

DATES OF ORIGIN  
OF  
VIRGINIA COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES

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## PREFACE

During the course of a recent study, the Institute of Government found it necessary to obtain the years in which Virginia counties were established and the State's municipalities incorporated. It was discovered that this information either was scattered in more than one publication or could only be acquired through correspondence with individual localities. Because such basic information might be useful to other persons and organizations, the Institute has prepared this report which contains the dates of establishment of existing counties and the incorporation of existing municipalities together with some additional material.

The Institute recognizes that disagreement may arise with respect to some of the dates because there were instances where the source materials differed from one another by a year or more. An effort has been made, however, to resolve these differences and provide what appears to be the correct dates. It will be appreciated if the readers will call to the Institute's attention any errors which may have unwittingly been included in this report.

To those persons who assisted Mr. J. Devereux Weeks in the preparation of this publication, the Institute wishes to express its appreciation.

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## COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES

The Commonwealth of Virginia, like other states, is divided into counties and municipalities. These local units in Virginia embrace 96 counties, 35 cities, and 197 incorporated towns. Counties range in area from 24 to over 1,000 square miles, with an average size of 400 square miles. County populations range from 3,000 to over 260,000 inhabitants approximately, with an average population of about 25,000.\* Virginia's cities range in population size from 5,000 to over 300,000, although their average size is about 46,000. The areas of Virginia's cities extend over the remarkable range of 2 square miles to 344 square miles. Incorporated towns in Virginia have populations that range from 85 to over 16,000, although most of them are very small. Only 32 towns exceed 2,500 population.

For the most part, Virginia counties and towns are similar to those in other states. Counties are unincorporated administrative subdivisions of the State created by law and governed by an elected board of supervisors. As a rule, towns are incorporated municipalities with populations of less than 5,000. In the Virginia Constitution there is seemingly mandatory language which states that incorporated municipalities with 5,000 or more inhabitants are cities and those with less than 5,000 are towns. However, a change in status from a town to a city is by practice a voluntary action. Thus, a town may continue as a town after its population has passed 5,000. Ten towns fall in this category; most have not become cities for economic reasons. The 197 incorporated towns were created either by action of the General Assembly or of the circuit court of the county. The towns are governed by an elected council.

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\*Population figures are those of the 1960 Census.

Cities in Virginia are comparable to cities throughout the country, except for the State-wide practice of city-county separation. Under this system the Virginia city is a primary political subdivision, governmentally independent of the county, or counties, surrounding it. Cities in this State are incorporated either by the Virginia General Assembly or by an appropriate circuit or corporation court. Virginia has first- and second-class cities. Generally speaking, cities with 10,000 inhabitants or more are cities of the first class.\* They are completely independent from the county and are responsible for carrying out within their boundaries the services and functions required of a county by the State as well as services normally associated with a city. Second-class cities are those with 5,000 to 10,000 inhabitants. In addition to being smaller, second-class cities continue to share the circuit court of the county in which they were situated when they were towns. In all other respects, however, cities of the second class possess the same powers and responsibilities as do first-class cities. All cities are governed by an elected council.

Most of these local units of government have existed for many years. Counties date from 1634 to 1880 with the majority being established between 1700 and 1800. Only 22 counties were created after 1800, and none have been created since 1880. Most counties were

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\* Although Virginia Code, sec. 15.1-1012 requires second-class cities attaining a population of 10,000 inhabitants or more to become certified as first-class cities, 4 have not formally made the transition. City-county separation is treated extensively in a forthcoming volume by Chester W. Bain entitled "A Body Corporate: The Evolution of City-County Separation in Virginia" to be published in 1967 by The University Press of Virginia.

created from other counties, but there are a few which originally were shires, and one was an Indian district. The first city was incorporated in 1722 and the latest in 1966. Almost two-thirds of the cities were created between 1800 and 1920. The oldest town was incorporated in 1749 and the most recent incorporation of a town occurred in 1966. Approximately two-thirds of the towns were incorporated between 1866 and 1920.

