

A Guide to the Greene County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1838-1961

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1838-1961

A Collection in the Library of Virginia
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History

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Title Statement

A Guide to the Greene County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1838-1961

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Publication Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record by Greg Crawford, 07 March 2014

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Greene County (Va.) Circuit Court

Extent

67 cubic feet (149 boxes; digital images)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Chancery Causes, 1838-1899, digital images can be found on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available electronically at the website of the Library of Virginia. Please use digital images.

Chancery Causes, 1900-1961, are processed and indexed information is available on the Chancery Records Index, but digital images are not available at this time. Contact Archives Research Services for availability.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These records came to the Library of Virginia in an undated shipment of court papers from Greene County.

Processing Information

Greene County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1838-1961 were processed first in 2005 and reprocessed in 2022, up to the year 1899, in order to add additional information, such as enslaved names and causes of action. At this time, there are no current plans to reprocess the 1900-1961 records.

Digital images of Chancery Causes 1838-1899 were generated by Backstage Library Works through the Library of Virginia's Circuit Court Records Preservation Program in 2024.

Encoded by G. Crawford: 2014; updated by J. Taylor: 2023; Update by M. Mason: December 2024

Preferred Citation

Greene County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1838-1961. (Cite style of suit and chancery index no.). Local Government Records Collection, Augusta County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Greene 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](#).

Greene County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Greene 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 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: Greene County was named for Nathanael Greene, commanding general of the Continental army in the South during part of the Revolutionary War. It was formed from Orange County in 1838. The county seat is Stanardsville.

Lost Locality Notes: Some court records, primarily volumes, suffered water damage as a result of a courthouse fire on October 24, 1979.

Scope and Content

Greene County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1838-1961 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.

Chancery causes before 1900 include a substantial number of cases concerning debts and estates. These cases largely involve disputes between individuals over the division of money and land.

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 Causes 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.

1853-006: Jane Powell by etc. vs. James Powell:

Scope and Content

A divorce case introduced by Jane Powell, who sued on the grounds of excessive cruelty. She reported in her bill that James Powell, her husband, hid his true character during their courtship and after their marriage, he began to sell off land she inherited against her will. Witnesses stated, in the depositions taken by the court, that James Powell was violent and married Jane Powell, not for love, but for her inheritance.

1883-005: J.R.T. Gentry vs. H.B.C. Gentry, etc.:

Scope and Content

The case includes a warrant, issued in 1880, for B.C. Gentry for setting fire to a public place of worship.

1884-002: Exr. of Fanny Buckner vs. Mordecai Buckner etc.:

Scope and Content

Delia and Anthony, two Black people enslaved by Fanny Buckner, were accused of burning down a dwelling house. Anthony was sold; however, Delia was not. The reason given was because her implication in the fire was found to be without basis. A deed of trust for the sale is included in the case.

1886-012: William R. Sims and wife vs. Admx. of William Dunn etc.:

Scope and Content

The suit includes information about events surrounding a local hotel during the Civil War, including Helen, an enslaved worker, who ran away to the Union Army, as well as the hotel being taken as a hospital and used for the treatment of soldiers.