

A Guide to the Campbell County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1801-1864

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1801-1864

A Collection in the Library of Virginia

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Author: Sarah Nerney

History

Processed by: L. Neuroth, J. Robinson, and LVA Staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Campbell County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1801-1864

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Author: Sarah Nerney

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from being created directly into EAD, created by Sarah Nerney, 31 March 2006

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

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

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Creator

Campbell County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

Digital images; 1 folder [12 items]; 1 microfilm reel

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

IN PROGRESS: Campbell County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1801-1864, 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

The Campbell County (Va.) Register of "Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1801-1850, and the Campbell County (Va.) Register of "Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1802-1864, were transferred to the Library of Virginia in 2023 under accession numbers 53887 and 53885, respectively, for digitization. Digital images of the registers were produced by the Library of Virginia Imaging Services in 2023 and accessioned under accession numbers 54086 and 54087.

The "Free Negro" registrations and affidavits and the lists of "free negroes" were transferred to the Library of Virginia from Campbell County (Va.) in 2004 under accession number 41133.

The microfilm copy of the Campbell County (Va.) Register of "Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1801-1850, was generated by the Library of Virginia's Imaging Services of Branch at an unknown date.

Processing Information

"Free Negro" registrations and affidavits, 1814-1857, and the list of "free negroes," 1851-1854, were originally described as part of the Campbell County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1854-1859, but were removed to the present Campbell County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1801-1864, record to enhance the context between record types in August 2025.

The microfilm of the Register of "Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1801-1850, was originally described as Campbell County (Va.) Register of "Free Negroes," 1801-1850, but was removed to the present Campbell County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1801-1864, record to enhance the context between record types in August 2025.

These records were processed, scanned, and indexed by L. Neuroth, J. Robinson, and LVA staff for the purposes of digitizing them for the digital project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative circa 2006 and in 2023.

Encoded by S. Nerney: March 2006; updated by C. Collins: August 2025.

Preferred Citation

Campbell County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1801-1864. Local government records collection, Campbell County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Alternative Form Available

The Campbell County (Va.) Register of "Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1801-1850, is available on microfilm, Campbell County (Va.) Reel No. 68.

Custodial History

The Campbell County (Va.) Register of "Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1801-1850, and the Campbell County (Va.) Register of "Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1802-1864, were transferred to the Library of Virginia from the Circuit Court of Campbell County in 2023 under accession numbers 53887 and 53885, respectively, for digitization. The registers were returned to the locality in 2023 by request of the clerk of the Circuit Court.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Campbell County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records, 1854-1859](#)

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 (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."](#)

Location of Originals

The "Free Negro" registers are retained in the locality. Contact the clerk of the Circuit Court for access.

Historical Information

Context for Record Type:

"Free Negro" Registers

In 1793, the Virginia General Assembly specified that "free Negroes or mulattoes" were required to be registered and numbered in a book to be kept by the town clerk, which shall specify "age, name, colour, and stature, by whom, and in what court the said negro or mulatto was emancipated; or that such negro or mulatto was born free." The process was extended to counties in 1803. Although some clerks were already recording such features, an 1834 Act of Assembly made it a uniform requirement to record identifying marks and scars and the instrument of emancipation, whether by deed or will. This bound register often coincided with a loose certificate containing largely the same identifying information. Both the registration system and the process of renewal was enforced differently in the various Virginia localities. Thus, the information found in these registers may differ from year to year and across localities.

The register books resulting from the administration of the 1793 and 1803 Act of Assembly are evidence of Virginia legislators' reaction to a quickly growing free Black and Multiracial population in Virginia in the post Revolutionary War period. Acts such as these allowed white officials to police the activities and movement of free Black community members throughout the state thereby restricting their autonomy.

"Free Negro" Registrations

In 1793, the Virginia General Assembly specified that "free Negroes or mulattoes" were required to "be registered and numbered in a book to be kept by the town clerk, which shall specify age, name, color, status and by whom, and in what court emancipated." These entries often coincided with the creation of a loose certificate containing largely the same identifying information.

