

A Guide to the Isle of Wight County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1767-1966 (bulk 1872-1919)

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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, 17 March 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

Isle of Wight County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

Digital images; 87.1 cubic feet (192 boxes)

Location

State Records Center

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Isle of Wight County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1767-1933, use digital images found on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available electronically at the website of the Library of Virginia.

Isle of Wight County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1934-1966, are indexed but not scanned. 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 Isle of Wight County (Va.) in 2001 under the accession number 38002 and under an undated accession.

Processing Information

These records were processed and indexed by Library of Virginia staff in 2008. Additional records were found later, processed and indexed, and filed at the end of the series rather than interfiled.

Digital images were generated in 2010 by Backstage Library Works through the Library of Virginia's Circuit Court Records Preservation Program.

Chancery Causes, 1934-1966 have been processed and indexed, but not scanned. At this time, there are no plans for the records to be digitized.

Post-1933 records were previously described separately under the title Isle of Wight County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1934-1966. Records are now described together.

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

Preferred Citation

Isle of Wight County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1767-1966 (bulk 1872-1919). (Cite style of suit and chancery index no.). Local government records collection, Isle of Wight County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Isle of Wight 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."](#)

Isle of Wight County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Isle of Wight County Court Records may be found in the Virginia Lost Records Localities Collection at the Library of Virginia. Search the [Lost Records Localities Database](#) found at the Library of Virginia web site.

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: Isle of Wight County was named probably for the Isle of Wight off the south coast of England. It was first known as Warrosquyoake for an Indian tribe living in the area whose name means "swamp in a depression of land," and was one of the original shires, or counties, first enumerated in 1634. The present name was given in 1637. Parts of Nansemond County were added in 1769 and 1772. The county seat is Isle of Wight.

Lost Locality Notes: Most pre-Revolutionary War-era loose records are missing. Volumes that record deeds, court orders, and wills exist. During the Civil War, the county clerk had Randall Boothe, a Black man he enslaved, transport the court records to Greenville and Brunswick counties for safekeeping. After the war ended, Boothe returned the records to Isle of Wight and served as courthouse caretaker.

Scope and Content

Isle of Wight County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1767-1966, 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.

These records are arranged in no particular order.

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.

1786-011: Sophia Hanson by etc.vs. Charles Hanson

Scope and Content

Sophia was the widow of William Rand, a prominent businessman and architect of a courthouse in Smithfield. Rand died in 1771. Sophia and her children inherited Rand's valuable estate (land, enslaved people, livestock, crops, etc.). Sophia married Charles Hanson in November 1777. Sophia accused her husband of selling her dowry property, which included people she had enslaved.

1790-013: William Robertson and Company vs. Francis Peacocke and Company

Scope and Content

The cause began in 1773, continued through the Revolutionary War, and did not end until 1790. The defendant was a mercantile business based in Glasgow, Scotland. The dispute involved repayment of a transaction.

1805-029: Moses, etc. (free people of color) vs Tim, etc. (free people of color)

Scope and Content

The plaintiffs and the defendants were all enslaved by Timothy Tynes, who had recently died at the time of the suit being filed. In his will, Tynes emancipated the plaintiffs and the defendants as well as left them a large plot of land to be divided equitably among all parties. The defendants wished for a court of equity to divide the land rather than to have it divided by the involved parties. Included in the suit is a plat which shows the division of the land.

1860-001: Barbara,etc. (enslaved) vs. Exr. of Dawson Warren, etc.

Scope and Content

The plaintiffs were enslaved and sued for their freedom.

1868-001: Joseph C. Norsworthy, etc. vs. Admr. of Joseph Norsworthy, etc.

Scope and Content

The suit detailed the difficulties Robert H. Whitfield experienced during the Civil War in his duty as administrator of Joseph Nosworthy's estate. Joseph Norsworthy was a wealthy property owner in the Isle of Wight County. He owned two estates known as Ragged Island and Plainfield. Ragged Island was sold at auction. Whitfield was responsible for disbursing proceeds among Nosworthy's descendants. The Civil War made it difficult for him to carry out his responsibilities.

1896-009: Exr. of Thomas D. Ripley vs. Jenny Ripley etc.

Scope and Content

The suit involved the estate of Thomas D. Ripley, who had died in 1854. In his will, Ripley freed Jenny and her children. He left them an annuity to provide for them. The issue was the annuity commenced at the time of Ripley's death or one year after his death.