

A Guide to the Amherst County (Va.) Judgments, circa 1770-1950

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
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History

Processed by: J. Taylor, C. Collins, and LVA Staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Amherst County (Va.) Judgments, circa 1770-1950

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Publication Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MS Word, created by Jennifer Taylr, 18 June 2026

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Creator

Amherst County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

28.3 cubic feet (58 boxes); 2 volumes

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection is open to research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Amherst County in 2022 in accession number 53740 as well as in an undated accession.

Processing Information

Prior to 2026, the judgement descriptive records were not standardized in their inclusion of contextual information or content lists. Local Records staff reviewed this record and have updated to current standards as of 2026.

The county and circuit court judgments were minimally processed by C. Collins and J. Taylor in 2024-2025.

Encoded by J. Taylor: June 2026.

Preferred Citation

Amherst County (Va.) Judgments, circa 1770-1950 [insert series or volume title]. Local government records collection, Amherst County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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

Additional Amherst County 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: Judgments are identified as civil suits, often involving debt, heard by a jury on the "law" side of the court as opposed to the "chancery" (or equity) side. Should the defendant not have funds to repay the debt, the court ordered their property (including enslaved people) to be seized and sold to repay the debt owed to the plaintiff. Judgments also contain suits brought by enslaved people seeking to gain their freedom.

In Judgments, an assumpsit or declaration (sometimes referred to as a narratio) lays out the plaintiff's grievance as a petition acted as a formal application to the court requesting judicial action. Judgment suits also generally included record types like subpoenas, summons, and exhibit. Judgments may also include additional documentations such as executions, bonds, and various kinds of writs.

Judgment suits make up a large quantity of a locality's records; consequently, they provide a great deal of information concerning the activities and interests of the people who lived in the locality. Since the vast majority of judgment suits relate to financial matters, they are a valuable resource in studying the economic and social history of Virginia localities and are the impotence for many chancery suits.

Locality History: Amherst County was named for Major General Jeffery Amherst, British commander in North America during the latter part of the French and Indian War and governor of Virginia from 1759 to 1768. It was formed from Albemarle County in 1761. Islands in the Fluvanna (now the James) River were added in 1770. The county seat is Amherst.

Additional Judgment Types

Condemnations are judgments concerning the taking of private property for public use through the power of eminent domain. Most cases involve railroad or canal companies and contain maps/plats of the land in question.

Support for Divorce Petitions: The Virginia General Assembly, in 1803, granted the first divorce for the state of Virginia; over the next couple of decades, the volume of divorce petitions sent to the General Assembly grew to an overwhelming and unmanageable number. In response, the General Assembly granted the chancery courts the ability to divorce petitioners and slowly the number of divorce petitions decreased in the General Assembly before ceasing entirely in 1850. During the period in which the General Assembly still had a hand in granting divorces, plaintiffs might petition their locality's civil courts for their support in petitioning the General Assembly, possibly to increase the likelihood of being granted a divorce by the governmental body.

Ejectments are a formal court order that declares the property owner to be the rightful owner of a piece of land or building and legally removes the unauthorized occupant. The court might also declare financial damages for the lost use of the property.

Types of Courts

The County Court was the original colonial court of adjudication and recordation, and it was the principal tribunal for the administration of local justice. The individual justices could act on small claims matters as well as criminal matters where imminent bodily harm was a possibility, there being an appeal to the full County Court, which met monthly. This court ceased to exist in 1919 and the recordation function was transferred to the circuit court.

The Superior Court of Law was created in 1808. It met twice a year in each county, presided over by a circuit-riding General Court judge. Records were filed with the County Court. It had civil and criminal jurisdiction. The court ceased to exist in 1831.

The Circuit Court was authorized by the Constitution of 1851 and established by an act of the General Assembly passed in May 1852. Courts were held twice yearly in each county, presided over by 21 judges who rode circuits in the area of their jurisdiction. The records were filed with County Court records. These courts were granted original jurisdiction concurrent with that of the County Courts, as well as appellate jurisdiction in all civil cases of more than fifty dollars and criminal cases not "expressly cognizable in some other court," including those involving loss of life.

Scope and Content

Amherst County (Va.) Judgments, circa 1770-1950, consist of civil cases in which justice was administered on the strictly formulated rules of common law. The majority of cases in this record group relate to matters of debt. The county and circuit court judgments have undergone minimal processing. A small section of records remain completely unprocessed.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into three series:

- Series I: Judgments, 1849-1864, relating to free and enslaved Black and Multiracial individuals
- Series II: Minimally Processed Judgments, 1831-1874
- Series III: Unprocessed Judgments, 1770-1950 circa
- Series IV: Judgment Volumes, 1818-1853

Contents List

Series I: Judgments, 1849-1864, relating to free and enslaved Black and Multiracial individuals 1849-1864

Extent

0.45 cubic feet (1 box)

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Barcode Number 0007833844: Judgments, 1849-1864

Scope and Content

Contains judgments related to free and enslaved people.

Series II: Minimally Processed Judgments 1831-1874

Scope and Content

This series has undergone minimal processing. This has allowed for the documentation of specific record types and various trends found in this set of records. All records remain tri-folded and may be fragile.

Subseries A: Circuit Court Judgments, 1831-1874

Extent

18 cubic feet (40 boxes)

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Barcode number 0007833681: Judgments 1831-1832

Barcode number 0007833682: Judgments 1832

Barcode number 0007833691: Judgments 1832-1833

Barcode number 0007833695: Judgments 1833-1834

Barcode number 0007833697: Judgments 1834-1835

Barcode number 0007833740: Judgments 1835-1836

Barcode number 0007833741: Judgments 1836-1837

Barcode number 0007833742: Judgments 1837-1838

Barcode number 0007833743: Judgments 1838

Barcode number 0007833744: Judgments 1838-1839

Barcode number 0007833745: Judgments 1839-1840

Barcode number 0007833807: Judgments 1840, 1851-1852

Barcode number 0007833746: Judgments 1840-1841

Barcode number 0007833750: Judgments 1840-1841

Barcode number 0007833751: Judgments 1841

Barcode number 0007833752: Judgments 1842

Barcode number 0007833753: Judgments 1842

Barcode number 0007833754: Judgments 1843

Barcode number 0007833755: Judgments 1843

Barcode number 0007833757: Judgments 1844

Barcode number 0007833756: Judgments 1843-1844

Barcode number 0007833759: Judgments 1844-1845

Barcode number 0007833760: Judgments 1845-1846

Barcode number 0007833761: Judgments 1846-1847

Barcode number 0007833762: Judgments 1847-1848

Barcode number 0007833763: Judgments 1848-1849

Barcode number 0007833764: Judgments 1849-1850

Barcode number 0007833806: Judgments 1850-1851

Barcode number 0007833808: Judgments 1852-1853

Barcode number 0007833808: Judgments 1852-1853

Barcode number 0007833842: Judgments 1853-1854

Barcode number 0007833809: Judgments 1855-1856

Barcode number 0007833810: Judgments 1855-1857

Barcode number 0007833811: Judgments 1855-1857

Barcode number 0007833812: Judgments 1857-1859

Barcode number 0007833813: Judgments 1859-1861

Barcode number 0007833814: Judgments 1861-1867

Barcode number 0007833815: Judgments 1866-1867

Barcode number 0007833839: Judgments 1867-1868

Barcode number 0007833840: Judgments 1868

Barcode number 0007833841: Judgments 1869-1874

Subseries B: County Court Judgments, 1845-1870

Extent

4.95 cubic feet (11 boxes)

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Barcode number 0007834160: Judgments 1845

Barcode number 0007834161: Judgments 1846

Barcode number 0007834162: Judgments 1846-1847

Barcode number 0007834164: Judgments 1848-1849

Barcode number 0007834165: Judgments 1849-1851

Barcode number 0007834167: Judgments 1852-1854

Barcode number 0007834169: Judgments 1854

Barcode number 0007833843: Judgments 1855-1858

Barcode number 0007834172: Judgments 1858-1861

Barcode number 0007834342: Judgments 1861-1867

Barcode number 0007834340: Judgments 1868-1870

Series III: Unprocessed Judgments, 1770-1950 circa

Scope and Content

All records in this record series are unprocessed and remain tri-folded within their original bundles; the

All records in this record series are unprocessed and remain tri-folded within their original bundles; the bundles also include other court records, such as commonwealth causes, road and bridge records, tax and fiscal records, Overseers of the Poor, etc. Not all record types will be found in every bundle of papers. The contents of the boxes are not arranged in any particular order and dates may overlap between boxes. Some records may be fragile.

Subseries A: County Court Judgments, 1804-1907

Extent

3 cubic feet (3 boxes)

Physical Location State Records Center

Barcode number 1043061: Judgments, Executions, and Miscellaneous Bonds; Miscellaneous Tax Lists; Election records 1804-1896

Barcode number 1043086: Judgments, Executions, Miscellaneous Bonds; Miscellaneous Tax Lists; Road and Bridge Records 1839-1884

Barcode number 1043090: Judgments, Executions, Miscellaneous Bonds; Miscellaneous Tax Lists; Election Records; Fiduciary Records. 1856-1907

Subseries B: Unidentified Court Judgments, 1770-1950 circa

Extent

1.9 cubic feet (3 boxes)

Physical Location State Records Center

Scope and Content

The court in which these records belong has not been identified.

Barcode number 1178801: Judgments 1770-1840

Barcode number 1042767: Executions; Judgments, and Ended Causes; Polls; Miscellaneous Land Taxes 1770-1855

Barcode number 0007698867: Commonwealth Causes, Judgments, Deeds 1791-1950 circa

Series IV: Judgment Volumes, 1818-1853

Extent

2 volumes

Subseries A: Superior Court of Law Judgment Volumes, 1818-1823

Extent

1 volume

Physical Location State Records Center

Barcode Number 1105830: Office Judgments, 1818-1823

Subseries B: Unidentified Court Judgment Volume, 1847-1853

Extent

1 volume

Physical Location State Records Center

Scope and Content

The court in which these volumes were used has not been identified.

**Barcode Number 1105816: Commonwealth Docket, Issue, and Office Judgments,
1847-1853**

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