

A Guide to the Fairfax County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1790

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1790

A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
2006
Author: Catherine G. O'Brien

History

Processed by: Library of Virginia staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Fairfax County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1790

Subtitle: Fairfax County (Va.) Certificates of Importation

Author: Catherine G. O'Brien

Publication Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from being created directly into EAD, created by Catherine G. O'Brien, 07 July 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

Fairfax County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

1 item

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Fairfax County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1790, are 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

The certificate was purchased by the Library of Virginia from Raynors Historical Collectible Auctions in 2005 and accessioned under accession number 41714.

Processing Information

The certificate was originally described as Fairfax County (Va.) Certificate of Non-Importation of Slaves, 1790, but was removed to the present Fairfax County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1790, record to enhance discoverability in June 2025. The physical certificate was interfiled with the Fairfax County (Va.) Free and Enslaved records in July 2025 by C. Collins.

These records were 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 at an unknown date.

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

Preferred Citation

Fairfax County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1790. Local government records collection, Fairfax County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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

Additional Fairfax 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.](#)"

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

Historical Information

Context for Record Type: In 1778, Governor Patrick Henry enacted legislation preventing importation of enslaved people into the commonwealth. Those that did bring their enslaved people were required to register them with the county court and sign a certificate of importation agreeing that they were not bringing enslaved people into the commonwealth with the intent to sell. The enslaved person is sometimes named, but not always, and occasionally information is given as to age, birthdate, and the state from which the individuals were moving. According to Section 3 of the act "every slave imported into this commonwealth contrary to the true intent and meaning of this act, shall upon such importation become free." By this clause, those enslaved people who were brought into Virginia illegally could pursue their freedom in the local courts. Fairfax County was formed in 1742 from Prince William County.

Locality History: Fairfax County was named for Thomas Fairfax, sixth baron Fairfax of Cameron, proprietor of the Northern Neck. It was formed from Prince William County in 1742. Part of Loudoun County was added in 1798. The county seat is the city of Fairfax.

Lost Locality Note: Original wills and deeds as well as many other loose papers were destroyed during the Civil War; deed books for twenty-six of the fifty-six years between 1763 and 1819 are missing. Numerous pre-Civil War minute books are missing as well.

Scope and Content

Fairfax County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1790, sometimes entitled certificates of nonimportation, contain information whereby an enslaver swears that they have not imported the enslaved person from Africa and that the enslaver has not brought the enslaved person into Virginia with the purpose of selling the enslaved person. The enslaved person is sometimes named, but not always, and occasionally information is given as to age, birthdate, and the state the individuals are moving from.

These records are comprised of a certificate, 1790, in which Rozin Offutt affirmed he had not brought

George, Daniel, Phillis, Love, and Tine into Virginia "to sell them," nor had they been "Imported from Africa or any of the westindia Islands."

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Certificates of Importation, 1790, arranged chronologically.

Contents List

Series I: Certificates of Importation, 1790

Extent

Extent: 1 item

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically

Barcode number 0007910757: Certificates of Importation, 1790

Library of Virginia