

# A Guide to the Chesterfield County (Va.) Estray Records, 1771-1905

Chesterfield County (Va.) Estray Records, 1771-1905  
1771-1905

---

A Collection in the Library of Virginia Barcode number 1045957, 1116521, 1124551, 1156600

Library of Virginia  
2022

**Author:** Mary Ann Mason

## History

**Processed by:** Library of Virginia staff

## Title Statement

A Guide to the Chesterfield County (Va.) Estray Records, 1771-1905

**Subtitle:** Chesterfield County (Va.) Estray Records, 1771-1905

**Collection:** 1045957, 1116521, 1124551, 1156600

**Author:** Mary Ann Mason

## Publication Statement

**Date:** © 2022 By The Library of Virginia. All Rights Reserved.

**Publisher:** Library of Virginia

[Conditions of Use](#)

## Profile Description

**Creation:** Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Mary Ann Mason, 09 Feb 2022

**Language Usage:** Description is in English

## Revision Description

**2022-02-09** Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

## Descriptive Summary

### Collection numbers

Barcode numbers 1045957, 1116521, 1124551, 1156600

### Language

English

### Collector

Chesterfield County (Va.) Circuit Court.

### Physical Characteristics

.9 cu. ft. ; 2 v.

### 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 records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court records from Chesterfield County.

## Preferred Citation

Chesterfield County (Va.) Estray Records, 1771-1905. Local government records collection, Chesterfield County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

# Adjunct Descriptive Data

## Related Material

Additional description of the Chesterfield County Free Black Registers can be found in a separate records can be found on microfilm at the Library of Virginia. Consult [A Guide to the Chesterfield County \(Va.\) Free Negro Registers, 1804-1854](#).

Additional material relating to free and enslaved Black and multiracial citizens in Chesterfield County can be found by searching [Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative](#).

## Historical Information

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.

Estrays were stray livestock found wandering. An inquest was held to determine the value of the livestock in order to reimburse the person who had found and cared for the animal. The report generally includes a physical description of the animal as well as an assessed monetary value.

In 1793, the Virginia General Assembly specified that “free Negroes or mulattoes” were required to “be registered and numbered in a book to be kept by the town clerk, which shall specify age, name, color, status and by whom, and in what court emancipated.” The process was extended to localities in 1803. This bound register often coincided with a loose certificate containing largely the same identifying information. The 1793 law required one to obtain a new certificate every three years. Both the registration system and the process of renewal was enforced differently in the various Virginia localities. Thus, the information found in these registers may differ from year to year and across localities. In 1834, the General Assembly added a requirement that each person be specified by marks or scars and the instrument of emancipation, whether by deed or will, be recorded. Not all free people registered in their locality.

Some clerks recorded information as a narrative style, while other clerks recorded free people and their information in a ledger. This latter style more closely resembles a present day spreadsheet with columns and headings identifying name, age, free status, and so forth. Note that some county clerks used the same book to record other types of records such as marriage registrations or boat licenses, or in this case estray records.

## Scope and Content

Chesterfield County (Va.) Estray Records, 1771-1905, contain various loose and bound records giving public notice of valuable, tame animals, either lost or found wandering and presumed escaped from their owners, allowing the owners to reclaim the animals. Entries generally indicate by whom the animal was taken up, before what justice the person went and when, and the description and appraisal (value) of the animal.

As shown in these volumes, it was not uncommon for clerks of the court, who were male and white, to record information relating to Black and multiracial communities alongside records concerning infrastructure, fiduciary matters, and various other record types. This context demonstrates how court house staff regardly

dehumanized the individuals represented in these records by equating their status to any other form of property, be it land, animals, or money.

## Contents List

### **Barcode number 1116521: "Register of Free Negroes"; Estrays 1804-1830**

#### **Scope and Content**

"Register of Free Negroes", 1804-1830. Also includes estrays, 1804-1830

### **Barcode number 1156600: "Register of Free Negroes"; Estrays 1805-1863**

#### **Scope and Content**

"Register of Free Negroes", 1830-1853. Also includes estrays, 1805-1863.

### **Barcode number 1045957: Micellaneous Records 1771-1904, undated**

#### **Scope and Content**

Records contain only a small amount of estray material, 1858-1890. Also includes Flour and Tobacco Inspection Returns, 1771-1832; Ordinary Keeper Lists, 1843-1868; Brands and Earmarks, 1772; Resolutions, 1843-1904; Organization Records; and Sales of Public Property.