

A Guide to the Prince George County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1745-1956 (bulk 1869-1916)

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia.

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History

Processed by: S. Bagley

Title Statement

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Profile Description

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Revision Description

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Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Prince George County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

16.1 cubic feet (37 boxes); Digital images.

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Prince George County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1745-1956 digital images 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 Prince George County (Va.) in 2009 under the accession number 44500.

Processing Information

Processed by S. Bagley in 2012.

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Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Prince George 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."](#)

Prince George County is one of Virginia's Lost Records Localities. Additional Prince George 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.

Additional unindexed post-1917 records may be available at the Prince George 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: Prince George County was named for Prince George of Denmark, husband of Queen Anne of England. It was formed from Charles City County by a statute adopted on 28 August 1702 to take effect on 23 April 1703. The county seat is Prince George.

Lost Locality Notes: Most court records were destroyed in 1782 by British troops during the Revolutionary War and again in 1864 by Union troops during the Civil War. A few volumes that record deeds, court orders, and wills exist.

Scope and Content

Prince George County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1745-1956, 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.

Arrangement of documents within each folder is 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.

1851-013, Joseph Jones v. Devs. of Rebecca E. Baugh:

Scope and Content

The slaves were family servants, both the orator and his said children are much attached, but if the said slaves were sold under the said deed, they may be sent out of state and separated from their families.

1857-008, Joshua Chappell and wife v. Admr. of James Bishop, etc.:

Scope and Content

Listed in the will of James Bishop, a slave named Angelia was emancipated and set free and was given all the land for her lifetime and at her death, the land will be given to her son Henry.

1887-009, Simon Bolling v. Francis Bolling, alias Mary Francis:

Scope and Content

Simon Bolling filed for a divorce because he thinks his wife had an affair with a white man and became pregnant. Simon and his wife are very dark and the child proving to be a bright mulatto. Simon charged upon his wife the crime of adultery and she confessed the truth of the accusation and admitted that a white man was in fact the father of the said mulatto child. There are two witnesses who stated that she was an unlawful wife. The matter was brought before the church of which Simon and his wife both are members. Simon retained his membership and she was expelled. Francis has frequently acknowledged it since to others and particularly to James Hall and Booker M. Harris who both gave depositions.

1906-003, Cain Dunn v. Maria Dunn:

Scope and Content

Divorce suit - The plaintiff was kind and affectionate to his wife and did all he could to make her happy, but she was unkind and cruel to him. She moved all of her things from the room upstairs in their house and put them in one of the rooms downstairs where she lived separate and apart from him, refusing at all times to allow him to enter the said room where she had taken up her adobe and lived as above stated until she was sent to Central State Hospital, having being adjudged insane. She was discharged from the hospital on Sept. 30, 1903 and returned home. She was sent back to Central State Hospital in June 1904 and was charged with lunacy. In March 1904, before she was sent back to the hospital, she came pretty closed to killing Cain by fully scalding him with boiling hot water, and as a result of the scalding, he was disabled for the greater part of a year and she is still at Central State Hospital.

1912-002, Susannah Brown, alias Susan Garrett v. Isaac Brown:

Scope and Content

Plaintiff filed for a divorce because her husband is a bigamist. His punishment was to spend three years in penitentiary and the court being of the opinion that he instead of being sentenced to confinement in the penitentiary should be sentenced to hard labor on the public roads. It was ordered that the defendant be delivered into the custody of the Superintendent of the penitentiary to be kept by him a member of the state convict road force in accordance with the law.

1916-022, Cubit Stith v. Lucy Jackson, etc.:

1910-025, Cubit Stith v. Lucy Jackson, etc.

Scope and Content

The orator was a colored man about seventy-two years old who was raised as a slave and is without education and absolutely ignorant of the ways of business or the laws of real property. He purchased from W. H. Belch a certain lot of parcel of land in Prince George County. Cubit being very ignorant and considering that he was old and had not very long to remain in this world, placed the title of his property in the name of his eldest daughter, Lucy Stith, who was then seventeen years old, and working in Berkley Virginia and unmarried. She later married and moved to New York state. The suit involved a dispute over the property. The plaintiff never recorded a deed to the property. He needed Lucy to sign the deed, but she refused. The value of the property had significantly increased due to DuPont building a plant in the vicinity. "Your orator states that she now refuses absolutely to give him any deed for the said property and claims it and the improvements which he has erected from his funds and by his labor as her own; that she is talking about selling the property and is threatening to turn him out of the said property as well as her mother, which would leave them homeless in their old age. Your orator avers that when recently, after her return to this county, he requested her for a deed for the said property, but she cursed him and used abuse too foul to repeat."