

# A Guide to the Henrico County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1807-1815

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia 0007531824

Library of Virginia

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## History

**Processed by:** Chris Smith

## Title Statement

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## Profile Description

**Creation:** Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Greg Crawford, 21 August 2014

**Language Usage:** Description is in English

## Descriptive Summary

### Barcode number

0007531824

### Language

English

### Collector

Henrico County (Va.) Circuit Court

### Physical Characteristics

.35 cu. ft. (1 box)

### Location

Library of Virginia

### Repository

The Library of Virginia

# Administrative Information

## Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

## Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

## Acquisition Information

These items came to the Library of Virginia in transfers of court papers from Henrico County.

## Preferred Citation

Henrico County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1807-1815. Local government records collection, Henrico County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

# Adjunct Descriptive Data

## Related Material

Additional Henrico County Court Records are found at the Library of Virginia.

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

Additional freedom suits may be found in the Henrico County Chancery Causes. Search the [the Chancery Records Index](#) found on the Library of Virginia web site. Enter the tilde symbol in the plaintiff surname field.

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

Slaves sued for emancipation in freedom suits based on the following: they were descendant(s) of a free female ancestor, typically a Native American (Henings Statutes, volume 2, p.170); failure of slaveowner(s) to abide by the 1778 slave nonimportation act (Henings Statutes, volume 9, pp. 471-472); or claimed to have been freed by slaveowner(s) by deed of emancipation or last will and testament (Henings Statutes volume 11, pp. 39-40)

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

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.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1807-1815, consist of suits initiated by slaves seeking to gain their freedom on the law side of the court. Cases are identified by style of suit consisting of plaintiff and defendant names. Surnames of others involved in a suit, including secondary plaintiffs and defendants, witnesses, deponents and affiants, and family members with surnames different from the plaintiff or defendant are indexed. Also identified are names of slaves and slaveowners found in suit as well as whether slave(s) won their freedom. Predominant documents found in freedom suits include petitions, records of suits, depositions, affidavits, wills, among other items. Information found in documents include slave's argument for freedom, acquisition of slaves by slaveowners, slave ancestry, and relationship between slaves and slaveowners.

Judgments (Freedom Suits) are useful when researching local history and genealogical information, particularly for African Americans. They are a valuable source of local, state, social, and legal history and serve as a primary source for understanding a locality's history.

## Index Terms

## **Corporate Names:**

Henrico County (Va.). Circuit Court.

## **Subjects:**

African Americans -- Virginia.

Free African Americans -- Virginia -- Henrico County.

Slaveholders -- Virginia -- Henrico County.

Slavery -- Virginia -- Henrico County.

## **Geographical Names:**

Henrico County (Va.) -- History.

Henrico County (Va.) -- Genealogy

## **Genre and Form Terms:**

Civil actions -- Virginia -- Henrico County.

Freedom suits -- Virginia -- Henrico County.

Judicial records -- Virginia -- Henrico County.

Local government records -- Virginia -- Henrico County.

Petitions -- Virginia -- Henrico County.

Wills -- Virginia -- Henrico County.

## **Arrangement**

Arranged chronologically.

## **List of Freedom Suits**

**1814 May: William Hart vs. James Anderson**

**1815 December: Eliza Lewis vs. - Austin**