

A Guide to the Lancaster County (Va.) Free Negro and Slave Records, 1751-1861

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History

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Descriptive Summary

Barcode number

1133868

Language

English

Collector

Lancaster County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

.45 cu. ft. (1 box)

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

These items came to the Library of Virginia in transfers of court papers from Lancaster County.

Preferred Citation

Lancaster County (Va.) Free Negro and Slave Records, 1751-1861. Local government records collection, Lancaster County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Lancaster Free Negro and Slave Records can be found on microfilm at the Library of Virginia. Consult ["A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm."](#)

Historical Information

Lancaster County was named probably for the English county. It was formed from Northumberland and York Counties sometime between 26 March and 16 September 1651. The county court first met on 1 January 1652. The county seat is Lancaster.

An act passed by the Virginia legislature in 1856 allowed freed slaves who desired to remain in Virginia to petition for reenslavement and choose a master or owner and remain in the state.

Scope and Content

Lancaster County (Va.) Free Negro and Slave Records include lists of free negroes (1813-1814, 1832, 1837-1841, 1851, 1853, 1857-1861, n.d.); patrol accounts (1785-1861); petitions, affidavits and certificates (1818, 1826, 1837, 1840, 1843-1844, 1851-1853, 1855); slave bills of sale (1789, 1802-1803, 1808, 1811, 1818, 1821, 1832-1834, 1840, 1853); and miscellaneous records (1751-1854).

Lists of free negroes were compiled by the commissioner of the revenue for tax purposes. They record the full name of each individual, whether male or female, place of residence, and trade, occupation or calling for each person on the list. On some lists, family groupings are clearly delineated. The 1814 list is a photocopy.

Patrol accounts give the district patrolled by a particular company of slave patrol and the names and number of hours for each participant. On most lists, the captain of the company is noted and a total amount of payment is given.

Petitions, affidavits and certificates consist of several kinds of records. The certificates or registrations (1840, 1851-1853, 1855) are copies of an individual's free negro registration kept by the clerk of court and contain the registration number, name, age, physical description, and circumstances of free status (i.e. born free or emancipated). The 1840 certificate is a copy of an 1817 registration from Baltimore County, Maryland, for Richard Johnson and was probably used to prove free status as a notation on the reverse of the document instructs the jailor to release him. There are petitions and summons relating to petitions to remain in the county of Lancaster (1826, 1837, 1843, 1844). The petitions state the name of the petitioner, the circumstances of free status, and a request to remain in the county often with accompanying names of citizens who can testify to the free status or who support the request of the petitioner to remain. The summonses give the names of witnesses, name of the petitioner(s), and the court date that the petition will be considered. There are two affidavits (1855) from Baltimore, Maryland, concerning the free status of a boy named John Ellis.

Slave bills of sale are deeds transferring ownership of slaves and include the name of the seller, the name of the purchaser, the price, and usually the names of the slaves being sold. Occasionally the ages of the slaves are given. Several of the deeds are more like fiduciary records in that they are reports of slaves sold from a

particular estate. Some deeds include other goods being sold in addition to slaves such as livestock or furniture.

Petition for Reenslavement, 1857, consists of the petition of Armistead Currie to give up his freedom in order to remain in Virginia. He asked the court to assign Addison Hull as his owner.

Miscellaneous records include commonwealth causes against slaves for assorted crimes (1824-1828, 1854); deeds of emancipation (1751, 1790-1796, 1827); a photocopy of a guardian's bond for free persons of color Robert and Jane Lowe (1832); a petition from Caroline Sherman for tax relief on an infirm and elderly slave named Jacob (1822); a photocopy of the petition of Anna Laws to be freed from her indenture (1779); a letter from David Boyd requesting that a search of the clerk's records be made to determine whether Susanna Jones and her children, mulattoes, were ever bound out by the court (1754); and a photocopy of a notice of judgment from the Overseers of the Poor to Elizabeth A. and Sarah Lattimer for the maintenance of a slave named Shadrach (1826).

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Lancaster County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Subjects:

African Americans--Virginia--Lancaster County.
African Americans--Employment--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Free African Americans--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Freedmen--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Slave records--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Slaveholders--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Slaves--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Tax collection--Virginia--Lancaster County.

Geographical Names:

Lancaster County (Va.)--History.

Genre and Form Terms:

Accounts--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Affidavits--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Bills of sale--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Bonds (legal records)--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Certificates--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Criminal court records--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Deeds of manumission--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Free negro and slave records--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Free negro lists--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Free negro registrations--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Free papers--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Letters (correspondence)--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Local government records--Virginia--Lancaster County.
Summons--Virginia--Lancaster County.

Added Entry - Corporate Name:

Baltimore County (Md.) Circuit Court.