

A Guide to the Northumberland County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1786-1857

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
2009

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History

Processed by: Sam Walters

Title Statement

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Author: Catherine G. O'Brien

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Catherine O'Brien, 2009

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

Northumberland County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

2 folders; 2 microfilm reels

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

"Free Negro" Tax records, 1845, 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 a transfer of court papers from Northumberland County in 2007 under accession number 43283.

The microfilm copy of these records was generated by The Library of Virginia's Imaging Services Branch.

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.

Petitions to Remain were removed from this record in November 2025 and are now described in Northumberland County (Va.) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth.

"Free Negro" Registrations were removed from this record in November 2025 and are now described in Northumberland County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons.

Petitions for Re-enslavement were removed from this record in November 2025 and are now described in Northumberland County (Va.) Petitions for Re-enslavement.

Certificates of Importation were removed from this record in November 2025 and are now described in Northumberland County (Va.) Certificates of Importation.

Encoded by C. O'Brien, 2009; updated by M. Mason, November 2025

Preferred Citation

Northumberland County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1786-1857. Local government records collection, Northumberland County. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va..

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See Also: [Northumberland County \(Va.\) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons](#)

See Also: [Northumberland County \(Va.\) Petitions to remain in the Commonwealth](#)

See Also: [Northumberland County \(Va.\) Petitions for Re-enslavement](#)

See Also: [Northumberland County \(Va.\) Certificates of Importation](#)

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

Additional Northumberland County (Va.) 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

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 this 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 Deeds; "Free Negro" Tax Records

Locality History: Northumberland County was named probably for the English county. It was formed about 1645 from the district of Chickacoan, the early-seventeenth-century name for the region between the Potomac and the Rappahannock Rivers. The date of the county's formation is conjectural because the act of assembly creating it is no longer extant, but internal evidence shows that the county was functioning in 1645.

Scope and Content

Northumberland County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1786-1845, consist of "Free Negro" Tax records, 1845, and Miscellaneous Records pertaining to Black and Multiracial individuals, 1802-1857.

"Free Negro" Tax records, 1845, consists of a list of twenty-eight "Free Negroes" with an order for sale. This is most likely due to unpaid taxes [digitized].

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

Circulars, 1802 and 1833, include two typescript letters to the county clerk pertaining to free and enslaved Black and Multiracial people. The circular letter, 1802, is a communication from the Governor of Virginia informing county clerks of laws requiring county courts to record proceedings against enslaved people accused of capital offenses, and to submit copies of those records to the executive branch.

The circular letter, 1833, is from the Board of Commissioners appointed by the legislature in 1833 to make appropriations for the removal of free persons of color from Virginia. The letter is a follow-up to an earlier request for information to aid the Board with plans to sponsor a ship to transport free persons of color from Virginia to Liberia in November 1834, under the direction of the American Colonization Society.

An estate document, 1786, listing Judy, Bett, and Esther, as being enslaved by Nancy Blackwell.

Additional Records available only on microfilm include:

"Record of food and clothing issued to Negroes at Northumberland House Land," 1844-1849, lists the name and accounts for each person who received food or clothing. Includes basic additional expense accounting for farming operations on the land. This volume is 12 pages with no index.

"Births of Blacks," 1841-1857, is a single page noting the birth of Dandridge Christopher, 13 May 1841, Henrietta Kinner, 11 March 1853 [?], Charels H. Kinner, 12 June 1854 [?], Eliza A. Kinner, 12 July 1854, Mary Kinner, 10 February 1856, and Martha Kinner, 16 May 1859.

"List of the names, ages, and sex of the Free Negroes in Northumberland County", undated, is a four-page document listing the names of about 126 individuals including there, sex, age, and occupation of each person listed. This is likely an additional "Free Negro" tax record compiled by the commissioner of revenue for the county.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1786-1857

Contents List

Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1766-1862

Extent

2 folders; 2 microfilm reels

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Barcode number 1189869: Free and Enslaved Records, 1786-1862

Northumberland County (Va.) Reel number 94: Record of food and clothing issued to Negroes at Northumberland House Land, 1844-1849 1844-1849

Northumberland County (Va.) Reel number 97: Births of Negroes, 1841-

1857 1841-1857

Northumberland County (Va.) Reel number 97: List of Free Negroes, undated

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