

A Guide to the Richmond (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1783-1942 (bulk 1888-1905)

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History

Processed by: V. Brooks, S. Bagley, E. Swain, J. Taylor, C. Collins, and C. Freed

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Descriptive Summary

Language

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Collector

Richmond (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

Digital Images; 417.1 cubic feet (868 boxes).

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Chancery Causes 1783-1866-042, use digital images found on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available electronically at the website of the Library of Virginia.

Chancery Causes 1866-043-1885 are currently closed for reformatting.

Chancery Causes 1886-1942 are unprocessed. 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 Richmond in 2018 under the accession number 52593. Additional records were transferred to the Library of Virginia in 2019 under accession number 52743 as well as under an undated accession.

Processing Information

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Richmond (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1886-1942 are unprocessed.

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Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Additional Richmond 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](#).

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

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.

Types of Courts: Richmond (Va.) Hustings court created by the General Assembly in 1782 at the time Richmond was granted its charter. The court was created to handle all criminal cases, civil law cases, probate of wills, fiduciary accounts, deed recordings, all licenses (business, marriage, etc.), citizenship applications, etc. It also included the Mayor's Court.

Richmond (Va.) Hustings Court Part I was approved April 5, 1910 under agreement of consolidation between the City of Richmond and the City of Manchester and their corporation/ Hustings Court.

Richmond (Va.) Law and Equity Court was created by an act of General Assembly on February 12, 1894 to handle all civil law cases and equity cases filed in the City of Richmond (includes divorces, partitions suits, injunctions, mechanic liens suits, etc.).

Richmond (Va.) Circuit Court created in 1852 as a successor to the Circuit Court of Chancery for the County of Henrico in order to handle all civil and criminal matters, same as other circuit courts for counties, cities, or towns. In July 1954, the Clerk of Law and Equity Court was named clerk of the Circuit Court. At the same time its jurisdiction was limited to criminal proceedings against convicts in the penitentiary, proceeding to enforce payment of money to commonwealth and suits against public officers representing the commonwealth.

Upon the close of the Civil War and the military occupation of Richmond, in Spring of 1866 a military tribunal, called the Court of Conciliation, was established. Rather than a singular judge, three arbitrators were given the power to adjudicate all cases which involved the possession of real and personal property, as well as

when contracts specified confederate currency as the payment method. The court's short term ended in December of the same year.

Locality History:Richmond, located between Henrico and Chesterfield Counties, was named by William Byrd (1674-1744), who envisioned the development of a city at the falls of the James River and with the help of William Mayo laid out the town in 1737. The name probably came from the English borough of Richmond upon Thames, which Byrd visited on several occasions. Richmond was established in 1742 and in 1779 was designated the capital of Virginia effective 30 April 1780. It was incorporated as a town, although "stiled the city of Richmond," in 1782 and was incorporated as a city in 1842. It served as the capital of the Confederacy from mid-1861 to April 1865. Richmond was enlarged by the annexation of Manchester (or South Richmond) in 1910, and by the addition of Barton Heights, Fairmount, and Highland Park in 1914. Further annexations from Chesterfield County occurred in 1942 and 1970.

Lost Locality Notes:Established in 1742; incorporated as a town, although "stiled the city of Richmond," in 1782. During the burning of Richmond on April 3, 1865, during the Civil War, Richmond circuit court judge John A. Meredith led efforts to save the circuit court records found at the State Court House. Rescuers successfully removed all the circuit court papers that concerned pending suits and many of the order books, but all of the circuit court will and deed books were lost. Records of the superior court and circuit superior court of law and chancery were also destroyed. Most of the pre-Civil War Husting Court records exist, including Hustings Court wills and deeds.

Scope and Content

Richmond (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1783-1942, 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.

Pre-1812 causes often only contain a single document, usually a subpoena.

A number of the divorce suits brought forth by women involve adultery as the primary reason for divorce. Many of these suits include depositions which contain detailed information about local houses of ill fame, including their locations and the names of women who worked in the houses.

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.

After the transatlantic slave trade ended in 1808, the domestic slave trade took its place. Richmond City became one of the largest slave trading cities in the south, second only to New Orleans. A number of chancery causes involve the slave trade, including slave traders as litigants in some suits, auction block sites, and references to enslaved people being sent further south as punishment.

