

A Guide to the Charlottesville (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1889-1939 (bulk 1895-1912)

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia
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History

Processed by: S. Nerney

Title Statement

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Author: Greg Crawford

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Revision Description

2013-11-21 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Language

English

Collector

Charlottesville (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

Digital images; 17.21 cubic feet (36 boxes)

Location

State Records Center Archival Annex

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Charlottesville (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1889-1939, 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

A portion of these records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Charlottesville (Va.) in 2008 under the accession number 43884. Additional records were transferred to the library in 2008 under the accession number 43885.

Processing Information

Charlottesville (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1889-1939, were processed by S. Nerney and completed in 2009.

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Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional unindexed post-1913 records are available at the Charlottesville (Va.) Circuit Court Clerk's Office.

Additional Charlottesville (Va.) 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](#).

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: Charlottesville, in Albemarle County, was named for Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the wife of King George III, and was established in 1762. The county seat of Albemarle County, Charlottesville was incorporated as a town in 1801 and as a city in 1888.

Scope and Content

Charlottesville (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1889-1939, 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.

Several suits involve businesses, churches, institutions, and societies, such as the Charlottesville & Albemarle Railway Company and the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway Company, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Shiloh Baptist Church, Mentor Lodge No. 1453 Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, Tent No. 27 Knights of the Maccabees, and the Widow's Son Lodge No. 60 of Ancient, Free & Accepted Masons.

Commonly found surnames among the plaintiffs and defendants include Bragg, Brown, Crawford, Davis,

Gleason, Harris, Howard, Johnson, Jones, Kelley, Leterman, Marshall, McKennie, Perkins, Scott, Smith, White, Wood, and Woods.

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.)

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