

# A Guide to the Louisa County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1803-1865

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia

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## History

**Processed by:** Library of Virginia staff

## Title Statement

A Guide to the Louisa County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1803-1865

**Subtitle:** Louisa County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1803-1865

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## Publication Statement

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## Profile Description

**Creation:** Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Sarah Nerney, 9 January 2008

**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

Louisa County (Va.) Circuit Court.

### Physical Characteristics

digital images; 2 folders; 1 microfilm reel (214 images)

### Location

Library of Virginia

### Repository

The Library of Virginia

# Administrative Information

## Access Restrictions

All Louisa County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1803-1865, 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

"Bond Book 2 and Free Negro Register," 1754-1837 came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of records from the Louisa County Circuit Court in 2025 under accession 54493.

"Free Negro Register," 1837-1865 digital images came to the Library of Virginia in 2025 under accession 54641 after the microfilm was scanned by Backstage.

"Free Negro" Registrations, 1803-1864 came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of records from the Louisa County Circuit Court in an undated accession.

## Processing Information

The microfilm copy of "Register of Free Negroes," 1837-1865, was generated by The Library of Virginia's Imaging Services Branch. This microfilm was then digitized by Backstage in 2025.

"Free Negro" Registration Records, 1803-1864, were originally described as part of the Louisa County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records but were removed to the present Louisa County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons in July 2025 to enhance the context between the record types.

These records have been processed, scanned, and indexed by L. Neuroth and other LVA staff for the purposes of digitizing them for the digital project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative. Encoded by S. Nerney, 2007; updated by M. Mason, July 2025; Updated by M.Mason, March 2026

## Preferred Citation

Louisa County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1803-1865. [series or volume title]. Local government records collection, Louisa County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia

# Alternative Form Available

"Register of Free Negroes," 1837-1865, is available on microfilm as Louisa (Va.) Reel 118

# Adjunct Descriptive Data

# Related Material

See also: [Louisa County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records](#)

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

Additional Louisa County (Va.) court records can be found on microfilm at the Library of Virginia. Consult "[A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm.](#)"

# Location of Originals

The original "Register of Free Negroes," 1837-1865, is believed to be located at the Louisa County Circuit Court although the current location is unknown.

# Historical Information

## Context for Record Type:

### "Free Negro" Registers

In 1793, the Virginia General Assembly specified that "free Negroes or mulattoes" were required to be registered and numbered in a book to be kept by the town clerk, which shall specify "age, name, colour, and stature, by whom, and in what court the said negro or mulatto was emancipated; or that such negro or

mulatto was born free." The process was extended to counties in 1803. Although some clerks were already recording such features, an 1834 Act of Assembly made it a uniform requirement to record identifying marks and scars and the instrument of emancipation, whether by deed or will. This bound register often coincided with a loose certificate containing largely the same identifying information. Both the registration system and the process of renewal was enforced differently in the various Virginia localities. Thus, the information found in these registers may differ from year to year and across localities.

The register books resulting from the administration of the 1793 and 1803 Act of Assembly are evidence of Virginia legislators' reaction to a quickly growing free Black and multiracial population in Virginia in the post Revolutionary War period. Acts such as these allowed white officials to police the activities and movement of free Black community members throughout the state thereby restricting their autonomy.

### "Free Negro" Registrations

In 1793, the Virginia General Assembly specified that "free Negroes or mulattoes" were required to "be registered and numbered in a book to be kept by the town clerk, which shall specify age, name, color, status and by whom, and in what court emancipated." These entries often coincided with the creation of a loose certificate containing largely the same identifying information.

Documents in this record group differ from the bound volumes referred to as "registers." These registration records typically appear in the form of certificates or handwritten statements recording the free status of a Black or multiracial person. They can include the free person's name, sometimes age, a brief physical description, and the circumstances of the person's freedom or emancipation, parents, former enslaver, place or date of emancipation. There are also affidavits that were given by individuals affirming a free person's status, as well as written descriptions of free people. In some cases, a person would not have a registration to submit to the court. Instead they produced some other form of identification proving their free status, for example, a deed of emancipation, a will, an apprenticeship indenture, or an affidavit of someone testifying to their character and status.

**Locality History Note:** Louisa County was named for Louisa, a daughter of King George II and wife of King Frederick V of Denmark. It was formed from Hanover County in 1742.

## Scope and Content

Louisa County (Va.) Records Related to the Registration of Free Persons, 1803-1865, includes two "Register of Free Negroes" volumes, 1754-1837 and 1837-1865; as well as loose "Free Negro" Registrations, 1803-1864, undated

Bonds Recorded and "Register of Free Negroes", 1754-1837, volume is 355 pages with the first portion of the volume recording various bonds and the back half of the volume serving as the "Register of Free Negroes," 1816-1837. There is an incomplete index for the bonds. The register's entries are not included in the index.

The "Bonds Recorded" also labeled "Bond Book No. 2," contains recorded bonds for Louisa County, 1754-1766. These bonds largely concern estate settlements and the probate of wills. [pages 1- 195].

"Register of Free Negroes," 1816-1837, records the registration number, age, name, color, stature, marks or scars, and in what court the person was emancipated or whether the person was born free. There are about 213 registration entries. As the volume was flipped and reused, entries for the "Register of Free Negroes" start on the last page of the volume [pages 196-355]

"Register of Free Negroes," 1837-1865, records the registration number, age, name, color, stature, marks or scars, and in what court the person was emancipated or whether the person was born free. Some clerks recorded additional information not required by law. There is an index at the front of the volume. The volume is 214 pages, containing registrations no.- 216-658.

"Free Negro" Registrations, 1809, 1833, 1847-1848, 1850, 1853, 1857, 1861, contain about 18 registrations and include the name of the free person, sometimes the individual's age and a brief physical description, and a statement or affidavit 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. If emancipated, emancipating owner, place and date of emancipation, and prior registration as a free negro are usually mentioned. Occasionally the register number is given; this number corresponds to the entry number in the "Register of Free Negroes" volumes.

## Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: "Free Negro" Registers, 1818-1865
- Series II: "Free Negro" Registrations, 1803-1864

# Contents List

## **Series I: "Free Negro" Registers 1818-1865**

### **Extent**

digital images

**Physical Location** Library of Virginia

**Barcode number 0007908141: Bond Book 2 and Free Negro Register, 1754-1837 [Digital Images]**

**Barcode number 0007918772: Free Negro Register, 1837-1865 [Digital Images]**

## **Series II: "Free Negro" Registrations, 1803-1864**

### **Extent**

3 folders

**Physical Location** Library of Virginia

**Barcode number 1153192: Free and Enslaved Records, 1809-1863**

**Barcode number 1153190: Free and Enslaved Records, 1770-1865**