

# A Guide to the Chesterfield County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1788-1857

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia  
Library of Virginia  
2026

## History

**Processed by:** S. Nerney and LVA Staff

## Title Statement

A Guide to the Chesterfield County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1788-1857

**Subtitle:** Chesterfield County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation

**Author:** Caroline Collins

## Publication Statement

**Date:** © 2026 By The Library of Virginia. All Rights Reserved.

**Publisher:** Library of Virginia

## Profile Description

**Creation:** Machine-readable finding aid derived from MS Word document by Caroline Collins, 21 January 2026

**Language Usage:** Description is in English

## Descriptive Summary

### Language

English

### Collector

Chesterfield County (Va.) Circuit Court.

### Extent

35 items

### Location

Library of Virginia

### Repository

The Library of Virginia

## Administrative Information

### Access Restrictions

Chesterfield County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1788-1857, 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**

Several Chesterfield County Deeds of Emancipation 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.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1788-1857, record to enhance discoverability in January 2026.

Several Chesterfield County Deeds of Emancipation were found among Chesterfield County (Va.) Dead Papers. The bulk of the deeds were separated out of the Chesterfield County (Va.) Deeds collection by LVA staff. They have been 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: January 2026.

### **Preferred Citation**

Chesterfield County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1788-1857. 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](#)

See also: [Chesterfield County \(Va.\) Deeds, 1749-1981 \(bulk 1780-1953\)](#)

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 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:** 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.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1788-1857, include 35 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.

Several individuals emancipated by deed have corresponding entries in the Chesterfield County free

registers, as they were able to remain in Chesterfield County following emancipation. For example, Aggy (or Aggey) was manumitted by Abram Woolridge, the executor of Robert Woolridge, in 1806, and was subsequently registered in the Chesterfield County (Va.) "Free Negro" Register and Book of Estrays, 1804-1830.

## Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Deeds of Emancipation, 1788-1857, arranged chronologically.

## Contents List

### **Series I: Deeds of Emancipation, 1788-1857**

#### **Extent**

Extent: 35 items.

**Physical Location** Library of Virginia

#### **Arrangement**

Arranged chronologically

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

Library of Virginia