

# A Guide to the Brunswick County (Va.) District Court Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1790-1808

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## History

**Processed by:** LVA staff

## Title Statement

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**Subtitle:** Brunswick County (Va.) District Court Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1790-1808

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## Publication Statement

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## Profile Description

**Creation:** Machine-readable finding aid derived from being created directly into EAD, created by Greg Crawford, 14 April 2015

**Language Usage:** Description is in English

## Descriptive Summary

### Barcode number

0007573138

### Language

English

### Collector

Brunswick County (Va.) Circuit Court

### Physical Characteristics

.20 cu. ft.

### 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 a transfer of court papers from Brunswick County.

## Preferred Citation

Brunswick County (Va.) District Court Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1790-1808. Local government records collection, Brunswick County (Va.) County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. 23219.

# Adjunct Descriptive Data

## Related Material

Additional [Brunswick County District court records](#) can be found at the Library of Virginia.

## Historical Information

Brunswick County was named for the duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg, 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.

The District Court was created in 1788. The purpose of the creation of the District Court was to alleviate congestion in the General Court which had caused unreasonable delays in the adjudication of common law cases. Virginia was divided into eighteen districts, each composed of several counties, plus the district of Kentucky. Courts were held in each district twice yearly and cases were heard from the several counties in that district. The District Court always met at the same place in each district, and its records were kept at that one location. The District Courts were abolished in 1808 and were replaced by the Superior Courts of Law.

Slaves could sue for emancipation if they were descendant(s) of a free female ancestor, typically a Native American (Hening Statutes, volume 2, p.170.)

## Scope and Content

Brunswick County (Va.) County District Court Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1790-1808, consist of suits initiated by slaves seeking to gain their freedom in the district 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 identified 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.

## Index Terms

### Corporate Names:

Brunswick County (Va.) Circuit Court.

### Subjects:

African Americans -- History -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.

Slaveholders -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.

Slavery -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.

### Geographical Names:

Brunswick County (Va.) -- History.

## **Genre and Form Terms:**

Civil actions -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.

Freedom suits -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.

Judicial records -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.

Local government records -- Virginia -- Brunswick County.

## **Added Entry - Corporate Name:**

Brunswick County (Va.) District Court

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