

The Moseley-King Farm in 1915-1938: Rufus Moseley

**By Sarah Evans, Connor Hughes, Rob
Phillips, William Poe, and Janey Stevens.**

The Many Faces of Sewanee and Reading the
Landscape; Drs. Willis and Evans.



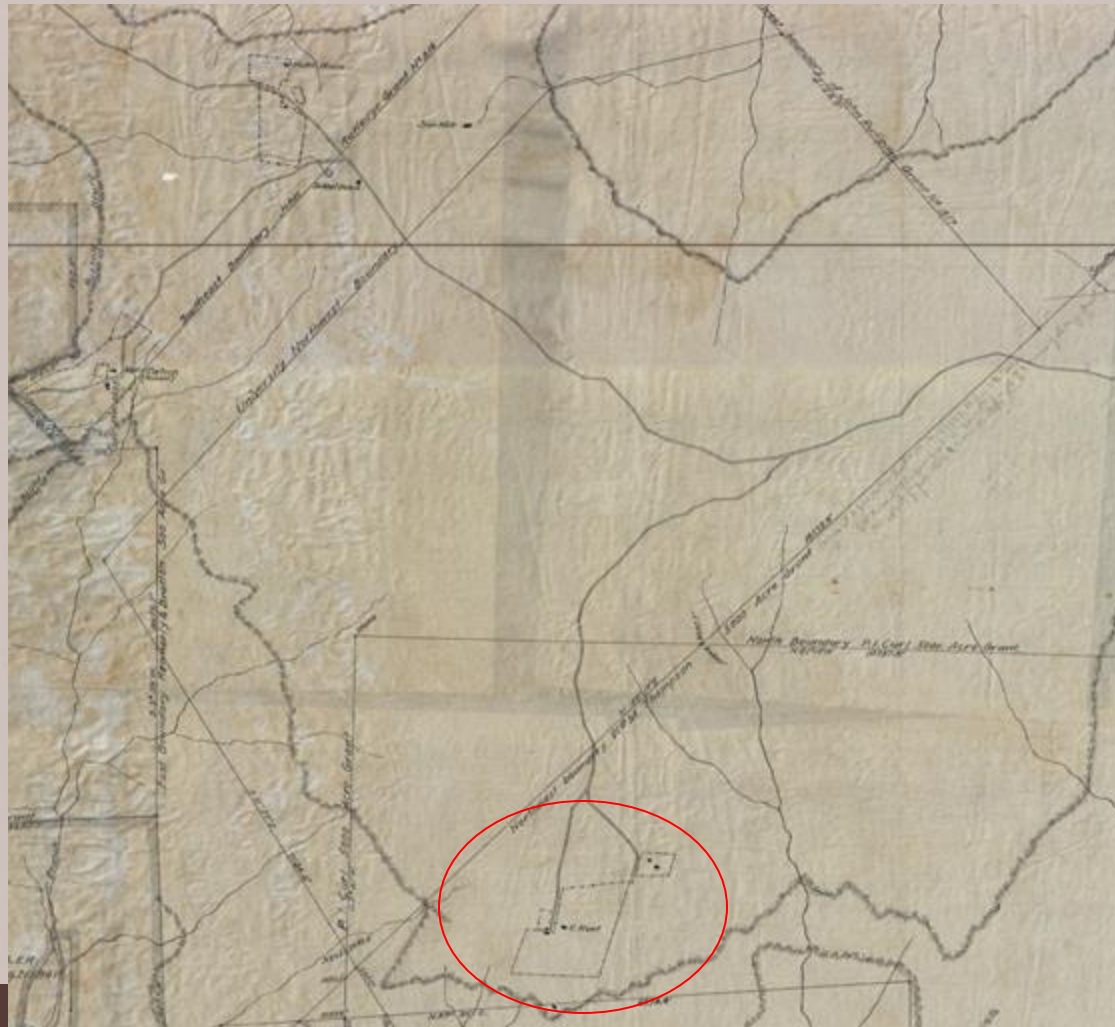
Introduction to Rufus Moseley

- Moseley was born a slave in 1856 in Franklin County.
 - Freed with the end of the Civil War.
- His family consisted of his wife, Mollie, and their sons and daughters. His sons, George and Conzie, and his daughter, Wilfred, seem to be the only of their children to survive into considerable adulthood.
- Between 1880 and 1920, Moseley's occupation on census records has been listed as servant (1880), drayman (1900), University driver (1910), and farm laborer (1920, 1930).
 - He remained a farmer from roughly 1920 until his death in 1936.
- He had a series of leases in the Sewanee village, and during our time period, he was owning and running a dairy business.