The majority of post-1865 revolve around property, whether that be disputes over a deceased's estate or in a debt suit, the necessity of the debtor to sell their land to pay their debts because they did not have the liquid funds to pay them. Some of these court cases involve disputes over property dating back to the 18th century.

Many chancery causes from 1866-1875 reference or involve court systems set up during the military occupation of Richmond after the Civil War, including the Court of Conciliation and the Freedmen's Court. Some of the chancery causes were heard in these courts before being heard in the Court of Chancery, reflecting the intricate and convoluted systems of governance which existed in Virginia after the end of the Confederacy and before Virginia was returned to the Union in 1870.

Occasional years were treated as "clearance years" where cases which had not had any movement or action in seven years were stricken from the docket. These cases were indexed with the date they were stricken, but the last major changes in the case happened ages earlier.

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.

1785-001: William Rose etc vs. Exr. of Rebecca Watson:

Scope and Content

The bill and answer in this debt suit discuss the British invasion of Richmond and the complainant's efforts to prevent Nanny, a woman enslaved by the defendant from being taken by the British army.

1787-001: John Capus vs. Benjamin Blyth

Scope and Content

The defendant in this debt suit is Benjamin Blyth, a well-known New England portraitist who relocated to Richmond in 1785. Blyth painted John and Abigail Adams.

1789-001: James Lyle vs. Jacob Valentine and 1789-005: George Nichols etc. vs. Charles Carter, trst.

Scope and Content

Both suits arose from contract disputes over lots in the city of Richmond acquired during Byrd's Lottery of 1767.

1798-001: Charles Purcell vs. William Nice

Scope and Content

This contract suit contains three military service documents dated 1795 and signed by General "Mad" Anthony Wayne. Two of the soldiers were born in Paris, France.

1809-001: Admr(s). of Dr. James Currie vs. Admr. of Peyton Randolph

Scope and Content

An exhibit used in this debt suit is an account of medical care provided by Dr. James Currie to people enslaved by Peyton Randolph.

1810-011: Michael Ternan vs. Joseph Hare

Scope and Content

A debt suit concerned with the care and keeping of an unnamed race horse.

1811-006: Admr(s). of Dr. James Currie vs. Exr. of Alexander Buchanan

Scope and Content

An exhibit used in this debt suit is an account of medical care provided by Dr. James Currie to people enslaved by Alexander Buchanan.

1813-003: John Cary and wife vs. Jane Sweeny etc.

Scope and Content

The suit involved the division of a portion of George Wythe's estate. Included in the suit is a copy of George Wythe's will disinheriting George Wythe Sweeney, his nephew and alleged murderer.

1817-020: William Wilde vs. Exr. of Samuel Overton

Scope and Content

A debt suit which revolved around an attempt to free Rebecca Glover, an enslaved woman. Overton attempted to raise money through subscription to purchase Glover and free her. Included in the suit are two copies of hand bills soliciting funds.

1819-005: John Porter by etc. vs. John Allen etc.

Scope and Content

John Porter (alias Jack) was promised his freedom by John Allen. However, Allen disregarded this promise and sold Porter to Robert Stewart, a free man of color. Porter never referred to himself as enslaved, calling himself only "a Black man;" he also criticized Stewart for perpetrating unjust enslavement on a member of his own race.

1822-010: Maria Smith (enslaved) vs. Nelson P. Vandevall (free man of color)

Scope and Content

Maria Smith, an enslaved woman, alleged she had a verbal contract with Nelson Vandevall, her enslaver, to purchase her freedom; she provided receipts for payments to that end. The suit was transferred to the Superior Court of Chancery in Richmond, who expressed a lack of support for people being enslaved by free people of color, but denied Smith's bill.

1823-007: Nancy Bryan (enslaved vs. James Austin etc.

Scope and Content

Nancy Bryan, an enslaved woman, alleged she had a contract with Johnson, her previous enslaver to purchase her freedom. However, when she had nearly paid the full amount, he sold her to James Austin, who took Bryan from D.C. to Richmond with the intention of further selling her. The court appeared to deny her injunction.

