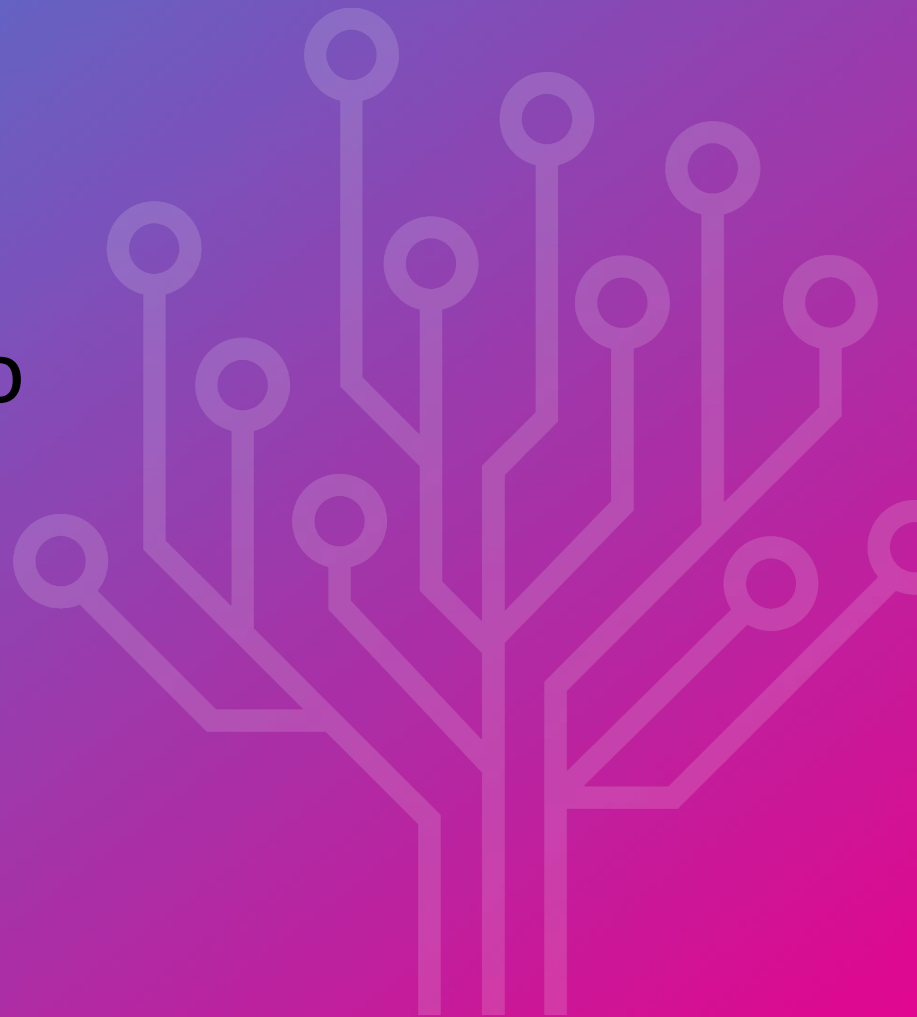
