

A Guide to the Henrico County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1770-1965

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Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Henrico County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

184.4 cu. ft. (387 boxes)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Chancery Causes 1770-1889 are currently closed for reformatting.

Chancery Causes 1890-1912 are indexed but not scanned. Contact Archives Research Services for availability.

Select Chancery Causes from 1913-1955 have been processed and indexed but not scanned. Contact Archives Research Services for availability.

Additional Chancery Causes from 1913-1965 are unprocessed. Contact Archives Research Services for availability.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These items came to the Library of Virginia in transfer of court papers from Henrico County under an undated accession. Additional records were transferred to the Library of Virginia from the Henrico County Circuit Court in 1940 under accession number 21718.

Processing Information

Chancery causes for the years 1770-1889 are currently closed for reformatting. The index remains available for research purposes.

Henrico County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1770-1912, were initially processed by Library of Virginia staff in 2009.

Chancery Causes, 1770-1889, were processed again by Library of Virginia staff to bring the collection up to the new standards which include capturing additional information, such as causes of action and thematic topics, in 2023-2025.

Select Chancery Causes from 1913-1955 have been processed and indexed, but not scanned. At this time, there are no plans to digitize these records.

Additional post-1912 records are unprocessed. At this time, there are no plans to process these records.

Encoded by: S. Bagely: 2009; updated by J. Taylor: February 2023; updated by M. Long: December 2025.

Preferred Citation

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Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Henrico 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."](#)

Henrico County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Henrico County Records may be found in the Virginia Lost Records Localities Collection at the Library of Virginia. Search the [Lost Records Localities Digital Collection](#) available at Virginia Memory.

See also: ["A Guide to the Henrico County \(Va.\) Business Records, 1803-1898."](#) a list of business records which may include exhibits in chancery suits.

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: Henrico County was named for Henry, Prince of Wales, eldest son of King James I. It was one of the eight original shires, or counties, first enumerated in 1634. The county seat is in the western part of the county.

Lost Locality Notes: All county court records prior to 1655 and almost all prior to 1677 are missing. Many records were destroyed by British troops during the Revolutionary War. Post-Revolutionary War county court records exist. Almost all circuit superior court of law and chancery and circuit court records were destroyed by fire during the evacuation of Richmond on 3 April 1865 in the Civil War. The county's circuit court held its sessions at the state courthouse in Richmond.

Scope and Content

Henrico County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1770-1965, 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.

There is a substantial amount of information concerning enslaved Black men, women, and children. While there are several suits concerning the freedom of enslaved individuals, these cases largely represent the perspective of white enslavers and their disputes involving the sale, hiring, financial responsibilities, and legality of ownership of Black individuals. Specifically, there are many cases concerning estate disputes over enslaved individuals.

Many of the cases from the 1780s-1790s are related to William Byrd III's lottery of his property in the late 1760s.

Cases beginning in the 1850s consist of a higher than average number of estate suits involving free Black and Multiracial individuals and families.

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.

1790-006: Thomas Willing, etc. vs. Carter Braxton:

Scope and Content

The defendant in this debt suit is Carter Braxton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

1806-019: Joseph B. Abrahams vs. Peter Haley

Scope and Content

Debt suit. Joseph B. Abrahams attacked a free Black man, Peter Haley. Abrahams argued that this attack was justified because Haley had insulted Abrahams' wife, and "such a state of insubordination in a man of his colour would well justify the deed." Haley took Abrahams to court for this attack and won a judgment against Abrahams. Abrahams claimed that Haley only won the case because he had tricked Abrahams into not appearing in court, and that therefore he shouldn't have to pay Haley the settlement.

1809-022: John Lynch vs. John Bernard

Scope and Content

Contract suit. The case centered around a group of French-American trading vessels, particularly the vessel La Ville de Bordeaux, which were caught up in the war between France and Great Britain in the 1790s. Ownership was split between John Lynch, an American citizen, and John Bernard, a French citizen,

and the issue was further complicated when two unrelated Americans were given control of the ship during the war. This was intended to be a temporary trust to prevent the ship from having to fly French colors and potentially becoming a military target, but the trustees violated their agreement by selling the ship in India without permission.