1824-001: William Patterson vs. Richard Carter

Scope and Content

Richard Carter hired out Daniel and Sam, two enslaved boys, to William Patterson for the years of 1822 to 1823. However, after 1822, Carter refused to continue to allow Patterson to have the services of the two boys because of his physical abuse and rampant neglect for the boys. Patterson sued for breach of contract.

1824-007: Orris Payne vs. Joshua Alvis

Scope and Content

Orris Payne, in this debt suit, alleged to have been defrauded by Sully, an enslaved man purporting to be free, who had sold Payne a mule that then died. The payment for the mule was due in a quantity of coal from the Dover pits in Goochland County.

1825-007: Milly Dorsy (enslaved) vs. Samuel C. Dawson

Scope and Content

Milly Dorsy an enslaved woman who was purchased in Maryland. She alleged that she and Samuel S. Dawson had reached an agreement that she was to be enslaved for nine years and then freed. At the time Dorsy filed her suit, she had served for three of the nine years before Dawson wanted to bring her down to Georgia to enslave Dorsy for life. She filed an injunction to enjoin Dawson from taking Dorsy to Georgia. The court dissolved the injunction and found in favor of Dawson.

1830-009: Susan Dunscomb (alias Sucky) by etc. vs. Cyrus Dunscomb

Scope and Content

This divorce suit provided detailed information about Susan Dunscomb (formerly Dean) was a free woman of color, who was emancipated by Major William Mosby. Included in the suit is an affidavit attesting to her

emancipation which occurred "on account of her long & truly [sic] faithful services particularly in saving his life during the insurrection of the slaves, called Gabriels insurrection."

1856-004: Mary Ann Brooks (free woman of color) vs. Exr. of William Minton etc.

Scope and Content

Mary Ann Brooks sued the executor of William Minton's estate to recover the funds from the hiring out of Peter Willis, Brooks' enslaved son. William Minton was the executor for Moses Brooks, Brooks' father, whose will required all of his grandchildren to be hired out for a period of ten years with the funds used to support their grandmother and aunts. After the ten years, the grandchildren were to be sent to a free state at the expense of the estate.

1860-008: Michael Oneil vs. George W. Pollard

Scope and Content

An unnamed woman enslaved by George W. Pollard had a \$15 bond and was looking for someone to hire her for the year 1847. Michael Oneil initially agreed to hire her, but after he was told he would need to provide some money up front, refused. Pollard was issued a judgement stating that Michael Oneil owed him money for the hire of the unnamed woman, but Oneil claimed he had never retained her services and owed him nothing.

1863-001: James G. Martin vs. E.H. Stokes

Scope and Content

James G. Martin, a resident of Norfolk, alleged Peter, an enslaved boy who had a "special and peculiar value to your orator which cannot be compensated by any mere money consideration" to Martin was abducted from Norfolk and brought to Richmond. Peter was later found in "the possession of" E.H. Stokes, a slave trader. Martin filed suit in order to obtain an injunction against the further sale and transport of Peter.

1863-002: William H. Barnes vs. E.H. Stokes

Scope and Content

William H. Barnes alleged Emma Ellen, an enslaved woman had been abducted from Norfolk and brought to Richmond City to be sold by E.H. Stokes. Barnes sought an injunction against the further sale and transport of Emma Ellen.

1864-018: Exr. of John Archer etc. vs. Elizabeth H. Hill etc.

Scope and Content

The executor of John Archer's estate sought to have Henry and Abby, two enslaved people, sold at auction for fear of their attempting to escape to the Union Army. Abby had attempted to self-liberate several times previously, as had Henry, who was at the time of the bill filing, been confined in jail.

1866-008: William H. Grant vs. General John H. Winder

Scope and Content

William H. Grant, the owner of a large tobacco factory, leased the building in 1861 to the Confederate Government to be used as a hospital. Grant was informed the building had been turned into a prison depot by General Winder, filled with prisoners of war, as well as a hospital for people of color at work building fortifications around the city. Grant reminded Winder of the terms of the lease agreement, which did not allow the building to be used for such purposes, Winder preceded to order the seizure of the property. Grant filed suit in the chancery court to restrain Winder from seizing the property.

1866-039: Beverly (free man of color) vs. William B. B. Cross etc.

