20th century was due to:
 - Improvements in transportation and the introduction of the Ford Model T – the first affordable automobile.
 - Improved railroads which allowed coal and other raw materials to be transported to cities like Richmond and Norfolk.
 - Two World Wars increased federal spending and a growing military- related industry:
 - The U.S. Naval Station Norfolk was built in 1917.
 - By 1920, Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company was the largest employer in the state.
 - In 1943, the Pentagon was built and as a result, Northern Virginia would become home to some of the world's biggest defense and aerospace companies.

The People

- By the end of the 20th century, there were still many regional differences between people and places, but urban Virginia, particularly along the east side of the state, was a blend of different ethnic people and cultures that were not so easy to distinguish.

- The population of Virginia towards the end of the 20th century was made up of:
 - 70.2% White/Caucasians - many of whom claim to be descendants of the English who settled colonial Virginia
 - 19.4% African American - the majority of whom are descendants of enslaved people of Virginia
 - 4.7% Hispanics
 - 3.7% Asian and Pacific Islanders
 - 2% Other- which included American Indians, Eskimos, and Melungeons.
- Melungeons were a mixed-race group that claimed Portuguese and Turkish ancestry in the 19th century to escape discrimination. The ethnic group is concentrated in the Valley and Ridge province of Wise, Scott, and Lee counties. Records show that by 1950, around 15,000 people categorized themselves as being Melungeons which was then considered a combination of white, Indian, and Portuguese. More recent studies and supporting genetic evidence in a study published in 2021 in the *Journal of Genetic Genealogy* shows that “the families historically called Melungeons are the offspring of Sub-Saharan African men and white women of northern or central European origin.”
- The state of Virginia recognized the following Indigenous tribes by the end of the 20th century:

State Recognized Indigenous Groups		
Nation	Year Recognized	Location
Mattaponi	17 th century	Banks of the Mattaponi River, King William Co.
Pamunkey*	17 th Century	Banks of the Pamunkey River, King William Co.
Chickahominy*	1983	Charles City Co.
Eastern Chickahominy*	1983	New Kent Co.
Rappahannock*	1983	Indian Neck, King & Queen Co.
Upper Mattaponi*	1983	King William Co.
Nansemond*	1985	Cities of Suffolk and Chesapeake
Monacan Indian Nation*	1989	Bear Mountain, Amherst Co.
<u>Cheroenhaka (Nottoway)</u>	2010	Courtland, Southampton Co.
<u>Nottoway of Virginia</u>	2010	Capron, Southampton Co.
<u>Patawomeck</u>	2010	Stafford Co.

*Federally recognized

Historical Events

- In 1902, the Virginia State Constitution ruled that all Virginia voters needed to pass a literacy test or pay a poll tax to vote and called for racial segregation in schools.
- The Equal Suffrage League of Virginia was created in 1909.
- World War I (1914-1918):
 - 100,000 Virginians served in WWI



- Virginians were mostly assigned to the Army's 29th, 42, and 80 divisions, the 510th and 511th Engineer Services Battalions and Base Hospitals Number 41 at the University of Virginia and No 45 in Richmond and Toul France (eight miles from the front).
- 1,071 Virginia women joined the Navy during WWI.
- 39% of drafted men in WWI were African Americans:
 - African Americans were segregated into units like the 510th Engineer Service Battalion and Company A of the 808th Pioneer Infantry.
- More than 3,700 Virginian's lost their lives, 600 were African Americans.
- Native Americans were put in white units and all Native American units.
- The summer after WWI became known as the "Red Summer" because continued fear, racial discrimination, and segregation caused riots to break out across the county:
 - Scholars and historians agree that African American soldiers helped usher in American's Civil Rights Movement.
- The Virginia Bureau of Vital Statistics was created in 1912:
 - The first registrar of the bureau, Dr. Walter Pleckler, strived to define "pure" white as someone without African American, Native American, or mixed heritage blood.
 - His racial stereotyping was often referred to as the One-Drop Rule.
- In 1924, the Virginia General Assembly enacted the Racial Integrity Act:
 - The Act was meant to end the intermixture of white people with other races.
 - An *Application For Marriage License* asked if a person was white, colored or of mixed race.
 - Pleckler was well known for creating surname lists of persons of mixed race, methodically checking birth and marriage records for errors, and sending warning letters to county official if they violated the *Racial Integrity Act*.
- World War II
 - The Selective Service began drafting men for WWII based on their race.
 - African American men were initially not drafted, but this changed in 1943.
 - African Americans were still segregated into "colored" units.
 - Native Americans were classified as both "colored" and "white" based on the amount of Indian blood in their veins.
 - Pamunkey and Mattaponi Tribes were classified as "white."
 - Monacan Tribes were classified as "white."
 - Chickahominy Tribes were classified as "colored," but later reclassified as "white."
 - Rappahannock Tribe were allowed to be "conscience objectors" and avoided classification.
- On April 23, 1951, African American students in Farmville, Prince Edward County marched to protest segregation in schools and the vast difference between accommodations and resources available to white students verses African American students.



- In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court heard the case *Brown v. Board of Education* and ruled segregation in schools was unconstitutional.
- The Virginia government created the Massive Resistance movement to stop desegregation and closed Virginia's public schools to stop integration:
 - The movement was spearheaded by Democratic U.S. senator Harry F. Byrd
 - School closures impacted both White and African American students.

The Transformation of Virginia

- 1952- Virginia ratified the Virginia Constitution and gave women the right to vote in the state of Virginia.
- 1959- the Virginia Supreme Court ruled that school closures were unconstitutional.
- 1966- the U.S. Supreme Court heard the case *Harper v. Virginia Board of Elections* and determined that the uses of a poll tax in Virginia violated the *Equal Protection Clause*:
 - At the end of 1965, a quarter million African Americans were registered to vote.
- 1967- the U.S. Supreme Court heard the case of *Loving v. Virginia* and ruled that a ban on interracial marriage was unconstitutional:
 - Richard Loving, a white man, and Mildred Loving, an African American woman, were arrested after they were married for violating the *Racial Integrity Act*. They originally pleaded guilty and left the state to avoid jail time.
- 1971- the Constitution of Virginia was amended to include provisions regarding desegregation in schools.
- 1983- Virginia Joint Resolution 54 allowed the state of Virginia to recognize Native American Tribes.
- 1985- Attorney General Mary Sue Terry was the first woman to win a state office in a public election.
- 1989- L. Douglas Wilder became the first African American to be elected governor of the state of Virginia.

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