Why the King Farm?

- Moseley bought the King Farm from Christian Ruef in 1915, who was using the farm to keep his livestock for his butcher business in town.
 - Ruef bought the land for \$300 from W.S. Bennett.
 - Moseley bought it for \$1,500.
- Moseley likely bought the farm for the agricultural/livestock structure preparations already made to the farm.
 - There were not many places to graze livestock around the University as it was heavily forested.
 - Ruef had already been grazing his livestock on the farm.
- With the land already prepared and structures already being there, Moseley would have had to do little to change the land to benefit his business.

Map of
Porter, Estill,
and Logan
Grants.
August 1914.
Tennessee
Iron, Coal,
and Railroad
Company,
Land
Department.



Moseley's Farm Occupation

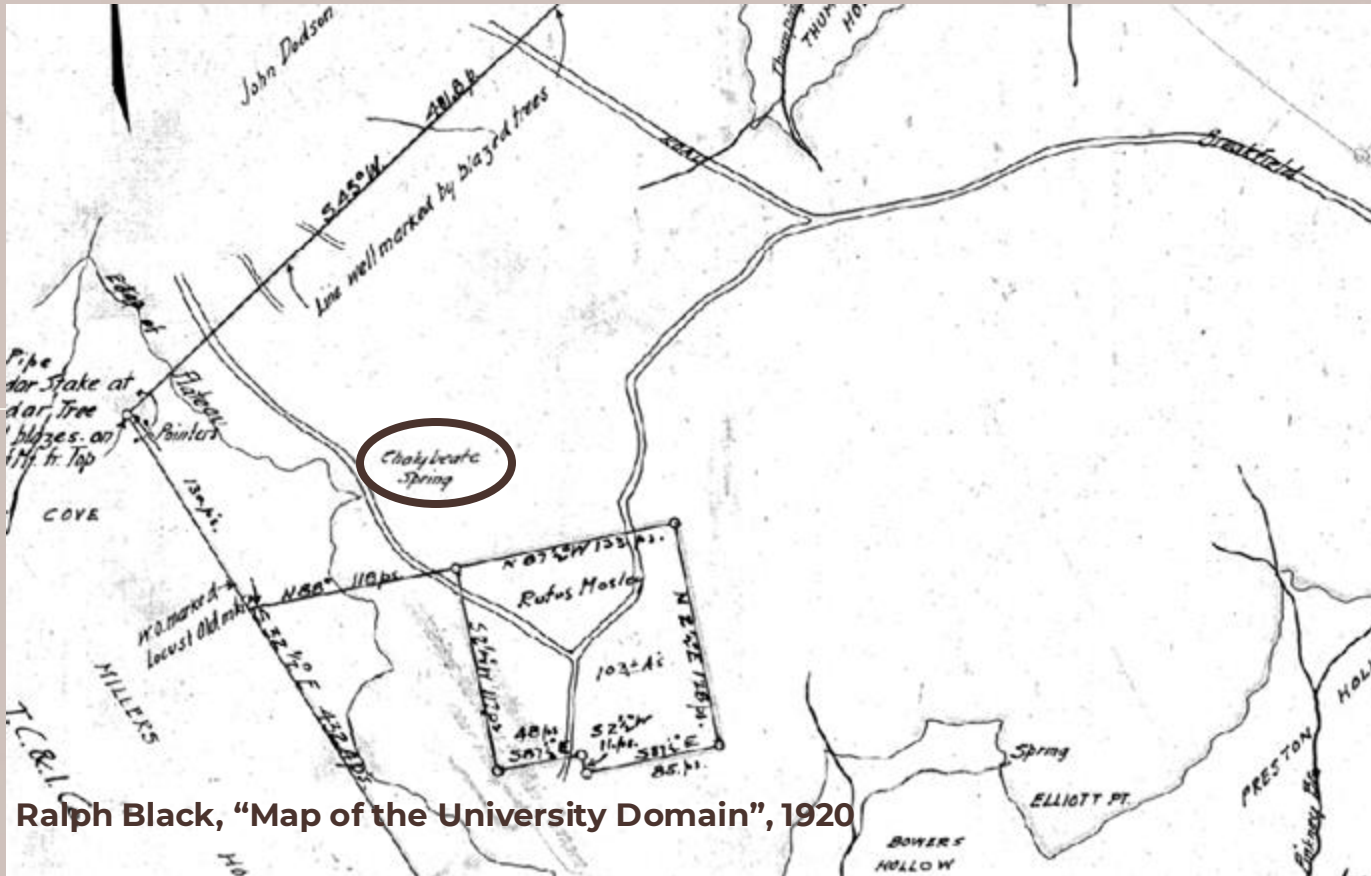
- Despite buying the farm in 1915, it is unlikely that Moseley moved out onto it immediately. There is no specific date in any records.
 - He had several leases in town which did not expire or get sold until the late 1910s.
 - In 1919 he sells a house he owns to John Kennerly, the lead teacher of Sewanee's local school for African Americans.
- We infer that Moseley moved onto the land sometime between 1917 and 1920.
 - In Ely Green's "Too Black, Too White", Ely describes going to see "Uncle Rufus Moseley" on his trip back to Sewanee in 1917, where his home is described as a farm about "a mile to go from the mountain's edge."
 - By the 1920 Census, he is listed as living on a farm on Chalybeate Springs Road which is in line with a 1920s map of the Domain.