1811-001: John Alcock vs. John Brockenbrough etc.

Scope and Content

Contract suit centered around an enslaved man named James Harris. John Alcock claimed that Alexander Walker, one of the defendants, had sold him Harris by promising that Harris was a skilled painter who wanted to be closer to his mother, who was enslaved in Richmond. Alcock argued that Walker failed to disclose that Harris had a drinking problem and that Alcock had been forced to try to sell him again in "the southern states."

1811-012: John Cary & wife vs. Charles Sweeney & c by etc.

Scope and Content

Estate suit. Centers around the estate of George Wythe and the property originally entailed to his great-nephew George Sweeney, who was tried for Wythe's murder in a famous 1806 Richmond court case. Includes as evidence a copy of Wythes's will and the codicil in which he disinherited Sweeney after being poisoned. The will outlines the support that was supposed to be given to Lydia Broadnax, a free Black woman who lived with Wythe and who was barred from testifying about his murder, and Michael Brown, a free Black boy who also lived with Wythe and was murdered alongside him. This included a personal request for Thomas Jefferson to act as Brown's patron.

1811-015: Trst. of William Duval vs. Legts. of Robert Pleasants

Scope and Content

Estate suit involving the estate of antislavery activist Robert Pleasants. Includes as evidence a copy of Pleasants' will, which includes several sections regarding people who had been previously manumitted by him or by the Pleasants vs Pleasants court case. These sections outline their future support, rights to remain, and lives on the settlement at Gravelly Hills. The will also outlines his plans for a school for Black children at Gravelly Hills to be established and funded from his estate.

1813-003: Petition of Nanny ~ etc.

Scope and Content

Freedom suit. Nanny and her son Moses were suing for their freedom on the grounds that Nanny's mother, Sally Lawson, was the descendent of a Cherokee woman named Sukey. See also: Sally ~ et al. vs Joseph Perkins, Charlottesville District Court 1808 (filed with Albemarle Co. Judgments)

1820-017: Daphne Lawson ~ vs Robert McCracken

Scope and Content

Freedom suit. Daphne Lawson, an enslaved woman, petitioned the court for her freedom under the argument that she had been illegally purchased by Robert McCracken despite having already been legally guaranteed emancipation.

1834-008: Gdn of John H. Mettert vs. John H. Mettert

Scope and Content

Estate suit requesting the sale two enslaved people for being "difficult to manage and in the habit of frequently running away." One of the enslaved individuals, George, was able to successfully present himself as a free man and was hired as a cook on board a schooner bound for New York.

1834-017: Mary D. Hite vs. John S. Syndor, gdn., etc.

Scope and Content

Contract suit requesting permission to sell an enslaved teenage boy, Hiram, after he attempted to escape Virginia on board a vessel bound for a northern state. The plaintiff references an unnamed individual in the community who Hiram had a close relationship with. She believed that this person had helped convince him to make the escape attempt and would continue to help Hiram run away if he remained in her

custody.

1841-010: Petition of Admr. of Francis R. Price

Scope and Content

Estate suit centered around Jefferson, an enslaved man who was described as being "addicted to running away." The suit describes multiple attempts by Jefferson, or Jeff, to escape enslavement while he was hired out to various individuals or businesses. The suit also describes his various arrests and time spent in jail.

1844-024: Susan Brooks, widow, vs. Exr. of Moses Brooks etc.

Scope and Content

Estate suit centered around the will of Moses Brooks. Brooks was the enslaver of three of his grandchildren: Samson Brooks, Lucy Ann Brooks, and Peter Willis. His plan was that his estate hire out all three of the children for an extended period of time after his death, and that the money from their labor should go to support his white wife and children. After their respective work periods were completed, they were supposed to be sent to a "free state". Peter Willis's work was also supposed to support his mother Mary Ann Brooks, but there is no other information given about her legal status and how she related to the rest of the family.

1854-006: Richard Meredith~ vs. Admr of Caty Mundowney (Free)

Scope and Content

Freedom suit involving an enslaved man, Richard Meredith, who had been sold by his enslaver to his wife, a free Black woman named Caty Mundowney, under the condition that she "should set him free and never sell him or give him to another." Richard claimed that Caty had never formally emancipated him while she was alive, even though she had been contractually obligated to by the bill of sale. Also includes documentation of an unsuccessful freedom suit for an enslaved woman named Mary Ann Brooks.

1864-001: Jacob Sneed etc. vs. William Sneed etc.

Scope and Content

Estate suit that includes a high number of notable records types, including: the free papers of a woman named Catharine Fitzamore, daughter of Sally Fitzamore of Fluvanna County; a genealogical chart that not only tracks the testator's descendents but also if/when they migrated out of Virginia; and a collection of broadsides from the Grand Divisions of the Sons of Temperance of Virginia. Also touches on the inheritance rights of illegitimate children.

1865-005: Curator of T. J. Brumfield vs. Mary H. Brumfield etc.

Scope and Content

Estate suit discussing the care of T. J. Brumfield's children after the deaths of both of their parents. Lucy Brumfield, a five year old girl, was placed into the Orphan Asylum despite having living relatives. The curator attempted to place her eight year old brother Joseph in the Orphan Asylum as well, but they rejected him and his grandmother Mary H. Brumfield was unwillingly obliged to temporarily take him in.

1866-009: Walter S. Chandler & wife etc. vs Exr. of John Harlow etc.

Scope and Content

Estate suit that largely focuses on the plaintiffs' inheritance of Mahala, an enslaved woman. Mahala suffered from what the records referred to as a "violent case of epilepsy." The suit includes several records documenting her illness and medical care, including her visits to a medical college for treatment.

1866-013: Nancy Ann Carroll, widow, etc. vs. Exrs. of John Sheppard

Scope and Content

Contract suit most notable for the 1851 will of John Sheppard included as an exhibit. John Sheppard was a landowner and magistrate who lived and raised a family with Sally Randolph, a free Black woman, for many

years. In his will, he stipulated that Sally should immediately be given \$1000 after his death "to enable her to remove herself and children to such place as she may desire." He then stated that the whole rest of his estate should be sold and the proceeds divided between Sally and their eight children. John also took extra steps to protect the property rights of their daughters, stipulating that "the shares severally divided herein before to my natural daughters shall be held by them upon their marriage to their sole separate use, as though each were a feme sole free from the control, contracted debts or liabilities of their respective husbands."

1866-017: John D. Warren & wife vs. Trustees of Edmund Christian etc.

Scope and Content

Contract suit that centers around a piece of property that was intended to be conveyed by the plaintiffs to the defendants. This property was located along the road leading from Charles City County to Richmond City, and over the course of the Civil War the property in question and all of the building thereon were destroyed and used for timber by both the Confederate and Union armies.

1867-002: Pleasant Jones (Free) etc. vs. Charles Jones (Free) alias Charles Anderson by etc.; 1868-021: Petition of James M. Taylor

Scope and Content

Estate initiated by a free Black family prior to the beginning of the Civil War, which was reopened following the war's conclusion. During the course of the suit, the white commissioner was accused of selling the decedent's property and keeping the proceeds for his own use rather than giving it to the family.

1867-009: Jacob Freyfogel vs. Mary Jane Freyfogel

Scope and Content

Divorce suit in which the plaintiff Jacob Freyfogel accused his wife Mary of being unfaithful to him. John presented as evidence a child who was born more than a year after Jacob had been imprisoned for murder and who Jacob claimed was multiracial. Several deponents also provided accounts of how one of Mary's alleged partners, a man named Jacob Ford, was attacked next door to Mary's house and died inside of her home.

1867-017: Eberhard Lohman etc. vs. Frederick Braur etc.

Scope and Content

Suit centers around a debate as to has the rights to govern St. John's German Lutheran Church according to the church's constitution. Includes descriptions of efforts taken by all parties to undermine one another, including one group who broke into the church and changed all of the locks to prevent the other group from entering.

