

A Guide to the Patrick County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1803-1958 (bulk 1887-1910)

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia

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Author: Greg Crawford

History

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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, 03 March 2016

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Patrick County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

Digital images; 79.56 cubic feet (172 boxes).

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Patrick County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1803-1912, use digital images found on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available electronically at the website of the Library of Virginia.

Patrick County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1913-1958 are unprocessed. 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 Patrick County in 2011 under accession number 50251. Additional records were purchased from a private seller in 2000 under accession numbers 37600, 37661, 37663, and 37664.

Processing Information

Chancery Causes, 1803-1912 were processed by Library of Virginia staff in 2015. At this time, there are currently no plans to process and index the 1913-1958 records.

Digital images for Chancery Causes, 1803-1912 were generated by Backstage Library Works through the Library of Virginia's Circuit Court Records Preservation Program in 2015.

Item previously cataloged as "Elizabeth Abington vs. William Abington etc., 1847" under accession number 37660 has been interfiled with the style of suit "Elizabeth Abington vs. William Abington etc." under the index number 1847-020 by J. Taylor; 2023.

Item previously cataloged as "Exr. of George Gunter etc. vs. John Gunter etc., 1840" under accession number 37661 has been interfiled with the style of suit "Peter Leak, exr. vs. John Gunter etc." under the index number 1840-007 by J. Taylor; 2023.

Item previously cataloged as "Francis Porter vs. William Porter, etc., 1840 " under accession number 37663 has been interfiled with the style of suit "Francis Porter vs. William Porter etc." under the index number 1840-008 by J. Taylor; 2023.

Item previously cataloged as "Wright Morefield vs. Peter Boss, 1841" under accession number 37664 has been interfiled with the style of suit "Wright Morefield vs. Peter Boss" under the index number 1841-011 by J. Taylor; 2023.

Post-1912 records were previously described separately under the title Patrick County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1913-1958. Records are now described together.

Encoded by G. Crawford: 2016; Updated by J. Taylor: September 2023.

Preferred Citation

Patrick County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1803-1958 (bulk 1887-1910). (Cite style of suit and [chancery index no. if available]). Local Government Records Collection, Patrick County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

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

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: Patrick County, like Henry County, was named for Patrick Henry, who was the first governor of the commonwealth of Virginia. It was formed from Henry County by a statute adopted on 26 November 1790. The county court first met on 13 June 1791. Part of Henry County was added to Patrick in

1791. The county seat is Stuart.

Scope and Content

Patrick County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1803-1958 (bulk 1887-1910), 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.)

Chancery Causes 1913-1958 are unprocessed.

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.

1832-001: Abner W. Scales vs. John Scales

Scope and Content

Abner W. Scales charged that the enslaved people he owned were the only resource to which he could use for payment of his debt.

1841-009: Elizabeth Beasley vs. Exr. of Thomas Beasley

Scope and Content

Elizabeth Beasley sued for a divorce from her husband, Thomas Beasley because he was having an affair with a free woman of color and had children by her. Thomas Beasley responded to the bill by claiming that he and Elizabeth had never been formally married. It was noted in the bill that there was a will, but no will was found with the case.

1844-001: Herbert Shelton vs. James W. Warhoop, etc.

Scope and Content

James W. Warhoop held Alexander, a "mulatto boy," as an apprentice, who was bound to him by the Overseers of the Poor. Warhoop took Alexander to North Carolina and tried to sell him.

1870-016: Elizabeth B. Taylor by another. vs. James B. Taylor

Scope and Content

Elizabeth B. Taylor filed for a divorce from James B. Taylor, her husband because James told her he was having an affair with an African American woman as well as several other women. Elizabeth came into the marriage possessed of a lot of personal property.

1879-041: Susan Vest vs. John Howell, etc., Notley P. Adams, etc. vs. Polly Vest, etc., Admr. of Zephemia T. Dehart, etc. vs. Susan Vest, etc.

Scope and Content

The suit referenced several enslaved people who were carried off to parts unknown to be sold. There is an affidavit included that stated that an enslaved woman was arrested in Floyd Co. as a "runaway slave". She was enslaved by the Henry Rakes estate.

1883-007: Admr. of Thomas J. Hatcher, etc. vs. Admx. of David D. Hatcher, etc.

Scope and Content

The cause concerned five enslaved people sold at a public auction before the Civil War, the proceeds from the sale amounting to at least three thousand dollars. The suit includes depositions regarding the enslaved people. Also referenced is slave traders taking enslaved people to Georgia to be sold.