

A Guide to the Frederick County (Va.) Free Negro and Slave Records, 1795-1871

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia 1117610, 1138021, 1138043
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Descriptive Summary

Barcode numbers:

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Language

English

Collector

Frederick County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

.675 cu. ft. (2 boxes and 1 folder)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The 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 transfers of court papers from Frederick County.

Preferred Citation

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Historical Information

Frederick County was formed in 1738 from Orange County though its first government did not take its seat until 1743. Part of Augusta County was added later.

In 1806, the General Assembly moved to remove the free negro population from Virginia with a law that stated that any emancipated slaves, freed after May 1, 1806, who remained in the Commonwealth more than a year, would forfeit the right to freedom and be sold by the Overseers of the Poor for the benefit of the parish. Families wishing to stay were to petition the legislature through the local county court. Beginning in 1837, freed slaves could petition the local courts for permission to remain.

Beginning in 1778, slaveholders who brought slaves into Virginia were required to register the slaves with the county court and sign an oath agreeing not to bring slaves into the commonwealth with the intent of selling them.

Scope and Content

Frederick County (Va.) Free Negro and Slave Records, 1795-1871, consist of free negro registrations, certifications and affidavits (1795-1864, n.d.); will of Nathaniel Mabry of Greensville County probably used to certify free negro status (1795); lists of free negroes (1851-1861); lists of free negroes returned for non-payment of taxes and/or offered for hire to pay their taxes (1850-1860); applications and petitions to remain in the state (1816-1850); free negro indentures (1805-1871); deeds of emancipation and manumission (1795-1836); certificates of non-importation of slaves (1795-1822); runaway slave matters (1822-1843); valuation and sale of runaway slaves (1824-1845); slave patrol commissions and claims (1820-1860, n.d.); and miscellaneous records (1761-1859).

Free negro registrations, certifications and affidavits contain the name of the free person, sometimes the individual's age and a brief physical description, and a statement or affidavit based either on another person's knowledge or on other official documentary evidence seen by the certifier that this person was either born free or was emancipated. If born free, reference is sometimes made to parents. If emancipated, emancipating owner, place and date of emancipation, and prior registration as a free negro are usually mentioned. Occasionally the register number is given; this number corresponds to the entry number in the register of free negroes kept by the clerk of court at the courthouse. Sometimes other evidence such as a will or deed of manumission was also presented as evidence of free status.

Lists of free negroes (1851, 1854, 1858, 1859, 1861) were compiled by the commissioner of the revenue for tax purposes. One list gives only names and occupations while others give name, age, sex, and occupation.

Lists of free negroes returned for non-payment of taxes and/or offered for hire to pay their taxes were compiled by the commissioner of the revenue (1850-1855, 1858-1860). Some lists give only the names of delinquent persons while others additionally list the amount of capitation and property taxes that remain unpaid. Virginia law allowed the commissioners of the revenue to hire out free negro tax delinquents in order to pay off their taxes. Many of these lists note that there were no one would hire the persons on the list. The 1858 list includes both whites and free negroes.

Applications and petitions to remain in the state include the name of the petitioner, the circumstances of free status, and a request to remain in the county.

Free negro indentures include both voluntary indentures of apprentice and those ordered by the Overseers of the Poor. Some of the later indentures may be for white individuals. The indentures include the name of the

free negro, often the name of parents if the individual is a child, the person to whom apprenticed, and the terms of the apprenticeship. Also included are orders from the Overseers of the Poor to bind out certain free black children.

Deeds of manumission and emancipation state the name of the slaveowner, the name of the slave to be freed, the date the slave shall achieve freedom, the date the manumission was proved or certified, and sometimes a reason why the owner decided to emancipate the slave.

Certificates of non-importation of slaves contain information whereby a slaveowner swears that (s)he has not imported the slave from Africa and that (s)he has not brought the slave into Virginia with the purpose of selling it. The slave is sometimes named but not always and occasionally information is given as to age or birth date.

Runaway slave matters include an advertisement and certification regarding Cyrus, a runaway (1822); a certification regarding Harrison, a runaway (1832); an affidavit from N. C. Williams regarding slaves Nelly and daughters Harriet and Juno who ran away in 1826 as well as slave Rizen who was convicted in Fairfax of housebreaking in 1835(1835); and a bill from the Winchester Virginian newspaper for advertising for a runaway (1843).

Valuation and sale of runaway slaves concern slaves held in the jail for being runaways. The name of the slave is noted as is the name of the purported owner if that can be determined. A group of three named men assessed the value of the slave and their names are given on the document. Such runaways were often sold as punishment and to recover the costs of holding them in jail.

Slave patrol commissions and claims include the names of persons appointed to serve and the amount of pay they claimed against the city for doing the patrol work.

Miscellaneous records include an affidavit regarding a slave suspected either runaway or stolen (1761); a bill of sale from Holliday to Graham for Emanule and Mary (1828); a relinquishment of title to slave to George S. Haynes (1846); and free negro Thomas Champe choose an owner/master (1859).

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Frederick County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Subjects:

African Americans -- Employment -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Free African Americans -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Free blacks -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Freedmen -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Fugitive slaves -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Slaves -- Emancipation -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Slave records -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Tax collection -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Geographical Names:

Frederick County (Va.) -- History.

Genre and Form Terms:

Advertisements -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Affidavits -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Certification -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Deeds -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Free negro and slave records -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Free negro certificates -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Free negro lists -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Free negro registrations -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Local government records -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Patrol returns -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Petitions -- Virginia -- Frederick County.

Contents List

Barcode number 1138021

Scope and Content

Free negro registrations, certifications and affidavits, 1795-1864, n.d.

Barcode number 1117610

Scope and Content

Will of Nathaniel Mabry of Greensville Co. probably used to certify a free negro status, 1795; Lists of free negroes, 1851-1861; Lists of free negroes returned for non-payment of taxes and/or offered for hire to pay their taxes, 1850-1860; Application/petitions to remain in the state, 1816-1850; free negro indentures voluntary and Overseers of the Poor, 1805-1871; Deeds of emancipation/manumission, 1795-1836; Certifications of non-importation of slaves, 1795-1822; runaway slave matters, 1822-1843; valuation and slave of runaway slaves, 1824-1845; patrol commissions and claims, 1820-1860, n.d.; miscellaneous records, 1761-1859.

Barcode number 1138043

Scope and Content

Registrations and certificates of Free Negroes, 1832, 1849, 1856, 1860.