

A Guide to the Essex County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1728-1914 (bulk 1825-1895)

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
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History

Processed by: G. Crawford, J. Hopewell, 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, 19 November 2007

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

Essex County (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

Digital images; .675 cubic feet (2 boxes)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Essex County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1728-1914, use digital images found on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available electronically at the website of the Library of Virginia.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions on use.

Acquisition Information

Some Essex County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1728-1914, were discovered among Essex County loose suit papers and judgements stored at the Library of Virginia. These chancery causes were processed and returned to Essex County for microfilming before 2000.

Two boxes of Essex County chancery causes, dating from 1728 to 1874, were found among boxes of Essex County miscellaneous records that came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Essex County (Va.) under an undated accession.

Processing Information

Some Essex County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1728-1914, discovered among Essex County loose suit papers and judgements stored at the Library of Virginia, were processed by J. Hopewell and returned to Essex County for microfilming before 2000. Additional Essex County chancery causes were field processed before 2000.

Two boxes of Essex County chancery causes, dating from 1728 to 1874, were found among boxes of Essex County miscellaneous records. They were processed and indexed by G. Crawford in 2008.

Digital images were generated from microfilm by Backstage Library Works through the Library of Virginia's Circuit Court Records Preservation Program in 2021.

Encoded by G. Crawford: November 2007; updated by C. Collins: January 2024.

Preferred Citation

Essex County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1728-1914 (bulk 1825-1895). (Cite style of suit and chancery index no.). Local government records collection, Essex County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Custodial History

Some Essex County chancery causes found at the Library of Virginia were processed and returned to the locality for microfilming before 2000.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Essex 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: ["A Guide to the McCall v. McCall Suit Papers, 1768-1799."](#) exhibits in Essex County Chancery Cause 1788-006: George McCall vs. Archibald McCall, etc.

Location of Originals

All but 2 boxes, or .675 cubic feet, of the original Essex County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1728-1914, are retained in the locality. Contact the Clerk of the Circuit Court for access.

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: Essex County was named probably for the English county or perhaps for Algernon Capell, second earl of Essex. It was formed from Old Rappahannock County in 1692. The county seat is Tappahannock.

Scope and Content

Essex County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1728-1914, 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.

Commonly found surnames among the plaintiffs and defendants include Andrews, Atkins, Banks, Baylor, Beazley, Bird, Bohannon (also spelled Bohannon), Boughan, Boughton, Bray, Brizendine, Brockenbrough, Broocke, Brooke, Brooks, Brown, Burke, Campbell, Carter, Cauthorn, Clarke, Clements, Covington, Cox, Crow, Croxton, Daingerfield, Davis, Dillard, Dishman, Dobyns, Dunn, Durham, Dyke, Edmundson, Eubank, Evans, Fauntleroy, Fisher, Games, Garnett, Gatewood, Gordon, Gouldman, Gray, Greenwood, Haile, Hawkins, Henley, Hill, Howerton, Hundley, Hunter, Jeffries, Johnson, Jones, Latane, Lewis, Lumpkin, Mann, Matthews, Micou, Miller, Mitchell, Montague, Moody, Motley, Munday, Muse, Newbill, Noel, Owen, Parker, Pitts, Purkins, Rennolds, Richards, Richardson, Roane, Robinson, Rowzee (also spelled Rowzie), Sale, Saunders, Scott, Shackelford, Smith, Spindle, Taylor, Thomas, Tribble, Upshaw, Walker, Waring, Webb, Wright, and Young.

These records also contain 1 folder of "Orphan Chancery," which has been processed but not indexed. These records contain parts, often single items, of chancery causes that could not be further identified as belonging to a certain case.

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 generally as follows: Bill, Answer, and Final Decree (if found.) However, some of these materials were scanned with the bills, answers, and decrees at the end of the case file.