

A Guide to the Nansemond County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1866-1944

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1866-1944

A Collection in the Library of Virginia
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History

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Title Statement

A Guide to the Nansemond County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1866-1944

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Greg Crawford, 17 March 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

Nansemond County (Va.) Circuit Court.

Physical Characteristics

Digital images; 68.8 cubic feet (151 boxes).

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Chancery Causes, 1866-1944, use digital images found on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available electronically at the website of the Library of Virginia.

Nansemond County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1934-1944 are indexed but not scanned. Contact Archives Research Services for availability.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These records came to the Library of Virginia in a transfer of court papers from Suffolk, City of/Nansemond County under an undated accession.

Processing Information

Chancery Causes were processed by Library of Virginia staff in 2003.

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

Digital images are available for years 1866-1933. Post 1933 records are indexed but not scanned. At this time, there are no plans to digitize these records.

Post-1933 records were previously described under the title "Nansemond County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1934-1944." Records now described together.

Encoded by G. Crawford: 2010; updated by J. Taylor: December 2023.

Preferred Citation

Nansemond County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1866-1944. (Cite style of suit and chancery index no.). Local government records collection, Suffolk (City)/Nansemond County County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional unindexed post-1913 records may be available at the Circuit Court Clerk's Office. Contact the county clerk for access.

Additional Nansemond 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."](#)

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

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: Nansemond County was created as Upper Norfolk County by 1640 and in 1642 was renamed Nansemond County for the Nansemond Indians, who lived in the area in the early seventeenth century. The county seat was Suffolk. The county became the independent city of Nansemond on 1 July 1972, and on 1 January 1974 Nansemond merged with the city of Suffolk. The entire area is now known as Suffolk.

Lost Locality Notes: Nansemond County court records were destroyed in three separate fires: the earliest consumed the house of the court clerk in April 1734 (where the records were kept at that time), the second was set by British troops in 1779, and the last occurred on 7 February 1866.

Scope and Content

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Nansemond County (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1866-1944, 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.

These materials were scanned with the bills, answers, and decrees at the end of the case file.

Selected Suits of Interest

1878-015: Nathaniel Riddick vs. Albermarle Swamp Land Company

This debt suit contains an account book from Nathaniel Riddick's activities while serving as president and general agent for the Albemarle Swamp Land Company. Riddick recorded employee's wages and purchases made from the company store.