

A Guide to the Chesterfield County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1760-1862

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
2009

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History

Processed by: S. Nerney

Title Statement

A Guide to the Chesterfield County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1760-1862

Subtitle: Chesterfield County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records

Author: Sarah Nerney

Publication Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Sarah Nerney, 26 August 2009

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

Chesterfield County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

.9 cu. ft. (2 boxes)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

The bulk of the Chesterfield County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1760-1862, are digitized and available through [Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative Digital Collection](#) on the Library of Virginia website. Please use digital images where possible.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Chesterfield County (Va.) as part of an undated accession.

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 January 2026 and are now described in Chesterfield County (Va.) Apprenticeship Indentures, 1768-1898.

Certificates of Importation were removed from this record in December 2025 and are now described in Chesterfield County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1813-1816.

Deeds of Emancipation were removed from this record in January 2026 and are now described in Chesterfield County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1788-1857.

"Free Negro" registrations, affidavits, and certificates were removed from this record in January 2026 and are now described in Chesterfield County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1792-1863.

Petitions for Re-Enslavement were removed from this record in December 2025 and are now described in Chesterfield County (Va.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1862.

Petitions to Remain were removed from this record in December 2025 and are now described in Chesterfield County (Va.) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1832-1856.

Chesterfield County Free and Enslaved Records were found among Chesterfield County (Va.) Dead Papers.

These records have been processed and indexed, and many of them have been scanned, by S. Nerney, L. Neuroth, and LVA staff for the purposes of digitizing them for the digital project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative.

Encoded by S. Nerney: August 2009; updated by C. Collins: January 2026.

Preferred Citation

Chesterfield County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1760-1862. Local government records collection, Chesterfield County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Chesterfield County \(Va.\) Apprenticeship Indentures, 1768-1898](#)

See also: [Chesterfield County \(Va.\) Certificates of Importation, 1813-1816](#)

See also: [Chesterfield County \(Va.\) Deeds of Emancipation, 1788-1857](#)

See also: [Chesterfield County \(Va.\) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1862](#)

See also: [Chesterfield County \(Va.\) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1832-1856](#)

See also: [Chesterfield County \(Va.\) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1792-1863](#)

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

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

Historical Information

Context for Record Types:

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 Chesterfield 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 "Free Negro" Tax Records and Runaway Records.

Locality History: Chesterfield County was named for Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth earl of Chesterfield, British statesman and diplomat, and was formed from Henrico County in 1749. The county seat is Chesterfield Court House. Part of Henrico County was added to Chesterfield in 1922.

Scope and Content

Chesterfield County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1760-1862, consist of "Free Negro" Tax Records, 1847-1855; Lists of "Free Negroes," 1853; Patrol Records, 1760-1862; Records related to lost free papers, 1831-1850; Runaway Records, 1804-1844; and additional single items, 1804-1858.

"Free Negro" Tax Records, 1847-1855, are comprised of seven lists. Six lists, 1847-1855, document the names of "Free Negroes" delinquent for the nonpayment of taxes and the amount of taxes each person owed. Several lists include a notation directing that the named individuals be hired out, while others note that the named individuals are to be sold. The final list, 1855, records information about "Free Negroes" in the district of William E. Gill, Commissioner of Revenue, for tax purposes. The list includes each person's name, sex, age, occupation, residence, whether they possessed free papers, and where they were registered.

Lists of "Free Negroes," 1853, include orders instructing Constables to ascertain which "Free Negroes" residing in Chesterfield County were there "contrary to law or going without large without being duly registered," and four resulting lists. The lists for District Nos. 2 and 6 document each person's name, age, sex, trade or occupation, and residence. They also include remarks regarding whether or not the individual possessed free papers, where the papers originated if not Chesterfield, and whether the person was born free or emancipated. The District No. 5 list includes each individual's name and whether they had free papers, while further down it names several free children under the age of 21 and the year in which each child was born. The District No. 4 list, to varying extents, records the name of each person, as well as their age, whether they were emancipated or born free, how long they resided in the County, whether they had free papers, and the locality their free papers originated in if not Chesterfield. One document states Mary Cox, who resided in from District No. 3, remained in Chesterfield contrary to law.