Documents in this record group differ from the bound volumes referred to as "registers." These registration records typically appear in the form of certificates or handwritten statements recording the free status of a Black or Multiracial person. They can include the free person's name, sometimes age, a brief physical description, and the circumstances of the person's freedom or emancipation, parents, former enslaver, place or date of emancipation. There are also affidavits that were given by individuals affirming a free person's status, as well as written descriptions of free people. In some cases, a person would not have a registration to submit to the court. Instead, they produced some other form of identification proving their free status, for example, a deed of emancipation, a will, an apprenticeship indenture, or an affidavit of someone testifying to their character and status.

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.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1801-1864, are comprised of two "Free Negro" registers, 1801-1864; "Free Negro" registrations and affidavits, 1814-1857; and lists of "free negroes" to be registered, 1851-1854.

Campbell County (Va.) Register of "Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1801-1850, records the registration of free Black and multiracial people of Black descent in Campbell County and covers the years 1801 to 1850. The clerk recorded name, age, height, complexion, marks and scars, and in what court the person was emancipated or if the person was born free. There is no index. Includes page numbers. In some instances, the clerk recorded information not required by law such as the name of the former enslaver, previous place of registration, or place of birth.

Campbell County (Va.) Register of "Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1802-1864, records the registration of free Black and multiracial people of Black descent in Campbell County and covers the years 1802 to 1864. The clerk recorded name, age, height, complexion, marks and scars, and in what court the person was emancipated or if the person was born free. The clerk appears to have copied register entries from the 1801-1850 volume in alphabetical order and added new registrations dating post 1850. In some instances, the clerk recorded information not required by law such as the name of the former enslaver, previous place of

registration, or place of birth.

"Free Negro" registrations and affidavits, 1814-1857, undated, name the following individuals: Reubin Jackson; Jinsey (Ginsey) Stewart or Smith and Lethe Eaton, Mary, William, Lundy, James, and Wyatt, her children; Ned Wyatt; Thomas Jackson; Samuel Richardson; Robert Pleasants; Randal; Elizabeth Howard; Amy Humbles (Umbles) and Juddy, Tabby, and Samuel Scott, her daughters and son-in-law, respectively; Catharine Howard; Amy Howard; Catharine Delaney; Polly Delaney; Patrick Mason (to whom Catherine Delaney was married); and Joe and Mary, Patrick's children.

The back of Jinsey Stewart's registration lists the names of several individuals to be registered, including the children of Bery Smith, who are unnamed; James; Thomas; John; Bowlin; Martha; Ellin; Dock; Wilatt; Leather Smith; Mary Smith; Kiry; Sucky; Charles Wilson Smith; William; and Sandy. The back of Amy Humbles' registration includes the names Samuel James Pinn (or Penn), Alex Humbles, Susannah (or Susan) Humbles, and Mary Fletcher Jackson.

Some registrations originated in different localities, such as Augusta County, Brunswick County, the City of Danville, Wythe County, and Rockbridge County. Upon their removal to Campbell County, individuals surrendered their free papers to the court to prove their free status. In such cases, they would have most likely received a Campbell County free registration to replace the document(s) handed over to the court. To varying extents, the registrations and affidavits list the free person's name, age, a brief physical description, and the circumstances of the person's freedom or emancipation.

Lists of "free negroes" to be registered, 1851-1854, undated, record the names of free individuals ordered to be registered. In some instances, only the individual's name is listed; a number of individuals' names are accompanied by additional details, including age, a brief physical description, and whether they were born free or emancipated. For most people, the information documented in the lists is replicated in one or both of the free registers.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Registers of "Free Negroes," 1801-1864, arranged chronologically by entry date.
- Series II: "Free Negro" Registrations, Affidavits, and related Records, 1814-1857, arranged loosely by record type then chronologically.

Contents List

Series I: Registers of "Free Negroes," 1801-1864

Extent

Extent: Digital images

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically by entry date

Barcode number 0007871769: Register of "Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1801-1850

Barcode number 0007871773: Register of "Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1802-1864

Series II: "Free Negro" Registrations, Affidavits, and related Records, 1814-1857

Extent

Extent: 1 folder [12 items]

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged loosely by record type then chronologically

Barcode number 1186721: Free and Enslaved Records, 1784-1867

Barcode number 1186/21: Free and Enslaved Records, 1784-1867

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