

A Guide to the Princess Anne County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1794-1862

Princess Anne County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1794-1862
1794-1862

A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
2025

History

Processed by: LVA Staff; L. Neuroth; M. Mason

Title Statement

A Guide to the Princess Anne County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1794-1862

Subtitle: Princess Anne County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1794-1862

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Publication Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MS Word, created by Mary Ann Mason, 1 December 2025

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Virginia Beach (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

digital images; 1 folder.

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Princess Anne County (Va.) Register of Free Negroes and Mulattoes, 1830-1862 is digitized and available through [Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative Digital Collection](#) on the Library of Virginia website. Please use digital images.

Majority of "Free Negro" Registrations, Affidavits, and Certificates, 1794-1809, 1820-1859, 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

Digital images of "Princess Anne County (Va.) Register of Free Negroes and Mulattoes, 1830-1862 " came to the Library of Virginia in 2025 under accession 54642.

Registrations, Certificates, and Affidavits came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court records from Virginia Beach Circuit Court in an undated accession.

Processing Information

Princess Anne County (Va.) Register of Free Negroes and Mulattoes, 1830-1862 was originally described in two separate records. One record described the microfilm copy of the register; the other record described the photostat copies of the register. The Virginia Untold Project manager made the decision to depose of the photostat copies, as they were a redundant copy by 2025. The microfilm will instead serve as an alternative copy to the digital images available through Virginia Untold.

"Free Negro" Registration Records, 1794-1860, were originally described as part of the Princess Anne County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records but were removed to the present Princess Anne County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons in November 2025 to enhance the context between the record types.

Princess Anne County (Va.) Register of Free Negroes and Mulattoes, 1830-1862 was microfilmed by the Library of Virginia's Imaging Services Division, the microfilm was then scanned by the Virginia Untold project Manager in 2025.

Encoded by M. Mason, November 2025.

Preferred Citation

Princess Anne County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1794-1862. Local government records collection, Princess Anne County (Va.) Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See Also: [Princess Anne County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records](#)

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

Additional Princess Anne 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."](#)

Location of Originals

Location of the original "Register of Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1830-1862 is currently unknown. It could not be located by the Clerk of the Circuit Court in 2025.

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 Note: Princess Anne County was formed in 1691 from Lower Norfolk County. Now extinct, it was incorporated into the city of Virginia Beach in 1963.

Scope and Content

Princess Anne County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1794-1862, consists of a "Register of Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1830-1862; and "Free Negro" Registrations, 1794-1859

"Register of Free Negroes and Mulattoes," 1830-1862, records the registration number; name; size (height); age; color, marks, and scars; by whom liberated (includes when, and by what instrument); in what county or place liberated; whether born free; when freedom was established and in what county; and when the copy of the register was delivered to the registered person. Registration numbers included are 104-108,189-419,452-551, numbering then restarts 1-127, but entries remain chronological. The first page appears to be missing from the original volume. There is no index. [digital images]

"Free Negro" Registrations, Affidavits, and Certificates, 1794-1809,1820-1859, include about eighty-four documents. These generally include the name of the individual, 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 free are usually mentioned. [digital images]

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: "Free Negro" Register, 1832-1860
- Series II: "Free Negro" Registrations, 1794-1860

Contents List

Series I: "Free Negro" Register, 1832-1860

Extent

Digital images

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Barcode number 0007919182: Register of Free Negroes and Mulattoes,

1830-1862

Series II: "Free Negro" Registrations, 1794-1860

Extent

1 folder, use digital images when available

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Barcode number 1120074: Free and Enslaved Records, 1766-1862

Library of Virginia