

A Guide to the Albemarle County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1785, 1798-1799, 1818-1864

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
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History

Processed by: E. Jordan and LVA Staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Albemarle County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1785, 1798-1799, 1818-1864

Subtitle: Albemarle County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation

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Publication Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MS Word, created by Caroline Collins, 12 March 2025

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Albemarle County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

29 items

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

IN PROGRESS: Albemarle County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1785, 1798-1799, 1818-1864, 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

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

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

Processing Information

Nine Albemarle County Deeds of Emancipation were originally described as part of the Albemarle County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1799-1870, but were removed to the present Albemarle County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1785, 1798-1799, 1818-1864, record to enhance discoverability in March 2025.

Additional Albemarle County Deeds of Emancipation were found by E. Jordan in 2025 while processing Albemarle County Deeds. This descriptive record was updated accordingly in November 2025.

These records were processed, scanned, and indexed by E. Jordan, L. Neuroth, and LVA staff for the purposes of digitizing them for the digital project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative at an unknown date.

Encoded by C. Collins: March 2025; updated by C. Collins: November 2025.

Preferred Citation

Albemarle County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1785, 1798-1799, 1818-1864. Local government records collection, Albemarle County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Albemarle County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records, 1799-1870](#)

See also: [Albemarle County \(Va.\) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1858-1864](#)

See also: [Albemarle County \(Va.\) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1816-1819, 1852-1859](#)

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

Additional Albemarle 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."](#)

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

Historical Information

Context of Record Type: Deeds of emancipation and manumission record an enslavers' intent to emancipate enslaved people from bondage. Some of the earliest legal manumissions in Virginia occurred in the early 1770s. However, there was a sharp rise following the 1782 manumission act that allowed enslavers to privately emancipate enslaved people "by last will and testament or other instrument in writing sealed." They were no longer required to seek a special act from the General Assembly. These documents sometimes include an enslavers' intent for emancipation ranging from religious and moral motivations to binding legal agreements.

Deeds of emancipation and manumission essentially provide the same information and there is little difference between the two. Both include the name of the enslaver, the name of the enslaved person to be freed, the date of anticipated freedom, the date the manumission was proved or certified, and as mentioned, sometimes a reason why the enslaver decided to emancipate the enslaved person. In a deed of manumission, an enslaver directly freed an enslaved person by manumission. In a deed of emancipation, an enslaved person could be freed after the enslaver's death by those executing a last will and testament. This collection also includes court orders that record the date or age when enslaved individuals were to be emancipated by deed as stipulated in an enslaver's will.

Locality History: Albemarle County was named for William Anne Keppel, second earl of Albemarle, and governor of Virginia from 1737 to 1754. It was created by a statute of 1744 and formed from Goochland County; part of Louisa County was added in 1761 and islands in the Fluvanna (now the James) River in 1770. The court met for the first time on 8 February 1745. The county seat is the city of Charlottesville.

Lost Locality Note: All order books except the first and many loose papers between 1748 and 1781 were destroyed by British general Banastre Tarleton's raid on Charlottesville in 1781 during the Revolutionary War.

Scope and Content

Albemarle County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1785, 1798-1799, 1818-1864, include 29 deeds. The deeds typically record the name of enslaver, the name of the enslaved person or persons to be freed, the date the enslaved person or persons achieved freedom, and the date the manumission was proved or certified. Sometimes, the deeds describe the reason for emancipation or manumission. Deeds of emancipation could be generated after the enslaver's death by those executing a last will and testament.

Multiple individuals were freed by deed after their freedom was purchased, while others were freed upon the death of their enslaver. Several deeds of emancipation involve individuals who later submitted petitions to remain or petitions for re-enslavement [see Albemarle County (Va.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1858-1864, and Albemarle County (Va.) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1816-1819, 1852-1859]. In one deed, 1843, Fanny and George, the wife and child of Reubin (Reuben) Lee, "a freedman of color," were emancipated by Richard Duke, the executor of Martha Walker, as ordered by the court [see **Albemarle County Chancery Cause 1843-041: Reuben Lee (Free) vs. Exr. of Martha F. Walker, etc.**].

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Deeds of Emancipation, 1785, 1798-1799, 1818-1864, arranged chronologically.

Contents List

Series I: Deeds of Emancipation, 1785, 1798-1799, 1818-1864

Extent

29 items

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically

Barcode number 1144734: Free and Enslaved Records, 1807-1870

Library of Virginia