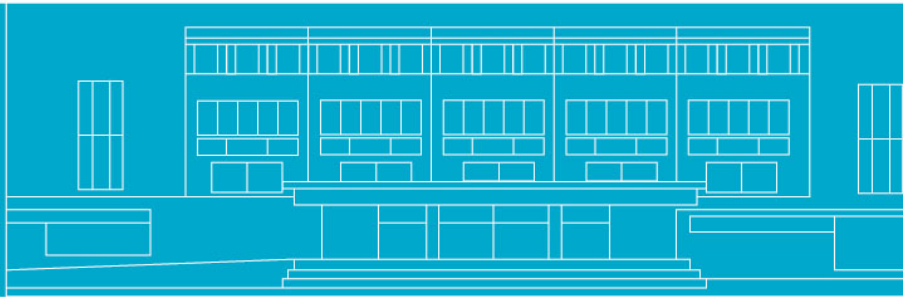


Digital Collections Search Tips



BASIC SEARCH – VIRGINIA UNTOLD: THE AFRICAN AMERICAN NARRATIVE (AAN)

To begin your search, go to <http://www.virginiamemory.com/collections/aan> and select “Search the Narrative”:



VIRGINIA UNTOLD: THE AFRICAN AMERICAN NARRATIVE AT THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

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](#)



This page contains documents to assist your search, access to the full indexes to records, and a search form



[Join the Narrative](#)



This page lists upcoming staff presentations & talks, links to social media and blogs about the Narrative, and interesting articles.



[About the Narrative](#)



This page has project history and background, as well as LVA contact information.

The Search the Narrative page gives you access to the following:

- 1) Original spreadsheets used to index the records. **Note:** not all items in the spreadsheets have been digitized and made available online yet.
- 2) Tip Sheets (like this one) to help you search and understand the collection.
- 3) Links to related research resources.
- 4) A search form to help you get started.

The search form allows you to search using 1, 2 or all 3 of the following: Name or Keyword, Record Type, Locality.

SEARCH THE NARRATIVE

Access the original csv indexes (spreadsheets) created for this project at [Collections Data @ LVA](#)

[Tip Sheet: African American Narrative Record Types](#) (pdf)

[Tip Sheet: Related Resources and Collections](#) (pdf)

Search the collection:

There are three options for starting your search.
You can use one, two or all three of them at a time.

The screenshot shows a search form with three input fields: "Name or Keyword:", "Record Type:", and "Locality:". Each field has a dropdown menu. Below the fields is a "Search" button and a link to "Browse the entire collection." Red arrows point from explanatory text to each field. The text for "Name or Keyword" says it searches all fields. The text for "Record Type" and "Locality" says they allow choosing from included types and localities. A note at the bottom says not all types are in each locality and that new ones will be added.

Name or Keyword:

Record Type:

Locality:

Browse the [entire collection](#).

Name or Keyword searches ALL fields in the database, including any indexes or transcriptions that are included.

Record Type and Locality allow you to chose from record types and localities that have been included SO FAR in the collection.

Please note: Not all Record Types are represented in each Locality. We will continue to add new localities and new records types, so check back!

Related Content and Library of Virginia Resources

- [Library of Virginia digital collections](#)
- [Research Notes and Bibliographies](#)
- [Virginia Heritage guides to Virginia collections](#)

Remember: There are advantages and disadvantages both to searching broadly and narrowing in more specifically. Using the collection effectively will require persistence and some experimentation, as the records are indexed according to words and spelling used in their creation. Which can be especially tricky with names.

The next two screenshots show some useful detail about the page.

SEARCH THE NARRATIVE

Access the original csv indexes (spreadsheets) created for this project at [Collections Data @ LVA](#)

[Tip Sheet: African American Narrative Record Types](#) (pdf)

Have a question about a Record Type?
Check out our Tip Sheet that explains
why they are created and the kind of information they contain.