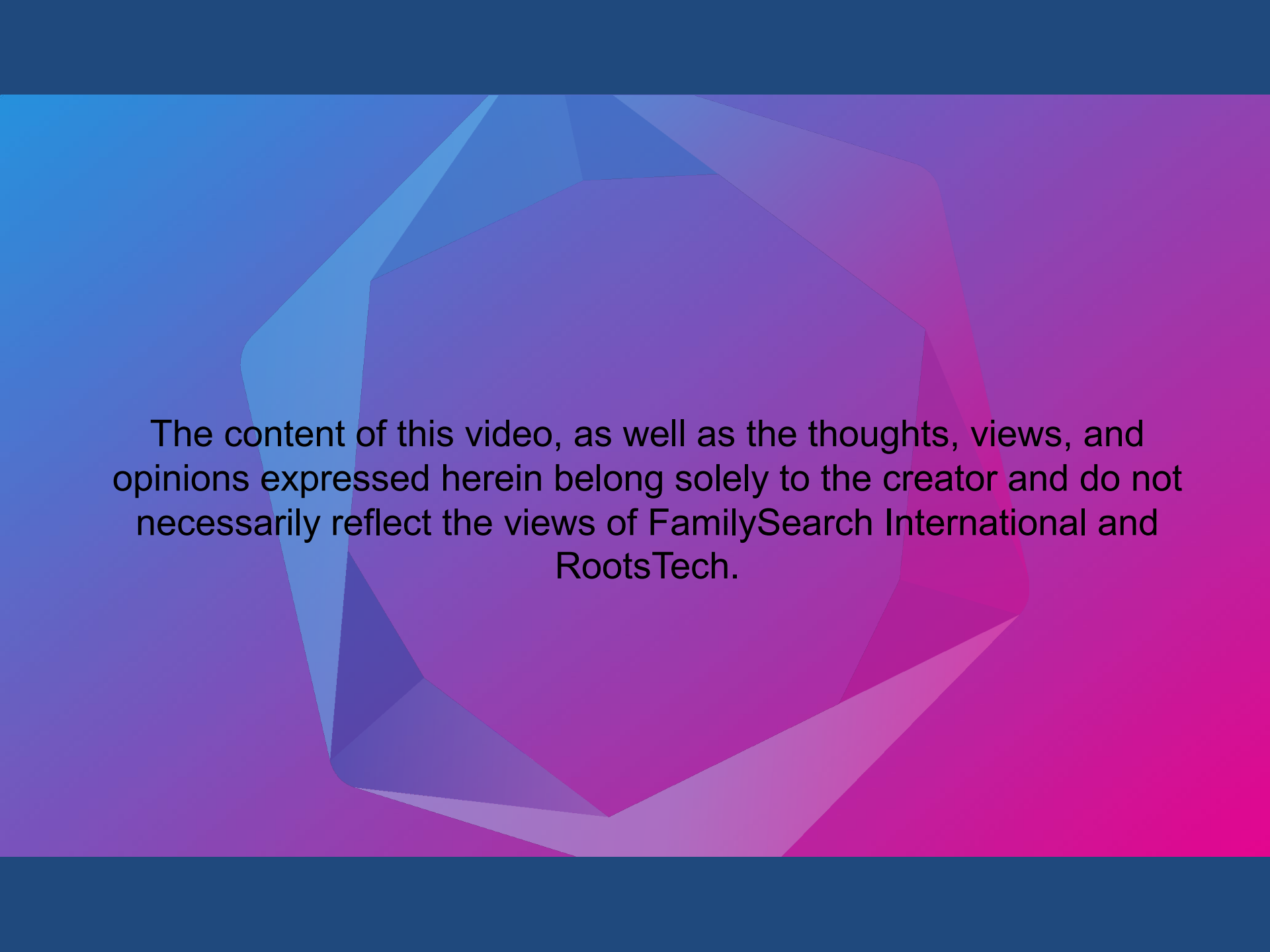




