

# A Guide to the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts - Insurrection Records, 1800-1833

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## History

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## Title Statement

A Guide to the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts - Insurrection Records, 1800-1833

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**Author:** Renee M. Savits

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## Descriptive Summary

### Accession Number

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### Language

English

### Abstract

Renee M. Savits

### Creator

Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts (1776-1928)

### Extent

.85 cu. ft. (2 boxes)

### Repository

The Library of Virginia

## Administrative Information

### Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

## **Use Restrictions**

These materials are available on microfilm [Misc. reels 1323] and should be served instead of the originals. It should be noted that the filming was done previously and does not follow the current arrangement of the papers.

## **Acquisition Information**

Transferred from the Auditor of Public Accounts in 1913.

## **Preferred Citation**

Virginia. Auditor of Public Accounts (1776-1928). Insurrection Records, 1800-1833. Accession APA 758, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

# **Biographical/Historical Information**

**SLAVE INSURRECTIONS:** Although Virginia society was generally orderly, the fear of slave rebellion lay just below the surface. There were two such rebellions in the antebellum period: Gabriel's Insurrection, in 1800, and the Southampton Insurrection, or Nat Turner's Rebellion, in 1831. Gabriel and his followers were caught before they could act, but Nat Turner and his supporters killed several whites before they were captured. In each instance retribution was swift. Local militia units were called out, many slaves were imprisoned, and the ringleaders were executed.

**AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS:** Although the colonial government had appointed auditors general from time to time, the office was not established on a permanent basis until after independence was declared. At its first session, which convened on 7 October 1776, the General Assembly passed an act creating a board of three auditors to examine and settle claims concerning receipts and expenditures for military purposes. The confusing financial situation of the state, however, resulted in a series of acts being passed over the next fifteen years elaborating and refining the duties of the auditors. Finally, at its session begun in November 1791, the General Assembly passed an act that combined the duties of the board of auditors and the solicitor general, whose office had been created in 1785 to settle the accounts of the state with the United States, and assigned them to a single auditor of public accounts effective 1 January 1792. The auditor soon became the most powerful fiscal officer in the state. All receipts and disbursements were made only upon his warrant to the treasurer, and his books were the standard against which those of the treasurer were checked.

The first changes were made as the accounts of the revolutionary era were settled. As the state moved into a period of steady financial and governmental growth in the nineteenth century, the number of accounts and funds maintained by the auditor became excessive. Thus, on 24 February 1823 the General Assembly passed an act creating the office of the second auditor to ease the auditor's burden. Although the second auditor handled several large special funds, the auditor continued to be responsible for most of the accounts concerning the daily operation of state government.

During the Civil War both the state government and the pro-Union Restored Government of Virginia, which was based first in Wheeling and then in Alexandria, had auditors of public accounts. After the war, near the end of Reconstruction, the military authorities appointed Major Thaddeus H. Stanton, of the United States Army, as auditor of public accounts. Stanton was paid by the state during his service from 3 April 1869 to 12 February 1870, although he remained an army officer. The position was returned to civilian control on 12 February 1870 with the election of William F. Taylor as auditor by the General Assembly.

Following the Civil War the complexities of an increasingly sophisticated financial world threatened to overwhelm the state fiscal offices, which had changed their practices but little since the end of the eighteenth century. Inadequate bookkeeping procedures and embezzlements of state funds resulted in a public demand for corrective action. It was not until a state government reorganization act was passed by the General Assembly on 18 April 1927, however, that the demand was satisfied. Effective 1 March 1928 the office of auditor of public accounts and second auditor were abolished and replaced by the office of comptroller--head of the Department of Accounts--to monitor the receipt and disbursement of state funds, and a new office of auditor of public accounts, under the General Assembly, to audit state and local government agencies.

The records of the first auditor of public accounts have not survived intact; periodically they have been subjected to disarrangement or destruction. When the auditor's office was created in 1776, Virginia's seat of government was in Williamsburg. In 1780, when the capital was moved to Richmond, the auditors and their records also moved. At this time, and during Benedict Arnold's raid on Richmond in 1781, some auditor's records were misplaced or destroyed. During the War of 1812, when it was believed that British troops were marching on Richmond, the state's records were loaded onto wagons and hauled to the James River for transportation upstream. Before the boats sailed, however, the alarm proved false and the records were unloaded and returned to the State Capitol.