Theories on Farm Occupants Between Ruef and Moseley (1915-1917)

- Moseley could have been taking care of the farm without living there within these two years.
 - Slight chance that he could have been a tenant to Ruef.
- He had several leases in town and a house that he did not sell until 1919, he could have resided in any of these locations.
 - Leasehold 234, cancelled 1920; Leasehold 305, cancelled 1919; Leasehold 312, cancelled 1915.
- It could have been beneficial to live in a less secluded location while he still had the option to.

A note on this map:

Despite being the Univ. engineer at the time, Ralph Black made quite the messy map. It is mostly accurate for the King Farm area, but other regions of the Domain have issues with sizes, names, etc.



Ralph Black, "Map of the University Domain", 1920

What was Rufus Moseley Doing?

- Rufus Moseley's primary occupation during this time period was a farmer (as listed on the 1920 and 1930 Censuses).
- Moseley is listed as running a dairy in the 1910s-1920s in a list compiled by Herman Green in Pat Makris's *The Other Side of Sewanee* (Makris 39).
- We know that Moseley owned a dairy business and had dairy cows, which he likely kept on the Moseley-King Farm.
 - "When I came out of the woods Uncle Rufus was going to the farm to the house with two buckets of milk" (Green 293).
- A lasting legacy of Christian Ruef's activity on the Moseley-King Farm is the likely hog raising on the land.
- He also was likely growing crops on the farm given the heavy modification of the soil that is still detectable today.

Moseley's Finances in the 1930s

- Rufus Moseley was in his 70s by this point and his children were moved out. The Depression was in full swing by this time in his life.
- V.C. Finney gives Rufus Moseley multiple loans in the 1930s
 - 01-18-1931: If not paid by maturity, the University can proceed under foreclosure and receive the money.
 - 12-04-1936: pays for taxes on the land to prevent property from going on sale. He will do the same for 1936 and 1937.
- January 18, 1934
 - Wilfred Moseley wrote to the University treasurer on behalf of her father. She says "My father is not making any money, only what we give him." The money is primarily coming from her brother Conzie's salary as a Sergeant in the 9th Cavalry Division.
 - She is asking to pay loan interest later than initially required.

[Typed section]

"Memo

"This 24th day of January 1931, I, personally, loaned to Rufus Mosely [sic] the sum of \$260.00 taking from him his note made payable to the University of the South for one year, and secured by a deed of trust for the University on the one hundred and three acres more or less he owns on the edge of the University property.

"If this note is paid by maturity, the money will return to me and all the papers in the case will go to Rufus Mosely [sic]. If it is not paid, the **University is at liberty to proceed under foreclosure proceedings**, and in that event, the \$260.00 advanced by me will go to the University as a gift.

