

A Guide to the Tazewell County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1800-1920 (bulk 1843-1915)

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia

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Title Statement

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Profile Description

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Revision Description

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

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Tazewell County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

86.7 cubic feet (201 boxes); Digital images

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Tazewell County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1800-1920 digital images can be found on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available electronically at the website of the Library of Virginia.

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Tazewell County in 2008 under accession number 43683. Additional records were transferred to the Library of Virginia in 2011 under accession number 50202 and as part of an undated accession.

Processing Information

The majority of these records were processed in 2008-2009. Additional records were processed and interfiled into the collection during a cataloguing assessment project in 2024.

Encoded by G. Crawford: 2009; Updated by E. Swain: December 2024.

Preferred Citation

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Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Tazewell 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."](#)

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

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

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

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

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: Tazewell County was originally named Alexandria County. It was formed from a portion of Fairfax County that Virginia in 1789 ceded to the federal government for use as the site of a new national capital. In 1801 the area officially became part of the District of Columbia, although Congress named it Alexandria County. By an act of 9 July 1846, Congress returned the county to Virginia, and the General Assembly extended the commonwealth's jurisdiction over the region effective 20 March 1847. By an act of assembly passed 16 March 1920, the county's name was changed to Tazewell, the name of the Custis family mansion (the home of Robert E. Lee), which is located in the county.

Scope and Content

Tazewell County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1800-1920, 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.

1841-003: Mathias Harman vs William McGuire, etc.:

Scope and Content

A land dispute suit concerning property in Kentucky owned by Harman's father, Mathias Harman, Sr., who was one of the first settlers in western Virginia. The suit includes depositions concerning Harman's settlement of western Virginia.

1868-003: Granville Jones vs. Exr. of William Davis, etc.:

Scope and Content

Dispute involves the value of town property in Tazewell Court House and Confederate money. Deponents recall the fear of citizens that Union forces were going to burn the town.

1876-027: John Peery and James Bailey vs R.W. Witten and others:

Scope and Content

Peery and Bailey hired by trustees of M.E. Church South of Pisgah to build a church in late 1860's. Peery and Bailey suing because they did not receive full payment for their work. The trustees response to complaint was the reason they did not pay the balance owed to Peery and Bailey was because they did a poor job.

1903-043: Foote and Johnson, etc. vs Administrator of Robert Davidson Hufford:

Scope and Content

Estate dispute. Hufford was a physician who died in 1898 deeply in debt, 2500 dollars in 1898 money. Creditors sued Hufford's estate to recover what was owed them. The suit includes an account book that records the accounts of Hufford's patients. Entries in patient's record medical services rendered by Hufford including abortions.