African American Research in Virginia to 1865: An Introduction

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Agenda

- ▣ Historical overview
- ▣ Strategies for determining if an individual was free or enslaved
- ▣ *Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative*

Timeline

- **1607:** English settlement at Jamestown
- **August 1619:** Africans arrive at Point Comfort and are sold before being transported to Jamestown
- **1640:** First known person to enslaved for life was John Punch
- **1662:** Whether a child was born enslaved or free depended on whether his or her mother was enslaved or free. This meant that those who were enslaved were enslaved for life.
- **1680:** Enslaved individuals could not leave home without a pass or bear arms
- **1691:** Children born to white mothers and African American fathers must be bound out as apprentices until the age of 30; if an enslaver freed enslaved people, the former enslaver had to pay for them to be transported out of Virginia within 6 months
- **1705:** Rewards for those who apprehended enslaved people who attempted to run away; punishing an enslaved person to death was not considered to be a crime; enslaver would be reimbursed if an enslaved person was sentenced to death
- **1775:** Enslaver would be reimbursed if an enslaved person was sentenced to be transported out of Virginia

Timeline

- ▣ **1778:** Enslaved individuals could not be imported from Africa into Virginia
- ▣ **1793:** Free African Americans who resided in towns had to register at the courthouse; free African Americans not permitted to enter Virginia
- ▣ **1803:** Free African Americans who resided in counties had to register at the courthouse
- ▣ **1806:** Individuals who gained freedom had to petition the General Assembly to remain in the commonwealth within 12 months of manumission
- ▣ **1808:** Federal government ends the international slave trade in the United States
- ▣ **1819:** Schools for enslaved people were banned
- ▣ **1831:** Any gathering of African Americans for the purpose of education was unlawful
- ▣ **1832:** African Americans not permitted to lead or attending religious services without permission

Timeline

- ▣ **1837:** Individuals who gained freedom could petition a local court instead of the General Assembly to remain in the commonwealth within 12 months of manumission
- ▣ **April 12, 1861:** Civil War began in South Carolina
- ▣ **January 1, 1863:** Emancipation Proclamation emancipated enslaved people in areas that were in rebellion against the United States
- ▣ **June 20, 1863:** 48 counties left Virginia to create West Virginia
- ▣ **March 3, 1865:** Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) created
- ▣ **April 9, 1865:** Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia, effectively ending the Civil War
- ▣ **December 3, 1865:** 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolished slavery in the United States
- ▣ **January 26, 1870:** Virginia readmitted to the Union

Laws

- ▣ McIlwaine, H. R., ed. *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia*. 13 vols. Richmond, VA: The Colonial Press, E. Wadley Company, 1905–1915.
- ▣ *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia*.
- ▣ Hening, William Waller. *The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, From the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619*. 13 vols. Charlottesville, VA: Published for the Jamestown Foundation of the Commonwealth of Virginia by the University Press of Virginia, 1969.
- ▣ Shepherd, Samuel. *Statutes at Large*. 3 vols. Richmond, VA: S. Shepherd, 1835–1836.
- ▣ Winfree, Waverly K. *The Laws of Virginia: Being a Supplement to Hening's The Statutes at Large, 1700–1750*. Richmond, VA: Virginia State Library, 1971.
- ▣ Guild, June Purcell. *Black Laws of Virginia: A Summary of the Legislative Acts of Virginia Concerning Negroes from Earliest Times to the Present*. Lovettsville, VA: Willow Bend Books, 1996. Originally published by Whittet and Shepperson, 1936.

Surnames

- ▣ Even if they were not recognized by the enslaver, some enslaved individuals had surnames.
- ▣ If a formerly enslaved individual did not already have a surname, he or she could choose one. It could be the name of the last enslaver, a previous enslaver, a family name, or whatever other name he or she decided to choose.
- ▣ Surnames could change over time. Sometimes a formerly enslaved individual took the surname of his or her last enslaver as a form of identification or was simply given that name in records. That does not mean that that person could not change his or her name later or even went by that name when given a choice.

Enslaved or Free?

- ▣ 1850 and 1860 U.S. census population schedules
- ▣ Personal property tax records
- ▣ “Free Negro Lists”
- ▣ Cohabitation registers and children’s registers
- ▣ “Free Negro Registers”

U.S. Census Population Schedule

State

SCHEDULE 1.—Free Inhabitants in

in the County of

State

of

enumerated by me, on the

day of

1850.

