

A Guide to the Louisa County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1783-1859

Louisa County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1783-1859
1783-1859

A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
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History

Processed by: C. Freed; M. Mason

Title Statement

A Guide to the Louisa County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1783-1859

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Author: Mary Ann Mason

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MS Word, created by Mary Ann Mason, 03 February 2026

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Louisa County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

5 folders.

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Louisa County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1783-1859, 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 records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Louisa County (Va.) as part of an undated accession.

Processing Information

Louisa County Deeds of Emancipation were originally described as part of the Louisa County (Va.) Free and Enslaved Records, but were removed to the present Louisa County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, record to enhance discoverability in January 2026.

Encoded by M. Mason : January 2026.

Preferred Citation

Louisa County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1783-1859. Local government records collection, Louisa County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Louisa County \(Va.\) Free and Enslaved Records](#)

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

Additional Louisa 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: 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: Louisa County was formed in 1742 from Hanover County.

Scope and Content

Louisa County (Va.) Deeds of Emancipation, 1783, 1794-1798, 1800-1807, 1814, 1816, 1836, 1850, 1859, consists of about 20 deeds. The deeds typically record the name of the enslaver, the name of the enslaved person or persons to be freed, the date the enslaved person or persons achieved freedom, and the date the manumission was proved or certified. Sometimes, the deeds describe the reason for emancipation or manumission. Deeds of emancipation could be generated after the enslaver's death by those executing a last will and testament.

Also includes, bond, 1788, to keep Rachel, recently emancipated, from accruing any public expense, a condition of her emancipation.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged

- Series I: Deeds of Emancipation, 1783-1859

Contents List

Series I: Deeds of Emancipation, 1783-1859

Extent

5 folders [use digital images]

Physical Location Library of Virginia

Barcode number 1153190: Free and Enslaved Records, 1770-1865

Library of Virginia