

A Guide to the Southampton County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1749-1912 (bulk 1831-1873)

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
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Author: G. Crawford

History

Processed by: Field Processors

Title Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by G. Crawford, 09 May 2007

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

2013-11-21 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Southampton County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

34.90 cubic feet (76 boxes); Digital images

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Southampton County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1749-1912 digital images can be found on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available electronically at the website of the Library of Virginia.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Southampton County (Va.) under an undated accession.

Digital images were generated from microfilm by Backstage Library Works in 2019 through the Library of Virginia's Circuit Court Records Preservation Program.

Processing Information

This collection was processed in the field.

Original records only available for years, 1749-1909. While available through the Chancer Records index, original records 1910-1912 remain in locality.

Encoded by G. Crawford: 2006; Updated by E. Swain: 2025.

Preferred Citation

Southampton County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1749-1912. (Cite style of suit and chancery index no.). Local government records collection, Southampton County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Southampton County Court Records can be found on microfilm at The Library of Virginia. See [A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm](#)

Location of Originals

Southampton County (Va.) Chancery Causes, post 1909, are retained in the locality. Contact the clerk of the Circuit Court for access.

Historical Information

Context of Record type: Chancery Causes are cases of equity. According to Black's Law Dictionary they are "administered according to fairness as contrasted with the strictly formulated rules of common law." A judge, not a jury, determines the outcome of the case; however, the judge is basing the decision on findings compiled and documented by Commissioners. Chancery causes are useful when researching local history, genealogical information, and land or estate divisions. They are a valuable source of local, state, social, and legal history and serve as a primary source for understanding a locality's history. Chancery causes document the lived experiences of free and enslaved individuals; women; children; people living with physical disabilities or mental health struggles; people living in poverty; defunct institutions and corporate entities; or those that may not have otherwise left traditional written histories.

Locality History: Southampton County was named, in the opinion of many authorities, for Henry Wriothesley, third earl of Southampton and treasurer of the Virginia Company of London from 1620 to 1624. It is more likely, however, that the county was named for the borough of Southampton in England. Southampton County was formed in 1749 from Isle of Wight County, and part of Nansemond County was added in 1786. The county seat is Courtland.

Scope and Content

Southampton County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1749-1912, consists of cases concerning issues of equity brought largely by residents of the county and filed in the circuit court. These cases often involve the following actions: divisions of estates or land, disputes over wills, disputes regarding contracts, debt, divorce, and business disputes. Other less prevalent issues include freedom suits, permissions to sell property, and disputes concerning trespass. Predominant documents found in these chancery causes include bills (documents the plaintiff's complaint), answers (defendant's response to the plaintiff's complaint),

decrees (court's decision), depositions, affidavits, correspondence, lists of heirs, deeds, plats, wills, records involving enslaved individuals, business records or vital statistics.

Arrangement

Organized by case, of which each is assigned a unique index number comprised of the latest year found in case and a sequentially increasing 3-digit number assigned by the processor as cases for that year are found. Arranged chronologically.

Arrangement of documents within each folder are as follows: Bill, Answer, and Final Decree (if found).

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