

A Guide to the Botetourt County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1790-1802

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1790-1802

A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
2025

History

Processed by: LVA Staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Botetourt County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1790-1802

Subtitle: Botetourt County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation

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Publication Statement

Date: © 2025 By The Library of Virginia. All Rights Reserved.

Publisher: Library of Virginia

Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MS Word by Caroline Collins, 16 July 2025

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Botetourt County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Extent

4 items

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Botetourt County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1790-1802, 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 Botetourt County (Va.) as part of an undated accession.

Processing Information

Botetourt County Deeds of Emancipation were originally described as part of the Botetourt County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1801-1862, but were removed to the present Botetourt County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1790-1802, record to enhance discoverability in July 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: July 2025.

Preferred Citation

Botetourt County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1790-1802. Local government records collection, Botetourt County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Botetourt County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records, 1801-1862](#)

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

Additional Botetourt 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."](#)

Botetourt County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Botetourt 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: Botetourt County was named for Norborne Berkeley, baron de Botetourt, the royal governor from 1768 to 1770. It was formed from Augusta County in 1769, and a part of Rockbridge County was added in 1785. The county court first met on 13 February 1770. The county seat is Fincastle.

Lost Locality Note: Many of the loose records including pre-1830 chancery and pre-1854 judgments suffered tremendous water damage as a result of a courthouse fire on 15 December 1970. Because of the near loss of records, the General Assembly passed the Virginia Public Records Act in 1975 for the purpose of preserving local records. Volumes that record deeds, court orders, and wills exist.

Scope and Content

Botetourt County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1790-1802, include three deeds. The deeds typically record the name of the 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.

These records are comprised of a deed, 1790, in which Edward Mitchell manumitted Roger and Elizabeth Rogis and Thomas Rogis, David Rogis, Roger Rogis, Jack Rogis, Henry Rogis, and William Rogis, their children; Samuel Calender; Rachel Nelson and Juba Nelson, Jack Nelson, and Lucy Nelson, her children; and Rubin Howard. In a document filed with the deed and dated 1802, Mitchell requested that "The Bearer hereof, Jack Nelson" be given a certificate that attests to his freedom. Additional records include a deed, 1790, in which Daniel Prentice emancipated Robbin, and a deed, 1798, in which George Hancock freed Will and Hannah.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Deeds of Emancipation, 1790-1802, arranged chronologically.

Contents List

Series I: Deeds of Emancipation, 1790-1802

Extent

Extent: 4 items

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically

Barcode number 1138016: Free and Enslaved Records, 1790-1862

Library of Virginia