

A Guide to the Isle of Wight County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1818

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1818



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Author: Greg Crawford

History

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Title Statement

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Barcode Numbers

0007560225

Language

English

Collector

Isle of Wight County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

Digital images

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions

Use Restrictions

Patrons are to use digital images found at [Virginia Untold: the African American Narrative](#).

Acquisition Information

These items came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Isle of Wight County (Va.) Circuit Court. Original documents returned at request of Circuit Court Clerk of Isle of Wight County.

Preferred Citation

Isle of Wight County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1818. Local government records collection, Isle of Wight County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Isle of Wight County 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

Isle of Wight County was named probably for the Isle of Wight off the south coast of England. It was first known as Warrosquyoake for an Indian tribe living in the area whose name means "swamp in a depression of land," and was one of the original shires, or counties, first enumerated in 1634. The present name was given in 1637. Parts of Nansemond County were added in 1769 and 1772. The county seat is Isle of Wight.

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)

Scope and Content

Isle of Wight County (Va.) Judgments (Freedom Suits), 1818, 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 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.

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:

Isle of Wight County (Va.) Circuit Court

Subjects:

African Americans -- Virginia.

Free African Americans -- Virginia -- Isle of Wight County.

Slaveholders -- Virginia -- Isle of Wight County.

Slavery -- Virginia -- Isle of Wight County.

Geographical Names:

Isle of Wight County (Va.) -- History.

Isle of Wight County (Va.) -- Genealogy

Genre and Form Terms:

Civil actions -- Virginia -- Isle of Wight County.

Freedom suits -- Virginia -- Isle of Wight County.

Judicial records -- Virginia -- Isle of Wight County.

Local government records -- Virginia -- Isle of Wight County.

Petitions -- Virginia -- Isle of Wight County.

Wills -- Virginia -- Isle of Wight County.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically