

A Guide to the Goochland County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1731-1924 (bulk 1800-1880)

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
Library of Virginia
2010

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History

Processed by: J. Hopewell, S. Walters, G. Crawford, and Field Processors

Title Statement

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Subtitle: Goochland County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1731-1924 (bulk 1800-1880)

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Publication Statement

Date: © 2010 By The Library of Virginia. All Rights Reserved.

Publisher: Library of Virginia

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Greg Crawford, 14 October 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

Goochland County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

Digital images; 60.975 cubic feet (133 boxes)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Chancery Causes 1731-1912 use digital images found on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available electronically at the website of the Library of Virginia.

Chancery Causes 1913-1924 are processed and indexed information is available on the Chancery Records Index, but digital images are not available at this time. Contact Archives Research Services for availability.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions on use.

Acquisition Information

The majority of these records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Goochland County (Va.) in 2024 under accession number 54168. Additional records were transferred to the library in 2008 under accession numbers 43722 and 43856.

Processing Information

Goochland County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1731-1924, were processed by J. Hopewell, S. Walters, G. Crawford, and field processors and completed in 2009.

Digital images of Chancery Causes 1731-1912 were generated by Backstage Library Works through the Library of Virginia's Circuit Court Records Preservation Program in 2010.

Encoded by G. Crawford: October 2010; updated by C. Collins: May 2024.

Preferred Citation

Goochland County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1731-1924 (bulk 1800-1880). (Cite style of suit and chancery index no.). Local government records collection, Goochland County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Custodial History

The Goochland County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1731-1924, were transferred to the Library of Virginia from the Circuit Court of Goochland County in 2008 under accession numbers 43722 and 43856 for processing and reformatting. Chancery Causes 1731-1912 were returned to the locality in 2010 by request of the Clerk of the Circuit Court. They came back to the library in 2024 under accession number 54168.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional post-1912 records may be available at the Goochland County Circuit Court Clerk's office.

Additional Goochland 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 Fleming and Webster Ledger, 1818-1827,"](#) an exhibit in Goochland County Chancery Cause 1878-007: Exx. of John S. Fleming vs. Creds. of John S. Fleming, etc.

See also: ["A Guide to the Woodson, Perkins, and Company Journal, 1843-1850,"](#) an exhibit in Goochland County Chancery Cause 1866-009: Admr. of John S. Woodson vs. Creds. of John S. Woodson.

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: Goochland County was named for Sir William Gooch, lieutenant governor of Virginia from 1727 to 1749. It was formed from Henrico County in 1728. The county seat is Goochland.

Scope and Content

Goochland County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1731-1924, 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 Anderson, Argyle, Bates, Bolling, Bowles, Britt, Carter, Childress, Clarke, Cocke, Cosby, Curd, Davis, Deitrick, Drumwright (also spelled Drumright), Duval, Ellis, Farrar, Fleming, Ford, Gathright, George, Gray, Guerrant, Harris, Hatcher, Holland, Hopkins, Houchins (also spelled Houchens and Houtchins), Hughes, Humber, James, Johnson, Jordan, Leake, Lewis, Martin, Massie, Matthews, Miller, Mills, Mims (also spelled Mimms), Morris, Mullins, Nuckols, Pace, Parrish, Payne, Peers, Perkins, Pleasants, Pledge, Powell, Powers, Pryor, Puryear, Randolph, Redford, Richardson, Royster, Salmons (also spelled Salmon), Sampson, Saunders, Shelton, Smith, Taylor, Toler, Turner, Underwood, Vaughan, Wade, Walker, Ware, Watkins, Webber, Wood, Woodson, and Woodward.

These records contain 1 box of "Orphan Chancery" which is 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.

These records also contain 1 box of "Chancery papers from foreign jurisdictions," which is processed but not indexed. The papers are copies of chancery-related documents obtained from other Virginia localities that were found while processing the Goochland County chancery causes. They originated from the following localities: Richmond City; Manchester City, which was consolidated with Richmond City in 1910; Fluvanna County; Lynchburg City; Chesterfield County; and Powhatan County.

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.)

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.

1852-004: Exr. of Thomas Brooks vs. Admr. of Fielding Brooks; Lewy, pauper vs. Exr. of Thomas Brooks, etc.; and Lewis Brooks, etc. vs. Exr. of Thomas Brooks, etc.:

Scope and Content

Lewis Brooks, also referred to as Lewy, was advertised to be sold following the death of Thomas Brooks, Lewis' enslaver, as the assets belonging to Thomas' estate were not enough to discharge his debts. Consequently, Lewis sued for his freedom, claiming that Thomas' will provided for his emancipation. He also stated that his wife and children were enslaved by Mary M. Garland, whose will stipulated that they might be freed if they wished and, if so, Lewis should be purchased with funds from Mary's estate and likewise liberated. According to Lewis, James M. Garland, Mary's executor, had thus far neglected to purchase Lewis as Mary's will had prescribed despite his wife and children having elected to be emancipated. Ultimately, the court ordered James to buy Lewis and free him based on the provisions of Mary's will.