

A Guide to the Amherst County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1814-1819

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History

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Title Statement

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Barcode number

0007539992

Language

English

Collector

Amherst County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

.10 cu. ft.

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

Patrons are to use digital images found at [Virginia Untold: the African American Narrative](#).

Acquisition Information

These items came to the Library of Virginia in transfers of court papers from Amherst County.

Preferred Citation

Amherst County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1814-1819. Local government records collection, Amherst County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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

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

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)

Amherst County was named for Major General Jeffery Amherst, British commander in North America during the latter part of the French and Indian War and governor of Virginia from 1759 to 1768. It was formed from Albemarle County in 1761. Islands in the Fluvanna (now the James) River were added in 1770. The county seat is Amherst.

Scope and Content

Amherst County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1814-1819, 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:

Amherst County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Subjects:

African Americans -- Virginia.

Free African Americans -- Virginia -- Amherst County.

Slaveholders -- Virginia -- Amherst County.

Slavery -- Virginia -- Amherst County.

Geographical Names:

Amherst County (Va.) -- History.

Amherst County (Va.) -- Genealogy

Genre and Form Terms:

Civil actions -- Virginia -- Amherst County.

Freedom suits -- Virginia -- Amherst County.

Judicial records -- Virginia -- Amherst County.

Local government records -- Virginia -- Amherst County.

Petitions -- Virginia -- Amherst County.

Wills -- Virginia -- Amherst County.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

List of Freedom Suits

1814 July: Pompey, etc. vs. Thomas Coleman

1818 November: Sam vs. John Barnett

1818 November: Bob Boyd vs. Godfrey Toler