The reference sources for this booklet were as follows:

William W. Hening, The Statutes at Large, Vols. I-XIII (1619-1792); Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1793-1966; Martha Bell Conway, Report of the Secretary of the Commonwealth to the Governor and General Assembly of Virginia (Richmond: Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, 1965), pp. 103-299; direct correspondence with localities; and Library Board of Virginia, A Hornbook of Virginia History (Richmond: Virginia State Library, Publication No. 25, 1965), pp. 12-38.

## CHRONOLOGY OF COUNTY FORMATION

<u>County</u>	<u>Year Established</u>	<u>Formed From</u>
<u>1630 - 1659</u>		
Charles City	1634	Originally a shire
Henrico	1634	Originally a shire
Isle of Wight	1634	Originally a shire
James City	1634	Originally a shire
Northampton	1634	Originally a shire
York	1634	Originally a shire
Nansemond	1645	Upper Norfolk County*
Northumberland	1648	Chickcoun Indian District
Gloucester	1651	York County
Lancaster	1651	Northumberland and York Counties
Surry	1652	James City County
Westmoreland	1653	King George and Northumberland Counties
New Kent	1654	York County
<u>1660 - 1699</u>		
Accomack	1663	Northampton County
Stafford	1664	Westmoreland County
Middlesex	1669	Lancaster County
King and Queen	1691	New Kent County
Essex	1692	Rappahannock County
Richmond	1692	Old Rappahannock County*
<u>1700 - 1729</u>		
King William	1702	King and Queen County
Prince George	1702	Charles City County
Brunswick	1720	Isle of Wight, Prince George, and Surry Counties
Hanover	1720	New Kent County
King George	1720	Richmond County
Spotsylvania	1720	Essex, King and Queen, and King William Counties
Goochland	1727	Henrico County
Caroline	1727	Essex, King and Queen, and King William Counties

<u>County</u>	<u>Year Established</u>	<u>Formed From</u>
<u>1730 - 1759</u>		
Prince William	1731	King George and Stafford Counties
Orange	1735	Spotsylvania County
Amelia	1735	Brunswick and Prince George Counties
Augusta	1738	Orange County
Frederick	1738	Augusta and Orange Counties
Fairfax	1742	Prince William County
Louisa	1742	Hanover County
Albemarle	1744	Goochland and Louisa Counties
Lunenburg	1745	Brunswick County
Chesterfield	1749	Henrico County
Culpeper	1749	Orange County
Cumberland	1749	Goochland County
Southampton	1749	Isle of Wight and Nansemond Counties
Dinwiddie	1752	Prince George County
Halifax	1752	Lunenburg County
Bedford	1754	Albemarle and Lunenburg Counties
Prince Edward	1754	Amelia County
Sussex	1754	Surry County
Loudoun	1757	Fairfax County
Fauquier	1759	Prince William County
<u>1760 - 1799</u>		
Amherst	1761	Albemarle County
Buckingham	1761	Albemarle County
Charlotte	1765	Lunenburg County
Mecklenburg	1765	Lunenburg County
Pittsylvania	1767	Halifax County
Botetourt	1770	Augusta and Rockbridge Counties
Shenandoah	1772	Frederick County
Fluvanna	1777	Albemarle County
Henry	1777	Pittsylvania County
Montgomery	1777	Botetourt, Fincastle,* and Pulaski Counties

<u>County</u>	<u>Year Established</u>	<u>Formed From</u>
<u>1760 - 1799 (Contd.)</u>		
Powhatan	1777	Chesterfield and Cumberland Counties
Washington	1777	Fincastle* and Montgomery Counties
Rockbridge	1778	Augusta and Botetourt Counties
Rockingham	1778	Augusta County
Greensville	1781	Brunswick and Sussex Counties
Campbell	1782	Bedford County
Franklin	1786	Bedford and Henry Counties
Russell	1786	Washington County
Nottoway	1789	Amelia County
Wythe	1790	Grayson and Montgomery Counties
Bath	1791	Augusta and Botetourt Counties
Mathews	1791	Gloucester County
Patrick	1791	Henry County
Grayson	1793	Patrick and Wythe Counties
Lee	1793	Russell and Scott Counties
Madison	1793	Culpeper County
Tazewell	1799	Russell, Washington, and Wythe Counties
<u>1800 - 1829</u>		
Giles	1806	Craig, Montgomery, Tazewell, and Wythe Counties
Nelson	1808	Amherst County
Scott	1815	Lee, Russell, and Washington Counties
Alleghany	1822	Bath and Botetourt Counties
<u>1830 - 1859</u>		
Floyd	1831	Franklin and Montgomery Counties
Page	1831	Rockingham and Shenandoah Counties
Smyth	1832	Washington and Wythe Counties

