

A Guide to the Greensville County (Va.) Marriage Register and Vital Statistics Records, 1781-1896

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
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History

Processed by: Library of Virginia Staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Greensville County (Va.) Marriage Register and Vital Statistics Records, 1781-1896

Subtitle: Greensville County (Va.) Marriage Register and Vital Statistics Records, 1781-1896

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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, 11 August 2025

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Greensville County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

7 vol.; 4.58 cubic feet(6 boxes) .

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Greensville County (Va.) Ministers' Returns and Certificates of Strays, 1781-1851 use microfilm copy, Greensville County (Va.) Reel 75.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Marriage Register, 1781-1853 and Index came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court records from Greensville County in 1938 under accession 21286.

Index of Marriage Register, 1781-1853 [photostat] came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court records from Greensville County in 1953 under accession 24011

Marriage Register, 1781-1853 [photostat] came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court records from Greensville County in 1963 under accession 25867

Marriage and vital statistics records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court records from Greensville County in 2023 under accession 53810.

Remaining material came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Greensville County in an undated accession.

Processing Information

The material in the record was originally described in five separate records: Greensville County (Va.) Marriage Records and Vital Statistics Records, 1781-1874 (bulk 1781-1842) Greensville County (Va.) Marriage Register, 1850-1861 Greensville County (Va.) Ministers' Returns, 1850-1861 Greensville County (Va.) Marriage Register and Index, 1781-1853 Greensville County (Va.) Ministers' Returns and Certificates of Strays, 1781-1851 In August 2025 Local records staff made the decision to combine these records into one Greensville County (Va.) Marriage Records and Vital Statistics Records in order to bring like records together and add researchers in locating these records.

Encoded by M. Mason, August 2025

Preferred Citation

Greensville County (Va.) Marriage Register and Vital Statistics Records, 1781-1896. [include series and item information]. Local government records collection, Greensville County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Alternative Form Available

Ministers' Returns and Certificates of Strays, 1781-1851 is available on microfilm Greensville County (Va.) Reel 75. [Both halves of the volume were microfilmed separately and spliced together to create one reel.]

Marriage Register, 1781-1853 and Index of Marriage Register, 1781-1853 are available as photostats [barcodes: 1146513, 1146514]

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Greensville County 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

Marriage Records

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. The license, issued then by the clerk, was given to the minister who performed the service. Written consent from a parent or guardian was needed for individuals younger than twenty-one years.

Birth and/or Death Records

Laws requiring the recording of births and deaths in Virginia were enacted as early as 1632, when a law directed ministers or churchwardens in each parish to present a "register of all burials, christenings, and marriages" yearly at the June meeting of the court. A similar act passed in 1659 stated that "enquiries are often made for persons imported into the collonie, of whose death no positive certificate can be granted for want of registers." Few records survive from these early decades.

In 1713, the General Assembly noted that earlier acts had "for a long time been disused" and once again directed the recording of births and deaths by the minister or clerk of each parish. A return made the same year noted that the list of births and deaths was not complete since many parishes failed to make returns "for tis a thing so new to the people that neither they care to Register their Births and Burials, nor are the Parish Clerks yet brought into a regular method of transmitting them."

The recording of vital statistics continued to be an ecclesiastical function throughout the colonial period. With the disestablishment of the Anglican church after the American Revolution and the rise of other religious denominations, the record-keeping process for vital statistics fell more and more to the individual family. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, medical science began to recognize the advantages of accurate birth and mortality information in controlling and treating communicable diseases. Pressure from local and national health organizations and medical professionals resulted in the passage of vital statistics registration laws. Virginia was one of the earliest states to pass such a law.

A law requiring the systematic statewide recording of births and deaths was passed by the General Assembly on April 11, 1853. Every commissioner of revenue registered births and deaths in his district annually, at the same time personal property subject to taxation was ascertained. The commissioner recorded births and deaths that had occurred prior to December 31st of the preceding year and returned the record to the clerk of court by June 1st. Information was obtained from heads of family, physicians, surgeons, or coroners. The law imposed penalties for failing to furnish or collect the information.

The clerk of court in each locality entered the information supplied by the commissioner into registers and prepared an accompanying alphabetical index. A copy of each register was forwarded to the Auditor of Public Accounts. The law went into effect on July 1, 1853, and continued until 1896, when an economy-conscious legislature repealed the recording provisions.

There was no statewide recording of births and deaths between 1896 and 1912. Several metropolitan areas continued to keep records of births and deaths for all or part of the period between 1896 and 1912. Systematic statewide registration began again in June 1912.

Locality History: Greensville County was formed from Brunswick County on 28 November 1780. The county court first met on 22 February 1781. Subsequent additions were made from Brunswick (1787) and Sussex (1802) Counties.