"My reason for doing this is that **I believe the University should eventually acquire this piece of land which makes a break in the University's outer lines and was originally a part of the University domain.**

"Mosely [sic] was planning to mortgage this property to outside parties and **I thought it was wise to prevent outside parties from possible possession of this place.**

"(Signed) B. F. Finney"

[Penciled in below]

"1/24/32 Extended for one year. First year's interest paid to BFF

"2/3/34 Extended for one yr to Jan 24-1935

"1/31/35 Extended for one year to Jan 24-1936.

"2/27/36 [Extended for one year to Jan] 24-1937"

V.C. Finney's Predatory Lending

- V.C. Finney's loans clearly had ulterior motives; he wanted to keep the land in the University's hand.
- While this land was not yet owned by the University, Sewanee had a "tenant at will" policy regarding Black renters on the Domain and Moseley had rented in earlier years.
- Paternalist sentiments often shadowed the formal interactions between Sewanee's Black and upper class white populations.

Connections to Sewanee in this Time

- Moseley was listed on the 1930 Census as living on Chalybeate Springs Road
 - He likely did not have any real neighbors, as this section of the bluff was sparsely populated.
 - His closest neighbors were John Dodson, who lived northwest of him near the southwestern-facing edge of the bluff, and the Potts family, living north-northwest of him near the northern-facing edge of the bluff.
- Transportation
 - He would have used Chalybeate Springs Road, then Breakfield Road to reach the campus and town.
 - Chalybeate Springs Road is the large ditch we now see going up into the Moseley-King Farm.

Connections to Sewanee in this Time (Cont.)

Frank Hickerson's Suggestions on How to Get Moseley Farm at Auction

Source: "Foreclosure: Rufus Moseley" folder, Leases and Deeds, 1828-1880, Box 33, Superintendent of Leases Collection, University Archives.

Typed on his letterhead: "Frank Hickerson, Lawyer, Winchester, Tennessee" and dated 22 Dec. 1937

Mr. C. W. Underwood
[University Treasurer]
Sewanee, Tennessee

Rufus Moseley foreclosure.

Dear Mr. Underwood:

You will find enclosed a Trustee's sale notice advertising the foreclosure sale in re above for Tuesday, January 18, 1938, at eleven o'clock in the morning.

Since it is the desire of the University to obtain this property at this sale, I suggest that a representative be here on the day of sale to bid. You could authorize me to bid the amount of the indebtedness but I do not know how high to run it. If you do find it inconvenient for someone to be here, let me know the highest bid you will place and I will have someone bid for the University, but will not bid the high dollar unless someone else bids on the property.

With kindest regards, I am

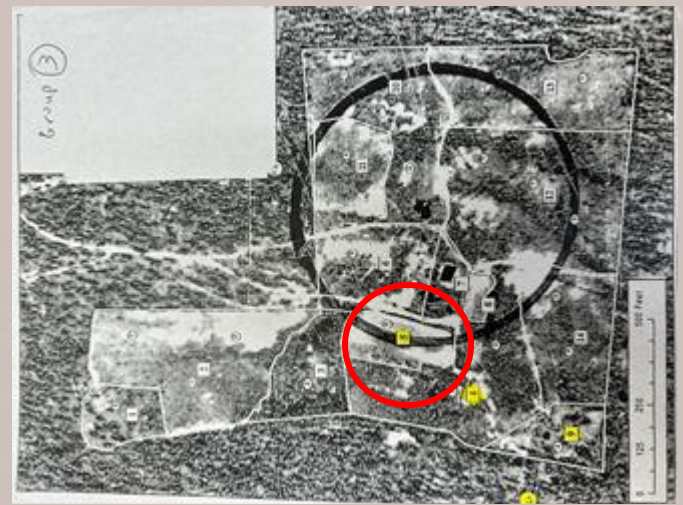
Yours very truly,

Frank Hickerson

- December 2, 1936, Moseley died at 80 years old.
- On December 22, 1937, the University's treasurer receives a letter asking how much Frank Hickerson should expect to be bid on the farm for the University.
- The University was predatory with their loans, giving them with the intent of obtaining the land when Moseley was gone.

Ecological Impact

- Land use in later periods of ownership skews many of the ecological legacies from the Moseley period.
- Several areas within the farm show signs of extensive soil modification with altered nutrient content and pH.
- Site 5 has a pH of 6 and incredibly high nutrient levels likely from long term soil amendments happening during Mosley's ownership in order to grow crops.
- Commercial fertilizers were expensive and not widely used until after WWII so Moseley was most likely using hog manure as the primary nutrient amendment as well as lime to raise the pH
- The modification of soil during this period resulted in a unique species assemblage colonizing this area once it was abandoned including Chinquapin Oaks and Nepal Grass.