1867-020: Daniel Jennings vs. Admx. of Andrew S. Padgett etc.

Scope and Content

Contract suit in which Daniel Jennings accused his former guardian, Andrew S. Padgett, of manipulating him into signing away his inherited property while Jennings was serving in the Confederate Army.

1869-011: George Fults (Free) and wife etc. vs. George W. Barker

Scope and Content

Contract suit surrounding a deed made between a free Black man, Thomas Charles, and George W. Barker while Virginia was part of the Confederacy. Thomas Charles was convicted of larceny and sentenced to be sold into enslavement. George W. Barker agreed to purchase and free him, with Thomas Charles using his own personal property as collateral for the purchase money. After his death, George W. Barker claimed that the property had been signed over to him outright and that the money paid by Thomas Charles's widow Mahala Fults for the debt was actually rent.

1869-013: Adolphus Wesley Ally vs. Isabella Alley

Scope and Content

Divorce suit. Included in the suit is an 1866 indictment against the wife, Isabella Alley, "for lewd and lascivious cohabitation with a negro man."

1871-003: Hart, Hays & Company] etc. vs. Henry R. Cronie etc.

Scope and Content

Debt suit. Defendant Henry R. Cronie claimed that he had a difficult time paying the debt in question because he had been driven from the county during the Civil War under the threat of "mob violence" after being accused of being an abolitionist.

1871-005: George Roane vs. Admr of William A. Christian

Scope and Content

Estate suit. George Roane, who had been enslaved prior to the end of the war, had been willed a yearly legacy from the estate of his former master, William A. Christian. Christian's administrator had recently begun to refuse to pay Roane the allotted sum. The administrator argued that because Christian had willed Roane the annual sum but didn't free him, the funds were intended to be compensation for his services during his enslavement. The estate was therefore no longer liable, given that Roane was no longer enslaved following the Civil War.

1873-095: Israel Brown vs. Richard Jones & wife etc.

Scope and Content

Contract suit. Concerns Israel Brown, a formerly enslaved man who was sentenced to deportation for attacking a white man and was pardoned following the Civil War. Includes a copy of record for Brown's sentence and later pardon from the Richmond Hustings Court.

1873-114: Petition of Admr. of James Price

Scope and Content

Estate suit. The decedent, James Price, was a captain in the Continental Line during the American Revolution. A portion of the records in this suit pertain to the property he gained from his Virginia Military Land Warrant for his service.

1874-011: Magdalena Frank by etc. vs William Frank etc.

Scope and Content

Divorce suit. Plaintiff Magdalena Frank accused her husband William of physical abuse that escalated to the point of almost killing one of their grandchildren. Magdalena owned a grocery and bar room where her husband worked and was often seen drinking, until she obtained a peace warrant that prevented him from entering her property. William justified his actions towards his wife by saying that "he would be a good man if Mrs. Frank would stay at home and let him attend to the outside business." Both sides accused the other of infidelity with various acquaintances and neighbors.

1876-016: Mildred Virginia Kimmell by etc. vs. Frederick Kimmell

Scope and Content

Divorce suit in which complainant files first bill in 1871, charging husband's excessive and frequent abuse of her and her infant child. Asks the court for a divorce and to compel him to sell his property and provide compensation before he squandered it all. Second bill in 1871 alleges that husband agreed to live separately and had agreed to sell property and provide for wife and child if she would drop the suit. Child became sick and died, and she alleges husband paid for no care nor burial expenses, and she feared he would use proceeds of property sale to return to Europe from "whence he came." He ostensibly did so, and paid her nothing.

1876-026: Mildred W. Hutcheson vs. Exrs. Ambrose Hutcheson etc. by etc.

Scope and Content

Estate suit. Commissioners' reports and depositions reference enslaved people, including dates of purchase and amounts paid for named enslaved people. One 1863 report notes that: "The slaves are family servants and, though most of them are women and children, they produce to the estate annually more income, in proportion to their value than the real estate which has been sold or that is unsold— Indeed the real estate that remains unsold, being unimproved, produces no income whatever. Mrs. Hutcheson the widow, with her family of little children, is keeping house and needs some of the servants to wait on her and them. If the slaves were sold to pay debts, other servants would have to be hired to wait on the family." 1859 deposition includes ages and other details of individual enslaved people, such as "Phoebe's value is impaired by a gun shot wound in the lower jaw."