Scope and Content

Greensville County (Va.) Marriage Records and Vital Statistics Records, 1781-1896, consists of both marriage records and vital statistics records for the locality.

The marriage records, 1781-1896, consist of largely progressed material including marriage registers, minister returns, marriage bonds, and index to marriage registers.

The vital statistics records, 1854-1896, include a register of births and birth and death registers.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Marriage Records, 1781-1869
- Series II: Vital Statistics Records, 1854-1896

Contents List

Series I: Marriage Records, 1781-1869

Extent

6 vol.; 4 boxes

Physical Location Library of Virginia; State Records Center

Barcode number 1128761: Ministers' Returns and Certificates of Strays, 1781-1851

Scope and Content

Ministers' Returns, 1785-1851, records the returns made by individual ministers of marriages performed within the county. The majority of returns are in the form of lists which record the date of marriage, the names of the parties married and the county of origin. In the process of preparing and sending the

returns, the name of the minister, the minister's denomination and date of return are also recorded. Between pages 4 and 5 of the volume is located an internal index. The index is arranged alphabetically (A-Y) by the groom's surname according to the order of the page numbers in the volume.

A loose estray record, dated 1813, is found in the front of the volume. Estray certificates, 1781-1831, are found in the second half of the volume. Estray records were generated by a locality to "give public notice of valuable, tame animals, either lost or found wandering and presumed escaped from their owners, allowing the owners to reclaim the animals."

Barcode number 1128762: Ministers' Returns, 1850-1861

Scope and Content

Ministers' Returns, 1850-1861, records the returns made by individual ministers within the county. Returns in this volume, prior to 1859, record the names of the parties, the date of the marriage ceremony and the minister's name and denomination. In this particular volume, the certificates from 1859 and 1860 include more detailed information such as the place of marriage, the ages of the parties, the status or condition of the parties before marriage, their places of birth, the names of their parents, the occupation of the groom and where the parties reside. There are no returns recorded for 1854-1858. The rest of the pages in the volume have been removed. An internal index, A-W, is unnumbered. The index is arranged alphabetically by surnames according to the page number in the volume.

Barcode number 1047210: Marriage Certificates and Consents and Minister's Returns, 1781-1859

Barcode number 1047213: Marriage Bonds, 1781-1801

Barcode number 1047212: Marriage Bonds, 1802-1822

Barcode number 1047211: Marriage Bonds, 1823-1842

Barcode number 1128758: Index of Marriage Register, 1781-1853

Scope and Content

Index to Marriage Register, 1781-1853, is a separate volume. This typescript index contains the first and last names of both parties. It is arranged alphabetically from A-Z and in addition, lists alternate spellings of both first and last names.

Barcode number 1128759: Marriage Register, 1781-1853

Scope and Content

Marriage Register, 1781-1853, is essentially divided into two sections. The first section covering pages 1-142, 1781-1853, records the date of the marriage bond, the names of both parties, the names of the parents or guardians present and the names of the security or witnesses in attendance. There is a marriage of note on pages 56 and 160. According to the entries, a free mulatto woman, named Mina or Mima, married David Watkins in December 1805. On page 142, there is an undated marriage bond.

The second section covering pages 143-183, 1785-1853, records the date of the marriage, the names of both parties, the minister's name and the religious denomination of the minister. Beginning on page 143, there is additional information given for some entries--in which county the marriage license was taken out. Entries on pages 181-182, 1853, also include such additional information as the age of the parties, the occupation of the husband, the status of the parties, where the parties were born and where they will live, the names of their parents and where the marriage ceremony took place. Ministers' ordination bonds from 1789 and 1793 are found on page 183.

Barcode number 1128763: Marriage Register, 1850-1861

Scope and Content

Marriage Register, 1850-1861, is a list of licenses issued by the County Court clerk. These licenses include the names of the parties and the party of consent. The ages of the parties and the filing date for the license are periodically listed. From 1859-1861, a number was given to each license recorded. An internal index, A-W, is unnumbered. This index is arranged alphabetically by surnames according to the page number in the volume.

Barcode number 0007843123: Marriage Records and Vital Statistics Records 1861-1869

Series II: Vital Statistics Records, 1854-1896

Extent

1 volume; 2.23 cubic feet (2 boxes)

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Barcode number 1115543: Register of Births, 1874 [oversize]

Scope and Content

Birth registers contain headings for: date and place of birth; name of child (if named); color (if "colored," whether enslaved or free); sex; whether born alive or dead; name of father or owner; father's occupation; father's residence (county or locality in the county); mother's name; how many infants at this birth (whether this was a multiple birth); deformities or any circumstances of interest; name of the person giving the information; and the relation of the informant to the person born.

Barcode number 0007843211: Birth and Death Registers 1854-1896

Barcode number 0007843219: Birth and Death Registers 1863, 1869, 1895 [oversized]