The next threat to the auditor's records came on the night of 2-3 April 1865, when the evacuation fire broke out as the Confederate garrison abandoned the city. Fortunately, the auditor's records escaped the flames

because they were stored in the basement and attic of the State Capitol, which did not burn. Following the capture of Richmond by Union troops, however, a detachment of the Twentieth New York Infantry Regiment served as a guard in the Capitol building and browsed through the records of the state's fiscal offices (sometimes recording candid opinions concerning the late Confederacy in the margins of ledgers and journals). After the state library building was completed on the east side of Capitol Square in the late 1890's the auditor's office moved into it and the older records were stored in the basement. There they remained until 1913, when they were transferred to the custody of the state library.

## Scope and Content

The Insurrection Records, 1800-1833, are housed in two boxes and arranged into two series. Series have been designated for Series I: Gabriel's Insurrection, 1800-1801, and Series II: Southampton Insurrection, 1831-1833. These records concern payment from the Auditor of Public Accounts to Virginia citizens and militia regiments who assisted with the insurrections.

The records, 1800-1833, contain accounts, manumissions, muster rolls, pay rolls, provision returns, and receipts. The bulk of the collection are the muster and pay rolls for regiments of the Virginia Militia assisting with the insurrections. The muster and pay rolls contain the names of members of the militia as well as their rank, pay, and dates of service. The accounts and receipts include payments for guard duty, purchases of food supplies, liquor, powder, and munitions for the militia, clothing repairs, and doctors visits.

The Insurrection records mainly concern the militia and citizens assisting the state with the insurrections. For information on the slaves and free blacks see the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts - Condemned Slaves and Free Blacks Executed or Transported Records, 1781-1865 (LVA Accession APA 756). For information on the governments response see the Office of the Governor, Executive Papers of Governor James Monroe, 1799-1802 (LVA Accession 40936) and Executive Papers of Governor John Floyd, 1830-1834 (LVA Accession 42665).

## Arrangement

This collection is arranged in the following series:

- Series I: Gabriel's Insurrection, 1800-1801
- Series II: Southampton Insurrection, 1831-1833

## Contents List

### **Series I: Gabriel's Insurrection, 1800-1801.**

#### **Extent**

Extent: .40 cu. ft. (1/2 legal size box and 1/2 oversize box).

#### **Scope and Content**

The Gabriel's Insurrection records series, 1800-1801, are housed in two boxes and arranged alphabetically by folder title. The series contains accounts and receipts, manumission receipts, muster and pay rolls, and provision returns.

Gabriel's Insurrection was a large slave insurrection planned for the fall of 1800 by Gabriel (1776-1800), a blacksmith owned by Thomas Henry Prosser of Henrico County, Virginia, and other conspirators. A heavy rainstorm postponed the plot which aimed to take Richmond, hold the governor hostage, and bargain for the freedom of all slaves. After the storm, two slaves informed their owners and the white community marshaled the forces of the governor, the militia, and the courts to root out and punish the conspirators. Gabriel was captured on a schooner in Norfolk and returned to Henrico for trial. The end result of the trials were that twenty six slaves were executed, including Gabriel and his brothers Solomon and Martin. Others were convicted but pardoned; several were sold out of state.

Militiamen were sent to secure the state arsenal at Point of Fork in Fluvanna County, militia companies were called up in Suffolk and Nansemond, and guards were placed on duty to watch captured conspirators and escort witnesses in Richmond and at Bowling Green, in Caroline County. Included are accounts and receipts detailing the costs for rations and spirits furnished to the militia, guard duty at the Penitentiary, transportation of captured slaves, and other sundry expenses. Also included are muster rolls, pay rolls, and provision returns containing the names of those serving guard, rank, days of service, provisions supplied, and amount paid.

Of note are the manumission receipts, 17 March 1801, for Pharoah and Tom, slaves belonging to Philip Sheppard and Elizabeth Sheppard. Pharoah and Tom had revealed Gabriel's plot to Mosby Sheppard and

were rewarded with their freedom afterwards by the General Assembly who authorized their purchase and manumission. The receipts were for payments made to the Sheppard family and were signed by Governor James Monroe.

### **Arrangement**

Arranged alphabetically by folder title. Oversize materials were separated and placed in oversize boxes though everything is listed in alphabetical order in the finding aid. Researchers should pay special attention to note the box numbers.

