

# A Guide to the Powhatan County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1782-1938 (bulk 1783-1913)

Powhatan County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1782-1951 (bulk 1822-1913)  
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A Collection in the Library of Virginia  
Library of Virginia  
2008  
**Author:** C. G. O'Brien

## History

**Processed by:** C. G. O'Brien

## Title Statement

A Guide to the Powhatan County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1782-1938 (bulk 1783-1913)

**Subtitle:** Powhatan County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1782-1951 (bulk 1822-1913)

**Author:** C. G. O'Brien

## Publication Statement

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## Profile Description

**Creation:** Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by C. G. O'Brien, 10 July 2008

**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

Powhatan County (Va.) Circuit Court.

### Physical Characteristics

75.75 cubic feet (162 boxes); Digital images.

### Location

Library of Virginia

### Repository

The Library of Virginia

# Administrative Information

## Access Restrictions

Powhatan County Chancery Causes, 1782-1929 digital images can be found on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available electronically at the website of the Library of Virginia.

Some post-1914 material has been processed and indexed. That indexed information can be found on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available electronically at the website of the Library of Virginia.

## Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

## Acquisition Information

These records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Powhatan County (Va.) in 2004 under accession number 41545.

Additional records were transferred to the Library of Virginia in 2009 under accession number 44158 and as part of an undated accession.

Additional records were purchased by LVA from a private collector in 2018 under accession number 52315.

## Processing Information

The majority of records from this collection were processed in two separate groups. The first group, Chancery Causes, 1782-1929, was processed prior to 2009 while the second group, Chancery Causes, 1793-1910, was processed prior to 2012.

Additional records were processed and interfiled into the collection during a cataloguing assessment project in 2024-2025.

There are currently no plans to process or index any additional post-1913 records.

Encoded by G. Crawford: 2008; Updated by E. Swain: 2025

## Preferred Citation

Powhatan County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1782-1938. (Cite style of suit and chancery index no.). Local government records collection, Powhatan County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, 23219.

# Adjunct Descriptive Data

## Related Material

Additional Powhatan 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."](#)

Additional unindexed post-1913 records may be available at the Powhatan County Circuit Court Clerk's Office.

See also: [Virginia Superior Court of Chancery \(Richmond District\) Records, 1806-1850.](#)

# 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:** Powhatan County was named for the paramount chief of the Powhatan Indians in the tidewater of Virginia in the late sixteenth and early years of the seventeenth century. It was formed from Cumberland County in 1777, and part of Chesterfield County was added in 1850.

# Scope and Content

Powhatan County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1782-1951 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.

These records contain one box of "Orphan Chancery." These records contain parts, often single items, of chancery causes which 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 as follows: Bill, Answer, and Final Decree (if found).

## 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.*

### **1901-009: L.C.W. McDowell vs. Trustees of William Sidney Warwick and wife, etc.:**

#### **Scope and Content**

Suit includes copy of marriage contract between William Sidney Warwick and Eliza Louisa Holdsworth recorded in Great Britain and filed in Powhatan County.