1877-018: Exrs. Mark A. Shope vs. Charles E. Sims trst., etc.

Scope and Content

Estate dispute referencing specific bequest to "Chickahominy Tribe No. 34, Improved Order of Red Men."

1877-020: John B. Brittain & wife, etc. vs. Robert Day etc.

Scope and Content

Estate dispute regarding executor failing to deposit funds from proceeds of sales of enslaved people in the 1860s, as well as dispute over legal title to said enslaved people prior to their having been sold. Early deposition notes: "Henry is now in jail...it would be unsafe to release him before a sale as he might escape to a free state." Prior suits from City of Richmond and Charles City County are included as exhibits. 1876 statement by Richmond City clerk references loss of papers from 1857 suite of Mary Jordan vs. Jordan etc. due to April 1865 fire, but there are some references to this case in these extant records.

1878-005: William H. Burton & wife etc. vs. Benjamin J. Duval etc.

Scope and Content

Estate dispute involving mismanagement of funds. Confederate currency was problematic and mismanagement was described as "the result and creature of excited pride and passions of the war then raging at its highest."

1878-006: Mary Carneal by etc. vs. James U. Carneal

Scope and Content

Divorce case in which wife seeks divorce on grounds of her husband's efforts to defraud her of property. Husband abandoned her when she would not sign over her homestead deed.

1878-010: William Christian vs. Children of William Albert Christian by etc.

Scope and Content

Estate dispute which included land and several named enslaved people in Marengo County, Alabama dating from 1848.

1878-013: Ambrose Carlton and James H. Gardner, Surv. Partner vs. John T. Ford

Scope and Content

Debt case in which defendant is the John T. Ford of what became the famous Ford's Theater where Abraham Lincoln was shot. Here, Ford was in Richmond in 1849 and was indebted to the boot and shoe firm of Hubbard, Gardner, and Carlton for hundreds of dollars' worth of shoes. He later left town and ostensibly neglected his debt, returning briefly in 1852 at which time suit was filed against him, with judgment for the plaintiffs. Exhibit attached to deposition of W.P. Shields for the plaintiffs were transcriptions of advertisements that were to have run in the Daily Richmond Whig in March 1852 regarding Kunkel's Nightingale Ethiopian Opera Troupe of which Ford was business manager. Records of the judgments against Ford were destroyed during the Civil War and the burning of Richmond. The most recent decree in the cause (1878) indicated that Ford planned to appeal, so it was ordered that the decree be suspended for 60 days, with \$100 bond. No further action evident in cause.

1879-007: Eliza Frayser etc. vs. Susan B. Winfree etc.

Scope and Content

Estate dispute in which plat references difficulty of obtaining accurate lines due to effects of Civil War battles.

1879-010: John H. Gaines vs. Charlotte Gaines (alias: Charlotte Taylor; Charlotte Shepherd)

Scope and Content

Husband sought divorce in 1867 alleging adultery and in 1879 a second bill sought annulment on grounds of wife's alleged bigamy. He refers to his wife as a "woman of color" and says that they "occupied relation of man and wife." Union was recognized legally by Feb. 27, 1866. Depositions of defendant's sister and brother in law reference the evacuation of Richmond in 1866.

1879-023: George W. West vs. Edward Hogan etc.

Scope and Content

Debt case in which one deponent named Nelson Turner is described as "colored" and who was a carpenter who worked on the complainant's house/construction: "I served my apprenticeship with Caleb Turner of Mecklenburg. Am now sixty two years old and have been working at the carpenter's business ever since I was large enough to turn a grind-stone."

1880-004: Thomas Stewart (Free) vs. Exr. William Stewart etc. (Free)

Scope and Content

Debt case in which plaintiff also references judgment: City of Richmond Freedmans Court vs. Exr. William Stewart, etc. Affidavit references Thomas Stewart and William Stewart as brothers. Property on Mechanicsville Turnpike.

