

A Guide to the Orange County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1738-1865

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
2015

History

Processed by: Library Staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Orange County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1738-1865

Subtitle: Orange County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1738-1865

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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, 2015 August 3

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Orange County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

.65 cubic feet (2 boxes).

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

"Free Negro" Tax Records, 1810-1854, are digitized and available through [Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative Digital Collection](#) on the Library of Virginia website. Please use digital images.

Use Restrictions

Acquisition Information

"A list of free negroes and mulattoes," 1810 came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of Court papers from Orange County in 2024 under accession 54134.

Remaining records came to the Library of Virginia in transfer of court papers from Orange County in 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 March 2024 and are now described in Orange County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1817-1859

Certificates of Importation were removed from this record in March 2024 and are now described in Orange County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1812-1815.

"Free Negro" Registrations were removed from this record in March 2024 and are now described in Orange County (Va.) Records Related to the Registrations of Free Persons, 1810-1860.

Petitions for Re-enslavement were removed from this record in March 2024 and are now described in Orange County (Va.) Petitions for Re-enslavement, 1861

Petitions to Remain were removed from this record in March 2024 and are now described in Orange County (Va.) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1826-1843

Encoded by G. Crawford, 2015; Updated by M. Mason, March 2024.

Preferred Citation

Orange County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1738-1865. Local government records collection, Orange County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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

Additional Orange County (Va.) 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:

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 Orange 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 Colonization Records; Deeds; Fiduciary Records; "Free Negro" Tax Records; Requisitions for Public Use; and "Runaway" Records

Locality History: Orange County according to most accounts, was named for William of Orange, the Dutch prince who became King William III of England in 1688. It is more probable, however, that it was named for William IV, prince of Orange-Nassau, who married Anne, eldest daughter of King George II, in 1734-the year that Orange County was formed from Spotsylvania County. The county court first met on 21 January 1735. The county seat is Orange.

Scope and Content

Orange County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1738-1865, includes Clerk Correspondence, 1851; Colonization Records, 1833; Court Records, 1760-1808; Criminal Records, 1843 ca.; Deeds, 1861-1865; Fiduciary Records, 1738-1826; "Free Negro" Tax Records, 1810-1854; Requisitions for Public Use Records, 1861-1864; "Runaway" Records, 1797-1824; and Tax and Fiscal Records, 1774-1861.

Clerk Correspondence include a letter, 1851 April 13, of Henning Chisman, an attorney in Rockingham Co. to [presumably] the Clerk of the Court of Orange County concerning documentation of the emancipation of Robert Jones (Robert Jones claims to be free and registered in Orange; Chisman is attempting to prove Jones did not petition to remain in the state and is trying to have Jones removed from the Commonwealth).

Colonization Records include a court order, 1833, appointing a committee to "see the free people of colour in the county of Orange, and to ascertain what number are willing to avail themselves of an Act of the General Assembly providing for their transportation to the colony of Liberia," (relates to 1833 March act "An Act, Making Appropriations for the Removal of Free Persons of Color").

Court Records, 1760-1808, consists of documents from various court proceedings [at the time of processing archivist could not reasonably determine in which court the records were heard]. The records include a set of depositions, 1760 June, concerning Willeby (or Biddy) a Black man enslaved by Edward Spencer; a set of depositions, 1760 August, concerning various Black and multiracial individual enslaved by Jeremiah Morton (enslaved names include Sam, Lilly, Deboarh, and Nan); and lastly a letter, 1808 October 8, of Beverly Stubblefield to Jacob Cook, concerning Violet, Anna, Rachal, Lewis, Easter, Edmund, and Armistead, all enslaved individuals Stubblefield gave to Catherine Beverly Stubblefield, his daughter, and the rights to the enslaved persons now that Catherine has died.

Criminal Records, 1843 ca., include a document compiled by a jury foreman for an unspecific criminal case. The jury findings note that on the evidence of few white citizens there are several families that are "a pest to the neighbor" due to their lack of occupation. The document notes the families to be "mixed population, consisting of a few white and a great part colored persons." There is also a finding of self-assemblies of several hundred Black and multiracial persons held each week on the sabbath.

Deeds, 1861-1865, consists of a notice for a deed of trust, 1861, of Robert Roach to Richard Richards, Trustee of James Turner, concerning sale of enslaved persons; and notice for deed of trust, 1865, of John T. Taliaferro noting intent to replace current trustee in a deed concerning Sarah, an enslaved woman, and Alfred, her child. Fiduciary Records, 1738-1826, consist of a petition, 1738, of William Crawford to have a Black enslaved boy, unnamed, appraised; and a request to divide the estate of Elizabeth Smith, 1826, consisting of enslaved persons Harry, Anarky, Adam, Sawney, James, Pheby, Mourning, Maria, and Henry.

"Free Negro" Tax Records, 1810-1854, consists of two items, the first "A list of free negroes and mulattoes within the district of Belfield Cave," 1810, compiled by commissioner of revenue Belfield Cave (includes the names, sex, ages, place of abode, and occupation of free Black and multiracial individuals within the county). The second "A List of Free Negroes Returned for the nonpayment of their taxes," 1854, compiled by Deputy Sheriff R.S. Boulward for the county noting free Black and multiracial residents who are delinquent on their state tax/ revenue tax (generally in the amount is \$1). The list includes the names of free Black and multiracial individuals, the amount due, and usually the reason the funds were not returned (such as "no property," "removed," or "not found").

Requisitions for Public Use Records, 1861-1864, consists of correspondence carrying out of an order, 1863 December 23, by General Joseph E. Johnston, requiring Orange County to supply a force of thirty Free Black and multiracial people to work on fortification. Records also consist of various requisitions, 1862-1864, for the supply of enslaved labor to assist in the construction of fortifications near Richmond, Va. There are also numerous lists, 1862-1863, documenting the apportionment of enslaved individuals in various magisterial districts of Orange County. The lists note the name of the enslaver, full number of enslaved persons, number of abled bodied enslaved males between 18-45, and how many enslaved persons supplied. These records do not list the names of the enslaved persons. Lastly, records include a petition, 1863 March 23, of John H. Robinson for release of "his boy" [only descriptor used] from public works service.

"Runaway" Records, 1797-1824, include a receipt, 1797, for John Davis noting his payment for apprehending Sarah, a self-emancipated Black woman, and bring his to the county jail; two notes, 1802, for payment to William Knight and William June in the transport of a Black man, enslaved by Thomas Walker to Orange County; and lastly documents, 1824, noting the confinement of Champion Hart, a self-emancipated Black man, to the county jail.

Tax and Fiscal Records, 1774-1861, consists of four certificates of infirmity, 1815-1816, presented by enslaver in an attempt to not pay taxes on enslaved individuals unable to work. These certificates note the enslaved person's name, age, aliment, and sometimes duration of aliment. Enslave names include Milley, Harry, Philis, Jack, Aaron, and Fanney.

Records also consists of one box of patrol returns and claims, 1774-1861. These records patrols generally

acted as the policing force that monitored the movement of free and enslaved Black and multiracial individuals. These record the names of the individuals on patrol; who authorized their patrol; dates of patrol; the number of hours on patrol; general geographic area patrolled; and compensation awarded. Some returns specifically note the objective to "apprehend all slaves and other disorderly persons," or "to visit all negro quarters, and other places suspected of entertaining unlawful assemblies of servants, slaves, or of disorderly persons."

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1738-1865

Contents List

Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1738-1865

Extent

.65 cubic feet (2 boxes)

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Barcode number 1171431: Slave Patrol Records, 1774-1861

Barcode number 1171432: Free and Enslaved Records, 1738-1865

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