

A Guide to the Campbell County (Va.) Criminal Records, 1790-1945

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
2018

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History

Processed by: J. Robinson

Title Statement

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Subtitle: Campbell County (Va.) Criminal Records, 1790-1945

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Publication Statement

Date: © 2018 By The Library of Virginia. All Rights Reserved.

Publisher: Library of Virginia

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Profile Description

Creation: Created directly into EAD20 March 2018

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Campbell County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

4.15 cu. ft. (9 boxes); 6 volumes

Location

Library of Virginia; State Records Center

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

IN PROGRESS: Identified Free People in Want of Register, are digitized and available through [Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative Digital Collection](#) on the Library of Virginia website. Please use digital images.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These records came to the Library of Virginia in two transfers of court papers from Campbell County in 2004 and under the accession number 41133, and in 2005 under the accession number 41665.

Processing Information

Encoded by G. Crawford, 2018; Updated by M. Mason, April 2026

Preferred Citation

Campbell County (Va.) Criminal Records, 1790-1945. Local government records collection, Campbell County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Campbell County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records](#)

Records related to free and enslaved people of Campbell County (Va.) and other localities are available through the [Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative Digital Collection](#) on the Library of Virginia website.

Additional Campbell County Court Records can be found on microfilm at the Library of Virginia. Consult "[A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm.](#)"

Historical Information

Context for Record Type:

Free People in Want of Registration

Consists of lists of free Black and multiracial people confined to jail because they were without a free registration document or certificate proving their free status. In some localities, city sergeants or county sheriffs created reports for the court of individuals confined to jail. These documents serve as a certification record of who was in jail. Prisoners were required to pay the jail fees accrued during their time in jail. If they could not pay, they were hired out to cover the cost of their expenses. If this was the case, the document may indicate if they were hired out along with a totaling of expenses. For further research, search the minute books or court order books for the locality of interest.

Commonwealth Causes

Commonwealth causes are criminal court cases filed by the state government that consist primarily of warrants, summons, subpoenas, indictments, recognizances, and verdicts handed down by juries and other legal authorities in order to prosecute individuals who violated the penal code.

The commonwealth causes reveal an inconsistency in forms of conviction and punishment for white versus Black and multiracial individuals. Throughout the early nineteenth century, Virginia legislators revised the laws in ways that reduced the legal status of free Black and Multiracial people to that of enslaved, thereby creating a legal system based on race. White Virginians and legislators feared insurrection and passed laws restricting the number of Black and Multiracial people allowed to gather in groups. Enslavers could be fined for permitting their enslaved people to hire themselves out for work and enslaved people were jailed on these occasions. While public whipping originated as a form of punishment for all those convicted, in Virginia, it was retained for those who were Black, free or enslaved, and officially outlawed as a punishment for white criminals in 1848. Often, Black individuals served much longer penitentiary sentences while the cases of white men, who had committed the same or similar crimes, were dismissed.

Locality History: Campbell County was named for William Campbell, a general in the militia during the Revolutionary War and one of the heroes of the Battle of Kings Mountain in 1780. The county was formed from Bedford County by an act passed on 15 December 1781. The county court first met on 7 February 1782. The county seat is Rustburg.

Scope and Content

Campbell county (Va.) Commonwealth Causes, 1790-1945, consist of records concerning Free people in want of Registration, 1859; Commonwealth Causes, 1790-1934; and Criminal Indexes and Dockets, 1896-1945

Free people in want of Registration Records, 1859, are comprised of two lists that record the names of

around 38 "free negroes" arrested for not having copies of their free registration. The lists include the following surnames: Appy, Banister, Brogden, Davis, Green, Harriss, Humbles (or Umbles), Jackson, McCoy, Scott, Stewart, Stuart, and Valentine. The lists include notations about the action of the court.

Commonwealth Causes, 1790-1934, are criminal court cases and consist primarily of warrants, summons, and indictments handed down by grand juries and other legal authorities in order to prosecute individuals who violated the penal code. These offenses ranged in severity from assault and battery to larceny to murder.

Criminal Indexes, and Dockets, 1896-1945, consists of volumes of dockets and indexes concerning criminal cases.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Free People in Want of Registration, 1859, arranged chronologically.
- Series II: Criminal Records, 1790-1934, arranged somewhat chronologically, many of the records remaining unprocessed.
- Series III: Criminal Indexes and Dockets, 1896-1945

Contents List

Series I: Free People in Want of Register, 1859

Extent

1 folder [use digital images]

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Barcode number 1186721: Free and Enslaved Records 1784-1867

Series II: Commonwealth Causes, 1790-1934

Extent

3.8z cubic feet (8 boxes)

Physical Location State Records Center

Barcode number 1178331: Commonwealth Causes, 1790 May-1879 Oct

Barcode number 1164576: Commonwealth Causes, 1867-1896

Barcode number 1178332: Commonwealth Causes, 1880 Jan-1886 Oct

Barcode number 1178333: Commonwealth Causes, 1887 Feb-1891 Nov

Barcode number 1178334: Commonwealth Causes, 1892 Jan-1932 Jul, undated

Barcode number 1164575: Commonwealth Causes, 1897-1905

Barcode number 1164574: Commonwealth Causes, 1906-1934

Barcode number 1164577: Criminal Records; Commonwealth Causes, 1829-1910, undated;1795-1866.

Series III: Criminal Indexes and Dockets, 1896-1945

Extent

6 volumes

Physical Location State Records Center

Barcode number 1163870: Justice's Criminal Judgments, 1896-1921

Barcode number 1163868: Criminal Docket Circuit Court 1927-1932

Barcode number 1163918: Criminal Index, 1930 circa

Barcode number 1163919: Criminal Index, 193 circa

Barcode number 1163919: Criminal Index, 193 circa

Barcode number 1163869: Civil and Criminal Docket Circuit Court 1933-1934

Barcode number 1163866: Trial Justice Criminal Judgments Returned to Court No. 1, 1934-1945