<u>County</u>	<u>Year Established</u>	<u>Formed From</u>
<u>1830 - 1859 (Contd.)</u>		
Rappahannock	1833	Culpeper County
Clarke	1836	Frederick and Warren Counties
Warren	1836	Frederick and Shenandoah Counties
Greene	1838	Orange County
Roanoke	1838	Botetourt and Montgomery Counties
Pulaski	1839	Montgomery and Wythe Counties
Carroll	1842	Grayson and Patrick Counties
Appomattox	1845	Buckingham, Campbell, Charlotte, and Prince Edward Counties
Arlington	1847	Fairfax County
Highland	1847	Bath County
Craig	1851	Alleghany, Botetourt, Giles, Montgomery, and Roanoke Counties
Wise	1856	Lee, Russell, and Scott Counties
Buchanan	1858	Russell and Tazewell Counties
<u>1860 - 1880</u>		
Bland	1861	Giles, Tazewell, and Wythe Counties
Dickenson	1880	Buchanan, Russell, and Wise Counties

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\* County does not exist today.

## CHRONOLOGY OF CITY INCORPORATION

<u>City</u>	<u>Year of Incorporation</u>	<u>From County of</u>
<u>1700 - 1799</u>		
Williamsburg*	1722	James City and York
Richmond	1782	Henrico and Chesterfield
<u>1800 - 1859</u>		
Norfolk	1845	Norfolk**
Petersburg	1850	Dinwiddie and Prince George
Alexandria	1852	Fairfax and Arlington
Lynchburg	1852	Campbell
Portsmouth	1858	Norfolk**
<u>1860 - 1865</u>		
NONE		
<u>1866 - 1899</u>		
Staunton	1871	Augusta
Winchester	1874	Frederick
Fredericksburg	1879	Spotsylvania
Roanoke	1884	Roanoke
Charlottesville	1888	Albemarle
Bristol	1890	Washington
Danville	1890	Pittsylvania
Buena Vista*	1892	Rockbridge
Radford*	1892	Montgomery
Newport News	1896	Warwick**
<u>1900 - 1919</u>		
Clifton Forge*	1906	Alleghany
Hampton	1908	Elizabeth City**
Suffolk	1910	Nansemond
Harrisonburg*	1916	Rockingham
Hopewell	1916	Prince George

<u>City</u>	<u>Year of Incorporation</u>	<u>From County of</u>
<u>1920 - 1929</u>		
Martinsville	1928	Henry
<u>1930 - 1939</u>		
NONE		
<u>1940 - 1949</u>		
Colonial Heights	1948	Chesterfield
Falls Church <sup>*</sup>	1948	Fairfax
Waynesboro	1948	Augusta
<u>1950 - 1959</u>		
Covington <sup>*</sup>	1952	Alleghany
Galax <sup>*</sup>	1953	Grayson and Carroll
Norton <sup>*</sup>	1954	Wise
<u>1960 - 1966</u>		
South Boston <sup>*</sup>	1960	Halifax
Fairfax <sup>*</sup>	1961	Fairfax
Franklin <sup>*</sup>	1961	Southampton
Chesapeake	1963	Norfolk <sup>**</sup>
Virginia Beach	1963	Princess Anne <sup>**</sup>
Lexington <sup>*</sup>	1966	Rockbridge

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<sup>\*</sup>Second-class cities; remainder are first-class cities.

<sup>\*\*</sup>County does not exist today.