Map of farm in 1950



Chinquapin Oak



Nepal Grass

Ecological Impact

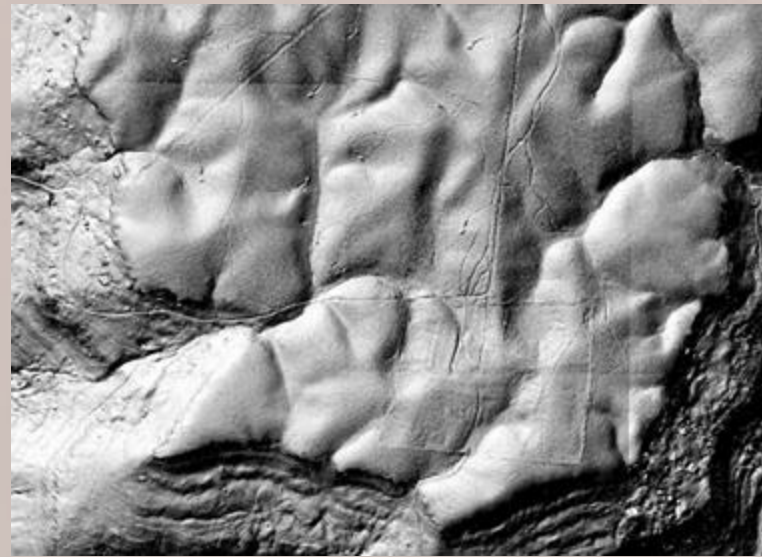
- Aerial imagery from the 1950s shows a cleared area where hogs were likely gathered.
- A very large clearing that remained free of vegetation several years after abandonment suggesting it was trampled and compacted for a long period of time, likely stretching back into the Moseley era.
- This area remains fairly sparse and relatively clear compared to the surrounding forest today.



1959

Ecological Impact (cont.)

- The roads leading to the farm show signs of heavy erosion visible on lidar data.
- Decades of heavy travel in and out of the farm with machinery
- Metal spokes on wagons during Moseley's period would have contributed significantly to erosion.
- Very little vegetation has established in the abandoned roads
- Currently an abundance of christmas ferns on the embankments of the roads, which are known for colonizing unnatural surfaces.



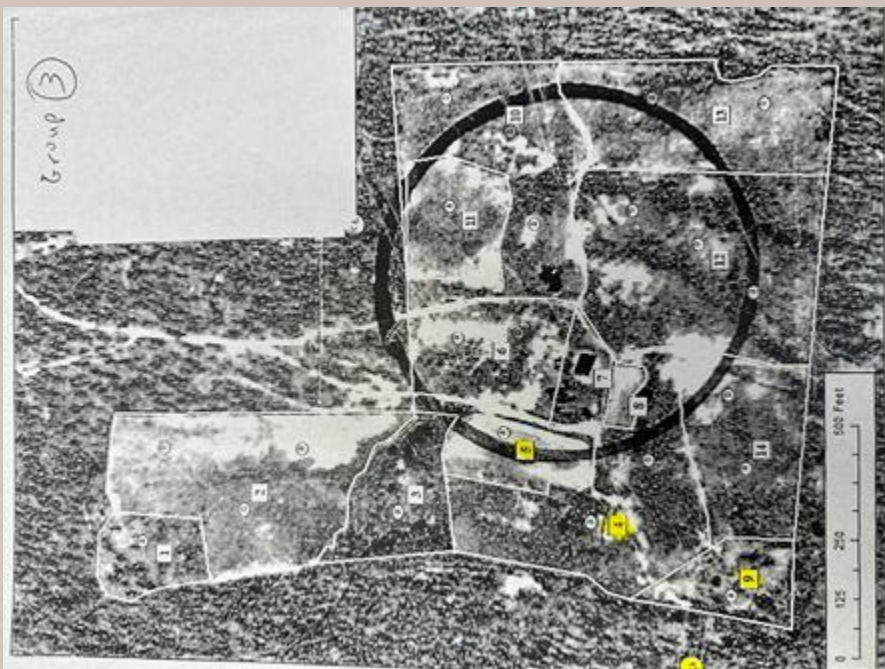
Lidar image



Christmas fern

Our Plots and What We Found

Plot Study Areas: 4, 5, 9, C1



- Our plots, primarily 9 and 5, had several trash heaps with various items.
 - Glass
 - Ceramics
 - Tin cans
- The ceramics were outside of our time period.
- Glass soda bottles found in plot 9 were bottled in McMinnville and Tracy City during the mid 1930s, it is possible that trash was dumped towards the end of the Mosley period
- We did find an unidentified artifact that we infer is the head of an agricultural tool like a hoe.



