

A Guide to the Botetourt County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1801-1862

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1801-1862

A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
2005

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History

Processed by: Library of Virginia Staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Botetourt County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1801-1862

Subtitle: A Guide to the Botetourt County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records

Author: Sarah Nerney

Publication Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from Archives database, created by Sarah Nerney, 16 November 2005

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

2013-11-21 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Physical Characteristics

1.125 cu. ft. (1 box, 1 folder (OS)); 1 volume

Repository

Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

IN PROGRESS: Botetourt County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1801-1862, are digitized and available through Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative Digital Collection on the Library of Virginia website. Please use digital images where possible.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Botetourt County (Va.) as part of an undated accession.

Processing Information

Starting in 2023, Library of Virginia archival staff in partnership with the Virginia Untold Project Manager began efforts to describe records related to free and enslaved Black and Multiracial people in a manner that improved the historical context of the records. In doing so, in some cases material once described within the "Free and Enslaved" record group for a locality may no longer be described within this record. When this has occurred, please see the Processing Information and Related Materials section for records that have been described separately.

Certificates of Importation were removed from this record in July 2025 and are now described in Botetourt County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1794, 1796, 1815.

Deeds of Emancipation were removed from this record in July 2025 and are now described in Botetourt County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1790-1802.

Two letters were removed from this record in July 2025 and are now described in Botetourt County (Va.) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1868.

These records have been processed, scanned, and indexed by L. Neuroth and LVA staff for the purposes of digitizing them for the digital project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative.

Encoded by S. Nerney: November 2005; updated by C. Collins: July 2025.

Preferred Citation

Botetourt County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1801-1862. Local government records collection, Botetourt County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Botetourt County \(Va.\) Certificates of Importation, 1794, 1796, 1815](#)

See also: [Botetourt County \(Va.\) Deeds of Emancipation, 1790-1802](#)

See also: [Botetourt County \(Va.\) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1868](#)

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

Additional Botetourt County (Va.) Court Records can be found on microfilm at The Library of Virginia web site. Consult ["A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm."](#)

Botetourt County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Botetourt County records may be found in the [Lost Records Localities Digital Collection](#) available on the Library of Virginia website.

Historical Information

Context for Record Type:

Free and Enslaved Records

The Free and Enslaved Records collection is comprised of miscellaneous records related to the regulation and policing of both enslaved and free Black and Multiracial people in Botetourt County. The localities/local government authorities were largely responsible for enforcing laws that restricted the movement of enslaved and free Black and Multiracial people and the resulting documentation was often filed in the circuit courts. The ways in which local authorities enacted legal measures against or on behalf of enslaved and free Black and Multiracial people varied from locality to locality; therefore, records were not necessarily standardized or filed and retained in a consistent manner. This collection is topical and a means by which to compile miscellaneous documents related to free and enslaved people that are not established local government

record types.

See: the [Virginia Untold Record Types](#) on the Library of Virginia website for additional context concerning "Free Negro" Tax Records and Requisitions for Public Use.

Locality History: Botetourt County was named for Norborne Berkeley, baron de Botetourt, the royal governor from 1768 to 1770. It was formed from Augusta County in 1769, and a part of Rockbridge County was added in 1785. The county court first met on 13 February 1770. The county seat is Fincastle.

Lost Locality Note: Many of the loose records including pre-1830 chancery and pre-1854 judgments suffered tremendous water damage as a result of a courthouse fire on 15 December 1970. Because of the near loss of records, the General Assembly passed the Virginia Public Records Act in 1975 for the purpose of preserving local records. Volumes that record deeds, court orders, and wills exist.

Scope and Content

Materials in the Library of Virginia's collections contain historical terms, phrases, and images that are offensive to modern readers. These include demeaning and dehumanizing references to race, ethnicity, and nationality; enslaved or free status; physical and mental ability; religion; sex; and sexual orientation and gender identity.

Botetourt County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1801-1862, consist of "Free Negro" Tax Records, 1801-1855, and Requisitions for Public Use, 1862.

"Free Negro" Tax Records, 1801-1855, consist of 17 lists of "free negroes and mulattoes" residing in Botetourt County. The lists generally record the name of each individual, as well as their occupation and place of abode or residence; several lists include additional information, such as sex, age, and "colour."

Requisitions for Public Use, 1862, are comprised of requisitions summoning "able bodied, male, free negroes" to work in the New River District [perhaps somewhere along the New River in Southwest Virginia] of the C.S.A. These records also include petitions of exemption submitted by Arthur Tanner, Charles Mayo, Lang Dennis, John Day, Jordan Banister, Robert Callender (Calendar), and Charles Wilson. Several individuals sought exemption due to health issues, while others asserted that their occupations as shoemakers and laborers, for example, were "necessary and important" to the continued functioning of the locality and its citizens.

Botetourt County (Va.) Minute Book for Court Exemption from Military Draft, 1862-1865, also includes information related to the requisitioning of free Black men. The volume contains the names of those assigned to work in the New River District in April 1862, as well as the names of individuals who petitioned to be exempted from the same. Additionally, the volume names those "detailed to work in the Military Service of the Army of South Western Virginia" in December 1862.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1801-1862, arranged loosely by record type then chronologically.

Contents List

Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1801-1862

Extent

Extent: 1.125 cu. ft. (1 box, 1 folder (OS)); 1 volume

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged loosely by record type then chronologically

Barcode number 1138016: Free and Enslaved Records, 1790-1862

Barcode number 1138041: Free and Enslaved Records, 1801-1818; 1868 [oversize]

Barcode number 1202872: Minute Book for Court Exemption from Military Draft, 1862-1865

