

A Guide to the Richmond (Va.) Naturalization Records, 1806-1868

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia

Library of Virginia

2023

History

Processed by: M. Long

Title Statement

A Guide to the Richmond (Va.) Naturalization Records, 1806-1868

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record by McKenzie Long, 16 July 2023

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Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Richmond (Va.) Circuit Court

Extent

.9 cu. ft. (2 boxes)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

City of Richmond's loose naturalization records, 1806-1868, are digitized and available through the [Naturalization Records Digital Collection](#) on the Library of Virginia website. Please use digital images.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These items came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from the City of Richmond.

Processing Information

Loose naturalization records, 1806-1868, were removed from the Richmond City Ended Causes and then processed and indexed as a distinct unit by M. Long for the purpose of inclusion in the Library of Virginia's Naturalization Records Digital Collection.

Encoded by M. Long: July 2023.

Preferred Citation

Richmond (Va.) Naturalization Records, 1806-1868. Local government records collection, Richmond (City) Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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

Richmond is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Richmond City Court Records may be found in the [Lost Records Localities Digital Collection](#) available on the Library of Virginia website.

Historical Information

Context for Record Type: Beginning in 1795, a person could declare their intent to become a citizen at any time and in any place after they arrived in the United States. Prior to the Naturalization Act of 1906, the naturalization process primarily occurred in local and state courts. Declarations of intent were the record by which an applicant for U.S. citizenship declared their intent to become a citizen and renounced their allegiance to a foreign government. This document typically preceded proof of residence or a petition to become a citizen by two or more years.

Locality History: The city of Richmond, located between Henrico and Chesterfield Counties, was named by William Byrd (1674-1744), who envisioned the development of a city at the falls of the James River and with the help of William Mayo laid out the town in 1737. The name probably came from the English borough of Richmond upon Thames, which Byrd visited on several occasions. Richmond was established in 1742 and in 1779 was designated the capital of Virginia effective 30 April 1780. It was incorporated as a town, although "stiled the city of Richmond," in 1782 and was incorporated as a city in 1842. It served as the capital of the Confederacy from mid-1861 to April 1865. Richmond was enlarged by the annexation of Manchester (or South Richmond) in 1910, and by the addition of Barton Heights, Fairmount, and Highland Park in 1914. Further annexations from Chesterfield County occurred in 1942 and 1970.

Lost Locality Note: Richmond is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. During the burning of Richmond on April 3, 1865, during the Civil War, Richmond circuit court judge John A. Meredith led efforts to save the circuit court records found at the State Court House. Rescuers successfully removed all the papers that were necessary to pending suits and many of the order books, but all of the wills and deed books were lost. Records of the superior court and circuit superior court of law and chancery were also destroyed. Most of the pre-Civil War Hustings Court records exist.

Scope and Content

Richmond (Va.) Naturalization Records, 1806-1868, consists of loose naturalization records filed in the local court. Loose naturalization records may include affidavits, reports for naturalization, declarations of intent to become United States citizens, and notices of application for admission of citizenship. The reports are narrative accounts made by applicants summarizing their journey to the United States. The declarations of intent record the person's name, place of birth, age, country of previous citizenship, renunciation of allegiance and fidelity to the nation of which the person is currently a citizen, and the date the intention was sworn. Affidavits, signed by those who knew the applicant and could vouch for their loyalty to the United States, may also be filed with the reports and declarations.

Notable trends in this collection include a limited number of women who filed declarations of intent as an extension of the citizenship status of the men in their families. Of particular note was the 1825 declaration of Elizabeth Kerr, an Irish immigrant whose declaration was primarily made to allow her to file further citizenship paperwork on behalf of her minor son, and the 1831 declaration of Christina Eisenmenger, a Bavarian immigrant who employed a German translator to help her file for citizenship after her husband

successfully completed his own naturalization process.

Also included were post-Civil War records certifying the citizenship status of individuals whose original naturalization records had been lost during the burning of Richmond in 1865.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into the following series:

- Series I: Loose Naturalization Records, 1806-1868, arranged chronologically.

Contents List

Series I: Loose Naturalization Records, 1806-1868

Extent

.9 cubic feet (2 boxes)

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Barcode number 0007853171: Naturalization Records, 1806-1855

Barcode number 0007853173: Naturalization Records, 1855-1868

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