

# Freedom in Alexandria Home Page

## Freedom in Alexandria

free negro register database  
alexandria, virginia, 1797-1861



Slavery in Alexandria



Search  
the  
Database



Alexandria History



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Hosted by the [Center for History and New Media](#), George Mason University

Target Audience: Historians and Genealogists



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In 1793, Virginia passed a law stating that every free African American was required to register with the county in which they lived, and for twenty-five cents they received a copy of their registration to be used as proof of freedom. The following database includes all of the entries in that register from 1797 to 1861.

## Basic Search

Your search criteria will be applied to the full text of the entries.

Search for Word(s):

## Advanced Search

First Name:

Last Name:

Age:   to

Occupation/Skills:

Physical Description:

Date of Entry:

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Previous Owner:

Relatives:

Number of Results per Page:

Arrange Results By:

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Autocomplete

Searching the database



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In 1793, Virginia passed a law stating that every free African American was required to register with the county in which they lived, and for twenty-five cents they received a copy of their registration to be used as proof of freedom. The following database includes all of the entries in that register from 1797 to 1861.

## Advanced Search - Results

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Date	Name	Age	Description	Skills	Matched Criteria
<a href="#">March 5, 1802</a>	Jane Williams	31	5'4"	Cook	Name
<a href="#">August 22, 1823</a>	Jane	14	5'2 1/2"; dark complexion	N/A	Name, Age
<a href="#">April 9, 1825</a>	Jane	N/A	N/A	N/A	Name
<a href="#">July 13, 1850</a>	Jane Davis	56	Light complexion	Seamstress	Name
<a href="#">December 2, 1853</a>	Jane	17	5'3"	N/A	Name, Age

Criteria previously entered will remain.

Showing records 1-5 (of 5)  
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Click on the date to view specific entries.



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## Jane

*No 20*  
Jane - daughter of Franky. - is aged about  
14 years. five feet 2 1/2 inches high, dark  
complexion, claims to be grand daughter of  
Betty formerly held as a Slave the property  
of William Horton died late of Kanawha  
County, but who was emancipated by  
judgment of the Court of Appeals of  
the Commonwealth, the said Jane was  
therefore as appears by evidence recorded  
in the Circuit Superior Court of said County  
law free  
Registered 10<sup>th</sup> July 1835  
Attest A. W. Duane Clerk

**Entry:**

Jane - daughter of Franky - aged about 14 years. Five feet 2 ½ inches high, dark complexion, claims to be grand daughter of Betty formerly held as a slave the property of William Horton died late of Kanawha County, but who was emancipated by judgment of the Court of Appeals of the Commonwealth, the said Jane was therefore as apparent by evidence recorded in the Circuit Superior Court of said County [ban?] free. Registered 10th July 1835

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Originally chartered as a city in Fairfax County, Virginia, Alexandria was officially integrated into the newly formed nation's capital in Washington, D.C., in 1801 and became known as Alexandria County. Although at the time Alexandria became a part of the capital city it then fell under the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia, Congress allowed previous Virginia laws to be retained. Therefore, laws regarding slavery and free blacks passed in Virginia prior to 1801 remained in effect in Alexandria. Alexandria rejoined the commonwealth of Virginia in 1847. A thriving seaport in the eighteenth century, Alexandria in 1796 "ranked as the third largest exporter of flour and the seventh largest port in the United States." It also relied on slave labor for its economy and had a rising population of free blacks.



*Government coal wharf on the shore of the Potomac River in Alexandria, Virginia, circa 1861.*

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## Alexandria Maps



Map of Alexandria drawn  
by George Washington



Alexandria, District of  
Columbia, 1819



Alexandria, Virginia, 1878;  
Alexandria County, created when  
Alexandria rejoined Virginia in 1847,  
includes what is present-day Arlington  
County and Alexandria City.

Click on each map for a high resolution image.

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## Census Data

Census Year	Slaves Manumitted	Free African Americans	Slaves	Total Population
1790	2		543	
1800	15		218*	
1810	6		1,383	
1820	19		1,857	
1830	23		1,693	
1840	25		1,374	
1850	12		1,382**	

\*Incomplete Records: Slave count only includes Ward 4.

\*\*Includes Arlington and Alexandria.

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Alexandria's earliest statute regarding manumission was passed in 1691. It required special legislative acts for manumission in order to "limit the increase of free blacks." A 1705 Virginia law spelled out the racial underpinnings of the institution of slavery, legalizing slavery only in regard to blacks. After the American Revolution, Virginia passed several additional manumission laws that remained in effect for Alexandria. In 1782, the commonwealth permitted voluntary manumission without restrictions, a law that was repealed after five years. The next year, Virginia law freed slaves who had served in the Continental Army "with the consent of their masters." Some individual Alexandrians continued to manumit their slaves up until the Civil War.

Virginia law also restricted the actions of free blacks. A 1793 law banned free blacks from moving to the commonwealth, and ship captains discovered assisting free blacks into Virginia were given a fine of 100 pounds. Several post-revolution laws also hint at Virginians' anxiety about the effect of free blacks on slaves. In 1798, Virginia law required the execution of any free person for "exciting enslaved persons to insurrection or murder." Likewise, anyone found harboring a slave was to be fined \$10 or given thirty-nine lashes. That same year, free blacks who "gave copies of their freedom registration to enslaved blacks were to be charged with a felony." Concern for a growing number of free blacks assisting slaves and outright rebellion hint at the general atmosphere of Virginia as the nineteenth century approached. With the African slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue in 1791 demonstrating to whites the possibilities of full-scale revolt and the move toward emancipation in the North, Virginia sought control over free blacks to protect the institution of slavery.

For a full listing of Virginia laws regarding slavery and freedom, visit [Slavery in America](http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/geography/slave_laws_VA.htm), "Virginia Slave Laws Summary and Record." [http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/geography/slave\_laws\_VA.htm.]

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## Possible "Phase II" Additions

- ✓ A discussion section where people can share information about their ancestors or their research.
  
- ✓ A more comprehensive "Census" section, with digital transcriptions of the Alexandria records.

14 SLAVES.											NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED			
Sex	FEMALE										TOTAL	White	African	Mixed
	36 under 45	45 and up 100	10 under 15	15 and up 20	20 and up 25	25 and up 30	30 and up 35	35 and up 40	40 and up 45	45 and up 100				
			3	3	1	2					142		2	11
1			2	2	1						145	2		30
3		1	6	3	4	2	1				171	1		32
2			2	5		1	1				177		15	11
3	2		5	3	3	3	1				228	4	4	14
4			2	12	9	4	2				270		2	20
2			3	4	3		1				173		1	28
1			1	3							177			19
			3	3	2	1					168		2	8
1	2		2	6			1				164		3	19
1			2	1	1	1	1				152			23
			3	5	1						143			18
1			1	7	1	2	1				178		2	15
1			1	2	1	1					169		1	19
2	1		5	2	1	1					155			20
2	1		1	2		2					162	1		11
2	1		8	2	3						258	7	2	9
25	10	1	41	69	33	23	9				3039	15	36	292
25	9		105	152	94	76	27				5423		10	161
59	14	1	149	221	127	97	36				8462	15	136	933
											8429			

1840 Alexandria City  
Census - number of slaves  
by age.

- ✓ A tool to allow users to log in and save their searches, as well as connect with other users who have performed similar searches.