Unidentified artifact
inferred to be
agricultural tool; plot 9.



Milk bottle for a dairy
business out of
Winchester; plot 9.



Dr. Pepper bottle bottled
in McMinnville; plot 9.



Coca-Cola bottle bottled
in Tracy City; plot 9.

Concluding Timeline

- **1915:** Rufus Moseley acquires the property from Ruef for \$1,500
- Mosley began to diversify operations on the farm with dairy cattle and likely growing of crops amending the soils with hog manure and lime
- By **1930s**, Mosley was in his 70s and began to have financial issues. Farming activity on the property likely decreased due to his age
- **1931:** VC Finney loans Moseley money in hopes of eventually acquiring the property.
- **1936:** Moseley dies and the University acquires the farm shortly thereafter
- The hog farming, soil amendments, and heavy road traffic left a distinct ecological legacy in the form of reduced species diversity and altered species compositions that is present today



Census Records Cited

- Ancestry. (1997-2024). *Rufus Moseley in the 1880 United States Federal Census*. 1880 United States Federal Census. https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/records?recordId=9515278&collectionId=6742&tid=&pid=&queryId=22f9b47c-171c-4c21-9f8b-e5eff0866216&_phsrc=oLh68&_phstart=successSource
- Ancestry. (1997-2024). *Rufus Moseley in the 1900 United States Federal Census*. 1900 United States Federal Census. <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/60333455:7602>
- Ancestry. (1997-2024). *Rufus Moseley in the 1910 United States Federal Census*. 1910 United States Federal Census. https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/records?recordId=27122525&collectionId=7884&tid=&pid=&queryId=b007ccd3-08d9-4769-93ed-e5a773c17740&_phsrc=oLh50&_phstart=successSource
- Ancestry. (1997-2024). *Rufus Moseley in the 1920 United States Federal Census*. 1920 United States Federal Census. https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/records?recordId=53246089&collectionId=6061&tid=&pid=&queryId=b007ccd3-08d9-4769-93ed-e5a773c17740&_phsrc=oLh50&_phstart=successSource
- Ancestry. (1997-2024). *Rufus Moseley in the 1930 United States Federal Census*. 1930 United States Federal Census. https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/records?recordId=67867467&collectionId=6224&tid=&pid=&queryId=b007ccd3-08d9-4769-93ed-e5a773c17740&_phsrc=oLh50&_phstart=successSource





Other Works Cited

- Green, E. (1970). *Ely: Too Black, too White*. Charleston, S.C: Home House Press.
- Hickerson, F. (1937, December 22). *Frank Hickerson's Suggestions On How to Get Moseley Farm at Auction*. "Foreclosure: Rufus Moseley" folder, Leases and Deeds, 1828-1880, Box 33, Superintendent of Leases Collection, University Archives.
https://www.williscourses.net/_files/ugd/f50c73_440c47e1d07b4557bff0820b730bae7f.pdf
- Makris, P. S. (1997). *The Other Side of Sewanee*.
- Moseley, W. (1934, January 18). *Wilfred Moseley to University Treasurer*. Foreclosure: Rufus Moseley folder, Leases and Deeds, 1828-1880, Box 33, Superintendent of Leases Collection, University Archives.
https://www.williscourses.net/_files/ugd/f50c73_56fe36370db64912a88b256c59721540.pdf
- Finney, B. (1931, January 24). *Vice-Chancellor Finney Justifies Loan to Rufus Moseley and Foreclosure on his Property*. "Foreclosure: Rufus Moseley" folder, Leases and Deeds, 1828-1880, Box 33, Superintendent of Leases Collection, University Archives.
https://www.williscourses.net/_files/ugd/f50c73_c1220c1b660148f287fde31b766eb484.pdf