Asst. Marshal

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The Name of every Person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1850, was in this family.		Sex		Age		Color		Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each Male Person over 15 years of age.	Place of Birth, Naming the State, Territory, or Country.	Whether blind, deaf, dumb, idiotic, pauper, or convict.	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			9	10
11	Mary C. Roe	44	F								
12	Shelton G.	22	M			Teacher					
13	Adeline	16	F								
14	James E.	14	M								
15	George Conaway	30	M								
16	Mary E.	23	F								
17	Henry G.	9	M								
18	Joseph E.	7	M								
19	Harriet	28	F								
20	Mary (Barnes)	40	F								
21	Samuel Barnard	35	M			Merchant					
22	Benjamin E.	22	M								
23	Robert Taylor	36	M			Lawyer					
24	John	23	M								
25	Edwin	11	M								
26	Robert	4	M								
27	William F.	1	M								
28	Joseph Linn	40	M								
29	James	18	M								
30	James	15	M								
31	Robert Jenkins	38	M								
32	P. O.	18	M								
33	John	20	M								
34	Robert	27	M								
35	James Jenkins	43	M								
36	James	38	M								
37	James Gardner	40	M								
38	Eliza	18	F								
39	Josephine	9	F								
40	Thomas	11	M								
41	Fitzgerald	5	M								
42	James	13	M								
43	Marcella Gage	26	F								
44	William	11	M								
45	Anna E. Walter	37	F								
46	Augusta	7	F								
47	John	5	M								
48	David Bradley	18	M								
49	James E. E. E.	37	M								
50	James Jenkins	38	M								
51	James	18	M								
52	John	38	M								

Includes:

- ▣ Names of free individuals
- ▣ Age
- ▣ Color
- ▣ Occupation
- ▣ Place of birth
- ▣ Literacy

Chesterfield County, 1850

Source: FamilySearch

Original: National Archives and Records Administration

Personal Property Tax

[illegible]

Includes:

- ▣ Head of household's name
- ▣ Number of free males over a certain age
- ▣ Number of enslaved individuals over a certain age
- ▣ Livestock
- ▣ Household items, such as clocks

Date:

- Beginning in 1782

City of Petersburg, 1849
Source: FamilySearch

"Free Negro List"

A List of Free negroes, above the age of 15 years, in the County of Powhatan in the year 1851.

Names.	Sex.	Age.	Trade or Occupation.
Allen Delia	Female	25	Weaver, Spinner &c
Armstrong Buck	Male	75	Blacksmith
Armstrong Anderson	do	40	do
Bates Phoebe	Female	80	
Brown Mameel	Male	42	Farmer
Brown Dorcas	Female	50	Spinner &c
Brackett John Lewis	Male	28	Farmer
Clark James	Male	30	Carpenter
Clark Harry	do	21	
Clayton Ned	do	21	
Cox Sterling Sen.	do	60	Farmer
Cox Sterling Jr.	do	27	Domestic servant
Cox Susan	do	31	Washing
Cox Charles Jr.	do	33	Blacksmith
Cox Joe	do	40	do
Cox Berry	do	45	do
Cox Henry	do	24	
Cox George	do	22	Blacksmith
Cox Mat	do	23	Butcher
Cox Kit	do	22	
Clark Cloe	Female	28	Spinner
Clayton Policy	do	30	do
Cox Julia	do	20	do
Cox Ridley	do	35	do
Cox Alfred	Male	14	
Cox Policy	Female	-	Spinner
Cox Peggy	do	-	do

Includes:

- Name
- Gender
- Residence
- Occupation

Date:

- Beginning in 1801

Powhatan County, 1851
 Powhatan County (Va.) Free Negro and
 Slave Records, 1780-1866
 Source: Virginia Untold

Cohabitation Register

[illegible]

Includes:

- ▣ Names of husband & wife
- ▣ Ages of husband & wife
- ▣ Places of birth & residences
- ▣ Last enslaver & residence
- ▣ Husband's occupation
- ▣ Names & ages of children
- ▣ Date of cohabitation

Date:

- ▣ February 27, 1866

Lunenburg County
Cohabitation Registers Digital Collection
Source: Virginia Untold

"Free Negro Register"

