

A Guide to the Powhatan County (Va.) Free Negro and Slave Records, 1780-1866

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia 1177495, 1188800-1188802

Library of Virginia

2008

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History

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Title Statement

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Subtitle: Powhatan County (Va.) Free Negro and Slave Records, 1780-1866 1177495, 1188800-1188802

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Publication Statement

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Publisher: Library of Virginia

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Catherine O'Brien, 13 June 2008

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

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

Descriptive Summary

Barcode numbers

1177495, 1188800-1188802

Language

English

Collector

Powhatan County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

1.80 cu. ft. (4 boxes)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These items came to the Library of Virginia in transfers of court records from Powhatan County.

Preferred Citation

Powhatan County (Va.) Free Negro and Slave Records, 1780-1866. Local government records collection, Powhatan County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. 23219.

Alternative Form Available

In part, photocopies.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Powhatan County \(Va.\) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1866](#)

Powhatan County (Va.) Registers of Free Negroes and Mulattoes, 1800-1865, are available on Powhatan County (Va.) Reel 58 and 45.

Historical Information

Powhatan County was named for the Indian chieftain who ruled the Native American inhabitants of tidewater Virginia in the early seventeenth century. It was formed from Cumberland County in 1777, and part of Chesterfield County was added later.

An act passed by the Virginia legislature in 1803 required every free negro or mulatto to be registered and numbered in a book to be kept by the county clerk.

An act passed in 1806 required freed slaves to leave the state within a year.

The General Assembly of Virginia passed a law as early as July 1, 1861, calling for the enrollment of free negroes to work in the public service.

Beginning in 1778, slaveholders who brought slaves into Virginia were required to register the slaves with the county court and sign an oath agreeing not to bring slaves into the commonwealth with the intent of selling them.

In 1806, the General Assembly moved to remove the free negro population from Virginia with a law that stated that any emancipated slaves, freed after May 1, 1806, who remained in the Commonwealth more than a year, would forfeit the right to freedom and be sold by the Overseers of the Poor for the benefit of the parish. Families wishing to stay were to petition the legislature through the local county court. Beginning in 1837, freed slaves could petition the local courts for permission to remain.

Scope and Content

Powhatan County (Va.) Free Negro and Slave Records, 1780-1866. The collection is comprised of free negro registrations, affidavits, and certificates, 1798-1866; and additional free negro and slave records, 1780-1865. Some items are photocopies of documents relating to slaves and free negroes that were located in other Powhatan court records.

Free negro registrations, affidavits, and certificates include name, sometimes age and a brief physical description, and the circumstances of the person's freedom or emancipation. If born free, reference is sometimes made to parents. If emancipated, the emancipating owner, place and date of emancipation, and prior registration as a free negro are usually mentioned.

Additional free negro and slave records consist of: free negro lists (1801, 1805, 1811, 1812-1823, 1833-1857); lists of free negroes delinquent on taxes (1818-1854); petitions of free negroes to remain in Virginia (1816-1852); miscellaneous petitions of free negroes, including petition of Frank to keep a gun (1818;

revoked 1831), motion of Bob to register as a free man (1851), petition of Judith Collins for reenslavement (1858), and petition to provide funds to remove emancipated infants to a free state (1860); papers regarding free negroes requisitioned for public use (1861-1863); certificates of importation of slaves (1870, 1814); certificates of non-importation of slaves (1817); order for removing Bradby's Rachel from the county (1824); warrants of commitment as runaways (1830-1847); agreements to hire slaves (1812-1814); bills of sale and deeds of gift of slaves (1810-1868); bond between Wood and Jordan to free slaves Peter and Jane at the age of 30 years (1850); deeds of emancipation (1798-1807, 1818-1853); fiduciary records pertaining to slave property (1809-1853); papers relating to free negro apprentices (1809-1855); list of taxable property, slaves of William Ronalds (1789); order to place on the poor list Jack belonging to the estate of Peter F. Archer (1825); order exempting 7 slaves of Richmond and Danville Railroad from taxation (1857); recognizance to answer charge of permitting slave to go at large (1861); receipt for Wait Cole and Rachel his wife, free negroes, for taxes (1816).

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Powhatan County (Va.) Circuit Court

Subjects:

Free African Americans--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Slaveholders--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Slavery--Law and legislation--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Slaves--Emancipation--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Geographical Names:

Powhatan County (Va.)--History.

Genre and Form Terms:

Affidavits--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Agreements--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Articles of apprenticeship--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Bills of sale--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Certificates--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Deeds--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Fiduciary records--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Free negro and slave records--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Free negro lists--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Free negro registers--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Free papers--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Local government records--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Petitions--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Tax and fiscal records--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Contents List

Barcode number 1188800: Free negro registrations, affidavits and certificates, 1798-1824, undated

Barcode number 1188801: Free negro registrations, affidavits and certificates, 1825-1835

Barcode number 1188802: Free negro registrations, affidavits

and certificates, 1836-1866

Barcode number 1177495: Additional free negro and slave records, 1780-1865.

Scope and Content

Includes free negro lists (1801, 1805, 1811, 1812-1823, 1833-1857); lists of free negroes delinquent on taxes (1818-1854); petitions of free negroes to remain in Virginia (1816-1852); miscellaneous petitions of free negroes, including petition of Frank to keep a gun (1818; revoked 1831), motion of Bob to register as a free man (1851), petition of Judith Collins for reenslavement (1858), and petition to provide funds to remove emancipated infants to a free state (1860); papers regarding free negroes requisitioned for public use (1861-1863); certificates of importation of slaves (1870, 1814); certificates of non-importation of slaves (1817); order for removing Bradby's Rachel from the county (1824); warrants of commitment as runaways (1830-1847); agreements to hire slaves (1812-1814); bills of sale and deeds of gift of slaves (1810-1868); bond between Wood and Jordan to free slaves Peter and Jane at the age of 30 years (1850); deeds of emancipation (1798-1807, 1818-1853); fiduciary records pertaining to slave property (1809-1853); papers relating to free negro apprentices (1809-1855); list of taxable property, slaves of William Ronalds (1789); order to place on the poor list Jack belonging to the estate of Peter F. Archer (1825); order exempting 7 slaves of Richmond and Danville Railroad from taxation (1857); recognizance to answer charge of permitting slave to go at large (1861); receipt for Wait Cole and Rachel his wife, free negroes, for taxes (1816).