

A Guide to the Henry County (Va.) Free Negro and Slave Records, 1796-1868

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1796-1868



A Collection in the Library of Virginia 1138024, 1138044
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History

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Title Statement

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Author: Sarah Nerney

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Descriptive Summary

Barcode numbers

1138024, 1138044

Language

English

Collector

Henry County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

.225 cu. ft.

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 a transfer of court records from Henry County.

Preferred Citation

Henry County (Va.) Free Negro and Slave Records, 1796-1868, Local government records collection, Henry County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Henry County 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

Henry County was formed in 1776 from Pittsylvania County.

Beginning in 1778, slaveholders who brought slaves into Virginia were required to register the slaves with the county court and sign an oath agreeing not to bring slaves into the commonwealth with the intent of selling them.

An act passed by the Virginia legislature required that a register be kept by the clerk of court for every slave held by any person for his or her life only. See Revised Code of Virginia 1819, volume 1, p. 439, section 70; Code of Virginia 1849, chapter 103, section 8; and Code of Virginia 1860, chapter 103, section 14.

Scope and Content

Henry County (Va.) Free Negro and Slave Records, 1796-1868. The collection contains court records documenting the interactions of free negroes and slaves with the county courts between 1796 and 1868. They include free negro registrations and certificates (1849-1859), lists of free negroes (1842-1862, undated), proceedings of slaves requisitioned for public use (1862- 1865, undated), slave patrol returns and appointments (1796-1863, undated), certificates of non-importation of slaves (1816, 1818), registers of slaves held for life (1853-1860), and miscellaneous items (1831-1868, undated).

Free negro registrations (1849-1859) contain the name of the free person, sometimes their age and a brief physical description, and a statement based either on another person's knowledge or on other official documentary evidence seen by the certifier that this person was either born free or was emancipated. If born free, reference is sometimes made to parents. Several of the certificates note that the free negro was not born to an emancipated female since May 1, 1806.

Lists of free negroes (1842-1862, undated) were compiled by the commissioner of the revenue for tax purposes. The lists give the full name, age, sex, and trade or occupation for each person on the list. The 1852 list is a fragment.

Proceedings of slaves requisitioned for public use (1862-1865, undated) contain various lists and receipts related to the requisitioning of slaves and free negroes to work on the fortifications during the Civil War. Records include lists of slaveowners and the number(s) of slaves sent, lists of slaveowners and slaves listed by name who were sent to the public works, orders from the state or county government regarding the requisitions, lists of free negroes drafted into work, a list of hands hired for the government stables, a receipt for providing meals to negroes, and a list of slaves examined by the medical board where slave and owner names are given as well as the slave's age and whether the slave is fit for work or exempt for a medical

reason.

Slave patrol returns and appointments (1796-1863, undated) contain appointments, orders and returns for payment of men appointed to patrol for runaways and slaves up to criminal activities. The patrol returns list the names of patrollers, dates and/or hours served on the slave patrol, and occasionally the amount of money to be paid. The captain of the patrol is usually indicated. The patrol orders and appointments are directives by the justice of the peace for specifically named men to patrol the county for a specific amount of time.

Certificates of non-importation of slaves contain information whereby a slaveowner swears that (s)he has not imported the slave from Africa and that (s)he has not brought the slave into Virginia with the purpose of selling it. Both of these certificates include the names, ages, and a brief physical description of the slaves brought into the state.

Registers of slaves held for life lists the name of the person who holds the slave(s) for life, the names and sometimes the ages of the slaves, and the former owner of the slaves or to whom the slaves would descend upon the death of the tenant.

Miscellaneous records include an oyer and terminer justice appointment (undated); a slave bill of sale (1838); a photocopy of judgment case Commonwealth vs. Henry Harris, a free negro, for having an illegal firearm (1850 May); report for hire of a negro (1855); applications from people of "mixed blood" to certify themselves as not a negro (1855, 1859); a judgment case Harris vs. Brewer (1860); articles of agreement between Edmund Randolph, colored, and Silas Self where the Freedman's Bureau had to give their consent to the arrangement (1866); similar articles of agreement between Ephraim Volintine and Aza Bateman (1866); and two orders from Orlando Brown of the Freedman's Bureau and Virginia Governor H. H. Wells instructing the clerks of court to receive the cohabitation registers from agents of the Freedman's Bureau. (1868).

A portion of these records are also available on microfilm. See Henry County (Va.) Reel 104 and Miscellaneous Reel 1134, Henry County Free Negro and Slave Records, 1838-1900 (accession 34440).

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Henry County (Va.). Circuit Court.

Subjects:

African Americans -- Employment -- Virginia -- Henry County.

African Americans -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Civil defense. -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Confederate States of America -- Defenses.

Free African Americans -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Slave labor -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Slaveholders -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Slavery -- Law and legislation -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Slaves -- Emancipation -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Tax collection -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Geographical Names:

Henry County (Va.) -- History -- 18th century.

Henry County (Va.) -- History -- 19th century.

Genre and Form Terms:

Bills of sale -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Certificates -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Emancipations -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Free negro and slave records -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Free negro lists -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Free negro registrations -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Judicial records -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Local government records -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Patrol returns -- Virginia -- Henry County.

Contents List

Barcode number 1138024

Scope and Content

Free negro registrations and certificates, 1849-1859; lists of free negroes, 1842-1862, n.d.; proceedings of slaves requisitioned for public use, 1862-1865, n.d. see also oversized box; slave patrol returns and appointments, 1796-1863, n.d.; oyer and terminer justice appointment, n.d.; miscellaneous (see catalog record for details) 1831-1868; certificates of non-importation of slaves, 1816, 1818; registers of slaves held for life, 1853-1860.

Barcode number 1138044

Scope and Content

List of quota slaves, 1862; lists of free negroes, 1848, 1849, 1856; list of slave owners and number of slaves available for Confederate service, 1862.