Scope and Content

Beverly had been formerly enslaved by Thomas Ritchie prior to Ritchie's death. In Ritchie's will, he wrote that Beverly would be free "if he behaves well." Beverly alleged in his bill that he had been sold by the executor of the estate, William B. B. Cross unnecessarily because Ritchie's estate had no debts which

needed to be paid with the funds from the sale.

1866-044: Admr. of William P. Martin vs. Mary Evans etc.

Scope and Content

There was an dispute over the terms of emancipation for Ann Eliza and Zipporah, two girls enslaved by William P. Martin. Along with their emancipation, William P. Martin also awarded the girls a sum of money. The executor refused to properly settle the estate so an administrator was appointed.

1866-052: Thomas Payne vs. Virginia Payne

Scope and Content

Thomas Payne sued for divorce from Virginia Payne. Additional information provided in this suit includes Thomas' time as a prisoner of war at Point Lookout.

1866-066: Margaret A. Stanley by etc. vs. Joseph Stanley

Scope and Content

Margaret A. Stanley sued for divorce from Joseph Stanley due to his desire to attempt to have children with Margaret sister's because neither of them had children. Joseph also had an extreme case of syphilis.

1867-017: Gdn. of James Waddle Davis vs. James Waddle

Scope and Content

A part of the estate dispute involved the court's permission in 1862 of the sale of four enslaved women because they "are all young women of infamous character-Lewd, impudent, in governable and runaways."

1868-016: Hattie S. Kilby &c. by etc. vs. Exx. of Theoderick Robertson

Scope and Content

This debt suit includes additional information on Walter Kilby's Civil War experience; he was wounded in the war and was taken as a prisoner of war. He returned home poor, disabled, and emaciated.

1868-037: Lucinda Hunter by etc. vs. William Hunter

Scope and Content

Lucinda Hunter filed for divorce from William Hunter because William was living with Evelina, an enslaved woman, as his wife.

1868-109: Nancy Ellen Crowley by etc. vs. William Crowley

Scope and Content

Nancy Ellen Crowley filed for divorce from William Crowley because he committed adultery with a "mulatto servant" who was living in the house. Additional information included William Crowley's war experience; he was wounded during the war and taken to a hospital in D.C. to recover.

1872-125: John N. Davis vs. Admr. of Lurania Anderson etc.

Scope and Content

John N. Davis, an attorney, sued Lurania Anderson and William Anderson, her husband, for legal fees related to a chancery suit heard in Amelia County. Nathaniel Harrison died in 1852 and devised his estate to Frankey Miles, a free woman of color, and Lurania Anderson, Ann Maria Jackson, and Edwin Harrison, who were rumored to be Miles' children by Harrison. Harrison's white heirs contested the will, but the court, and later the Supreme Court of Appeals, ruled in favor of Miles and her children. The estate included several thousand acres of land, 80 to 90 enslaved persons, and various household items, among other things. This suit originated in Amelia County in 1860, but was removed to Richmond City in 1869.

1873-017: John Jackson vs. Virginia H. Jackson

Scope and Content

Divorce suit. John Jackson accused his wife of adultery. Bill and depositions provide substantial detail on the alleged adulterous relationship between Virginia Jackson and Clarence Eacho, including how the Plaintiff discovered about the affair first hand. (He came home and discovered Eacho sneaking out the window; a fight between the two ensued on the front lawn; neighbors give testimony to this). Plaintiff and defendant were formally enslaved but were married by Rev Dr Reid of the Presbyterian Church on 22nd November 1862.

1873-029: P.T. Atkinson and wife etc. vs. Julia A. King, widow etc.

Scope and Content

Estate case. Plaintiffs requested the Chancery Court probate papers purporting to be the will of Alfred King. Suit should have been introduced on the law side of the court and the answers by defendants attest to this. Accordingly, the matter became an issue out of Chancery and a jury was consulted. Numerous arguments are submitted by counsel debating the fine line between equity and legality of the situation.

1874-032: Maria Louisa Blackburn, by etc. vs Walter Blackburn

Scope and Content

Divorce suit. A copy of indictment (Commonwealth vs Walter Blackburn; 14 Jan 1874) for adultery was entered as evidence. Depositions concern the details of the alleged adultery as well as the arrest of Blackburn for these charges.