1881-003: William Powers Ballard vs. Minna Carolina Ballard

Scope and Content

Divorce case in which husband alleges abandonment. Married in Germany in 1866 as per marriage certificate. Couple had two (or three) children in Henrico County. Wife returned to Germany and remained there with two children. Wife wrote several detailed letters in English to husband and to her in-laws regarding life in Germany and family information. Husband alleges a third child was abandoned and died; letters do not reference that.

1881-010: William Bass vs. Mary Bass

Scope and Content

Divorce case which references wife's alleged adultery and sex work with nearby Federal troops in 1865, and her subsequent abandonment in 1866 when troops left.

1881-020: Franklin Davis etc. vs. City of Richmond]

Scope and Content

Dispute in which plaintiff seeks injunction to prevent City of Richmond from purchasing property known as the Hanes Farm for establishing a smallpox hospital separate from the general hospital in Richmond. Plat is detailed and includes lunatic asylum location.

1881-025: George G. Minor etc. vs. Exr. William A. Christian etc. by etc.

Scope and Content

Estate dispute in which decedent's will includes named enslaved people and land/property in Virginia and Alabama.

1882-008: Devisees of Fannie Lavinia Sheppard vs. Exr. Fannie Lavinia Sheppard, etc.

Scope and Content

Estate dispute in which decedent's post-Civil War will includes financial bequests to "faithful servants" and gives much detail regarding personal jewelry made from various family member/ancestors' hair, as well as specific personal property and its history with family members/ancestors.

1883-018: Peter F. May & Bro] vs. Sullivan & Early]

Scope and Content

Dispute over the use of an unregistered tobacco trademark. Complainants sell "To-To" tobacco; defendants have been selling "Ta-Ta" tobacco, both seals of which are quite similar. Exhibits include a packet of Ta-Ta tobacco.

1883-025: Joseph Salomon etc. vs. John Tinsley

Scope and Content

Defendant is alleged to have married a white woman out of state, he being a "colored man." Both were non-residents of Virginia. Regarding a debt from a judgment from U.S. Supreme Court.

1884-015: J.M. Carter Jr. vs Curtis Carter etc.

Scope and Content

Estate dispute that includes the 1850 will of Curtis Carter in which he names certain enslaved people and specifies that the named father of two named enslaved boys should be permitted to purchase them within two years at a certain price.

1884-027: Georgina L. Gatewood by vs. George W. Gatewood

Scope and Content

Debt suit in which wife sold her inherited property to help pay husband's debts, and alleges that husband did not uphold his contractual agreements to pay his debts nor to protect interests of his wife and family. Over 40 named enslaved persons, and some family relationships, are referenced in pre-1865 deed exhibits.

1884-031: Merchants and Planters Savings Bank] vs. Luther R. Dickinson

Scope and Content

Debt case in which the editor/proprietor of The Southern Planter and Farmer allegedly owed a \$1,100.00 debt to said bank in 1880, allegedly "absconding" from the state, abandoning the newspaper offices and its contents, thus discontinuing the newspaper.

1885-008: Sarah Elizabeth Jones by etc. vs. John E. Jones

Scope and Content

Divorce suit in which complainant's husband was complainant's father's committee, and during the complainant's father's lifetime and after his death, complainant's husband allegedly sold some properties and did not invest the funds in her name, thus taking the money as his own. Husband alleges that complainant had previously suffered from depression and mental instability.

1885-019: Robert C. Braxton Jr. vs. Charlotte Ross etc.

Scope and Content

Contains an 1841 deed references 1829 deed with several named enslaved people from Gwyn's Island in Mathews County, as well as conveyances of some of those enslaved people in 1829, one of whom was recorded in King and Queen County. This 1841 deed notes that Henry "from soem cause unknown will either elope or destroy himself, having attempted several times lately to drown himself." Later deeds reference more named enslaved people.

1885-022: R.E. Lee Camp No. 1 Confederate Veterans] vs. Channing M. Robinson etc.

