

A Guide to the Albemarle County (Va.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1858-1864

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1858-1864

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History

Processed by: LVA Staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Albemarle County (Va.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1858-1864

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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

Creator

Albemarle County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

11 items.

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Albemarle County (Va.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1858-1864, 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

Albemarle County Petitions for Re-Enslavement 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.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1858-1864, record to enhance discoverability in March 2025.

These records were processed, scanned, and indexed by 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.

Preferred Citation

Albemarle County (Va.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1858-1864. 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 \(Va.\) Deeds of Emancipation, 1785, 1798-1799, 1818-1864](#)

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 for Record Type: Petitions for Re-enslavement consist of petitions of free Black individuals choosing to be re-enslaved. An act passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 1806 required formerly enslaved people to leave the commonwealth within twelve months of being granted their freedom. Individuals were forced to leave behind family, friends, and community who remained enslaved. In addition, many emancipated people did not have the financial means or social support to move to a free state. One option to preserve family and relationships was to return to slavery. In 1856, the Virginia legislature passed an act allowing free Black individuals who desired to remain in the commonwealth to petition for re-enslavement. Only a small number of free Black Virginians petitioned the courts to re-enslave themselves to an enslaver of choice, and an even smaller percentage succeeded. Many petitioners chose enslavers they knew well or who owned a spouse or family member. These petitions include the petitioner's name, previous enslaver, means of emancipation, and new desired enslaver.

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.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1858-1864, consist of records related to the petitions of five individuals:

Satchell (Sachel) Grayson, 1858, who was manumitted by the will of Mary Oldham, his former enslaver. According to the petition, Grayson could not "be satisfied to leave the state of Virginia and consequently his wife and children," and requested he be enslaved to John Wood, Jr. There is no indication as to the court's decision.

John Martin, 1858, who was emancipated by the will of Nancy Martin, his former enslaver. Martin was found to have remained in the Commonwealth beyond the twelve-month limit implemented by the General Assembly in 1806. In his petition. Martin stated that he had "a wife & two children, slaves, to whom he [Martin] is naturally attached, and is unable to purchase and unwilling to abandon." He requested to be enslaved to James E. Huckstep, and his petition was ultimately granted by the court.

Andrew Hatter (alias Anderson Hatter), 1863, who submitted a petition requesting to be enslaved to Benjamin F. Abell. The request was granted by the court.

Mike Ailstock, 1864, who "resided in the county all his life," petitioned the court to be enslaved to Stephen (or Shepherd) S. Moore. The court granted his request.

Sylva, 1864, who was manumitted by the will of John Terrell, her former enslaver, and who "resided in the County of Albemarle all her life," sought to be enslaved to William L. Wood. Her petition was granted.

Several individuals who submitted petitions for re-enslavement were emancipated by deed [see Albemarle County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1785, 1798-1799, 1818-1864].

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1858-1864, arranged chronologically.

Contents List

Series I: Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1858-1864

Extent

11 items

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically

Barcode number 1156122: Free and Enslaved Records, 1802-1865

Library of Virginia