

A Guide to the Alexandria (Va.) Convict Register, 1870-1924

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1870-1924



A Collection in the Library of Virginia 1112717
Library of Virginia
2010
Author: Callie Lou Freed

History

Processed by: Library of Virginia staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Alexandria (Va.) Convict Register, 1870-1924

Subtitle: Alexandria (Va.) Convict Register, 1870-1924

Collection: 1112717

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Publication Statement

Date: © 2010 By The Library of Virginia. All Rights Reserved.

Publisher: Library of Virginia

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Callie Lou Freed, 02 July 2010

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

2013-11-21 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Barcode number

1112717

Language

English

Collector

Alexandria (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

1 v. (98 leaves)

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 original volume came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from the City of Alexandria.

Preferred Citation

Alexandria (Va.) Convict Register, 1870-1924. Local government records collection, Alexandria (City) Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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

Historical Information

The act to establish Alexandria was passed in 1749. Its site had previously been known as Hunting Creek Warehouse and as Belhaven. Alexandria was incorporated as a town in 1779 and was ceded to the federal government in 1789 for use as part of the site of the new national capital. It officially became part of the District of Columbia in 1801 and was renamed Alexandria County by Congress. By an act of 9 July 1846, Alexandria County, including the town of Alexandria, was retroceded to Virginia, which took jurisdiction over the area on 20 March 1847. The town was incorporated as a city in 1852. It was enlarged by annexations from Alexandria (now Arlington County) and Fairfax Counties in 1915 and 1929 and from Fairfax County alone in 1952 and 1973. The county is named for John Alexander, an early owner of the tract in Fairfax County on which the town was located.

During the 1869-1870 session, the General Assembly passed an "Act to Secure Identification of Persons Convicted of Criminal Offences." On 2 November 1870, the act was approved. The act specified that "every clerk of the court of each county and corporation shall keep a register of full and accurate descriptive lists of every person convicted in his own or any other court of record of his county or corporation, of felony or other infamous offence, and a duly certified and attested copy of any such descriptive list may be used as prima facie evidence of the facts therein stated in any question of identity. Such registers shall be kept written up, well indexed, and shall be open to public inspection at reasonable hours. The register shall follow a set form and each descriptive list shall be attested by said clerk."

In addition, "the clerk of every court of record of each county or corporation, other than the county or corporation court, shall within ten days from the date of conviction of any person in his court of any offence mentioned in the first section of this act, deliver to the clerk of the county or corporation court, for record in said register, an attested descriptive list of the person so convicted, in the form hereinbefore prescribed." The judges of the respective courts are responsible for seeing that the provisions of the act are "punctually and properly carried out" by their respective clerks. The act was amended on 18 January 1871 and outlined the following: "For the services mentioned in this or the first section of this act, the clerk shall be entitled to a fee of fifty cents, to be paid out of the state treasury." By and large, the county and circuit court clerks went about compiling these registers throughout the counties of Virginia as late as the 1960s.

Order books and/or Minute books record all matters brought before the court when it was in session and may contain important information not found anywhere else. A wide variety of information is found in order/minute books--including individuals convicted of felonies.

The original records, from which this volume was compiled, were created by the Corporation and Mayor's Courts. The Corporation Court, in jurisdictions incorporated as independent cities, was the town/city equivalent of the County Court. It was presided over by Justices under the Mayor of the town/city and heard

civil and criminal matters. Civil actions on appeal and criminal matters resulting in conviction were sent to the next higher court (Corporation Court to Circuit Court) for further action. The Mayor's Court, according to Black's Law Dictionary, is a "court in which the mayor sits with the powers of a police judge or committing magistrate in respect to offenses committed within the city (e.g. traffic or ordinance violations) and sometimes with civil jurisdiction in small causes." Activities typically included qualifying the Councilmen and officers of the Corporation, issuing warrants for violations of local ordinances, hearing evidence against those who violated local ordinances; keeping a record of executions issued by the court and of fines and fees paid.

Scope and Content

Alexandria (Va.) Convict Register, 1870-1924, is a "descriptive list of persons convicted of a felony, or other infamous offences, in the Corporation Court of Alexandria, Virginia, since November 2nd, 1870." Based on a set form, the listings of each conviction include the individual's name in full and any aliases, the present and last known residence of the accused, the color or race of the individual (including white, black, mulatto, dark, bright, colored, negro, light brown or dark brown), the individual's height, eye color, hair color and any identifying marks, the apparent or known age of the accused, his or her occupation, the offence, the court in which convicted, the date of conviction and page of record and whether the judgment was reversed or pardon granted and date thereof. The volume has 98 leaves but there are numerous blank pages between entries. The entries for leaves 1-6 include the convict's full name and are arranged by date of conviction. Leaves 7-98 contain entries arranged by the convict's surname (A-Y) according, for the most part, to the date of his conviction for the offense listed. Five, undated, loose entries are found at the front of the volume. Instead of a court conviction, sometimes an individual was convicted by a Justice of the Peace.

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Alexandria (Va.) Circuit Court.

Subjects:

African American prisoners--Virginia--Alexandria.

African Americans--Employment--Virginia--Alexandria.

African Americans--History--1863-1877.

African Americans--History--1877-1964.

African Americans--Virginia--Alexandria.

Occupations--Virginia--Alexandria.

Prisoners--Virginia--Alexandria.

Public records--Virginia--Alexandria.

Racially mixed people--Virginia--Alexandria.

Geographical Names:

Alexandria (Va.)--History.

Genre and Form Terms:

Criminal court records--Virginia--Alexandria.

Judicial records--Virginia--Alexandria.

Justices of the peace--Virginia--Alexandria.

Local government records--Virginia--Alexandria.

Minute books--Virginia--Alexandria.

Order books--Virginia--Alexandria.

Registers (lists)--Virginia--Alexandria.

Added Entry - Corporate Name:

Alexandria (Va.) Corporation Court.

Alexandria (Va.) Mayor's Court.