Patrol Records, 1760-1862, undated, consist of patroller accounts, claims, and commissions. The accounts and claims, to varying extents, name the patrollers, the dates and number of hours each patrolled, and the amount of money they received for their services. Several pre-1800 records name the enslavers whose property the patrollers visited. In the commissions, patrollers were instructed to "take up all negroes you shall find strolling about from one plantation to another without a pass as well as other disorderly persons."

Records related to lost free papers, 1831-1850, are comprised of advertisements posted by Billy Drummond (1831), Sarah Morris (circa 1850), and Robert Logan (1850), who sought information regarding the whereabouts of their free papers, and an order, 1847, which directed that Robert B. Edwards' registration be renewed. They also include certificates, 1837-1841, for Walter Logan; Prince, Martin, Edward, and Daniel Trent; and Eliza Hewlett, which attest to the loss of their free papers.

Runaway Records, 1804-1844, include commitments, 1804-1807, of Hall, David, Buttler, and Robert Boyd, who were suspected runaways; a letter and copy records, 1817, proving Peter McCauley's status as a free man; a valuation, certificate, and letter, 1825-1826, related to the jailing of William Harvey as a runaway, who was later released upon proof of his free status; a receipt, undated, related to the sale of Andrew, Isabella, and Maria Berot (or Beret), which includes descriptive information about each person's age, complexion, and marks and scars; and valuations and orders related to the following enslaved persons arrested as runaways: John and Sylvia (1831), Charles Jones (1825), Nancy Coleman (1834), Druscilla Jordan (1837-1838), Bill Westbrook and Emanuel Scott (1842), Dolly Valentine (1844), William Albert (1828), and Joe Adkins (1838). Some individuals were sold, some were released, and others were hired out to pay their jail fees.

Additional single items relating to the documentation of free and enslaved Black and Multiracial individuals in and around Chesterfield County, Va., include:

Certificate, 1831, which verifies that Billy Drummond worked at a Lumber house for six years and had "conducted himself" satisfactorily.

Certificate and report, 1852, related to the sale of Mary by James M. Perdue, the administrator of David Brook's estate.

Certificate, 1858, in which William Gill verified that Ryley Vallintine [Valentine] was the son of Betsey Valentine, and that Alexander was the son of Herbert Valentine.

Letter, 1833, from M. Winfree to Samuel Taylor, Esq., related to whether individuals previously enslaved by Thomas Paup (or Pauss) would be able to obtain free papers. The back of the letter states that three individuals were ordered to be registered.

List, undated, presumably of free persons [there is no indication as why the list was compiled]. The list includes the following names: Sam Richardson, John Richardson, Anthony Platcher, William Martin, Jeremiah Mays, Sally Mays, Jesse Pleasants, Jenny Richardson, Flora Mays, Amey Crump, Lucy Abba, Mary Cox, Clarissa Butler, Alexander Brown, Nancy Alvis, Daniel Alvis, and Effey Tendley.

List, undated, of enslaved persons freed by Jordan Anderson's will. The following individuals are named: Lucy, George, Jack, Frank, Phillis, Anaka, Amy, Little York, and Milly. The list also includes each person's age, "color," marks and scars, and stature.

Pass, 1838, which allowed Philip Taylor, Anderson Simmons, Jim Smith, Dick Taylor, Davy Smith, William Taylor, Charity Taylor, as well as Frank and Ann Eliza, her children, Betsey Morris, Margaret Smith, Christianna Smith, Flora Taylor, and Priscilla Bass to "pass unmolested" until they should be registered as free. They were emancipated by the will of Thomas O. Taylor.

Statement, 1838, in which Caroline M. Johnson grants Betty Brown and Ann Eliza, Betty's daughter, permission to register as free. Johnson "relinquish[ed] all [her] right and title to them."

Summons, 1804, commanding Robert Woodcock to "deliver up Dick a free black boy to William Hix to whom the said Dick has been bound as an Apprentice."

Summons, 1838, ordering Jordan Anderson and Nathan Anderson to appear in court and testify on behalf of Tom (alias Tom Anderson), who sought to be registered as a free person.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1760-1862, arranged loosely by record type then chronologically.

Contents List

Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1760-1862

Extent

Extent: .9 cu. ft. (2 box)

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged loosely by record type then chronologically

Barcode number 1116535: Free and Enslaved Records, 1790-1862

Barcode number 1116533: Patrollers Claims, 1760-1862