[Tip Sheet: Related Resources and Collections](#) (pdf)

Search the collection:

The screenshot shows a search form with the following fields: "Name or Keyword:" (text input), "Record Type:" (dropdown menu with "All Record Types" selected), and "Locality:" (dropdown menu with "All Localities" selected). A "Search" button is located below the "Locality:" field. The "Record Type:" dropdown menu is open, showing a list of record types: All Record Types, Certificate of Importation, Cohabitation Register, Coroner's Inquisition, Deed of Emancipation, Free Negro Registration, Free Negro Requisition for Public Use, Free Negro Tax Record, Freedom Suit, Indenture of Apprenticeship, Petition for Re-Enslavement, Petition to Remain in the Commonwealth, and Slave Requisition for Public Use. A red arrow points from the tip sheet text to the "Record Type:" dropdown menu. Another red arrow points from the tip sheet text to the "Locality:" dropdown menu. Below the search form, there is a "Browse the entire collection" link and a "Related Content and Library of Virginia Resources" section with a list of links: "Formation histories for Virginia counties & independent cities", "Library of Virginia digital collections", "Research Notes and Bibliographies", and "Virginia Heritage guides to Virginia collections".

Using this search form, you may search only one Record Type at a time.

Related Content and Library of Virginia Resources

- [Library of Virginia digital collections](#)
- [Research Notes and Bibliographies](#)
- [Virginia Heritage](#) guides to Virginia collections

SEARCH THE NARRATIVE

Access the original csv indexes (spreadsheets) created for this project at [Collections Data @ LVA](#)

[Tip Sheet: African American Narrative Record Types](#) (pdf)

[Tip Sheet: Related Resources and Collections](#) (pdf)

Search the collection:

The screenshot shows a search form with the following fields: "Name or Keyword:" (text input), "Record Type:" (dropdown menu with "All Record Types" selected), and "Locality:" (dropdown menu with "All Localities" selected). A "Search" button is located below the "Locality:" field. The "Locality:" dropdown menu is highlighted with a red oval. A red arrow points from the tip sheet text to the "Locality:" dropdown menu. Below the search form, there is a "Browse the entire collection" link and a "Related Content and Library of Virginia Resources" section with a list of links: "Formation histories for Virginia counties & independent cities", "Library of Virginia digital collections", "Research Notes and Bibliographies", and "Virginia Heritage guides to Virginia collections".

Generally, Locality refers to the county or city in which
a certain document or record originated, usually in the Circuit Court.
Locality may also refer to county or city of residence or perhaps
location from which a letter was written.

Related Content and Library of Virginia Resources

- [Formation histories for Virginia counties & independent cities](#)
- [Library of Virginia digital collections](#)
- [Research Notes and Bibliographies](#)
- [Virginia Heritage](#) guides to Virginia collections

Date of county or city formation,
as well as a locality's "parentage,"
can have a big impact on research.
Learn more about a locality's history with our online guide.

For our example, we'll use all three search fields: Name or Keyword, Record Type, and Locality.

Once filled, mash the "Search" button to start your search.

SEARCH THE NARRATIVE

Access the original csv indexes (spreadsheets) created for this project at [Collections Data @ LVA](#)

[Tip Sheet: African American Narrative Record Types](#) (pdf)

[Tip Sheet: Related Resources and Collections](#) (pdf)

Search the collection:

Name or Keyword:

Record Type:

Locality:

Once the fields are filled, click the "Search" button.

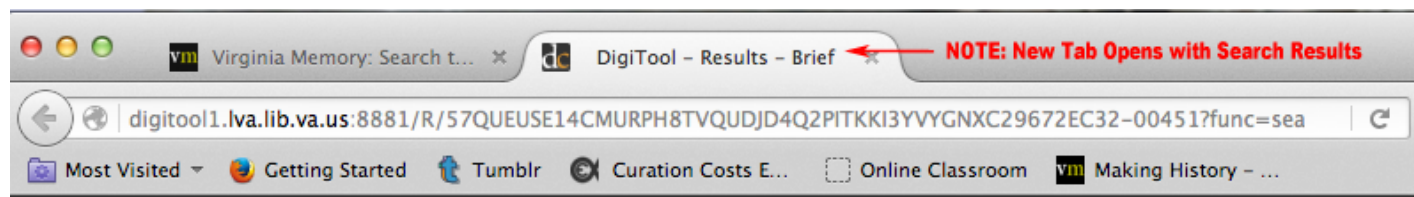
Browse the [entire collection](#).