1874-037: Mary Innocent Clayton, by etc. vs Edward Vincent Clayton

Scope and Content

Divorce suit. Husband is arrested by Richmond City Police for allegations of brutal domestic violence against his wife. Two letters were entered into evidence; they contain overt admissions by the husband committing physical violence against her repeatedly.

1874-042: A. W. Childress, etc vs Exr of Henry T Smith, shff, etc.

Scope and Content

Contract suit filled by a former guard of the Henrico County Jail for unpaid wages. A petition for unpaid wages was also filled by an African American women (Beddy Taylor) who had been employed as a cook for the jail. Depositions provide details on working conditions and duties of those employed by the sheriff and exhibits, commissioners' reports, accounts, etc. include a wealth of accounting information for the operation of the jail during the 1860s and 1870s. The sheriff's passbook for 1869 was also filled as an exhibit.

1874-056: Heirs of William John Clarke, etc vs Exr of Edward Govan

Scope and Content

Estate case over the recovery value for enslaved persons belonging to the estate of Edward Govan. Relates to another case pending in Richmond City (Heirs of William John Clarke vs Exr of Edward Govan) that, at the time of the bill, had reached the Supreme Court of Appeals. Plaintiff claim that the executor, George W Richardson had these enslaved persons in his possession for a number of years; and had never render any accounting for them. Since the final degree in that case, the plaintiff discovered that Richardson had an additional enslaved person in his possession (Kitty or Catherine). Moreover, that this enslaved woman had died while in his possession and therefore, they believed that Richardson should be held financially responsible for her death. While this would have likely been a relatively standard Chancery cause prior to 1863/1865, this bill was filed in 1871 and appears to be one of the few cases filed in chancery for Richmond City that directly and exclusively focused on issues surrounding the financial interest of enslavement property after the Civil War.

1875-052: Celestia E McDaniel, by etc. vs David McDaniel

Scope and Content

Divorce Suit. Plaintiff Celestia E. McDaniel sues for a divorce from her husband, David McDaniel for

allegedly seducing and impregnating her young niece, Celestia Frances Bryan. Originally, Bryan had come to reside with her aunt and uncle in Richmond when she was about eight years old as McDaniel had promised his brother-in-law that he would educate and provide for the young girl as an adopted daughter. Depositions from various family members recount in detail their personal views on the situation and on the course of events that came to pass before and after Bryan gave birth, as an unmarried woman and seventeen year old, to a child connected to McDaniel in June 1855.

1875-062: R T Foster vs Stillman, Heinricks & Co]

Scope and Content

Debt Case. R. T. Foster seeks relief from a petition filed against him in the Court of Conciliation, a military tribunal court in Richmond City established by the United States after the close of the Civil War. Case includes a copy of the court record for the proceedings in said court. It appears to be one of the few cases that had an significant overlap with said court.

1876-022: William Beverly Swan vs. Robert Howard, trst. etc.

Scope and Content

This debt suit case involves the adopted son of Gilbert Hunt, William Beverly Swan. Swan is settling debts, but the case includes additional descriptions of Gilbert Hunt's life after the 1811 Richmond Theatre fire.

1876-053: Trustees of the Third Presbyterian Church vs. PR Gratten etc, E. Pleasants for etc. vs. Trustees of the Third Presbyterian Church

Scope and Content

Trustees for the Third Presbyterian Church bought land to build a new church and Sunday school. They front the costs themselves and recoup the costs by selling the pews at a public auction, which thereby made members of the congregation owners of specific pews in the church. By 1872, the Church was considered unsafe due to being built on a hill which had a tunnel cut into it for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. The congregation abandoned the old church and sought to sell the land permanently to the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company, however because the pews were owned by congregation members, the trustees for the Third Presbyterian Church filed suit for the right to sell everything on the land, including the pews.

1876-073: Katherine H. Joynes by etc. vs. Thomas R. Joynes

Scope and Content

A divorce suit where Katherine sued for divorce on the grounds of Thomas' adultery. She lists sex workers he visited, as well as the brothel they all worked at. All of them women named were called as deponents and gave information on a well-known brothel, as well as occasional hints about their perspectives on their work. Also included is a petition about debts owed by Thomas and a request for the funds owed, a strange request for a divorce case.

