

A Guide to the Henrico County (Va.) Ministers' Returns, 1815-1853

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia Barcode number 1108218/Henrico County (Va.) Reel 89

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Descriptive Summary

Collection numbers

Barcode number 1108218/Henrico County (Va.) Reel 89

Language

English

Collector

Henrico County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

1 v. (188 p.); 1 microfilm reel.

Location

State Records Center - Archives Annex, Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

Use microfilm copy, Henrico County (Va.) Reel 89.

Acquisition Information

This original volume came to the Virginia State Library (now the Library of Virginia) in a transfer of court papers from Henrico County.

The microfilm copy was generated by the Genealogical Society of Utah while filming at the Henrico County Courthouse.

Preferred Citation

Henrico County (Va.) Ministers' Returns, 1815-1853. Henrico County (Va.) Reel 89, Local government records collection, Henrico County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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

Henrico County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Henrico County Court Records may be found in the Virginia Lost Records Localities Collection at the Library of Virginia. Search the [Lost Records Localities Database](#) found at the Library of Virginia web site.

Historical Information

Henrico County was one of the eight original shires, or counties, first enumerated in 1634. The county was named for Henry, Prince of Wales, eldest son of King James I.

Prior to 1853, when the Commonwealth began recording vital statistics, Virginia marriages were recorded at the county or city level. Beginning in 1661, in order to be married by license, the groom was required to go before the county clerk and give bond with security that there was no lawful reason to prevent the marriage. The license, issued then by the clerk, was given to the minister who performed the service. Written consent from a parent or guardian was needed for individuals younger than twenty-one years.

Until 1780, marriages could be performed only by ministers of the Established Church, who were required by law to record marriages in the parish register. In 1780, dissenting ministers (only four per county from each sect) were first permitted to perform marriage ceremonies. In order to have a record of all marriages, ministers were required to sign a certificate to be filed with the county clerk. Initially, ministers sent marriage certificates to the clerk every three months. Some ministers adopted a custom of making collected returns--a list of marriages performed within a period of time such as a year or several years. Beginning in 1784, marriage certificates were returned annually. The law was rarely enforced, and ministers' returns were sometimes late, incorrect, incomplete, and in many instances, not made at all. County clerks compiled a register of marriages based, in part, on ministers' returns.

The ministers' returns of Henrico County (Va.) described in this collection were created by the County Court.

Recognized in 1634 as an original shire. All county court records prior to 1655 and almost all prior to 1677 are missing. Many records were destroyed by British troops during the Revolutionary War. Post-Revolutionary War county court records exist. Almost all circuit superior court of law and chancery and circuit court records were destroyed by fire during the evacuation of Richmond on April 3, 1865, during the Civil War. The county's circuit court held its sessions at the state courthouse in Richmond.

Scope and Content

Henrico County (Va.) Ministers' Returns, 1815-1853, records the returns made by individual ministers of marriages performed within the county. This volume was originally titled "Records at Large, 1815-1853." Returns in this volume, prior to 1853, record the names of the parties, the date of the marriage ceremony and the minister's name and denomination. As part of the return process, ministers filed marriage certificates with the county clerk. These signed documents certified that a minister had performed the actual marriage ceremony between the named individuals on a certain date. Returns also took the form of lists.

By 1853, more information was included in lists or certificates from the individual ministers such as the ages of the parties, country of origin (in this case, Germany), occupation of husband, status of parties before marriage and where parties were married. In addition, the parents' names of both parties and the birthplaces of both parties were sometimes noted. Marriages between free persons of color are noted, from 1825-1853, in various returns. There is an internal index to the volume following the returns. This index is organized alphabetically A-Y, by the groom's surname, according to the order of the page numbers in the volume. Surnames with B, G, S or W are found on additional pages in the index. Colored persons or free persons of color are noted with parentheses.

This volume also contains marriage licenses prepared by the county clerk and presented to the minister who would perform the ceremony. These signed documents "authorized and licensed" or "licensed and permitted" the ministers to perform the actual marriage ceremonies. The license indicated to the minister and the public that there were no impediments to the marriage.

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Henrico County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Subjects:

Christian sects--Virginia--Henrico County.

Clergy--Virginia--Henrico County.

Free African Americans--Marriage--Virginia--Henrico County.

Free African Americans--Virginia--Henrico County.

Marriage--Virginia--Henrico County.

Geographical Names:

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

Genre and Form Terms:

Local government records--Virginia--Henrico County.

Marriage certificates--Virginia--Henrico County.

Marriage licenses--Virginia--Henrico County.

Marriage records--Virginia--Henrico County.

Ministers' returns--Virginia--Henrico County.

Added Entry - Corporate Name:

Henrico County (Va.) County Court.