

A Guide to the Caroline County (Va.) Ministers' Returns, 1796-1852

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia Barcode number 1104542/Caroline County (Va.) Reel 80
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History

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Title Statement

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Collection numbers

Barcode number 1104542/Caroline County (Va.) Reel 80

Language

English

Collector

Caroline County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

1 v. (140 numbered items); 1 microfilm reel

Location

State Records Center - Archives Annex, Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

Use microfilm copy, Caroline County (Va.) Reel 80.

Acquisition Information

This volume was compiled and created by the Caroline County Circuit Court Clerk's Office. Original returns and licenses were chronologically arranged, consecutively numbered and bound.

Reel 80 was generated by Backstage Library Works through the Library of Virginia's Circuit Court Records Preservation Program.

Preferred Citation

Caroline County (Va.) Ministers' Returns, 1796-1852. Caroline County (Va.) Reel 80, Local government records collection, Caroline County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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

See the [Lost Records Localities Digital Collection](#) available at Virginia Memory.

For more information and a listing of lost records localities see [Lost Records research note](#).

Historical Information

Caroline County was formed from Essex, King and Queen, and King William counties on 1 May 1728, and additional parts of King and Queen County were added in 1742 and 1763. The county was named for Caroline of Anspach, wife of King George II.

Most loose records and deed books prior to 1836 and will books prior to 1853 were stolen, mutilated, and/or destroyed by Union troops who ransacked the courthouse in May 1864. A near-complete run of order books exists.

Prior to 1853, when the Commonwealth began recording vital statistics, Virginia marriages were recorded at the county or city level. Beginning in 1661, in order to be married by license, the groom was required to go before the county clerk and give bond with security that there was no lawful reason to prevent the marriage. The license, issued then by the clerk, was given to the minister who performed the service. Written consent from a parent or guardian was needed for individuals younger than twenty-one years.

Until 1780, marriages could be performed only by ministers of the Established Church, who were required by law to record marriages in the parish register. In 1780, dissenting ministers (only four per county from each sect) were first permitted to perform marriage ceremonies. In order to have a record of all marriages, ministers were required to sign a certificate to be filed with the county clerk. Initially, ministers sent marriage certificates to the clerk every three months. Some ministers adopted a custom of making collected returns--a list of marriages performed within a period of time such as a year or several years. Beginning in 1784, marriage certificates were returned annually. The law was rarely enforced, and ministers' returns were sometimes late, incorrect, incomplete, and in many instances, not made at all. County clerks compiled a register of marriages based, in part, on ministers' returns.

The ministers' returns of Caroline County (Va.) described in this collection were created by the County Court.

Scope and Content

Caroline County (Va.) Ministers' Returns, 1796-1852, records the returns made by individual ministers of marriages performed within the county. The majority of returns are in the form of lists which record the date of marriage and names of both parties. In the process of preparing and sending the returns, the name of the minister and the minister's denomination are also recorded. This volume also contains marriage licenses

prepared by the county clerk and presented to the minister who would perform the ceremony. These signed documents "authorized and licensed" or "licensed and permitted" the ministers to perform the actual marriage ceremonies. The license indicated to the minister and the public that there were no impediments to the marriage.

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Caroline County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Subjects:

Christian sects--Virginia--Caroline County.

Clergy--Virginia--Caroline County.

Marriage--Virginia--Caroline County.

Geographical Names:

Caroline County (Va.)--History.

Genre and Form Terms:

Local government records--Virginia--Caroline County.

Marriage licenses--Virginia--Caroline County.

Marriage records--Virginia--Caroline County.

Ministers' returns--Virginia--Caroline County.

Added Entry - Corporate Name:

Caroline County (Va.) County Court.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.