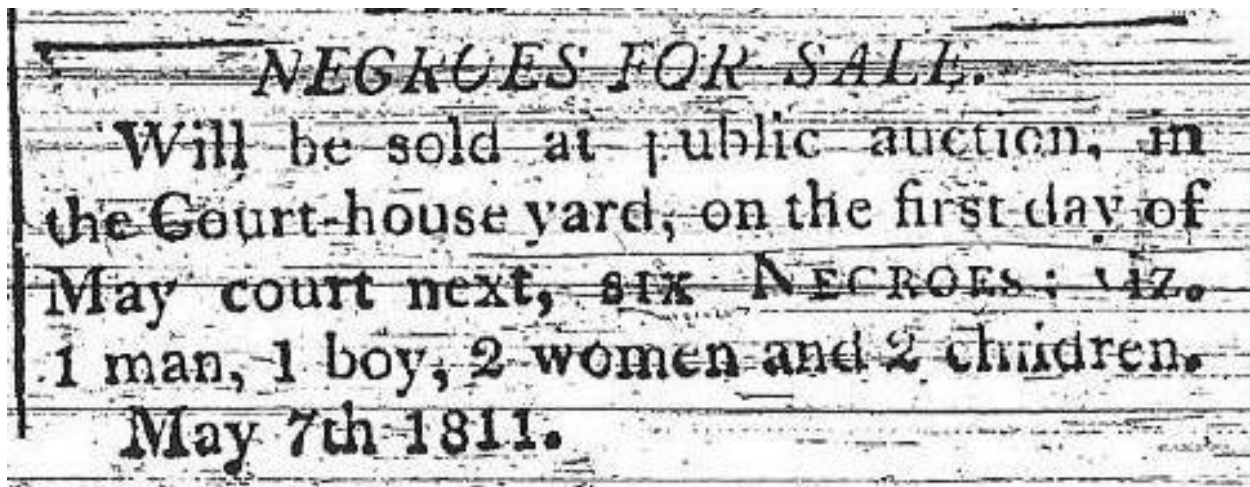


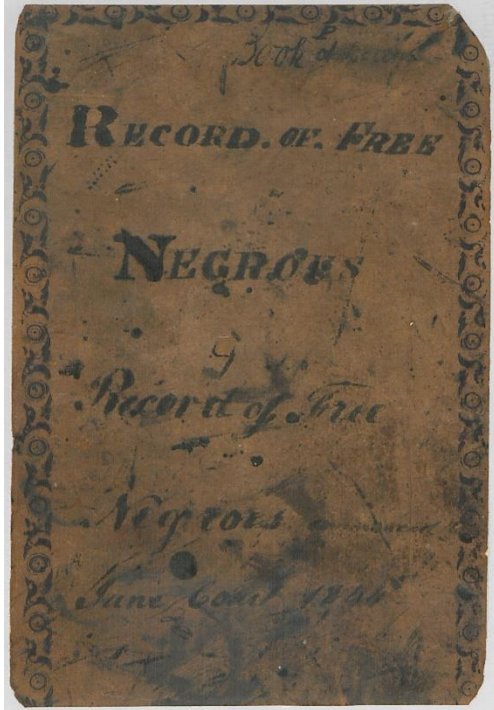
Introduction

African-American history is intertwined with the courthouse history through its historic court cases, actions by judges and juries, court records retained in the Circuit Court Clerk's Office, and activities held on the courthouse grounds. Loudoun County was founded in 1757, and its records from those early days through 1865 document the institution of slavery— the sale of people held in bondage, often on the courthouse steps; the transfer of human property within wills to spouses and children; and punishment for acts of resistance to inhumane treatment. This newspaper advertisement, using the vernacular of the time, announced the sale of enslaved people at the courthouse.

Washingtonian (Leesburg), 11 May 1811 (Image courtesy of the Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg, VA)



NEGROES FOR SALE.
Will be sold at public auction, in
the Court-house yard, on the first day of
May court next, six NEGROES; viz.
1 man, 1 boy, 2 women and 2 children.
May 7th 1811.



Less often, deeds of emancipation were recorded that granted freedom from bondage. A 1793 Virginia law required freed Black people to go to the courthouse every 3 years to certify their freedom, accompanied by a White person who would testify on their behalf. An 1806 law required people freed after May 1806 to leave the Commonwealth within a year or risk being returned to slavery. The Register of Free Negroes, as it was called, was one of the most precious and important records to the African-American community pre-Civil War, and it remains one of the most treasured documents in the courthouse's archives.

[View the 1844 Record of Free Negroes](#)

The hope of equality after freedom came in 1865 can be seen in the marriages recorded at the courthouse, previously illegal during the time of slavery, and in deeds for purchases of land by formerly enslaved people, such as Jacob Howard and Andrew Causberry.

Deed Book 6H Page 251

This image shows a snippet of a handwritten deed document. The text is written in cursive and is enclosed in a rectangular border. The text reads: "This Indenture made this 12th day of December 1874 between Mrs A. Stephenson and Mary D. Stephenson his wife of the first part and Jacob Howard and And Andrew Causberry of the second part, Witness,". The document is a legal record of a deed.

However, the reality of a resistant South soon became evident. The African-American community was not represented on juries until the mid-1900s and rarely as elected officials. Segregated tax records became the norm in 1890 until 1963, and some land deeds prohibited the sale of property to African-Americans. Separate schools for African-American and White children existed from the time public education was established in 1870 through integration in 1968. The land deeds recorded with the Clerk of the Circuit Court clearly identify schools for “colored” children referring to African-American children. The courthouse continues to be a place where our community’s history is made. The annual Loudoun County NAACP march on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in January starts at the courthouse. Swearing-in ceremonies for judges are held in the 1894 Courthouse, the third to be built on the property.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Marker



Lorrie Sinclair Taylor, Loudoun County's first African-American judge, was sworn in at the 1894 Courthouse on August 13, 2021. Judge Taylor sits on the bench for the General District Court in Loudoun County.

Judge Taylor (image courtesy of Damon Decker)

