

A Guide to the Lunenburg County (Va.) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1869

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia

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History

Processed by: Autumn Simpson

Title Statement

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Profile Description

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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

Lunenburg County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

1.1 cubic feet (4 boxes)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Lunenburg County (Va.) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1869 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

Freedmen's Bureau Apprenticeship indentures came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of Court records in 2006 under accession 42852.

Other Freedmen's Bureau Records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of Court records in an undated accession.

Processing Information

Lunenburg County (Va) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands Records were previously described in Lunenburg County (Va.) Freedmen's Contracts, 1865-1866, and Lunenburg County (Va.) Apprenticeship Bonds and Indentures, 1865-1867. These were combined with other Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands Records for the locality in 2024 to enhance the context between the various records.

Nottoway County (Va.) Freedmen's Bureau Apprenticeship Indentures, 1866-1867 were previous housed and described with the Lunenburg County (Va.) Apprenticeship Bonds and Indentures, 1865-1867 now described in Lunenburg County (Va) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands Records. For unknown reasons, these records, were filed in Lunenburg County and mistakenly identified as orphans bonds because most of the African American children indentured were orphans. Lunenburg County and Nottoway County were in the same military district following the Civil War. The military authority was headquartered in Lunenburg County courthouse.

These records have been 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 A. Simpson, 2009 ; updated by M. Mason, February 2024

Preferred Citation

Lunenburg County (Va.) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1869. Local government records collection, Lunenburg County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Lunenburg County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records, 1802-1865](#)

See also: [Lunenburg County \(Va.\) Apprenticeship Indentures, 1799-1868](#)

See also: [Nottoway County \(Va.\) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1866-1867](#)

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

Additional Lunenburg County Records can be found on microfilm at the Library of Virginia. Consult ["A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm"](#) found on the Library of Virginia's web site.

Historical Information

Context for Record Type:

Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands On March 3, 1865, the federal government created The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands using the Freedmen's Bureau Bill. Also known as the "Freedmen's Bureau," this agency was responsible for aiding refugees of the Civil War, especially formerly enslaved people in the areas of education, employment, and health care. Meant to last for only one year after the war, the Bureau was largely operational from June 1865 to December 1868, and officially abolished in 1872.

Freedmen's Contracts

Local offices of the Freedmen's Bureau assisted in drawing up contracts between formerly enslaved people and employers. These contracts were meant to ensure that the formerly enslaved were accorded fair and legal work contracts that included precise terms of employment. However, because many formerly enslaved people were forced to enter into arrangements with former enslavers, arrangements could be largely ignored or abused. They eventually morphed into sharecropping and debt peonage. Contracts usually specify the dates of the expected employment, the occupation of the employee, expected wages and housing arrangements, and any rent that was to be paid to the employer. These records were generated by the federal government and therefore many are housed in the National Archives, however a few localities retained possession of these records in their courthouses after the dissolution of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1872.

Freedmen's Apprenticeship Indentures

In the fall of 1865, the Freedmen's Bureau assumed responsibility as the governing body for apprenticeship indentures and oversaw the binding out of children of formerly enslaved people to indenture holders. Although these contracts were generated by the federal government, a few localities retained possession and they were filed in the courthouse as Freedmen's Bureau records. They typically contain the name of the person or institution binding out, the person to whom bound, the name of the person being indentured, the length of the apprenticeship, and the responsibilities of the person taking on the indenture.

Locality History: Lunenburg County was named for George II, duke of Brunswick-Luneburg, a German possession of the Hanoverian kings of England. It was formed from Brunswick County in 1745.

Scope and Content

Lunenburg County (Va.) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1869, consists of Freedmen's Bureau Apprenticeship Indentures, 1865-1867; Freedmen's Contracts, 1865-1866; and various correspondence and records, 1865-1868.

Apprenticeship Bonds and Indentures, 1865-1867, consists of twenty-seven indentures which record the binding of Black and multiracial children to individuals for the purpose of learning a trade. Both are contractual agreements between the indenture holder and agents of the Freedmen's Bureau. They stipulate the amount the indenture holder agreed to pay to the Freedmen's Bureau in exchange for the child to be bound to them by the Freedmen's Bureau; length of apprenticeship; and a statement of the obligations and responsibilities of each party. Information found in the apprenticeship indentures include names of the indenture holder and Freedmen's Bureau agents, bond amount, date of indenture, names and age of the apprentice, and name of trade.

Freedmen's Contracts, 1865-1866, consist of a little over 300 (2 boxes) employment contracts between formerly enslaved Black and multiracial individuals and their employers. Contracts usually specify the dates of the expected employment, the occupation of the employee, expected wages and housing arrangements and any rent that is to be paid to the employer.

Correspondence and Records, 1867-1869, of the Freedmen's Bureau and Military District concerning the activities of the Local Courts in Lunenburg County. Includes circular [printed], 1867 May 28, of General Order No. 31, noting the role of Military Commissioners in keeping local order; circular, 1867 June 6, noting Brevet Captain D. J. Connolly as Military Commissioner of Lunenburg and Nottoway; and circular, 1867 April 3, of the Freedmen's Bureau concerning control and regulation of local court (in response to racial violence in Lunenburg and racism in the carrying out of the law).

Correspondence, 1867, concerning accounts and other administration functions.

Resolutions, 1867, passed by the court of Lunenburg County largely done in response to circulars and other actions of the military district or Freedmen's Bureau which they believe are unjust actions.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into

- Series I: Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1869, and organized by records type then chronologically

Contents List

Series I: Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1869

Extent

1.1 cubic feet (4 boxes)

Barcode number 1177493:Apprenticeship Bonds and Indentures, 1865-1866

Barcode number 1202860:Freedmen's Contracts, 1865-1866

Barcode number 1202861:Freedmen's Contracts, 1866

Barcode number 1202259:Various Series, 1825-1886

Scope and Content

Court Records: Communications with Freedmen's Bureau and Military District, 1867-1869