### **Accounts and receipts, 1800.**

**Box 1**

**Folder 1**

### **Accounts and receipts, 1801.**

**Box 1**

**Folder 2**

### **Manumission receipts, 1801.**

**Box 1**

**Folder 3**

### **Payrolls, Caroline Court House guards [oversize], 1800-1801.**

**Box 2**

**Folder 1**

### **Payrolls, Fluvanna and Goochland Counties militia [oversize], 1800.**

**Box 2**

**Folder 2**

### **Payrolls, Richmond Penitentiary guards [oversize], 1800-1801.**

**Box 2**

**Folder 3**

### **Payrolls, 4th Regiment and 4th Division, Richmond Troop of Cavalry [oversize], 1801.**

**Box 2**

**Folder 4**

### **Payrolls, 23rd Regiment Chesterfield County Militia, 1st Battalion [oversize], 1800.**

**Box 2**

**Folder 5**

### **Payrolls, 23rd Regiment Chesterfield County Militia, 2nd Battalion [oversize], 1800.**

**Box 2**

**Folder 6**

### **Payrolls, 23rd Regiment Chesterfield County Militia, Town of Manchester (Richmond, Va.) guards; and Field and Staff officers payrolls [oversize], 1800.**

**Box 2**

**Folder 7**

### **Provision returns, 1800-1801.**

**Box 1**

## **Series II: Southampton Insurrection, 1831-1833.**

**Boxes** 1-2 (box)

### **Extent**

Extent: .45 cu. ft. (1/2 legal size box and 1/2 oversize box).

### **Scope and Content**

The Southampton Insurrection records series, 1831-1833, are housed in two boxes and arranged alphabetically by folder title. The series contains accounts and receipts and muster and pay rolls.

Nat Turner (1800-1831) was an enslaved African American who led a rebellion of more than fifty enslaved and free African Americans in Southampton County, Virginia, on 21 August 1831, that resulted in the deaths of 55 to 65 white people. The rebellion was suppressed within 48 hours, but Turner was not apprehended until 30 October 1831. A white militia with twice the manpower of the rebels and reinforced by three companies of artillery eventually defeated the insurrection. More than 200 African Americans were killed in retaliation by mobs and the militia in the course of putting down the rebellion. Turner was tried and convicted 5 November 1831 and executed by hanging in the town of Jerusalem, Southampton County, Virginia, on 11 November 1831.

Included are accounts and receipts detailing items furnished to Southampton County citizens during the insurrection; food, candles, fodder, tin pans, and other sundry items supplied to the militia; doctor care of militia members; newspaper advertisements; and travel costs. Also included are muster and pay rolls for artillery and militia regiments, including the 15th, 29th, 59th, 62nd, 65th, and 71st Virginia Militia. Included are the names of those serving guard, rank, days of service, provisions supplied, and amount paid.

### **Arrangement**

Arranged alphabetically by folder title. Oversize materials were separated and placed in oversize boxes though everything is listed in alphabetical order in the finding aid. Researchers should pay special attention to note the box numbers.

### **Accounts and receipts, 1831-1832.**

**Box** 1

**Folder** 5

### **Muster and payrolls, Artillery Regiment of Captain David Hargrave, 1831-1832.**

**Box** 1

**Folder** 6

### **Muster and payrolls, Captain Alexander P. Peete's company [oversize], 1831.**

**Box** 2

**Folder** 9

### **Muster and payrolls, 15th Regiment Virginia Militia, 1833.**

**Box** 1

**Folder** 7

### **Muster and payrolls, 29th Regiment Virginia Militia, 1831-1832.**

**Box** 1

**Folder** 8

### **Muster and payrolls, 29th Regiment Virginia Militia [oversize], 1831-1832.**

**Box** 2

**Folder** 10

### **Muster and payrolls, 59th Regiment Virginia Militia, 1831-1832.**

**Box** 1

**Folder 9**

**Muster and payrolls, 59th Regiment Virginia Militia [oversize], 1831-1832.**

**Box 2**

**Folder 11**

**Muster and payrolls, 62nd Regiment Virginia Militia [oversize], 1831-1832.**

**Box 2**

**Folder 12**

**Muster and payrolls, 65th Regiment Virginia Militia, 1831-1832.**

**Box 1**

**Folder 10**

**Muster and payrolls, 65th Regiment Virginia Militia [oversize], 1831-1832.**

**Box 2**

**Folder 13**

**Muster and payrolls, 71st Regiment Virginia Militia, 1831-1832.**

**Box 1**

**Folder 11**

**Muster and payrolls, 71st Regiment Virginia Militia [oversize], 1831-1832.**

**Box 2**

**Folder 14**