

Hidden Database Gems: Slavery, Abolition, and Social Justice & Virginia Company Archives



I FIRST LEARNED ABOUT this valuable resource when, after giving a talk at the North Carolina Archives, the NC State Archivist, Jesse R. Lankford, Jr., came up to me and mentioned that the slave records for NC had been digitized by the Adam Matthew Group. That was very exciting news to hear. Then, of course, I had to learn more!

The first thing I learned was that I needed to access this database from a library — university, college or public — that subscribes to it. Once you either find a library that carries

the subscription or you get your local library to carry it, you are on your way to finding so much more.

Slavery, Abolition and Social Justice

www.amedu.com/Collections/Slavery-Abolition-and-Social-Justice-1490-2007.aspx

As stated on the database website, the objective is "Bringing together primary source documents from archives and libraries across the Atlantic world ... to explore and compare unique material relating to the complex sub-

jects of slavery, abolition and social justice. In addition to the primary source documents there is a wealth of useful secondary sources for research and teaching; including an interactive map, scholarly essays, tutorials, a visual sources gallery, chronology and bibliography..."

The participating libraries include Anti-Slavery International, Bank of England, Special Collections & Archives Berea College, British Library, Duke University Libraries, Earl K Long Library – The University of New Orleans, the archives of Georgia and North Carolina, The National Archives (UK), Library and Archives Canada, and several other libraries and archives.

I quickly figured out that the main NC records I sought are part of the "Court Records" collection, which focuses on four states: North Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana and Missouri, located at www.slavery.amdigital.co.uk/Introduction/CourtRecords.aspx. The NC records include comprehensive coverage of appeal cases on questions of slavery in the Supreme Court, along with county-level court records for the select counties of Bertie and New Hanover (Superior Court Minute Books, 1806-1876), along with material from the counties of Brunswick, Columbus, Beaufort, Hyde, Gates, Halifax,



Top: Example of the listing for a "chosen" Library/Archive, in this case the North Carolina State Archives.

Bottom: Example of a search on "Bertie County" Turner.

Catawba, Caldwell and Rockingham. Similar coverage is found for records from Georgia (Supreme Court and lower court records), Louisiana (1,200 cases that went on appeal to the LA Supreme Court) and Missouri (printed reports for the Supreme Court, 1805-1876).

As far as accessing the included documents you can search, select a theme, choose a region, identify a document type, limit by date range or select the "source" archive. Since my initial interest was in North Carolina, I selected "North Carolina State Archives" (although I did take a peak to see what was included from Duke University

Libraries, which includes a lot of printed material). You are then presented with a list of those documents digitized from the NC Archives.

Having done research into slave owners in Bertie County, I also used the search feature for — "Bertie County" Turner — which yielded seven results, split amongst Court Records, Printed Material and Essays. None of these directly involved the Turner family of my interest, but the search feature is easy to use and the quality of the digital images found is excellent.

Do check out the tutorials which are also available, www.slavery.amdigital.co.uk/FurtherResources/Tutorials/tutorials.aspx.

Fortunately, those for North Carolina are all currently available (while those for the other states are "coming soon") and provide a detailed perspective on the courts of North Carolina:

- North Carolina - Introduction & History of the Supreme Court
- North Carolina - The lower courts
- Tutorial - North Carolina (includes discussion of various case studies based on particular suits identified)

And do recognize that I have only discussed the "Court Records" element of the database, and there is much more to it!

As you can imagine, once I learned about the above database, I also checked out The Adam Matthew Group to see what else might have interest to genealogists, and I discovered the *Virginia Company Archives*, www.amedu.com/Collections/Virginia-Company-Archives.aspx, which caught my eye, since so many that ended up in North Carolina (and the colonies as a whole) often arrived in VA or with connections to The Virginia Company of London.

Virginia Company Archives
www.amedu.com/Collections/Virginia-Company-Archives.aspx.

This project includes the *Ferrar Papers* which are in Magdalene College, Cambridge, transcripts of those documents that throw light on the Virginia Company of London, and the four volumes of *The Records of the Virginia Company of London* (Washington, D.C., 1906-35), edited by Susan Myra



Top: Virginia Company Archives home page.

Bottom: Population list for Virginia as found in The Virginia Company Archives.

Kingsbury. The Ferrar collection began as a business archive, consisting of papers of Nicholas Ferrar (d.1620) and those of the Virginia Company of London and its subordinate, the Somer Islands Company. From 1619 until the company's dissolution in 1624, two of old Nicholas's sons – John (1619-22) and Nicholas (1622-24) – held in succession, the office of Deputy, and conducted the company's daily business from the family's home on St. Sithes Lane in the City of London.

The contents are divided into Manuscripts, Printed Material and Gallery. The

Manuscripts collection is listed chronologically. I did a search on "James City" and there were 48 hits. The first was a 1619 population list for Virginia, broken down by location and listing men, women and young persons.

Not having done as much early VA research as others, I dabbled enough to learn what a neat collection this is, and those genealogists researching early VA residents will want to check this out.

Learn more about The Virginia Company of London via these resources:

- nps.gov, Historic

Jamestowne, The Virginia Company of London, www.nps.gov/jame/historyculture/the-virginia-company-of-london.htm

- e-book, *The Virginia Company of London, 1606-1624* by Wesley Frank Craven, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/28555
- e-book, *The Three Charters of the Virginia Company of London*, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/36181
- *The Thomas Jefferson Papers*, The Library of Congress, http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/jefferson_papers/mtjser8.html — The Virginia Records volumes were part of Jefferson's personal library.

These are just two of the very interesting databases available for purchase from The Adam Matthew Group, www.amedu.com, by University/College and Public Libraries. Unfortunately, these are not available as subscriptions for individuals, though many genealogists do have affiliations with universities and libraries which may have a subscription. Check and see if your local university, college or public library has a subscription! If not, you might want to suggest that they check out subscribing. Please address any queries about these or other Adam Matthew Group products to: info@amedu.com.

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