Scope and Content

Complainant seeks injunction preventing defendant from cashing out the proceeds of a property purchase, arguing that defendant sold property to complainant with unclear title, as per an outstanding will, which required owner of property to potentially pay an annuity to a relative under certain conditions. Complainant charges that defendant was aware of this and intentionally withheld that information. Property was to be used for constructing a home for "indigent Ex-Confederate Soldiers and Sailors."

1885-026: Exrs. John F. Sheppard etc. vs. James A Banton & wife, etc.

Scope and Content

Estate dispute that includes correspondence as exhibits, one of which is 9 Jan 1866 letter from the defendant to the decedant Sheppard in which he specifically states that he has hired "six good negro men to labor on the farm. I know them well and think they will labor industriously. I have had the management of the greater part of them, on my Mother's farm, before the war. As a general rule, I don't think free labor reliable, but such as I have, with families, can be relied on to remain the entire year. I pay \$7.50 per month for them." In an earlier letter of 9 Dec 1865, Blanton also mentions the character of an acquaintance with whom he "served three years together in the Army."

1886-015: Elizabeth Harris by etc. vs. John N. Harris

Scope and Content

Divorce cause in which wife asserts excessive physical abuse from her husband, and her having worked to pay for most of the mortgage on the house. Seeks alimony also. Deposition of Wesley Jones recounts an instance when Harris' husband came home and demanded she give him the deed to their house, and ostensibly her reply was "the white people had it," to which he said "I want you to bring my deed home, if you don't bring it home I will make you do it you devil you," and the deponent reported that Harris "struck her with his fist about the face, her lip was swollen up...he drew an iron poker and said you devil you I am a great mind to kill you." The interviewer then questioned the deponent regarding whether Mrs. Harris had attended to her duties as a wife... Other depositions also. Decree included alimony, and, if not paid, to sell the property and the commissioners would deposit it in an account to be used as annual payments for Mrs. Harris.

1886-023: John H. Smith vs. Children of James Smith etc. by etc.

Scope and Content

Estate dispute regarding property whereby decedent died with out a will. According to depositions, decedent and disputants were persons of color. Depositions also reference family relationships of decedent's heirs.

1887-002: Admr. C.P. Goodall etc. vs. Exr. Eliza A. Burton etc.

Scope and Content

Decedent's will (written in 1879, probated 1884) specifies that she is a married woman with property of her own to bequeath. Will includes specific bequests to family members and "to Ned Banks, a colored boy whom I raised, five acres of land...upon condition that he shall remain with and work for myself and husband during our lives and the live of the survivors of us, without charge...After his death...the said five acres shall return to my estate..."

1887-003: Peter C. Courtney vs. Gdn. Peter C. Courtney etc.

Scope and Content

Estate dispute whereby a son is suing his father (who is also his guardian), for the father's alleged negligence in providing his son and daughter their fair share of their estate. Court documents note that "The suit is one of a peculiar character...by a young and vigorous man...against his aged father...If the plaintiff is entitled to his pound of flesh the court will give it to him...but rules of law (will be applied) strictly." Father quotes a poem: "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child." Documents also discuss the enslaved people who were emancipated after the war and how that also decreased the value of the estate sought by the son.

1887-021: John T. Anderson etc. vs. Clinton H. Branch etc.

Scope and Content

Debt suit relating to Richmond cigar manufacturers, including details of cigar manufacturing business and inventory; several cigar brands listed, and prices (1886).

1887-025: Exr. David G. Williams vs. Widow David G. Williams, etc., by etc.

Scope and Content

Estate dispute dating to 1838, in which decedent's will names 130+ enslaved persons and their relationships to one another. Originated in Petersburg and appealed in Richmond City Circuit court of Appeals 1861, and was revived in Nottoway 1877 and at some point to Henrico, then removed from the docket there in 1887.

