

# A Guide to the Orange County (Va.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1861

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1861

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia

Library of Virginia

2024

## History

**Processed by:** Jim Watkins

## Title Statement

A Guide to the Orange County (Va.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1861

**Subtitle:** Orange County (Va.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1861

**Author:** Mary Ann Mason

## 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 Mary Ann Mason, 15 April 2024

**Language Usage:** Description is in English

## Descriptive Summary

### Language

English

### Collector

Orange County (Va.) Circuit Court

### Physical Characteristics

1 item.

### Location

Library of Virginia

### Repository

Library of Virginia

## Administrative Information

### Access Restrictions

Orange County (Va.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1861, 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 Orange County in an undated accession.

## Processing Information

Orange County (Va.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement were previously described with the Orange County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records but were removed to the present Orange County (Va.) Petitions for Re-enslavement for discoverability purposes.

These records have been scanned and indexed by LVA staff for the purposes of digitizing them for the digital project Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative.

It is believed the petitions for re-enslavement currently in this collection were removed from the Orange County (Va.) Judgments and processed by Jim Watkins around 2009.

Encoded by M. Mason: April 2024

## Preferred Citation

Orange County (Va.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1861. Local government records collection, Orange County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. 23219.

# Adjunct Descriptive Data

## Related Material

See also: [Orange County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records, 1738-1865](#)

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

Additional Orange County (Va.) 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

**Context of Record Type:** Petitions for Re-enslavement contain petitions of free Black individuals choosing to be re-enslaved. An act passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 1806 required formerly enslaved people to leave the commonwealth within twelve months of being granted their freedom. Individuals were forced to leave behind family, friends, and community that remained enslaved. In addition, many emancipated people did not have the financial means or social support to move to a free state. One option to preserve family and relationships was to return to slavery. In 1856, the Virginia legislature passed an act allowing free Black individuals who desired to remain in the commonwealth to petition for re-enslavement. Only a small number of free Black Virginians petitioned the courts to re-enslave themselves to an enslaver of choice, and an even smaller percentage succeeded. Many petitioners chose enslavers they knew well or who owned a spouse or family member. These petitions include the petitioner's name, previous enslaver, means of emancipation, and new desired enslaver.

**Locality History Note:** Orange County, according to most accounts, was named for William of Orange, the Dutch prince who became King William III of England in 1688. It is more probable, however, that it was named for William IV, prince of Orange-Nassau, who married Anne, eldest daughter of King George II, in 1734-the year that Orange County was formed from Spotsylvania County.

## Scope and Content

Orange County (Va.) Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1861, contains one petition of Nicolas Poindexter requesting to be re-enslaved choosing Betty C. Towles as his enslaver. The reasons for Nicholas' petition are not documented.

## Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1861, arranged chronologically

## Contents List

# Series I: Petitions for Re-Enslavement, 1861

## Extent

1 item

**Physical Location** Library of Virginia

## Arrangement

chronologically

**Barcode number 1171432: Free and enslaved records, 1738-1865**

Library of Virginia