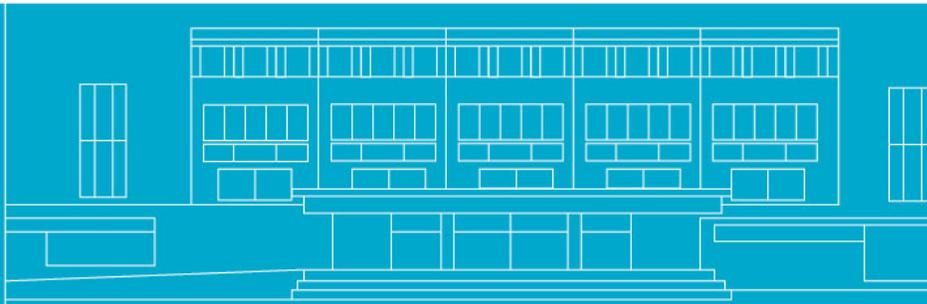


Digital Collections Search Tips



African American Narrative – Related Resources & Complementary Collections

[Chancery Records Index \(CRI\)](#)

Each of Virginia's circuit courts created chancery records that contain considerable historical and genealogical information. For African American researchers, chancery records document the division of slave property, disputes over slave transactions, the pursuit of freedom by slaves, and efforts of former slaves to obtain property they inherited from their former owners. Because the records rely so heavily on testimony from witnesses, they offer a unique glimpse into the lives of African Americans going back to the 18th century. See the list of suits of interest found in the finding aid for the Augusta County chancery causes

(<http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=lva/vi03473.xml>) for examples. Currently, there are over 250,000 cases containing over 99,000 slave names indexed in the database and over 10 million images of chancery causes available online. A tip sheet for finding slave names in the CRI is available in the “Search Tips” link on the CRI home page. Please check periodically for updates as this is an ongoing project.

[Legislative Petitions Digital Collection](#)

The primary catalyst for legislation in the commonwealth between 1774 and 1865, petitions to the General Assembly from the public addressed public improvements, military claims, divorce, manumission of slaves, division of counties, incorporation of towns, religious freedom, and taxation, among other concerns. Petitioning played a vital role in Virginia politics from the American Revolution to the Civil War. The right to petition was not restricted by class, race, or sex; as a result, women, free blacks, and slaves petitioned the General Assembly, although they were all denied the right to vote.

There are 660 records in the database respecting free negroes. The petitions originate from freedmen, colonization societies, citizens, executors & administrators, slaves, Quakers, and others. A large part of these petition relate to requests by former slaves to remain in the Commonwealth. In addition, these petitions also relate to appropriations or aid to colonization societies, charters for colonization societies, the removal of free negroes from the Commonwealth, the sale of liquor to free negroes, prohibitions against free negroes from owning dogs, and restrictions on free negroes & mulattoes in the sale of produce.

There are 1,139 records in the database related to slaves and slavery. Included are petitions from slaves, former slaves, citizens, heirs, administrators, slave owners, colonization societies, executors, jailors, overseers of the poor, Quakers, and others respecting permission of freed slaves to remain in the state, permissions by slave owners to bring slaves into the state, wills & administrations, compensation of slave owners for the loss of their slaves, manumissions, general emancipation, colonization of slaves in Africa, runaways, pardons, insurrections, and commerce with slaves.

[Lost Records Localities Digital Collection](#)

This collection consists of images for a wide variety of court records found as part of chancery and other locality records-processing projects. The images are of surviving records from localities where most records are no longer extant. Records found in the collection that are of interest to African American researchers include the following: bills of sale, deeds, deeds of manumission, free negro certificates, chancery causes, marriage settlements, estate inventories, and wills. Please check periodically as this is an ongoing project.

[WPA Life Histories Collection](#)

This collection provides a fully-searchable index with images to approximately 1,350 life histories, social-ethnic studies, and youth studies plus more than 50 interviews with former slaves which were created by the staff of the Virginia Writers' Project.

[Virginia Chronicle](#)

Virginia Chronicle is the Library of Virginia's digital newspaper collection. It contains 125,337 issues comprising about 990,000 pages that date back to the beginning of the 19th century. The pre-1865 newspapers contain advertisements for runaway slaves, lost free papers, and slave auctions that record names of African Americans and additional descriptive information. The newspapers also have transcripts of court trials involving African Americans, slave and free. Please check periodically for updates as this is an ongoing project.

[Virginia Heritage](#)

Virginia Heritage is a consolidated database of more than 12,000 finding aids which provide information about the vast array of manuscripts and archival materials housed in historical societies, libraries, museums, colleges and universities across the Commonwealth. The continuous addition of new and updated finding aids makes this a great tool for discovering primary source materials documenting the history, culture, and people of Virginia. Please check periodically as this is an ongoing project.