## CHRONOLOGY OF TOWN INCORPORATION

<u>Town</u>	<u>Year of Incorporation</u>	<u>Located in County of</u>
<u>1700 - 1799</u>		
Dumfries	1749	Prince William
Smithfield	1752	Isle of Wight
Leesburg	1758	Loudoun
Abington	1778	Washington
Front Royal	1788	Warren
New Market	1796	Shenandoah
Haymarket	1798	Prince William
<u>1800 - 1859</u>		
Luray	1812	Page
Fincastle	1821	Botetourt
Bridgewater	1835	Rockingham
Marion	1835	Smyth
Scottsville	1838	Albemarle
Wytheville	1839	Wythe
Lovettsville	1842	Loudoun
Chatham	1852	Pittsylvania
Edinburg	1852	Shenandoah
Orange	1855	Orange
Ashland	1858	Hanover
<u>1860 - 1865</u>		
Port Royal	1865	Caroline
<u>1866 - 1899</u>		
Tazewell	1866	Tazewell
Berryville	1870	Clarke
Gordonsville	1870	Orange
West Point	1870	King William
Blacksburg	1871	Montgomery
Middleburg	1871	Loudoun
Woodstock	1872	Shenandoah

<u>Town</u>	<u>Year of Incorporation</u>	<u>Located in County of</u>
	<u>1866 - 1899</u>	
Chase City	1873	Mecklenburg
Lebanon	1873	Russell
Louisa	1873	Louisa
Manassas	1873	Prince William
Rocky Mount	1873	Franklin
Boydton	1874	Mecklenburg
Charlotte Court House	1874	Charlotte
Lawrenceville	1874	Brunswick
Occoquan	1874	Prince William
Pamplin City	1874	Appomattox and Prince Edward
Glade Spring	1875	Washington
Halifax	1875	Halifax
Hamilton	1875	Loudoun
Burkeville	1877	Nottoway
Columbia	1879	Fluvanna
Dayton	1879	Rockingham
Herndon	1879	Fairfax
Wise	1879	Wise
Hillsboro	1880	Loudoun
Middletown	1882	Frederick
Onancock	1882	Accomack
Bluefield	1884	Tazewell
Goshen	1884	Rockbridge
Pocahontas	1884	Tazewell
Shenandoah	1884	Page
Stuart	1884	Patrick
Vinton	1884	Roanoke
Boykins	1886	Southampton
Broadway	1886	Rockingham
Cape Charles	1886	Northampton
Claremont	1886	Surry
Pulaski	1886	Pulaski
Emporia	1887	Greenville

<u>Town</u>	<u>Year of Incorporation</u>	<u>Located in County of</u>
	<u>1866 - 1899</u>	
Keysville	1887	Charlotte
Stephens City	1887	Frederick
Blackstone	1888	Nottoway
Crewe	1888	Nottoway
Mount Jackson	1888	Shenandoah
Iron Gate	1890	Alleghany
Remington	1890	Fauquier
Richlands	1890	Tazewell
Ridgeway	1890	Henry
Vienna	1890	Fairfax
Big Stone Gap	1891	Wise
Buchanan	1892	Botetourt
Colonial Beach	1892	Westmoreland
Courtland	1892	Southampton
Floyd	1892	Floyd
Gate City	1892	Scott
Glasgow	1892	Rockbridge
Grottoes	1892	Rockingham
Pennington Gap	1892	Lee
Waverly	1892	Sussex
Clintwood	1894	Dickenson
Coeburn	1894	Wise
Duffield	1894	Scott
Saltville	1894	Smyth and Washington
Singers Glen	1894	Rockingham
Timberville	1894	Rockingham
Washington	1894	Rappahannock
Belle Haven	1895	Accomack
Mount Crawford	1895	Rockingham
Clover	1896	Halifax
Eastville	1896	Northampton
Clarksville	1898	Mecklenburg
Culpeper	1898	Culpeper