Register of free negroes & mulattoes					in Henrico County (Cont. continued)		
When reg'd	No.	Name	Age	Color &c	Status	Emancipated or how free (and by whom)	In what Court emancipation recorded if at all.
April 22 nd 1800	796	William Evans	9	A boy of a dark complexion no mark or scar perceptible.	4 free	Done for us appeared by the evidence of William Evans.	Court of Register at April Court 1833.
June 18 th 1800	797	John Smith	31	A man of a yellow complexion no mark or scar perceptible.	3 free	Done for us appeared from the evidence of Thomas Smith.	Court of Register at June Court 1800.
" " 1800	798	James Reynolds Jr. (Deceased)	21	A boy of a dark brown complexion with a scar under the left eye, and one on the temple near the left eye brow.	4 free	Emancipated by James Reynolds his father by deed recorded in the County Court of Henrico 13 th June 1800.	Henrico Court
Aug 15 th 1800	799	Stephen Martin	31	A man of a dark complexion with a small scar under his throat.	3 free	Done for us appeared from the evidence of Stephen Martin.	Court of Aug Court.
" 7 th 1800	799	Edw. Martin	20	A man of a yellow complexion, no visible mark or scar.	3 free	Done for us appeared from a certificate of the register from the Court of Henrico County Court and emancipated by George & Company.	Court of Aug Court.
Oct 7 th 1800	791	Edw. Hunt	19	A man of a yellow complexion with a scar on the right wrist (and one under right arm).	3 free	Done for us appeared from the evidence of Thomas Hunt.	Court of Oct Court 1833.
Nov 4 th 1800	792	Polly Rogers	27	A woman of a dark complexion with a scar on her forehead.	3 free	Done for us appeared from the evidence of Thomas Rogers.	Do at Nov Court 1800.
Dec 5 th 1800	793	John Highley	60	A man of a brown complexion, with a small mark on nose on the right side of his throat.	3 free	Emancipated by James Highley by deed recorded under his name and attested by Joseph May.	Court of Register at Dec Court 1800.
Feb 4 th 1801	794	James Jackson (Deceased) formerly James Mann	32	A man of a dark brown complexion with a scar on the lower part of his right arm, a little above the wrist.	3 free	Done for us appeared from the evidence of James Jackson from the Court of Henrico County Court.	Court of Feb Court 1834.
March 10 th 1801	795	Mary Price	38	A woman of a dark brown complexion no mark or scar perceptible.	3 free	Done for us for Court of Henrico C. C. Evidence.	Court of March Court 1834.
May 3 rd 1801	796	Henry Evans	34	A mulatto woman, no mark or scar perceptible.	3 free	Done for us for residents of the register from the Court of the Henrico County of Richmond.	Court of May Court 1834.

Includes:

- ▣ Name
- ▣ Age
- ▣ Color & stature
- ▣ By whom & through what court emancipation was obtained
- ▣ If the individual was born free

Date:

- ▣ Beginning in 1793 for towns
- ▣ Beginning in 1803 for counties

Henrico County, 1833

Virginia Untold



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VIRGINIA UNTOLD

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN NARRATIVE

The Library of Virginia's collections are rich with records documenting the lives of African Americans in Virginia. However, access to those materials dating from before the American Civil War is limited at best. These limitations are the result of period perspectives on the identities of enslaved and disenfranchised populations, as well as sheer volume. Due to this, the individual stories form a narrative of a people that has not been fully told.

The Library's African American Narrative project aims to provide greater accessibility to pre-1865 African American history and genealogy found in the rich primary sources in its holdings. Traditional description, indexing, transcription, and digitization are major parts of this effort. However, and perhaps more importantly, this project seeks to encourage conversation and engagement around the records, providing opportunities for a more grassroots and diverse narrative of the history of Virginia's African American people.

[Search the Narrative](#)

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The processing of local court records found in Virginia Untold was made possible through the innovative [Circuit Court Records Preservation Program](#) (CCRP), a cooperative program between the Library of Virginia and the [Virginia Court Clerks Association](#) (VCCA), which seeks to preserve the historic records found in Virginia's circuit courts. The scanning, indexing and transcription of the records were made possible through the generosity of [Dominion Energy](#) and funding provided by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), administered by the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) (IMLS).



<https://www.virginiamemory.com/collections/aan/>

Thank You!

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