

A Guide to the Northumberland County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1799,1803

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1799,1803

A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
2025

History

Processed by: Sam Walters

Title Statement

A Guide to the Northumberland County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1799,1803

Subtitle: Northumberland County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1799,1803

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Publication Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MS Word, created by Mary Ann Mason, 15 December 2025

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Northumberland County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

2 items; digital images.

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Northumberland County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1799,1803,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 Northumberland County in 2007 under accession number 43283.

Processing Information

Northumberland County (Va.) Certificates of Importation were previously described with the Northumberland County (Va.) Free and Enslaved records, but were removed to this record in November 2025 to increase discoverability.

These records have been scanned and indexed by Library of Virginia staff for the purposes of digitizing them for the digital project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative.

Encoded by M. Mason: November 2025

Preferred Citation

Northumberland County Certificates of Importation, 1799,1803. Local government records collection, Northumberland Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See Also: [Northumberland County \(Va.\)Free and Enslaved Records](#)

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

Additional Northumberland County (Va.) court records can be found on microfilm at the Library of Virginia.Consult ["A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm."](#)

Historical Information

Context of Record Type: In 1778, Governor Patrick Henry enacted legislation preventing importation of enslaved people into the commonwealth. Those that did bring their enslaved people were required to register them with the county court and sign a certificate of importation agreeing that they were not bringing enslaved people into the commonwealth with the intent to sell. The enslaved person is sometimes named, but not always, and occasionally information is given as to age, birthdate, and the state from which the individuals were moving. According to Section 3 of the act "every slave imported into this commonwealth contrary to the true intent and meaning of this act, shall upon such importation become free." By this clause, those enslaved people who were brought into Virginia illegally could pursue their freedom in the local courts.

Locality History: Northumberland County was probably named for the English county. It was formed about 1645 from the district of Chickacoan, the early seventeenth century name for the region between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers.

Scope and Content

Northumberland County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1799 and 1803.

Certificates of importation, 1799 and 1803, contains the oath of James Cox stating that the enslaved people he is bringing into Virginia from Maryland were not imported from Africa and that he does not intend to sell them in Virginia. The statement contains the names of the slaves he is bringing into Virginia. The other document is a certificate issued by the county clerk to William Harding in 1803 stating that Harding has complied with the law concerning the importation of slaves from Maryland into Virginia.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Certificates of Importation, 1799,1803, then organized loosely chronological

Contents List

Series I: Certificates of Importation, 1799,1803

Extent

2 items; Digital Images [Use digital Images]

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Barcode number 1189869: Free and Enslaved Records, 1786-1862

Library of Virginia