



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

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Librarian of Virginia

Library of Virginia Commemorates Black History Month with Exhibition Entitled "*I have this day committed to jail*": Records of Free & Enslaved Citizens from the City of Richmond Hustings Court Runs Feb. 1–28, 2023

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RICHMOND, VIRGINIA – In honor of Black History Month, the Library of Virginia presents a display of historic records from the City of Richmond Hustings Court that document the complex dynamics between white, free Black and enslaved people in Virginia's capital city. Entitled "*I have this day committed to jail*": Records of Free & Enslaved Citizens from the City of Richmond Hustings Court, the free exhibition runs Feb. 1–28, 2023, in the Library's Lobby and Pre-function Hall.

Urban centers such as Richmond drew many enslaved men and women looking to hire themselves out, either on their own or at the behest of their rural owners. Richmond also appealed to free Black Virginians looking for work and sanctuary. As the populations of both enslaved and free Black people grew throughout the early 19th century, Virginia lawmakers enacted increasingly restrictive legislation to police the lives of Black Virginians.

The results are captured in a variety of document types from the Hustings Court, including court papers of criminal trials involving free Black and enslaved people for various petty crimes and felonies, free registration certificates, petitions of free Black Virginians requesting permission to remain in Virginia and jail records of free Black and enslaved people traveling at large.

With support from a National Historical Publications and Records Commission grant from the National Archives, the Library of Virginia examined more than 250 boxes of materials from the City of Richmond Hustings Court to select records to digitize as a part of Virginia Untold, a Library of Virginia digital project that facilitates access to records of enslaved and free Black people in Virginia before 1867.

Related images are available here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8a1lmtt5e3isaeu/AABhplkcg6G0QeubyOcJ8CsQa?dl=0>

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ABOUT THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

The Library of Virginia is the state's oldest institution dedicated to the preservation of Virginia's history and culture. Our online offerings attract nearly 4 million website visits per year, and our resources, exhibitions and events bring in more than 100,000 visitors each year. The Library's collections, containing more than 130 million items, document and illustrate the lives of both famous Virginians and ordinary citizens. The Library is located in downtown Richmond near Capitol Square at 800 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219. Learn more at www.lva.virginia.gov.