1876-088: Exr of Robb Barker, etc vs J H Connell & Wife, etc; Louisa N Barker, by vs Robin Barker, trst, etc.

Scope and Content

Estate case; Family wishes to sell property in downtown Richmond City that they are unable to rent out and that has significantly depreciated in value. Prior to the close of the Civil war, said property served almost exclusively as an auction house on "Wall Street" (15th Street) and Franklin Street for the buying and selling of enslaved persons. Accounting records detail the construction of said building as well as the rents paid by trading firm/dealers, including Richard Henry Dickinson, as well as medical services rendered to enslaved persons.

1877-028: Admrs. Of William Barret vs. Lgts. Of William Barret

Scope and Content

The suit was based around settling of William Barret's estate among his heirs. William Barret was a wealthy merchant who made his money in chewing tobacco and retained much of his money post Civil War because he put his money in England rather than Confederate bonds.

1877-052: John M. Goddin vs. William M. Justis

Scope and Content

The suit began as a trespass suit; the plaintiff filed suit because he owned an island in the James River and William Justis was trespassing on the land and carrying off tons of sand (presumably to sell for construction purposes), thereby decreasing the size of the island. However, the issue then becomes a question of ownership over the island because William Justis filed two exhibits which showed his claim for ownership: a gift of land given to him by Virginia Governor James L. Kemper. As the plaintiff had deeds of ownership showing he had purchased the land, the court had to decide who had the greater claim.

1877-061: James Lyons, trst. Vs. Piedmont & Arlington Life Insurance Co] etc.

Scope and Content

Has an interesting legal discussion about the rights of an heir to his estate because the original case was settled during the Civil War and he was an "alien enemy," living in the North/West states and a member of the Union army.

1877-095: Julia A. King by etc. vs. Alfred King etc, Petition of John Howard

Scope and Content

Julia King asks the court to appoint a guardian for her husband for financial transactions due to his failing memory. Depositions included in the case discuss what sounds like Alzheimer's developing.

1877-100: Samuel C. Hays vs. Paul Michael etc, Petition of Margaret McFall etc.

Scope and Content

The suit was concerned with the estate of James Hayes. After the death of Catharine Hayes, James' mother, her money and property was divided among her living heirs. James was determined, by the Richmond Court of Hustings, to be unable to care for himself due to an undefined disability. The suit described the financial and physical abuse James suffered at the hands of his carers, including being coerced into signing away the property he inherited from his mother.

1878-034: John Woodson by etc. Vs. William R. Chalkley etc.

Scope and Content

An estate suit filed by John, Jacob, and Lucy Woodson, the stepchildren of William R. Chalkley. The children inherited property and money from their father after his death; upon Chalkley's marriage to the children's mother, he filed for and was appointed guardian over the funds. This suit was filed on behalf of the Woodson children for the mismanagement of the funds by Chalkley, including his own admission in a deposition to charging the children for room and board and taking the money out of their trust despite the children all being under the age of fourteen. The Woodson children's mother was unaware not only of her husband's mismanagement, but even that Chalkley had been appointed guardian.

1878-064: John R. Williams & wife vs. Dora Holloway etc.

Scope and Content

Dora Holloway was a white woman who was left impoverished after her husband's death. She also had three young children to raise. The answer and depositions provide information on how she managed as a poor widow in pre-war Richmond.

1879-066: Richmond Railway Company] vs. Asher W. Garber

Scope and Content

The Richmond Railway Company, a transportation service in Richmond, sued Asher W. Garber, the proprietor of an omnibus transportation enterprise, for trespass and sought an injunction to prevent him from operating along the Richmond Railway Company's routes. They claimed that Garber's omnibuses drove on the Richmond Railway Company's rails and damaged the street around the rails, which the Richmond Railway Company was responsible for maintaining. The court ruled that Garber had the right to operate the omnibuses along the same routes, but the omnibuses had to avoid the Richmond Railway

Company's rails.

1879-090: Admx. of John M. McGowan vs. Jane King etc.

