

A Guide to the Northumberland County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1759-1980 (bulk 1902-1950)

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
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History

Processed by: Sam Walters, G. Crawford and Field Processors

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, 02 February 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

Northumberland County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

Digital images; 64.2 cubic feet (141 boxes)

Location

State Records Center

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Chancery Causes 1759-1912, use digital images found on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available electronically at the website of the Library of Virginia.

Chancery Causes 1913-1980 are indexed. Contact Archives Research Services for availability.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Northumberland County (Va.) in 2007 under accession numbers 43487 and 43283.

Processing Information

Northumberland County Chancery Causes were processed by field processors in the locality and Library of Virginia staff. Processing was completed in 2009.

Digital images for Chancery Causes 1759-1912 were generated by OCLC in 2009 through the Library of Virginia's Circuit Court Records Preservation Program.

Post-1912 records were previously described separately under the title Northumberland County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1913-1980. Records are now described together.

At this time, there are no plans to digitize Chancery Causes 1913-1980.

Encoded by G. Crawford: 2010; updated by J. Taylor: August 2023.

Preferred Citation

Northumberland County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1759-1980 (bulk 1902-1950). (Cite style of suit and chancery index no.). Local Government Records Collection, Northumberland County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Northumberland 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."](#)

Northumberland County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Northumberland County may be found in the Virginia Lost Records Localities Digital Collection at the Library of Virginia. Search the [Lost Records Localities Digital Collection](#) available at Virginia Memory.

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: Northumberland County was named probably for the English county. It was formed about 1645 from the district of Chickacoan, the early-seventeenth-century name for the region between the Potomac and the Rappahannock Rivers. The date of the county's formation is conjectural because the act of assembly creating it is no longer extant, but internal evidence shows that the county was functioning in 1645. The county seat is Heathsville.

Lost Locality Note: Created about 1645. The county suffered some losses in a fire in the clerk's office on October 25, 1710. Volumes beginning in 1650 that record deeds, court orders, and wills exist.

Scope and Content

Northumberland County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1759-1980 (bulk 1902-1950), 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.)

Selected Suits of Interest

1813-008: Walter C. Gardiner and wife, etc. vs. John Simkins

Scope and Content

The cause involves the property of Isaac Simkins who died after being "impressed by a British Man of War."

1820-001: Margaret B. Hudnall, etc. vs. Nancy Waddy, etc.

Scope and Content

The cause includes correspondence related to the impressment of Alexander Waddy by the British navy. Waddy left for Europe in 1809 never to be heard from again.