

A Guide to the Russell County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1840-1933

Russell County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1840-1960 (bulk 1874-1948)
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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
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2010
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History

Processed by: S. Bagley

Title Statement

A Guide to the Russell County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1840-1933

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Author: G. Crawford

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Greg Crawford, 10 June 2010

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

Russell County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

126 cubic feet (352 boxes); Digital images

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Russell County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1840-1933 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 Russell County in 2000 under accession number 37641. Additional records were transferred to the Library of Virginia in 2007 under accession number 43112 and additional records were purchased in 2013 from Bookworm and Silverfish in Wytheville, Virginia under accession number 50747.

Processing Information

Russell County (Va.) Chancery Causes were processed in two separate groups the first, Chancery Causes 1840-1879, and later the second group, Chancery Causes 1864-1960. Additional records were processed and interfiled into the collection during a cataloguing assessment project in 2024.

Encoded by G. Crawford: 2010; Updated by E. Swain: November 2024.

Preferred Citation

Russell County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1840-1960. (Cite style of suit and chancery index no. if available). Local government records collection, Prince George County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, 23219.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

See also: [Dickenson County \(Va.\) Chancery Causes](#).

See also: [Lee County \(Va.\) Chancery Causes](#).

See also: [Scott County \(Va.\) Chancery Causes](#).

See also: [Tazewell County \(Va.\) Chancery Causes](#).

See also: [Wise County \(Va.\) Chancery Causes](#).

Additional Russell County Court Records can be found on microfilm at The Library of Virginia web site. Consult ["A Guide to Virginia County and City Records on Microfilm."](#)

Russell County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Russell Court Records may be found in the Virginia Lost Records Localities Collection at the Library of Virginia. Search the [Lost Records Localities Database](#) found on the Library of Virginia's web site.

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: Russell County was named for William Russell, a Clinch Valley pioneer and the member of the House of Delegates who introduced the legislation forming the county from Washington County in 1786. The county seat is Lebanon.

Lost Locality Notes: Created in 1786. The first marriage register and most loose papers were lost in a fire in the clerk's office in 1872. Volumes that record deeds, court orders, and wills (except Will Book 1) exist.

Scope and Content

Russell County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1840-1960, 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 is as follows: Bill, Answer, and Final Decree (if found).

Selected Suits of Interest

Causes of Interest are identified by local records archivists during processing and indexing. These causes are generally selected based upon guiding principles of having historical, genealogical or sensational significance; however, determining what is "of interest" is subjective, and the individual perspective and experience of the describing archivist will affect the material identified.

1864-003: James Samples, etc. vs. Simeon Hunt and wife, etc.:

Scope and Content

Suit involves the division of enslaved persons held as property.

1898-004 George Banner vs. Thomas L. Rosser:

Scope and Content

During the real estate boom of the late 1880s, Banner sold to Rosser, a real estate developer, 868 acres of land that was supposed to become the city of Minneapolis - located opposite St. Paul on the Clinch river. After the bust in the early 1890s, Rosser's companies went bankrupt and Minneapolis was never built. The suit originated out of this bankruptcy. A plat of St. Paul and Minneapolis was filed as an exhibit.

1873-021 Susannah Breeding vs. Elijah Breeding:

Scope and Content

After 40 years of marriage, Susannah filed for divorce based on abuse and infidelity. Elijah then accused Susannah of abuse and of encouraging their daughter to engage in sex work. Based on the testimony of neighbors, friends, and former employees; the judge found for Susannah and ordered a commissioner to record and divide their property.