In this search, we're looking for the name "Lucy" found anywhere in Free Negro Registrations from Chesterfield County.

Related Content and Library of Virginia Resources

- [Library of Virginia digital collections](#)
- [Research Notes and Bibliographies](#)
- [Virginia Heritage](#) guides to Virginia collections

This will direct your search to our digital asset management system, which will open in another browser window like this:



Select that browser window to see your search results. **Hint:** if you don't get any search results, go back the original tab and try another search.

If all goes well and there are results to view, you'll see a screen like this in that 2nd tab. That big red circle below shows the specific terms searched for in the collection, that the search results are sorted alphabetically by Title/Creator, that the results are presented in a "Brief view" and that there are 16 results in total.

The screenshot shows the 'digitalcollections' interface for the 'LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA'. The search results are displayed in a grid format. A red circle highlights the search criteria and sorting options.

Search: 'W-All Words= lucy AND W-Type= free negro registration AND W-Coverage= chesterfield county' in 'Admin Unit LVA01' Collection [Sorted by: Title/Creator]

Sort by: Title

Records 1- 16 of 16

Record Number	Title/Creator	Year
1	Abba, Lucy (48): Free Negro Register	1825
2	Abba, Lucy Ann (F, 7): Free Negro Register	1849
3	Abba, Lucy (F, 32): Free Negro Register	1808
4	Abba, Peggy (30): Free Negro Register	1827
5	Abby, Dina (Alias Dina Abba, F, 28): Free Negro Register	1808
6	Baker, Martha (16): Free Negro Register	1853
7	Barbour, James Thomas (M, 22): Free Negro Register	1820
8	Jesper, Archer (M, 30): Free Negro Register	1809
9	Johnathan, Louisiana (Alias Louisiana Pleasants, F, 26): Free Negro Register	1843
10	Morris, Lucy (25): Free Negro Register	1807
11	Morris, William Henry (22): Free Negro Register	
12	Moss, Lucy Ann (7): Free Negro Register	

1 [Abba, Lucy \(48\): Free Negro Register](#)



1825



In some results, you can see that the search term "Lucy" is in the title.

3 [Abba, Lucy \(F, 32\): Free Negro Register](#)



1808



5 [Abby, Dina \(Alias Dina Abba, F, 28\): Free Negro Register](#)



1808



7 [Barbour, James Thomas \(M, 22\): Free Negro Register](#)



1820



But in other results, there isn't a clear indication of the search term "Lucy."

9 [Johnathan, Louisiana \(Alias Louisiana Pleasants, F, 28\): Free Negro Register](#)



1843



This page is referred to as the "Full view" of the record.



Object  - PDF Document (1 M)

Once a result is selected, a more detailed description of the item is given.

A closer read of the metadata reveals the name "Lucy Ann Pittman" as being included in this particular document.

Record number 000355216

Title Johnathan, Louisiana (Alias Louisiana Pleasants, F, 28): Free Negro Register

Date Issued 1843

Description Additional name(s): Milley Smith (29), Phillis Mayo (27), Mary Fleming (15), Lawuanna Anderson (27), Betsy Crane (30), Clarissa Hill (60), Samuel Pleasants (19), James Smith (48), Colin Pittman (15), George Pittman (15), Elizabeth Ann Pittman (12), Sarah Ann Pittman (10), Peter Pittman (7), Gustavus Pittman (4), Richard Pittman (2), Fanny Pittman (13), Ballard Pittman (1), Lucy Ann Pittman (8), Mary Ann Pittman (2), Daniel Alvis (29), Jordan Smith (27)

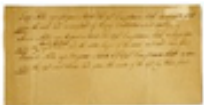
Acts passed by the Virginia Legislature in 1793 and 1803 required every "free negro" or "mulatto" to be registered and numbered in a book to be kept by the county clerk. This collection contains records involved in the registration process. The registration language and process varied across localities, thus the information and type of records may differ.

