

A Guide to the Augusta County (Va.) Marriages of Colored persons returned by Freedmen's Bureau Agents, 1865-1866

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1865-1866

A Collection in the Library of Virginia

Library of Virginia

2006

Author: Sarah Nerney

History

Processed by: Sarah Nerney; M. Mason

Title Statement

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Subtitle: Augusta County (Va.) Marriages of Colored persons returned by Freedmen's Bureau Agents, 1865-1866

Author: Sarah Nerney

Publication Statement

Date: © 2006 By The Library of Virginia. All Rights Reserved.

Publisher: Library of Virginia

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from being created directly into EAD, created by Sarah Nerney, 27 September 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

Collector

Augusta County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

1 microfilm reel - Augusta County (Va.) Reel 242

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

The microfilm copy of these records was generated by The Library of Virginia's Imaging Services Branch.

Processing Information

This volume was previously described as "Augusta County (Va.) Volume of Free Negro and Slave Records, 1866" but the supplied titled was changed to "Augusta County (Va.) Marriages of Colored persons returned by Freedmen's Bureau Agents, 1865-1866," in March 2025. This decision was made based upon the information supplied by the targets included on the microfilm reel, freedmen's bureau correspondence, and the heading information found in the volume. This title better reflects the contents of the volume.

Encoded by S. Nerney, 2006; Updated by M. Mason, March 2025

Preferred Citation

Augusta County (Va.) Marriages of Colored persons returned by Freedmen's Bureau Agents, 1865-1866.
Augusta County (Va.) Reel 242, Local government records collection, Augusta County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

The original volume contains similar, but not identical information to the information recorded in the more official registers prepared by the freedmen's Bureau Agents. There appears to be over 100 additional registrants in this volume than indicated in the [Augusta County \(Va.\) Register of Colored Persons cohabiting together as Husband and Wife, 27th February 1866](#)

See also: [Augusta County \(Va.\) Register of Children of Colored Persons whose Parents had ceased to cohabit which the Father recognizes to be his, 27th February 1866](#)

Additional Augusta County Records can be found on microfilm at the Library of Virginia. Consult "[A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm](#)" found on the Library of Virginia web site.

Records related to free and enslaved people of Augusta County and other localities are available on [Virginia Untold](#)

Location of Originals

Original volume remains at the Augusta County Court House. Contact the August County Circuit Court Clerk for access.

Historical Information

Context for Record Type: A cohabitation register, or as it is officially titled, "Register of Colored Persons Cohabiting Together as Husband and Wife on 27th February 1866," was the legal vehicle by which formerly enslaved men and women legitimized both their marriages and their children. During enslavement, enslaved people were considered property by Virginia law. While many enslaved people entered into non-sanctioned marriages, these were neither recognized legally nor protected from enslavers who separated spouses at will. In 1864, Governor Francis Pierpont recommended that the General Assembly of the Restored government of Virginia pass a law "requiring the clerk of each county or corporation court to keep a book, in which, at the joint request of a negro man and woman, who have heretofore been living as man and wife, he shall register their names and the date of their marriage." On February 26, 1866, the General Assembly passed an act legitimizing marriages between enslaved people and the children that resulted from them. These records contain extensive information including the names of the husband and wife, as well as their ages, place of birth, residence, occupations, previous enslavers, previous enslaver's city or county residence,

the name(s) of their children, the children's ages, and the date of commencement of cohabitation.

Locality History: Augusta County was named for Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, who married Frederick Louis, Prince of Wales, and was the mother of King George III. It was formed from Orange County by a statute of 1738 that stipulated that when the population was large enough the new county government would begin to function. The county court first met on 9 December 1745. The county courthouse is in Staunton, and the county administrative offices are in Verona.

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.

Augusta County (Va.) Marriages of Colored persons returned by Freedmen's Bureau Agents, 1865-1866, contains Quarter Masters records at Wisewell Barracks and Hospital (Washington, D.C.), 1865; "Names of Freedpersons who have reported themselves as married by the state law of Virginia passed February 27, 1866"; and a list of indentures of minor freed children in the Rockingham District, 1866. The original volume appears to be largely kept by 1st Lt. George T. Cook, Assistant Sub Assistant Commissioner, for the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, stationed in Augusta County 1866 June- December. This volume was filed with the County Clerk William Burnett by Roswell Waldo, Assistant Sub Assistant Commissioner, in 1868 for local reference purposes. The original volume is at least 301 pages; however, pages 106-299 are not included as part of the microfilmed images. There is no index.

The "List of Quarter Masters Stores et cetera at Wisewell Barracks and Hospital," 1865, records the number of heating stoves, shovels, fire pokers, pieces of zinc, fire axes, and other items relating to stoves and stove equipment found in the various rooms and offices of the Wisewell Barracks and hospital (Washington, D.C.). [pages 3-7]

The bulk of the volume is composed of lists of the "Names of Freedpersons who have reported themselves as married by the state law of Virginia passed February 27, 1866" and lists of the "Names of Children of Freedpeople who have reported," 1866. The register records a register number, the date of registration, the names of the husband and wife, their ages and places of birth, the occupation of the husband, their current residence, and a "remarks" or notes column for additional information such as the death of one of the parties. The leaf following the information of the married couple then usually notes the children of the individuals registered, noting a register number, the name of the father and the names and ages of the children that he recognized to be his. Sometimes the names of the children names are included in the notes column of the marriage lists. The volume includes about 894 register entries. [pages 10-105]

The final pages of the volume, are a register of "Indentures of Minor Freed Children in Rockingham Co. by 1st Lt. George T. Cook", 1866. These are apprenticeship indentures coordinated by the Freedmen's Bureau. The register includes a register number, date of the registration, name of the child, sex, age in years and months, to whom bound, county of residence, trade or occupation to be taught, amount of money to be paid to the child at the close of the indenture, and the name of the witness to the indenture. [pages 300-301]

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Marriages of Colored persons returned by Freedmen's Bureau Agents, 1865-1866

Contents List

Series I: Marriages of Colored persons returned by Freedmen's Bureau Agents, 1865-1866

Extent

1 microfilm reel

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Reel no:August County (Va.) Reel 242

