

The Vestry Book of the Upper Parish, Nansemond County, Virginia, 1743-1793

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Following the death of Dr. C. G. Chamberlayne, the task of transcribing and editing additional volumes of Virginia parish vestry books fell to a number of different scholars. This particular volume, which was prepared under the editorship of Wilmer L. Hall and published originally by the Library of Virginia, is devoted to Upper Parish, Nansemond County. As such, it takes on special importance because almost all primary sources relating to colonial Nansemond have perished in various fires. To appreciate the contents of the records transcribed for this work, one has only to listen to Mr. Hall's recitation of the duties of the parish vestries, the de facto depositories of power in Virginia during the colonial period: "The vestry made up the parish budget, levied and apportioned the taxes for parish expenses; employed ministers and other church officers . . . built and repaired churches and chapels, took care of the poor, of orphan and illegitimate children, including the rudimentary education of pauper children . . . presented offenders and collected fines for offenses against morality and church discipline; appointed persons to establish and maintain the boundary lines of owners of land, known as processioning, and kept a record of their reports; and exercised other powers necessary for the management of parochial affairs." Records relating to all aspects of the parish business described above and placing colonists in Upper Parish between 1743 and 1793 abound in this volume. The transcription itself is preceded by Mr. Hall's very learned Introduction, which describes the history of the parish, and it is followed by an equally detailed name and subject index containing well over 10,000 entries.

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