

# A Guide to the Chesterfield County (Va.) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1832-1856

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia  
Library of Virginia  
2025

## History

**Processed by:** S. Nerney

## Title Statement

A Guide to the Chesterfield County (Va.) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1832-1856

**Subtitle:** Chesterfield County (Va.) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth

**Author:** Caroline Collins

## 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, 17 December 2025

**Language Usage:** Description is in English

## Descriptive Summary

### Language

English

### Collector

Chesterfield County (Va.) Circuit Court.

### Extent

13 items

### Location

Library of Virginia

### Repository

The Library of Virginia

## Administrative Information

### Access Restrictions

Chesterfield County (Va.) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1832-1856, 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 Chesterfield County (Va.) as part of an undated accession.

## Processing Information

Chesterfield County Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth were originally described as part of the Chesterfield County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1760-1862, but were removed to the present Chesterfield County (Va.) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1832-1856, record to enhance discoverability in December 2025.

Chesterfield County Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth were found among Chesterfield County (Va.) Dead Papers. They were processed, scanned, and indexed by S. Nerney, L. Neuroth, and LVA staff for the purposes of digitizing them for the digital project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative.

Encoded by C. Collins: December 2025.

## Preferred Citation

Chesterfield County (Va.) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1832-1856. Local government records collection, Chesterfield County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

# Adjunct Descriptive Data

## Related Material

See also: [Chesterfield County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records, 1760-1862](#)

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

Additional Chesterfield 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."](#)

## Historical Information

**Context for Record Type:** Sometimes referred to as "Applications to Remain," these records are applications that formerly enslaved individuals submitted to state and local courts for permission to remain in Virginia with their free status. The Virginia General Assembly passed a law stating that all formerly enslaved people freed after 1 May 1806 who remained in Virginia more than twelve months could be put on trial by the state. Individuals who wished to remain in the commonwealth were to petition the state legislature. In 1816, a new Act of Assembly gave the local courts power to grant permission to remain. The documents in these cases will include: the name(s) of the petitioner(s), the circumstances of free status, and a request to remain in the county. Individuals needed to prove that they had in fact been emancipated. Therefore, application packets might also include supporting documents such as the formerly enslaved person's register, a copy of a will or deed of emancipation, or witness statements known as affidavits.

**Locality History:** 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.

## Scope and Content

Chesterfield County (Va.) Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1832-1856, consist of records related to the petitions of six individuals. These petitions are applications that formerly enslaved individuals submitted to state and local courts for permission to remain in Virginia with their free status. The petitions often include the formerly enslaved individual's name, their method of emancipation, name of their former enslaver, and whether the application/petition was successful or not. Petitions may also include affidavits signed mainly by white residents or witness statements again provided by white residents. Additional names of enslaved or free Black and Multiracial individuals can be found in these records.

These records involve the following individuals: Reuben Rouzee; Caty Cheatham; Chloe; Augustus and Jane Gordon; and Betsy Harris. Caty Cheatham, Chloe, and Betsy Harris were permitted to remain, while Augustus and Jane Gordon's petition was denied. There is no indication as to whether or not Reuben Rouzee's petition was granted.

Individuals whose petitions to remain were granted often have corresponding entries in their locality’s free register(s). For example, Caty Cheatham appears in the Chesterfield County (Va.) “Free Negro” Register and Book of Estrays, 1805-1863.

## Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1832-1856, arranged chronologically.

## Contents List

### Series I: Petitions to Remain in the Commonwealth, 1832-1856

**Extent**

Extent: 13 items

**Physical Location** Library of Virginia

**Arrangement**

Arranged chronologically

**Barcode number 1116535: Free and Enslaved Records, 1790-1862**

Library of Virginia