

A Guide to the Amherst County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1798-1859

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1798-1859

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History

Processed by: E. Jordan

Title Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from being created directly into EAD, created by Greg Crawford, 20 July 2023

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Amherst County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

6 items

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Amherst County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1798-1859, 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 items came to the Library of Virginia in shipments of court papers from Amherst County (Va.) in 2022 under accession number 53740.

Processing Information

Amherst County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation were removed from the larger Amherst County (Va.) Deeds [accession 53740] record set and then processed and indexed as a distinct unit by E. Jordan and L. Neuroth for the purposes of digitizing them for the digital project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative.

Encoded by E. Jordan: July 2023; Edited by M. Mason: August 2023; updated by C. Collins: December 2024.

Preferred Citation

Amherst County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1798-1859. Local government records collection, Amherst County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Amherst County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records, 1816-1826](#)

See also: [Amherst County \(Va.\) Deeds, 1771-1894 \(bulk 1797-1871\)](#)

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

Additional Amherst County (Va.) court records can be found on microfilm at The Library of Virginia web site. Consult ["A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm."](#)

Historical Information

Context of Record Type: Deeds of emancipation and manumission record an enslavers' intent to emancipate enslaved people from bondage. Some of the earliest legal manumissions in Virginia occurred in the early 1770s. However, there was a sharp rise following the 1782 manumission act that allowed enslavers to privately emancipate enslaved people "by last will and testament or other instrument in writing sealed." They were no longer required to seek a special act from the General Assembly. These documents sometimes include an enslavers' intent for emancipation ranging from religious and moral motivations to binding legal agreements.

Deeds of emancipation and manumission essentially provide the same information and there is little difference between the two. Both include the name of the enslaver, the name of the enslaved person to be freed, the date of anticipated freedom, the date the manumission was proved or certified, and as mentioned, sometimes a reason why the enslaver decided to emancipate the enslaved person. In a deed of manumission, an enslaver directly freed an enslaved person by manumission. In a deed of emancipation, an enslaved person could be freed after the enslaver's death by those executing a last will and testament. This collection also includes court orders that record the date or age when enslaved individuals were to be emancipated by deed as stipulated in an enslaver's will.

Locality History: Amherst County was named for Major General Jeffery Amherst, British commander in North America during the latter part of the French and Indian War and governor of Virginia from 1759 to 1768. It was formed from Albemarle County in 1761. Islands in the Fluvanna (now the James) River were added in 1770.

Scope and Content

Amherst County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1798-1859, include deeds of emancipation and manumission, which record the name of the enslaver, the name of the enslaved person to be freed, the date the enslaved person shall achieve freedom, the date the manumission was proved or certified, and sometimes a reason

why the enslaver decided to emancipate the enslaved person. The two methods of relinquishing ownership of an individual differ only in that enslavers directly freed their enslaved property by manumission. Deeds of emancipation could be generated after the enslaver's death by those executing a last will and testament.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Deeds of Emancipation, 1798-1859, arranged chronologically.

Contents List

Series I: Deeds of Emancipation, 1798-1859

Extent

6 items

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically

Barcode number 0007848855: Deeds; Deeds of Emancipation; Indenture of Apprenticeship; Certificates of Importation, 1798-1867

Library of Virginia