

A Guide to the Amherst County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1822-1864

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
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History

Processed by: S. Nerney

Title Statement

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Subtitle: Amherst County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1822-1864

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Sarah Nerney, 21 March 2013

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

2013-11-21 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Amherst County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

1 volume; 1 microfilm reel

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Amherst County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1822-1864, 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

The Register of "Free Negroes" and List of Deeds Recorded in the Clerk's Office, 1822-1864, was transferred to the Library of Virginia from Amherst County (Va.) as part of an undated accession.

Processing Information

The microfilm of the Register of "Free Negroes" and List of Deeds Recorded in the Clerk's Office, 1822-1864, was originally described as Amherst County (Va.) Register of "Free Negroes," 1822-1864, but was removed to the present Amherst County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1822-1864, record to enhance the context between record types in November 2024.

During the redescription process, Local Records staff reviewed Amherst County (Va.) Reel No. 89, which was found to contain a copy of the Register of "Free Negroes" and List of Deeds Recorded in the Clerk's Office, 1822-1864, as well as loose records that duplicate information found in the register.

These records have been processed and indexed by S. Nerney, L. Neuroth, and other LVA staff for the purposes of digitizing them for the digital project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative.

The volume was conserved by Etherington Conservation Services in 2013. Digital images of the volume were produced by Backstage Library Works in 2021.

Encoded by S. Nerney: March 2013; updated by C. Collins: November 2024.

Preferred Citation

Amherst County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1822-1864. Local government records collection, Amherst County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Alternative Form Available

The Register of "Free Negroes" and List of Deeds Recorded in the Clerk's Office, 1822-1864, is available on microfilm, Amherst County (Va.) Reel No. 89.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Amherst County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records, 1816-1826](#)

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 (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:

"Free Negro" Registers

In 1793, the Virginia General Assembly specified that "free Negroes or mulattoes" were required to be registered and numbered in a book to be kept by the town clerk, which shall specify "age, name, colour, and stature, by whom, and in what court the said negro or mulatto was emancipated; or that such negro or mulatto was born free." The process was extended to counties in 1803. Although some clerks were already recording such features, an 1834 Act of Assembly made it a uniform requirement to record identifying marks and scars and the instrument of emancipation, whether by deed or will. This bound register often coincided with a loose certificate containing largely the same identifying information. Both the registration system and the process of renewal was enforced differently in the various Virginia localities. Thus, the information found

in these registers may differ from year to year and across localities.

The register books resulting from the administration of the 1793 and 1803 Act of Assembly are evidence of Virginia legislators' reaction to a quickly growing free Black and multiracial population in Virginia in the post Revolutionary War period. Acts such as these allowed white officials to police the activities and movement of free Black community members throughout the state thereby restricting their autonomy.

"Free Negro" Registrations

In 1793, the Virginia General Assembly specified that "free Negroes or mulattoes" were required to "be registered and numbered in a book to be kept by the town clerk, which shall specify age, name, color, status and by whom, and in what court emancipated." These entries often coincided with the creation of a loose certificate containing largely the same identifying information.

Documents in this record group differ from the bound volumes referred to as "registers." These registration records typically appear in the form of certificates or handwritten statements recording the free status of a Black or multiracial person. They can include the free person's name, sometimes age, a brief physical description, and the circumstances of the person's freedom or emancipation, parents, former enslaver, place or date of emancipation. There are also affidavits that were given by individuals affirming a free person's status, as well as written descriptions of free people. In some cases, a person would not have a registration to submit to the court. Instead, they produced some other form of identification proving their free status, for example, a deed of emancipation, a will, an apprenticeship indenture, or an affidavit of someone testifying to their character and status.

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.

Scope and Content

Amherst County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1822-1864, consist of the Register of "Free Negroes" and List of Deeds Recorded in the Clerk's Office, 1822-1864.

Amherst County (Va.) Register of "Free Negroes," 1822-1864, records the registration of free Black and multiracial people of Black descent in Amherst County and covers the years 1822 to 1864. The clerk recorded name, age, height, complexion, marks and scars, and in what court the person was emancipated or if the person was born free. There is no index. Includes page numbers. Following the register pages are seven loose papers that are either copies of individual registers or rough drafts of registrations recorded. In some instances, the clerk recorded additional information not required by law such as the name of the former enslaver, previous place of registration, or place of birth.

Amherst County (Va.) List of Deeds Recorded in the Clerk's Office, 1845-1850, begins at the end of the volume and includes a list of deeds subject to taxation from January 1845 to May 1850. Information recorded includes names of grantor and grantee, date, and any applicable tax. There is one loose deed inserted in the pages following the list of deeds.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1822-1864, arranged chronologically by registration date.

Contents List

Series I: Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1822-1864

Extent

1 volume

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically by registration date

**Barcode number 1138341: Register of "Free Negroes" and List of Deeds
Recorded in the Clerk's Office, 1822-1864**

Library of Virginia