

A Guide to the Richmond (Va.) Inquisitions of Escheat and Estrays, 1821-1868

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Descriptive Summary

Barcode number

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Language

English

Collector

Richmond (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

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Location

State Records Center - Archives Annex, Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

This volume came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from the City of Richmond.

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Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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

Historical Information

The City of Richmond is located between Henrico and Chesterfield Counties. It was named by William Byrd II, who with the help of William Mayo laid out the town in 1737. The name probably came from the English borough of Richmond upon Thames. Richmond was established in 1742 and in 1779 was designated the capital of Virginia effective April 1780. Incorporated as a town in 1782 and incorporated as a city in 1842, it was the capital of the Confederate States of America from 1861 to 1865. Richmond was enlarged by several annexations, including Manchester/South Richmond (1910), Barton Heights, Fairmount, and Highland Park (1914). A further annexation from Chesterfield County occurred in 1970.

In 1785 the General Assembly passed an act authorizing the appointment of an escheator by the governor for each locality. An act was passed in December 1797 to permit escheators to sell land on credit if they thought it would enhance the price. The purchaser signed a deed of trust and a bond, copies of which were sent to the auditor of public accounts.

Established in 1742; incorporated as a town, although "stiled the city of Richmond," in 1782. During the burning of Richmond on April 3, 1865, during the Civil War, Richmond circuit court judge John A. Meredith led efforts to save the circuit court records found at the State Court House. Rescuers successfully removed all the papers that were necessary to pending suits and many of the order books, but all of the wills and deed books were lost. Records of the superior court and circuit superior court of law and chancery were also destroyed. Most of the pre-Civil War Hustings Court records exist.

Scope and Content

Richmond (Va.) Inquisitions of Escheat and Estrays, 1821-1868, are inquiries to determine the proper owners of land and stray livestock. Both types of inquests are mixed together in the volume. There is no index.

Inquisitions of escheat were performed by the escheator for the city and a group of sixteen freeholders. They were to determine if a deceased individual died seized of any land, what disposition for the land if any was left, and whether the individual was an alien or a citizen. Land owned by a person without heirs reverted to the commonwealth.

Estrays were stray livestock found wandering. An inquest was held to determine the value of the livestock in order to reimburse the person who had found and cared for the animal. The report generally includes a physical description of the animal as well as an assessed monetary value.

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Virginia. Circuit Court (Richmond)

Subjects:

Escheat -- Virginia -- Richmond.

Estray records -- Virginia -- Richmond.

Livestock -- Virginia -- Richmond.

Geographical Names:

Richmond (Va.) -- History -- 19th century.

Genre and Form Terms:

Land records -- Virginia -- Richmond.

Local government records -- Virginia -- Richmond.

Proceedings -- Virginia -- Richmond.