Registration records found in this collection include numbered certificates that recorded the free person's name, sometimes age, a brief physical description and the circumstances of the person's freedom or emancipation. If born free, a reference is sometimes made to the parents. If emancipated, the emancipating owner, place and date may be mentioned. There are affidavits that were given by individuals affirming a free person's status. There are written descriptions of free persons. Lastly, you will find registrations which are loose papers that match information found in the bound volumes of registered "free negroes" kept in the court house.

Notes Original filename 1116535_0003_0072_0001-0003

Coverage Chesterfield County

To view the original document, select either the Object icon or the thumbnail of the document.



Object



- PDF Document (1 M)

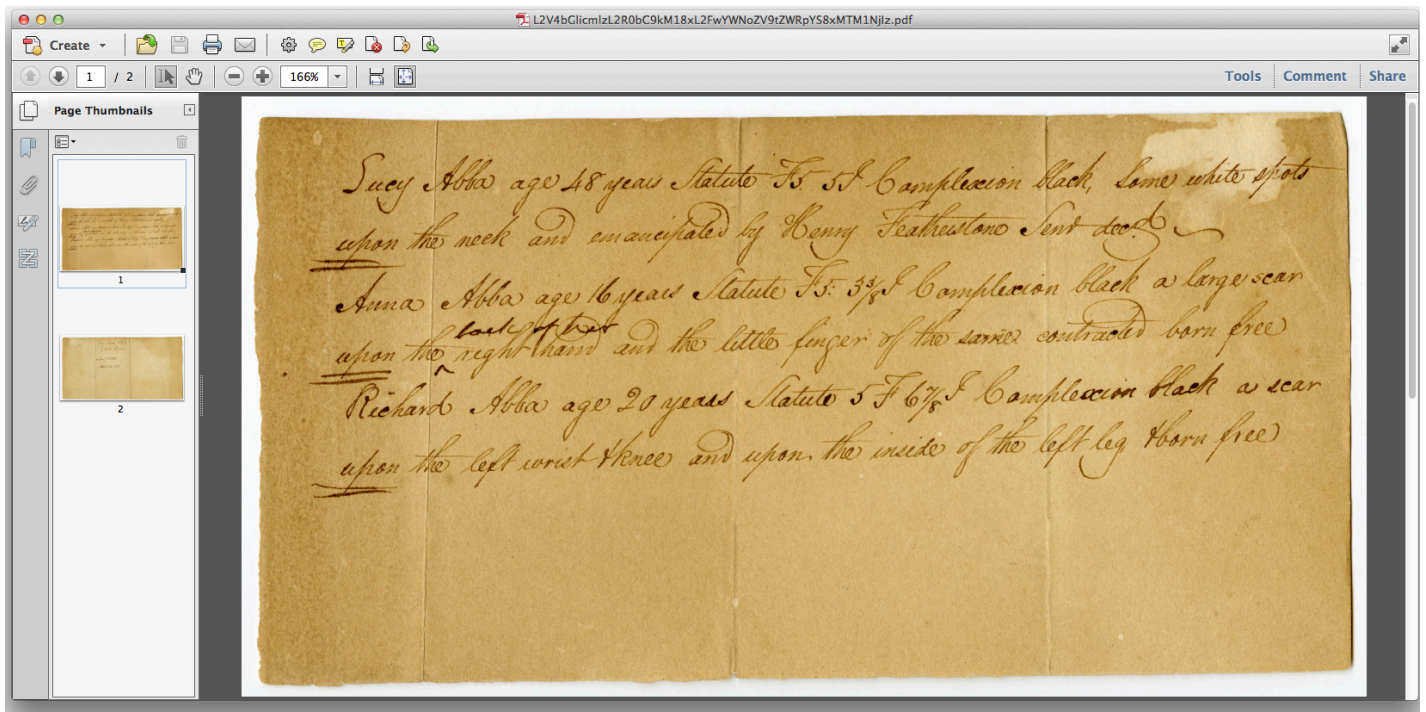
Record number 000355141

Title Abba, Lucy (48): Free Negro Register

Date Issued 1825

Description Slave Owner: Henry Featherstone

Additional name(s): Anna Abba (F, 16), Richard Abba (20)



Once you're done with a document, close the window with the digital image in order to go back and look through other items in the result set.

If you want to do another search, you can go back to the Search the Narrative page by selecting the correct tab in your browser:

