

A Guide to the Southampton County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1754-1861

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
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2008

Author: Catherine G. O'Brien

History

Processed by: LVA staff

Title Statement

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Subtitle: Southampton County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1754-1861

Author: Catherine G. O'Brien

Publication Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Catherine O'Brien, 07 May 2008

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

Southampton County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

1.15 cu. ft. (3 boxes)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These items came to the Library of Virginia in shipments of court papers from Southampton County, accession number 31913.

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.

Apprenticeship Indentures were removed from this record in June 2024 and are now described in Southampton County (Va.) Apprenticeship Indentures, 1813-1904

Certificates of Importation were removed from this record in June 2024 and are now described in Southampton County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1790-1816

"Free Negro" Registrations were removed from this record in June 2024 and are now described in Southampton County (Va.) Records Relating to the Registration of Free Person, 1794-1864

Petitions to Remain were removed from this record in June 2024 and are now described in Southampton County (Va.) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1818-1853

Records relating to the Nansemond and Nottoway Indian tribes once included with this collection have been removed [on an unknown date] and can now be found in barcode number 1119712 and in Southampton Chancery Causes index numbers 1830-064, 1835-038, 1837-054, 1837-055, 1840-027, 1841-043, 1849-045, 1851-032, 1851-033, 1856-048, 1870-042, 1871-076, and 1871-077. The Southampton Chancery Causes are available on the [Chancery Records Index](#) on the Library of Virginia website.

Encoded by C. OBrian, 2015; Updated by M. Mason, June 2024.

Preferred Citation

Southampton County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1754-1861. Local government records collection, Southampton County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Southampton County \(Va.\) Certificates of Importation, 1790-1816](#)

See also: [Southampton County \(Va.\) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1818-1853](#)

See also: [Southampton County \(Va.\) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1794-1864](#)

See also: [Southampton County \(Va.\) Apprenticeship Indentures, 1813-1904](#)

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

Additional Southampton 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

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 Orange 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; Fiduciary Records; "Free Negro" Tax records; and "Runaway" Records

Locality History: Southampton County was named, in the opinion of many authorities, for Henry Wriothesley, third earl of Southampton and treasurer of the London Company from 1620 to 1624. It is more likely, however, that the county was named for the borough of Southampton in England.

Scope and Content

Southampton County (Va.) Free Negro and Slave Records, 1754-1861, consist of Deeds, 1822 and 1845; Fiduciary records, 1848; "Free Negro" Tax records, 1791-1861; Patrol Records, 1754-1861; "Runaway" records, 1798 and 1852; and additional records of various record types, 1798-1852.

Deeds, 1822 and 1845, consist of two bills of sale the first, 1822, between William Owens and Leonaard Cobb, for the transfer of Tom, Davy, Ben, and Simon, four Black men enslaved by William Owens; and the last, 1845, between Eglantine Joyner, a free Black woman, and William Babb, transferring Henry Joyner to Babbs, until Henry arrives at the age of 21.

Fiduciary records, 1848, contain dower records, 1848, of Mary W. Kellos, which consist of a list of names and birth dates of 17 individuals enslaved by Kellos with addition documents providing information as to the birth and death dates of some of the enslaved individuals.

"Free Negro" Tax records, 1791-1861, consists of "Free Negro Tax Lists", 1801-1831, and "Free Negro Delinquent Tax Lists", 1791-1861

"Free Negro Tax Lists," 1791-1860, are lists Black and multiracial individuals compiled by a revenue commissioner for tax purposes. Lists may contain name only; they may also include gender, age, place of residence, and occupation. Lists of individuals who haven't paid taxes sometimes contain amount of tax levied, and remarks about why the tax was not paid. These records contain lists from Nottoway Parish, 1801 and 1817, 1821, 1822 and 1826 [oversize]; St. Luke's Parish, 1801, 1803, 1812 [oversize], and 1819; the District of Samuel Calvert, 1804-1805; the District of Ephraim Lee, 1807; a list dated 1821 Sep 6, and a list dated 1831 Dec.

Also included "Free Negro Delinquent Tax Lists," 1791-1861, which consist of list of "Insolvent Free Negroes," 1791-1792; lists of "Insolvents and Non-Inhabitants," in the St. Luke's Parish, 1800 and 1858-1860; Upper District, St. Luke's Parish, 1852-1857; Lower District, St. Luke's Parish, 1857 and undated; Nottoway Parish, 1800-1801 and 1859-1860; lists of "Individuals Returned Delinquent," 1814-1815; 1821, and undated; and lists of Individuals "Ordered for sale for Non-Payment of Taxes," 1826-1828.

Patrol Records, 1754-1861, undated, consist of one box of patrol reports, appointments, orders, and warrants. These patrols generally acted as the policing force that monitored the movement of free and enslaved Black and multiracial individuals. These record 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. Some returns specifically note the objective to "apprehend all slaves and other disorderly persons," or "to visit all negro quarters, and other places suspected of entertaining unlawful assemblies of servants, slaves, or of disorderly persons."

"Runaway" records, 1798 and 1852, consists of a commit order, 1798, committing Robert, a Black man enslaved by Joel Judkins of North Carolina, to jail for suspicion of self-emancipating; and a jailor's report, 1852, concerning Dennis Sycamore, a Black man, stating his legal status is free but has been charged with self-emancipating.

Additional records of various record types, 1798-1852, consist of a bond, 1814, for James Jones under condition of allowing Joice, Esther, Harry, Jenny, Annah, and Mary currently enslaved by Jones to petition for their freedom at the next court.

Also includes, a certificate, 1824, of good character made on behalf of Stepney, a formerly enslaved Black man [possibly made in effort to petition to remain in the commonwealth, petition noted as rejected].

Also, includes an order, 1804, to recover Cato and Henry, two Black men enslaved by William Blake, suspected of being transported illegally to South Carolina (illegally sold to Blake by John Derring).

Also, includes, a petition, 1830, of Moses Pretton, "a free man of colour," made in an effort to secure license to carry a firearm.

Lastly, includes records concerning James Brooks, 1759-1760, consist of a will, bills of sale, and affidavits, related to James Brooks, a formerly enslaved Black man, being purchased by James Brooks, Jr., his son, from John Buckner.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1754-1861, arranged loosely by record type then chronologically

Contents List

Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1754-1861

Extent

1.15 cubic feet (3 boxes)

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

arranged loose by record type then chronologically

Barcode number 1119722: Free and enslaved records, 1759-1866

Barcode number 1185512: Free and enslaved records, 1812-1826

**Barcode number 1119725: Free and enslaved records, 1754-1860
[oversized]**

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