

A Guide to the Accomack County (Va.) Commonwealth Causes, 1815-1863

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Descriptive Summary

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English

Collector

Richmond (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

.90 cu. ft. (2 boxes)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These items came to the Library of Virginia in a shipment of court papers from Accomack County under the accession number 44262.

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Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Accomack County (Va.) County Commonwealth Causes involving "free Blacks" and "free persons of color" are available at [Virginia Untold: the African American Narrative digital collection](#).

Additional unprocessed Accomack County (Va.) commonwealth causes are available at the Library of Virginia.

Historical Information

Accomack County was named for the Accomac Indians, who lived on the Eastern Shore at the time of the first English settlement in Virginia. The word means "on-the-other-side-of-water place" or "across the water." It was one of the original eight shires, or counties, first enumerated in 1634 and spelled Accomac without the k. The county's name was changed to Northampton County in 1643. The present county was formed from Northampton about 1663. In October 1670, the General Assembly temporarily reunited Accomack and Northampton Counties as Northampton County. In November 1673, Accomack County was again separated from Northampton. In early records, the county's name was spelled many ways. In 1940 the General Assembly adopted the present spelling, Accomack. The county gained a small part of the southern end of Smith's Island from Somerset County, Maryland, in 1879, after the United States had approved boundary changes between Virginia and Maryland that had been agreed to in 1877. The county seat is Accomac.

In 1806, the General Assembly passed a law stating that all emancipated enslaved people, freed after May 1, 1806, were required to leave the Commonwealth. Those who remained in the Commonwealth more than a year could be put on trial by the state, and if found guilty, would forfeit their right to freedom and be sold with the proceeds from the sale going to the state treasury.

Scope and Content

Materials in the Library of Virginia's collections contain historical terms, phrases, and images that are offensive to modern readers. These include demeaning and dehumanizing references to race, ethnicity, and nationality; enslaved or free status; physical and mental ability; religion; sex; and sexual orientation and gender identity.

Accomack County (Va.) Commonwealth Causes, 1815-1863, consist primarily of commonwealth causes (criminal cases) involving "free Blacks" and "free persons of color" accused of remaining in the Commonwealth more than one year following emancipation.