

A Guide to the Bath County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1798

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1798

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.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1798

Subtitle: Bath County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from being created directly into EAD, created by Catherine G. O'Brien, 20 June 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

1 item

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

The deed of emancipation was purchased by the Library of Virginia from Raynors Historical Collectible Auctions in 2003 and accessioned under accession number 40929.

Processing Information

The deed of emancipation was originally described as part of the Bath County (Va.) Bill of Emancipation, 1798, record, but was removed to the present Bath County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1798, record to enhance discoverability in June 2025. The physical deed was interfiled with the Bath County (Va.) Free and Enslaved records in July 2025 by C. Collins.

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 C. O'Brien: June 2006; updated by C. Collins: June 2025.

Preferred Citation

Bath County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1798. Local government records collection, Bath County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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.](#)"

Historical Information

Context of Record Type: Deeds of emancipation and manumission record an enslaver's intent to emancipate enslaved people from bondage. Some of the earliest legal manumissions in Virginia occurred in the early 1770s. However, there was a sharp rise following the 1782 manumission act that allowed enslavers to privately emancipate enslaved people "by last will and testament or other instrument in writing sealed." They were no longer required to seek a special act from the General Assembly. These documents sometimes include an enslaver's intent for emancipation ranging from religious and moral motivations to binding legal agreements.

Deeds of emancipation and manumission essentially provide the same information and there is little difference between the two. Both include the name of the enslaver, the name of the enslaved person to be freed, the date of anticipated freedom, the date the manumission was proved or certified, and as mentioned, sometimes a reason why the enslaver decided to emancipate the enslaved person. In a deed of manumission, an enslaver directly freed an enslaved person by manumission. In a deed of emancipation, an enslaved person could be freed after the enslaver's death by those executing a last will and testament. This collection also includes court orders that record the date or age when enslaved individuals were to be emancipated by deed as stipulated in an enslaver's will.

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.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1798, are comprised of one deed. Deeds of emancipation typically record the name of enslaver, the name of the enslaved person or persons to be freed, the date the enslaved person or persons achieved freedom, and the date the manumission was proved or certified. Sometimes, they describe the reason for emancipation or manumission. Deeds of emancipation could be generated after the enslaver's death by those executing a last will and testament.

These records include a deed, 1798, in which George Massingbird freed Lewis, whom he described as "a Mulattoe Man" around 20 years old.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Deeds of Emancipation, 1798, arranged chronologically.

Contents List

Series I: Deeds of Emancipation, 1798

Extent

Extent: 1 item

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically

Barcode number 0007910775: Free and Enslaved Records, 1798, 1827

Library of Virginia