Scope and Content

Jane King moved to Richmond after the death of John M. McGowan, her brother, in 1874 and took charge of his ice house business. Under King's control, the business became more profitable and people began referring to her as the "Ice Queen" due in part to her business acumen. She and her family inhabited the Pace-King House in Shockoe Bottom for a time. This suit involves McGowan's estate and contains some records from the ice house business during the mid-to-late 1870s.

1880-044: Erdmann F. R. Hoffman vs. Anna Hoffmann

Scope and Content

Erdmann Hoffmann sought a divorce from Anna Hoffmann, his wife. He accused Anna of drinking excessive amounts of liquor and committing adultery with two Black men. As part of the divorce suit, Erdmann requested custody of their children. The suit includes a decorative marriage certificate written in German.

1880-064: Peter V. Daniel, Jr. vs. William A. Jenkins and wife etc.

Scope and Content

This suit involves a dispute over cows. Peter V. Daniel, Jr., complained about cows kept on property owned by William D. Gibson, as trustee for A. R. Jenkins, wife of William A. Jenkins, located next door to Daniel's home at the intersection of Main Street and Adams Street. He bemoaned "the extremely oppressive and unhealthy exhalations and odors" emanating from the property and the loud bellowing of the cows, which sometimes persisted throughout the night. The court decreed that the cows should be removed from Jenkins' property.

1880-070: Israel Brown vs. Sarah Brown

Scope and Content

Israel Brown sought a divorce from Sarah Brown, his wife, citing abandonment. It is mentioned that Sarah Brown was expelled from "the Ebenezer Baptist Church (colored)" for deserting her husband "without giving any reason therefor [sic]." Reverend Richard Wells of the Ebenezer Baptist Church is a deponent in the suit.

1880-084: Bettie B. Roy by etc. vs. Exr. of Susan P. Bates etc.

Scope and Content

A deed included in the suit mentions Lucy, a girl enslaved by Samuel Ellis, who was "convicted of homicide." A Richmond City commonwealth cause found through Virginia Untold reveals that Lucy was charged with "maliciously kill[ing] and murder[ing] her infant child." The commonwealth cause contains a note stating that Lucy was convicted and sentenced to hang, but the deed states that Lucy was transported.

1882-046: Robert Y. Horsley vs. Richmond and Alleghany Railroad Co]

Scope and Content

Injunction was refuted. Challenges law put forth by General Assembly concerning a public ferry on the James River

1882-049: Ann M. Elam, trst vs. Sally E. Walker, etc

Scope and Content

Injunction was refuted. Challenges law put forth by General Assembly concerning a public ferry on the James River

1882-085: Admr of Lucy Taylor vs. Heirs of Lucy Taylor

Scope and Content

This estate dispute includes touching letters to Lucy Taylor from her enslaved daughter and an older emancipated son about their respective experiences. Lucy Taylor's daughter was sold multiple times further down south: first North Carolina in 1846 then down to Alabama. The correspondence which amounts to 3 letters, were the last communication they were known to have had. Lucy herself had been formerly enslaved by the plaintiff's father--William C. Allen.

1883-137: Germania Insurance Co] for, etc. vs. Richmond & Danville Railroad Co], etc.

Scope and Content

This debt suit contains additional information about a catastrophic fire that occurred in West Point, Virginia.

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1883-143: Frank M. Howard for etc. vs. Exr. of Peter Bernhard (alias: Pierre Bernard)

Scope and Content

Frank M. Howard and Susan Drayton, both sang with the Richings Grand English Opera Company (also known as the Caroline Richings-Bernard Grand English Opera Troupe), and instituted a debt suit against the estate of Pierre Bernard in the Richmond City chancery court for salary owed. Pierre Bernard was the husband of Caroline Richings-Bernard, who led the opera troupe. The opera troupe traveled the United States and performed operas in English, thus appealing to the "masses" rather than upper class theatergoers who (tended) to prefer foreign-language operas.

1884-024: Smith & Beverly] vs. James T. Vaughan

Scope and Content

This contract suit concerns a connecting tunnel between railroads.

1884-041: P.H. Mayo & Bro] vs. Thomas Tabb Mayo

Scope and Content

This suit contains additional information about the manufacturing of tobacco for the US Navy.