

A Guide to the Frederick County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1798-1859

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History

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Descriptive Summary

Barcode numbers

0006548170

Language

English

Collector

Frederick County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

.35 cu. ft. (1 box)

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 papers from Frederick County.

Preferred Citation

Frederick County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1798-1859. Local government records collection, Frederick County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Frederick County Court Records are found at the Library of Virginia.

Additional Frederick County Court Records can be found on microfilm at The Library of Virginia. See [A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm](#)

Additional freedom suits may be found in the Frederick County Chancery Causes. Search the [the Chancery Records Index](#) found on the Library of Virginia web site. Enter the tilde symbol in the plaintiff surname field.

Historical Information

Slaves sued for emancipation in freedom suits based on the following: they were descendant(s) of a free female ancestor, typically a Native American (Hening Statutes, volume 2, p.170); failure of slaveowner(s) to abide by the 1778 slave nonimportation act (Henings Statutes, volume 9, pp. 471-472); or claimed to have been freed by slaveowner(s) by deed of emancipation or last will and testament (Henings Statutes volume 11, pp. 39-40)

Frederick County was named in honor of Frederick Louis, Prince of Wales and eldest son of King George II. It was formed from Orange County by a statute of 1738 that stipulated that when the population was large enough the new county government would begin to function. The county court first met on 11 November 1743. Part of Augusta County was added in 1754. The county seat is the city of Winchester.

Scope and Content

Frederick County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1798-1859, consist of suits initiated by slaves seeking to gain their freedom on the law side of the court. Cases are identified by style of suit consisting of plaintiff and defendant names. Surnames of others involved in a suit, including secondary plaintiffs and defendants, witnesses, deponents and affiants, and family members with surnames different from the plaintiff or defendant are indexed. Also identified are names of slaves and slaveowners found in suit as well as whether slave(s) won their freedom. Predominant documents found in freedom suits include petitions, records of suits, depositions, affidavits, wills, among other items. Information found in documents include slave's argument for freedom, acquisition of slaves by slaveowners, slave ancestry, and relationship between slaves and slaveowners.

Judgments (Freedom Suits) are useful when researching local history and genealogical information, particularly for African Americans. They are a valuable source of local, state, social, and legal history and serve as a primary source for understanding a locality's history.

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Frederick County (Va.). Circuit Court.

Subjects:

African Americans -- Virginia.

Free African Americans -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Slaveholders -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Slavery -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Geographical Names:

Frederick County (Va.) -- History.

Frederick County (Va.) -- Genealogy

Genre and Form Terms:

Civil actions -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Freedom suits -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Judicial records -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Local government records -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Petitions -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Wills -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

List of Freedom Suits

1817 May: Horace~ vs. Joel T. Gustine

1828 August: Matilda~ vs. John Morgan

1829 June: Mary~, etc. vs. George W. Finch (See also Frederick County Chancery Cause 1833-088 CSC: Mary~, etc. vs. George Finch)

1829 November: Franky~ vs. P. McCormick

1857 November: Violet~ , etc. vs. Exr. of John Morgan (See also Frederick County Chancery Cause 1836-073 CSC: Violet~ , etc. vs. Exr. of John Morgan)

1859 June: Isaac Franklin vs. Thomas C. Miller