1888-004: George W. Daggett vs. Virginia Daggett

Scope and Content

Divorce suit in which the couple are Black and had been cohabitating since prior to the 1866 law allowing for cohabitating couples to be considered married. Both accuse each other of adultery. Complainant is referenced as having been a barber and a minister at Westwood Baptist Church in Henrico County, with property in Henrico County. Statements and depositions include information regarding neighbors and their occupations; one deponent is the half-brother of the complainant, and provides information regarding family members living out of state. Another deponent claims to have purchased the complainant's barber shop business, and his deponents repeatedly ask where and how he obtained or saved enough money to purchase it outright.

1888-019: Jane Campbell by etc. vs. Joseph Campbell

Scope and Content

Divorce suit in which husband is alleged to have frequented houses of ill-fame in Richmond, especially the house of Martha Webb on Marshall Street near 15th Street and a "common house on Poplar Street kept by a colored woman named Sue" and Miss Georgia Brown in Locust Alley, and Ann Dean's.

1888-020: Peter Friend & wife vs. Admx Philander Doxtater etc. by etc.

Scope and Content

Complainants seek title/deed of property purchased by them from Louisa Doxtater, administrator and widow of Philander Doxtater. Decree orders that property be officially transferred to complainants. Original 1886 deed specifies that Charlotte Friend, wife of Peter Friend, is the grantee/purchaser, not her husband. Charlotte Friend is referenced as colored.

1888-021: Christine E. Lohwasser vs. Julius B. Lohwasser

Scope and Content

Divorce suit in which husband is alleged to have frequented houses of ill-fame in Richmond. Includes a letter from anonymous source to wife informing her of this. She instituted divorce suit shortly thereafter.

1888-023: Edward Kennedy etc. vs. Daniel Shelby etc.

Scope and Content

Debt suit involving circus property, including live animals. Newspaper article details the suit; some property is in Richmond, some in Henrico. Includes inventory of live animals, information regarding the treatment of animals while awaiting sale, and receipts for some animals sold.

1888-028: Julia A. Green etc. by vs. Herbert A. Claiborne etc

Scope and Content

Estate suit involving property divisions dating prior to Civil War. Deeds reference named enslaved persons and some family relationships. Suit was heard by Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals.

1888-029: Asa K. Snyder etc. vs. Wade & Chewing]

Scope and Content

Suit of trespass in which several plaintiffs seek to prevent Wade & Chewing from extending Hanover Street through property through which it had not officially been constructed. Bill, answers, depositions, etc. describe physical characteristics of adjacent properties. Property owners and/or interested parties include R.E. Lee Camp #1 Confederate Veterans, and suit references property south of Boulevard. Also includes specifications for construction of that portion of Hanover Street, and an oversized plat is included. References to improper drainage and potential health hazards.

1889-017: Edmund Waddill Jr. vs. John Bickerstaff etc.

Scope and Content

Suit brought against the owner of a soap factory in a residential neighborhood who accused him of creating a "public nuisance" due to the smell of large amounts of animal remains he brought onto his property to make the soap. More than fifty residents and visitors who had passed through the area provided depositions about the effects of the "dead animal factory" on the community.

1889-018: Sylvester Willis vs. Dora Willis

Scope and Content

Divorce suit. Sylvester Willis accused his wife of adultery, and for his evidence claimed that after cohabiting with her he contracted "that loathsome venereal secret disease known as Clap," which he could only have gotten from her, and that "this disease was given to his wife by one of her nearest relatives." He also leaned on contemporary fears of miscegenation in his accusations against his wife by further claiming that while she was working in a factory "her conduct with negro men was so reprehensive that her employer or his agent drove her away from the factory in disgrace."

1889-126: County of Henrico vs City of Richmond

Scope and Content

The county of Henrico initiated a suit against the city of Richmond after the city purchased a farm in Henrico County with the intention of building a smallpox hospital on the property. Henrico County claimed that Richmond had not informed them of their plans for the property prior to the purchase, violating state laws, and that they would not have allowed the purchase if they had known the true reason. The intended site of the hospital was close to a "small village" of Black residents and a predominately Black cemetery, according to a deponent. Included in the suit was a discussion of the city's previous housing and treatment of smallpox victims and plans for their future care, and meeting records for the Board of Supervisors for both the city of Richmond and Henrico County.