

Your Ancestors on “Judge Judy” Using Chancery Records in Virginia

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Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be on Judge Judy? If you have ancestors who lived in Virginia, there's a good chance they appeared in Chancery Court. In this lecture, come discover what chancery records are, where to find them, and how you can use them to break down your brick walls. We'll look at examples of chancery cases from various parts of Virginia, see what types of issues went to chancery court, and discover who appears in these rich records.

Understanding Chancery Records

- Introducing equity
- History of chancery in Virginia
- Genealogical gold
- Types of issues found in chancery

Structure of a chancery case

- Bill
- Answer
- Decree
- Other components
 - Subpoena
 - Deposition
 - Affidavit
 - Docket
- Important things to note
 - File folder
 - Back of papers

Access to Chancery Records in Virginia

- Library of Virginia Research Room
- Order and minute books
- Online

Step by step: accessing chancery records online

- Familiarize yourself with the index homepage
- Click Search the Index
- Know which locality the records are in for your time period
- Determine which records are available – and in which format
- Know what to expect – search tips and information indexed

Using Chancery for Brick Walls

- Princess Anne County
- Halifax County
- Brunswick County
- Powhatan County

Resources to understand context

- Atlas of Historical County Boundaries - Newberry Library
<https://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/pages/Virginia.html>
- Judy G. Russell, “The oratrix,” *The Legal Genealogist*, 12 August 2013 (<https://www.legalgenealogist.com/blog> : accessed 8 October 2020).

Library of Virginia Resources

- Chancery Records Index
<http://virginiamemory.com/collections/chancery/>
- Search Tips for the Chancery Records Index
<https://www.lva.virginia.gov/chancery/search-tips.htm>
- Chancery Records Index FAQ
<https://www.lva.virginia.gov/chancery/faq.htm>
- Chancery Records Index Availability
<https://www.lva.virginia.gov/chancery/available.asp>
- Archives and Map Research Rooms Rules and Information Governing the Use of Materials
https://www.lva.virginia.gov/about/policies/Archives_and_Map_Research_Rooms.pdf

Summary

- Chancery courts decided cases based on fairness, where the plaintiff and defendant argued for something other than simple monetary compensation
- Chancery cases contain a wealth of genealogical gold
- We detailed how to access records both in person and online
- We looked at examples of chancery records from around the state of Virginia
- Have you found your ancestors in chancery records? If not, what are you waiting for!?

I would love to hear from you!

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“Your ancestors deserve the best researcher, the most passionate story-teller, and the dignity of being remembered. So let's encounter your ancestors through family history and remember the past made present today!”

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Connecting Families – Encountering Ancestors