

A Guide to the Henry County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1783-1946 (bulk 1870-1916)

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia

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History

Processed by: R. Smith

Title Statement

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Author: Greg Crawford

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Greg Crawford, 08 September 2009

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

Henry County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

Digital images; 101.39 cubic feet (218 boxes)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Henry County Chancery Causes, 1783-1931, use digital images found on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available electronically at the website of the Library of Virginia.

Chancery Causes 1932-1946 indexed. Contact Archives Research for availability.

Use Restrictions

No restrictions on use.

Acquisition Information

These records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Henry County (Va.) in 2003 under the accession number 40847 and an undated accession.

Chancery cause 1799-017: Thomas W. Ruble vs. John P. Pyrtle came to the Library of Virginia in 2009 as a gift of Paul Matthew Hagans of Pikeville, Kentucky under accession number 44157.

Processing Information

Henry County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1783-1946, was processed and indexed in 2005.

Encoded by G. Crawford: 2009; updated by J. Taylor: June 2023

Digital images were generated by OCLC through the Library of Virginia's Circuit Court Records Preservation Program in 2009.

Preferred Citation

Henry County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1783-1946. (Cite style of suit and chancery index no.). Local government records collection, Henry County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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

Additional unindexed post-1913 records may be available at the Circuit Court Clerk's Office.

Historical Information

Context for 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: Henry County was named for Patrick Henry, who was the first governor of the commonwealth of Virginia. It was formed from Pittsylvania County in 1776. The county court first met on 20 January 1777. Part of Patrick County was added later in 1858. The county seat was previously in Martinsville but has been moved near Collinsville.

Scope and Content

Henry County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1783-1931 (bulk 1870-1916), 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.

These records contain one box of "Orphan Chancery" which is processed, but not indexed. These records contain parts, often single items, of chancery causes which could not be further identified as belonging to a certain case.

Arrangement

Organized by case, of which each is assigned a unique index number comprised of the earliest 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).

Selected Causes of Interest

Since the processing of this locality, information gathering standards have changed. At this time there are no suits of interest available for this locality.