

A Guide to the Accomack County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1795-1815

Accomack County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1795-1815
1795-1815

A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
2024

History

Processed by: LVA Staff

Title Statement

A Guide to the Accomack County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1795-1815

Subtitle: Accomack County (Va.) Certificates of Importation

Author: Caroline Collins

Publication Statement

Date: © 2024 By The Library of Virginia. All Rights Reserved.

Publisher: Library of Virginia

Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MS Word, created by Caroline Collins, 07 August 2024

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Accomack County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

17 items.

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Accomack County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1795-1815, 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 records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Accomack County (Va.) as part of an undated accession.

Processing Information

Accomack County Certificates of Importation were originally described as part of the Accomack County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, 1758, 1799-1861, but were removed to the present Accomack County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1795-1815, record to enhance discoverability in August 2024.

These records were processed, scanned, and indexed by LVA staff for the purposes of digitizing them for the digital project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative at an unknown date.

Encoded by C. Collins: August 2024.

Preferred Citation

Accomack County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1795-1815. Local government records collection, Accomack County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Accomack County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records, 1758, 1799-1861](#)

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

Additional Accomack 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."](#)

Accomack County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Accomack County Records may be found in the [Lost Records Localities Digital Collection](#) available on the Library of Virginia website.

Historical Information

Context for Record Type: In 1778, Governor Patrick Henry enacted legislation preventing importation of enslaved people into the commonwealth. Those that did bring their enslaved people were required to register them with the county court and sign a certificate of importation agreeing that they were not bringing enslaved people into the commonwealth with the intent to sell. The enslaved person is sometimes named, but not always, and occasionally information is given as to age, birthdate, and the state from which the individuals were moving. According to Section 3 of the act "every slave imported into this commonwealth contrary to the true intent and meaning of this act, shall upon such importation become free." By this clause, those enslaved people who were brought into Virginia illegally could pursue their freedom in the local courts.

Locality History: Accomack County was named for the Accomac Indians, who lived on the Eastern Shore at the time of the first English settlement in Virginia. The word means "on-the-other-side-of-water place" or "across the water." It was one of the original eight shires, or counties, first enumerated in 1634 and spelled Accomac without the k. The county's name was changed to Northampton County in 1643. The present county was formed from Northampton about 1663. In October 1670, the General Assembly temporarily reunited Accomack and Northampton Counties as Northampton County. In November 1673, Accomack County was again separated from Northampton. In early records, the county's name was spelled many ways. In 1940 the General Assembly adopted the present spelling, Accomack. The county gained a small part of the southern end of Smith's Island from Somerset County, Maryland, in 1879, after the United States had approved boundary changes between Virginia and Maryland that had been agreed to in 1877. The county seat is Accomac.

Lost Locality Note: A significant number of loose records from the 1700s suffered extreme water and pest damage. Volumes that record deeds, court orders, and wills exist.

Scope and Content

Accomack County (Va.) Certificates of Importation, 1795-1815, sometimes entitled certificates of nonimportation, contain information whereby an enslaver swears that they have not imported the enslaved person from Africa and that the enslaver has not brought the enslaved person into Virginia with the purpose of selling the enslaved person. The enslaved person is sometimes named, but not always, and occasionally information is given as to age, birthdate, and the state the individuals are moving from.

The records are comprised of general certificates and affidavits, 1795-1802, in which the enslaver swore that none "of the slaves now in my Possession have been Imported from Africa or any of the West Indian Islands since the first day of November One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy Eight." The enslaved persons referred to in the certificates and affidavits are not named. The enslavers include Charles Beard, Matthew Beard, John Marchant, George Merrill, Rachel Cowles, Jacob Boston, Samuel Holland, Colmore (or Colmon) Bayne, and John Massey.

The records also consist of the following certificates: 1799, of Joseph Crocket, who moved from Maryland to Accomack County with Rachel (or Rachil), Nell, and Phillis; 1801, of Custis Jenkins, who brought Leah into Accomack County from Maryland; 1813, of Lemuel Hall, who brought Tamar (20), M[illegible] (5), and Esther (2) into Accomack County; 1814, of Rachel R. Bayley, who removed Sarah (13) to Accomack County from Baltimore; 1814, of James Gibbons, who brought Rachel (7) into Accomack County from Maryland; 1814, of Benjamin Cluff, who removed Levin (37 or 38) and David (16) to Accomack County from Maryland; 1814, of Stephen J. Lewis, who removed Scott (26), George (23), Nanny (also called Nancy) (27), Let (7), Comfort (6), Sabra (4), Savage (4), and Jinny (3) to Accomack County from Maryland; and 1815, of Benjamin Cluff, who brought Jim (40) into Accomack County from Maryland. Most of these certificates contain general physical descriptions of the individuals named within.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged:

- Series I: Certificates of Importation, 1795-1815, arranged chronologically.

Contents List

Series I: Certificates of Importation, 1795-1815

Extent

17 items

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically

Barcode number 1138011: Free and Enslaved Records, 1744-1861

Library of Virginia