

A Guide to the Northampton County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1737-1860

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
2006

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History

Processed by: LVA staff

Title Statement

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Subtitle: Northampton County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1737-1860

Author: Catherine G. O'Brien

Publication Statement

Date: © 2006 By The Library of Virginia. All Rights Reserved.

Publisher: Library of Virginia

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Catherine O'Brien, 08 June 2007

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

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

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Northampton County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

.225 cu. ft. (1 box)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Northampton 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.

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

Northampton County Free and Enslaved Records are believed to have been removed from Northampton County (Va.) Judgments and processed by LVA staff around 2007.

Apprenticeship Indentures were removed from this record in July 2024 and are now described in Northampton County (Va.) Apprenticeship Indentures, 1727-1748.

Certificates of Importation were removed from this record in July 2024 and are now described in Northampton County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1743-1744, 1816.

"Free Negro" Registrations were removed from this record in July 2024 and are now described in Northampton County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1728, 1853-1861.

Petitions to Remain were removed from this record in July 2024 and are now described in Northampton County (Va.) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1849-1866.

The original list of "Free negroes owing levies," 1804, was removed from the Northampton County (Va.) Tax and Fiscal Records and placed with the Northampton County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records in July 2024 by C. Collins.

Encoded by C. O'Brien, June 2007; updated by C. Collins, July 2024.

Preferred Citation

Northampton County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1737-1860. Local government records collection, Northampton County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Northampton County \(Va.\) Apprenticeship Indentures, 1727-1748](#)

See also: [Northampton County \(Va.\) Certificates of Importation, 1743-1744, 1816](#)

See also: [Northampton County \(Va.\) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1849-1866](#)

See also: [Northampton County \(Va.\) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1728, 1853-1861](#)

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

Additional Northampton County (Va.) court records can be found on microfilm at The Library of Virginia website. Consult ["A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm."](#)

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 Northampton 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, Judgments, and Patrol Records.

Locality History: Northampton County was named probably for the English county, of which Obedience Robins, a prominent early resident of the Eastern Shore, was a native. The county, which originally included all of the peninsula south of Maryland and which was one of the eight shires, or counties, first enumerated in 1634, was first called Accomack. The General Assembly changed the name to Northampton County in 1643. Accomack County was created from Northampton County about 1663, but in October 1670, the General Assembly temporarily reunited the two counties as Northampton County. In November 1673, Accomack County was again separated from Northampton. The county seat is Eastville.

Scope and Content

Northampton County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1737-1860, consist of "Free Negro" Tax records, 1804, 1807, Judgments, 1855-1859, Patrol Records, 1806-1808, Tax and Fiscal Records, 1757, and additional records of various types, 1737-1860.

"Free Negro" Tax Records, 1804, 1807, are comprised of "Free negroes owing levies," 1804, and a list of "insolvent free negroes," 1807. The list of "Free negroes owning levies" includes the names of 61 free Black and multiracial individuals. Beside several names, former enslavers or familial relationship are documented. The list of "insolvent free negroes," includes the names of six or seven emancipated individuals who owed taxes. Former enslavers are listed alongside the names of several individuals. The back of the document directs that the free individuals are "to be sold for Taxer."

Judgments, 1855-1859, include petitions, in which Hiram H. Griffith, administrator of Robert F. Williams, sought to sell the child of Lucy, a woman enslaved by Williams' estate and Luther Nottingham, guardian of John Wilkins and Delitha Wilkins, sought to sell George, as well as orders permitting Robert Wilkins, Francis Rolley, John Fox, and John W. Elliott to sell Scylla; Leonard N. Nottingham and George F. Wilkins to sell Smith, who belonged to Maria Joynes, widow of Edward Baptist; John Wilkins, guardian of Rebecca S. Wilkins and George T. Wilkins, to sell Laura (or Lauren); and an order ratifying the sale of Jacob by Azariah Thurston, guardian of William Fitchett, to Elijah Brittingham.

Patrol Records, 1806-1808, include patrol accounts and one patrol appointment. These patrols generally acted as the policing force that monitored the movement of free and enslaved Black and multiracial individuals. The records usually document the names of the individuals on patrol; who authorized their patrol; dates of patrol; the number of hours on patrol; general geographic area patrolled; and compensation awarded.

Tax and Fiscal Records, 1757, include a petition by Arthur Robins, who sought to avoid paying taxes on an enslaved woman "past her labour" and unable to work.

Additional single items relating to the documentation of free and enslaved Black and multiracial individuals in and around Goochland County, Va., include:

An account, 1758, in which James Peterkin claimed that James Anderson, a "free Negroe," owed him compensation for time run away, as well as time lost, cash paid to John Leatherman "in Bringing you from Accomak," and for "my personal Expenses [going] after you to Same place."

A claim, 1737, submitted by Esau Jacob, who asserted that Rhodie, an enslaved girl granted him as part of the distribution of John Jacob's estate, had been freed because Ann Toyer, her mother, was judged to be free. Jacob sought compensation for the loss of Rhodie. [See also [Toyer, Ann: Freedom Suit, 1733](#), available through the Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative Digital Collection on the Library of Virginia website.]

An order, 1860, certifying Mary Stevens' heritage and status as a "free person of mixed blood." Based on proof provided by John Kendall and other white citizens, it was determined that Stevens descended from the Gingaskin Tribe of Virginia Indians and was therefore "not a negro." The order also includes a sentence instructing that Louisa Rozelle, a "free Negroe," be hired out.

An order, 1860, restricting the movement of the enslaved and free Black and multiracial communities. It established a curfew that could only be circumvented with "the lawful permission of said owner or hirer" and authorized all magistrates of the county to detain any offenders.

A receipt, 1755, for payment given to Daniel Stephens by Garner Crosely and Thomas Drighouse for “keeping one Negro Boy one year.”

A warrant, 1738, issued in order to detain Riah (also referred to Uriah), enslaved by Gertrude Harmonson, and Secer (also spelled Cesar), enslaved by Josephas Meriah Johnson. Susannah Powell claimed that Riah and Secer wrongfully transported Meriom and her two children, who were enslaved by Powell, into Accomack County and left them in the custody of Isaac Smith.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1737-1860, arranged loosely by record type then chronologically.

Contents List

Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1737-1860

Extent

.225 cubic feet (1 box)

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged loosely by record type then chronologically

Barcode number 0007532553: Free and Enslaved Records, 1727-1866

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