

A Guide to the Charles City County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1800-1859

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
2006

Author: Sarah Nerney

History

Processed by: Library of Virginia staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Charles City County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1800-1859

Subtitle: Charles City County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records

Author: Sarah Nerney

Publication Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from being created directly into EAD, created by Sarah Nerney, 31 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

Charles City County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

.225 cu. ft. (1 box)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

The bulk of the Charles City County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1800-1859, are digitized and available through [Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative Digital Collection](#) on the Library of Virginia website. Please use digital images where possible.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Charles City County (Va.) as part of an undated accession.

Processing Information

Starting in 2023, Library of Virginia archival staff in partnership with the Virginia Untold Project Manager began efforts to describe records related to free and enslaved Black and Multiracial people in a manner that improved the historical context of the records. In doing so, in some cases material once described within the "Free and Enslaved" record group for a locality may no longer be described within this record. When this has occurred, please see the Processing Information and Related Materials section for records that have been described separately.

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

"Free Negro" registrations and certificates were removed from this record in October 2025 and are now described in Charles City County (Va.) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1821, 1835-1864.

Encoded by S. Nerney: March 2006; updated by C. Collins: October 2025.

Preferred Citation

Charles City County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1800-1859. Local government records collection, Charles City County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Alternative Form Available

A few pages of the List of "Free Negroes and Mulattoes" over Twelve Years of Age, 1859, are available on microfilm, Charles City County (Va.) Reel No. 22.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Charles City County \(Va.\) Records related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1821, 1835-1864](#)

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

Additional Charles City 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.](#)"

Charles City County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Charles City County (Va.) records may be found in the [Lost Records Localities Digital Collection](#) available on the Library of Virginia website.

Historical Information

Context for Record Type:

Free and Enslaved Records:

The Free and Enslaved Records collection is comprised of miscellaneous records related to the regulation and policing of both enslaved and free Black and Multiracial people in Charles City County. The localities/local government authorities were largely responsible for enforcing laws that restricted the movement of enslaved and free Black and Multiracial people and the resulting documentation was often filed in the circuit courts. The ways in which local authorities enacted legal measures against or on behalf of enslaved and free Black and Multiracial people varied from locality to locality; therefore, records were not necessarily standardized or filed and retained in a consistent manner. This collection is topical and a means by which to compile miscellaneous documents related to free and enslaved people that are not established local government record types.

See: the [Virginia Untold Record Types](#) on the Library of Virginia website for additional context concerning "Free Negro" Tax Records.

Locality History: Charles City County was named for King Charles I and was one of the original shires, or counties, first enumerated in 1634. The county seat is Charles City. Part of James City County was added to Charles City in 1721.

Lost Locality Note: Records have been destroyed at various times. The most damage occurred during the Civil War when the records were strewn through the woods in a rainstorm. A few pre-Civil War volumes such as deed books, will books, minute books, and order books exist.

Scope and Content

Charles City County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1800-1859, consist of "Free Negro" Tax Records, 1851, 1859, and Patrol Records, 1800-1855.

"Free Negro" Tax Records, 1851, 1859, include two lists of "free negroes and mulattoes" over the age of 12. The lists document each person's name, age, and occupation. The 1859 list groups the names of each individual by their sex.

Patrol records, 1800-1855, are comprised of patrol returns and patrol appointments. The patrol returns include the names of patrol members, the number of hours each patrolled, and the compensation they received for their services. The patrol appointments include, to varying extends, the names of patrol members and the length of their appointment; some order a patrol to be summoned, but do not specify any names. Typically, they direct patrol members to "patrole and visit all Negro Quarters and other places suspected of entertaining unlawful assemblies of Slaves Servants, or other disorderly persons, as aforesaid unlawfully assembled or any others a strolling about from one plantation to another without a pass from his Master Mistress or Overseer."

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1800-1859, arranged loosely by record type then chronologically.

Contents List

Series I: Free and Enslaved Records, 1800-1859

Extent

Extent: .225 cu. ft. (1 box)

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

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Barcode number 1138019: Free and Enslaved Records, 1800-1859