<u>Town</u>	<u>Year of Incorporation</u>	<u>Located in County of</u>
	<u>1900 - 1919</u>	
Hillsville	1900	Carroll
Holland	1900	Nansemond
Round Hill	1900	Loudoun
Virgilina	1900	Halifax
Fries	1901	Grayson
Jonesville	1901	Lee
La Crosse	1901	Mecklenburg
South Hill	1901	Mecklenburg
Clifton	1902	Fairfax
Mineral	1902	Louisa
Nickelsville	1902	Scott
Urbanna	1902	Middlesex
Wachapreague	1902	Accomack
Wakefield	1902	Sussex
Windsor	1902	Isle of Wight
Bowling Green	1903	Caroline
Drake's Branch	1903	Charlotte
Warrenton	1903	Fauquier
Damascus	1904	Washington
Narrows	1904	Giles
Parksley	1904	Accomack
Appalachia	1906	Wise
Dendron	1906	Surry
Dublin	1906	Pulaski
Troutdale	1906	Grayson
Branchville	1908	Southampton
Brookneal	1908	Campbell
Chincoteague	1908	Accomack
Elkton	1908	Rockingham
Ivor	1908	Southampton
Kenbridge	1908	Lunenburg
Purcellville	1908	Loudoun
Amherst	1910	Amherst

<u>Town</u>	<u>Year of Incorporation</u>	<u>Located in County of</u>
	<u>1900 - 1919</u>	
Boyce	1910	Clarke
The Plains	1910	Fauquier
New Castle	1911	Craig
Rural Retreat	1911	Wythe
St. Paul	1911	Wise
Altavista	1912	Campbell
Bedford	1912	Bedford
Cedar Bluff	1912	Tazewell
Dillwyn	1912	Buckingham
Farmville	1912	Prince Edward
Chilhowie	1913	Smyth
Gretna	1914	Pittsylvania
Monterey	1914	Highland
Pearisburg	1914	Giles
St. Charles	1914	Lee
Tappahannock	1914	Essex
Brodnax	1915	Brunswick
Tangier	1915	Accomack
Christiansburg	1916	Montgomery
Stanley	1916	Page
Victoria	1916	Lunenburg
Dungannon	1918	Scott
Honaker	1919	Russell
	<u>1920 - 1929</u>	
Standardsville	1921	Greene
McKenney	1922	Dinwiddie
Strasburg	1922	Shenandoah
Toms Brook	1922	Shenandoah
Salem	1924	Roanoke
Appomattox	1925	Appomattox
Capron	1926	Southampton

<u>Town</u>	<u>Year of Incorporation</u>	<u>Located in County of</u>
<u>1920 - 1929</u>		
Glen Lyn	1926	Giles
Grundy	1926	Buchanan
Scottsburg	1926	Halifax
Boone's Mill	1927	Franklin
Quantico	1927	Prince William
Alberta	1928	Brunswick
Surry	1928	Surry
<u>1930 - 1939</u>		
Kilmarnock	1930	Lancaster
Phenix	1930	Charlotte
Stony Creek	1930	Sussex
Madison	1931	Madison
Independence	1934	Grayson
Haysi	1936	Dickenson
Jarratt	1938	Greensville and Sussex
<u>1940 - 1949</u>		
Clinchport	1940	Scott
Accomac	1944	Accomack
Cleveland	1946	Russell
Montross	1946	Westmoreland
Newsoms	1946	Southampton
Pound	1946	Wise
Rich Creek	1946	Giles
Warsaw	1946	Richmond
Pembroke	1947	Giles
<u>1950 - 1959</u>		
Exmore	1950	Northampton
Onley	1950	Accomack
Painter	1950	Accomack

<u>Town</u>	<u>Year of Incorporation</u>	<u>Located in County of</u>
	<u>1950 - 1959</u>	
Whaleyville	1950	Nansemond
Cheriton	1951	Northampton
Keller	1951	Accomack
Melfa	1951	Accomack
Poquoson	1952	York
Bloxom	1953	Accomack
White Stone	1953	Lancaster
Weber City	1954	Scott
Irvington	1955	Lancaster
Troutville	1956	Botetourt
Manassas Park	1957	Prince William
Hallwood	1958	Accomack
Nassawadox	1958	Northampton
Saxis	1959	Accomack
	<u>1960 - 1966</u>	
Craigsville	1960	Augusta
Hurt	1966	Pittsylvania