

A Guide to the Westmoreland County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1810-1858

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Author: Greg Crawford

History

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Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

Barcode number

0007423868

Language

English

Collector

Westmoreland 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 Westmoreland County.

Preferred Citation

Westmoreland County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1810-1858. Local government records collection, Westmoreland County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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

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

Additional freedom suits may be found in the Westmoreland 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 (Henings 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)

Westmoreland County was named for the English county. It was formed from Northumberland County in 1653. The county seat is Montross.

Scope and Content

Westmoreland County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1810-1858, 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:

Westmoreland County (Va.). Circuit Court.

Subjects:

African Americans -- Virginia.
Free African Americans -- Virginia -- Westmoreland County.
Slaveholders -- Virginia -- Westmoreland County.
Slavery -- Virginia -- Westmoreland County.

Geographical Names:

Westmoreland County (Va.) -- History.
Westmoreland County (Va.) -- Genealogy

Genre and Form Terms:

Civil actions -- Virginia -- Westmoreland County.
Freedom suits -- Virginia -- Westmoreland County.
Judicial records -- Virginia -- Westmoreland County.
Local government records -- Virginia -- Westmoreland County.
Petitions -- Virginia -- Westmoreland County.
Wills -- Virginia -- Westmoreland County.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

List of Freedom Suits

1810 Sept: Jenny~ vs. Bennet Rose

1819 May: Alexander Toleson, etc. vs. Thomas Rowand

1822 May: Joanna Thompson vs. James Wigley

1847 Aug: Ann~ alias Ann Daniel vs. James B. Murphy

1858 Oct: Sydnor~, etc. vs. Admr. of Ransdell Pierce, etc.