

A Guide to the Brunswick County (Va.) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1868

Brunswick County (Va.) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1868

A Collection in the Library of Virginia

Library of Virginia

2013

Author: Greg Crawford

History

Processed by: Laura Crouch

Title Statement

A Guide to the Brunswick County (Va.) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1868

Subtitle: Brunswick County (Va.) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1868

Author: G. Crawford

Publication Statement

Date: © 2013 By The Library of Virginia. All Rights Reserved.

Publisher: Library of Virginia

[Conditions of Use](#)

Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from being created directly into EAD, created by Autumn Simpson, 21 June 2013

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

Brunswick County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

.45 cu. ft. (1 box)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Brunswick County (Va.) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1868 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

These records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Brunswick County Circuit Court in an undated accession.

Processing Information

Freedmen's Bureau records were originally described as "Brunswick County (Va.) Freedmen's contracts and apprentice indentures, 1865-1868" but were retitled "Brunswick County (Va.) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1868" in February 2024 to help standardize description of records and increased context between various Freedmen's Bureau records.

These records have been scanned and indexed by LVA staff for the purposes of digitizing them for the digital project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative.

Encoded by G. Crawford, 2013; updated by M. Mason, February 2024

Preferred Citation

Brunswick County (Va.) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1868. Local government records collection, Brunswick County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Brunswick County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records, 1823-1862](#)

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

Additional Brunswick 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: Brunswick County was named for the duchy of Brunswick-Luneburg, one of the German possessions of King George I. It was formed by statute in 1720 from Prince George County and on 31 October 1723 the boundaries of the county were ordered to be laid out, but, because of the sparse population, the county court first met in June 1732. Brunswick County was enlarged by the addition of parts of Surry and Isle of Wight Counties in 1733. The county seat is Lawrenceville.

Scope and Content

Brunswick County (Va.) Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1868, consist of Freedmen's Contracts and Freedmen's Apprenticeship Indentures.

Freedmen's Contracts, consist of employment contracts between formerly enslaved African Americans 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.

Freedmen's Apprenticeship Indentures, record the binding of emancipated Black and multiracial children to individuals for the purpose of learning a trade. They 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.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into

- Series I: Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1868, and organized chronologically

Contents List

Series I: Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, 1865-1868

Extent

.45 cubic feet (1 box)

Barcode number 0007435750:Freedmen's contracts and apprentice indentures, 1865-1868