

A Guide to the Bath County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, ca. 1808-1847

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia

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History

Processed by: Library of Virginia staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Bath County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, ca. 1808-1847

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from being created directly into EAD, created by Sarah Nerney, 28 March 2006

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

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

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Creator

Bath County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

digital images

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Bath County (Va.) "Register of Free Negroes," ca. 1808-1847, is 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

Bath County (Va.) Reel No. 141 was generated by the Library of Virginia's Imaging Services Branch at an unknown date.

Processing Information

The free register on Bath County (Va.) Reel No. 141 was originally described as Bath County (Va.) Register of "Free Negroes," ca. 1808-1847, but was removed to the present Bath County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, ca. 1808-1847, record to enhance the context between record types in July 2025.

These records were processed and indexed by L. Neuroth and LVA staff for the purposes of digitizing them for the digital project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative at an unknown date.

Encoded by S. Nerney, March 2006; updated by C. Collins, July 2025; updated by M. Mason, November 2025

Preferred Citation

Bath County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, ca. 1808-1847. Local government records collection, Bath County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Alternative Form Available

Bath County (Va.) "Register of Free Negroes," ca. 1808-1847, is available on microfilm as Bath County (Va.) Reel No. 141

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Bath County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records, 1827](#)

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

Additional Bath 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."](#)

Location of Originals

The original volume of "Register of Free Negroes," ca. 1808-1847 could not be located by the Clerk of the Circuit Court in 2025.

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.

Locality History: Bath County was named either for the many mineral springs found in the county or for the town of Bath in England. It was formed from Augusta, Botetourt, and Greenbrier (now in West Virginia) Counties by a statute passed on 14 December 1790 to take effect 1 May 1791. The county court first met on 10 May 1791. The county seat is Warm Springs.

Scope and Content

Bath County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, ca. 1808-1847, consist of a "Register of Free Negroes," ca. 1808-1847, which records the age, name, complexion, stature, and marks or scars of each individual. The clerk also noted the court in which the person was emancipated or if the person was born free. Some clerks recorded additional information not required by law. There is no index.

The Microfilm copy of the volume also contains nine pages of Certificates of Election, 1865-1866. The certifications, submitted by the clerk of court and election commissioners, verify the winners of particular elections for county, Virginia state senate and house of delegates, and federal congressional elections. The county offices certified include justice of the peace, county surveyor, overseers of the poor, constable, and commissioners of the revenue. The election commissioners and winners of the various offices are named, as are the magisterial or congressional districts to which a particular elected office belonged. These pages are not included in the digital images.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: "Register of Free Negroes," ca. 1808-1847, arranged chronologically by entry date.

Contents List

Series I: Register of "Free Negroes," ca. 1808-1847

Extent

Digital Images

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically by entry date

Barcode number 0007918229: Free Negro Register ca. 1808-1847[Digital]