

A Guide to the Powhatan County (Va.) Marriage License Register and Marriage Certificates , 1850-1872

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1850-1872

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Descriptive Summary

Barcode number

1123740

Language

English

Collector

Powhatan County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

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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

This volume came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Powhatan County.

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Powhatan County (Va.) Marriage License Register and Marriage Certificates, 1850-1872. Local government records collection, Powhatan County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

This volume is located at the State Records Center. Contact Archives Research Services for access information, directions and hours.

Related Material

Additional Powhatan County Marriage Records can be found on microfilm at the Library of Virginia. Consult ["A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm."](#)

Historical Information

Powhatan County was formed from Cumberland County in 1777, and part of Chesterfield County was added on 16 March 1850. The county was named for the paramount chief of the Powhatan Indians in the tidewater of Virginia in the late sixteenth and early years of the seventeenth century.

Prior to 1853, when the Commonwealth began recording vital statistics, Virginia marriages were recorded at the county or city level. Beginning in 1661, in order to be married by license, the groom was required to go before the county clerk and give bond with security that there was no lawful reason to prevent the marriage. Written consent from a parent or guardian was needed for individuals younger than twenty-one years. The license, issued then by the clerk, was given to the minister who performed the service. Once the service was performed, the minister submitted a return to the county clerk. The county clerk recorded these returns along with other marriage records, such as bonds, certificates and licenses, in a marriage register.

Until 1780, marriages could be performed only by ministers of the Established Church, who were required by law to record marriages in the parish register. In 1780, dissenting ministers (only four per county from each sect) were permitted to perform marriage ceremonies. In order to have a record of all marriages, ministers were required to sign a certificate to be filed with the county clerk. Initially, ministers sent marriage certificates to the clerk every three months. Some ministers adopted a custom of making collected returns--a list of marriages performed within a period of time such as a year or several years. Beginning in 1784, marriage certificates were returned annually. The law was rarely enforced, and ministers' returns were sometimes late, incorrect, incomplete and in many instances, not made at all. County clerks used these returns and other original records to compile volumes.

The original marriage licenses and marriage certificates, from which this volume was compiled, were created by the County Clerk.

Scope and Content

Powhatan County (Va.) Marriage License Register and Marriage Certificates, 1850-1872, is divided into two separate and distinct volumes. Powhatan County (Va.) Marriage License Register and Marriage Certificates,

1850-1872, is divided into two separate and distinct volumes. One side contains a register of marriage licenses from 1850 to 1872. This register records all marriage licenses issued by the county court clerk during the mid-nineteenth century. The information kept by the clerk contains the day, month and year when the license was issued, the full name of the intended groom and the full name of the intended bride. The clerk would then note the intended groom's race (only if he was a free person of color), the bride's condition (daughter of or widow of) and the race of the intended bride (only if she was a free person of color.) Licenses issued both to Free African Americans and African Americans are noted throughout the volume. Only the first thirty pages of the volume are numbered. There is an internal index (A-W) found in the front of the volume. Entries are arranged by the first letter of either the bride or groom's surname as the name appears according to the page number of the volume. Therefore, surnames found in the unnumbered pages of the volume are not found in the internal index.

The other side of the volume contains information from marriage certificates. These certificates, 1850-1854, were compiled by the county court clerk from returns made by individual ministers within the county. As part of the return process, ministers filed marriage certificates with the county clerk. These signed documents certified that a minister had performed the actual marriage ceremony between the named individuals on a certain date. The name of the minister and sometimes the minister's denomination were recorded. These certificates, sometimes in the form of lists, noted the names of both parties and their date of marriage. This volume is the continuation of a previous volume which noted ministers' returns in the county from 1820 to 1850. There is an internal index (A-W) found in the front of the volume. Like the other side, entries are arranged by the first letter of either the bride or groom's surname as the name appears according to the page number of the volume. However, all pages are numbered (14) and the index is complete. Information collected after 1854 became part of the statewide indexes of Birth, Marriage and Death registers arranged by counties and cities and found in the Library of Virginia's collections.

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Powhatan County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Subjects:

African Americans--Marriage--Virginia--Powhatan County.
African Americans--Virginia--Powhatan County.
Christian sects--Virginia--Powhatan County.
Clergy--Virginia--Powhatan County.
Free African Americans--Marriage--Virginia--Powhatan County.
Free African Americans--Virginia--Powhatan County.
Marriage--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Geographical Names:

Powhatan County (Va.)--History--19th century.

Genre and Form Terms:

Local government records--Virginia--Powhatan County.
Marriage certificates--Virginia--Powhatan County.
Marriage licenses--Virginia--Powhatan County.
Marriage records--Virginia--Powhatan County.
Ministers' returns--Virginia--Powhatan County.
Registers (lists)--Virginia--Powhatan County.

Added Entry - Corporate Name:

Powhatan County (Va.) County Court.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.