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Federal Rules of Civil Procedure Merge Equity and Common Law

September 16, 1938

In 1938, pursuant to its authority under the Rules Enabling Act of 1934, the Supreme Court enacted uniform rules of procedure for the federal courts. Among the changes wrought by the rules was the elimination the federal courts' separate jurisdiction over suits in equity (a centuries-old system of English jurisprudence in which judges based decisions on general principles of fairness in situations where rigid application of common-law rules would have brought about injustice). Under the new rules, suits in equity and suits at common law were grouped together under the term “civil action.”

See also:

Federal Rules of Civil Procedure [/history/courts/rules-federal-rules-civil-procedure]

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