

is explained by the fact that it is a photocopy, recently made, of original rent rolls in the possession of the Maryland Historical Society. Owing partly to the private aspect of rent rolls and debt books and partly to the custom of making duplicate copies of them, a considerable number of these are to be found in private collections, particularly the Calvert Papers.

As for the rest of the series, the year 1734 seems to mark a definite point. All entries previous to 1734 are noted in Eastern Shore rent rolls as being in the "Old Rent Roll" and subsequent additional rent rolls are regularly entered each year thereafter. All the entries in the "Old Rent Roll" appear to have been copied at one time, i.e., there is no complete rent roll for an earlier date such as the 1659 one in Liber 0. There *were* other original rent rolls previous to 1734, because some are extant in private collections. The fact that they, like the original of Liber 0, do not exist in such form in the *Rent Roll* series in the Land Office today is not too difficult to explain. It has already been noted that during the controversy over land records while Maryland was a royal colony it was decided that whereas patents, warrants, certificates, etc. were a matter of public concern and therefore to be kept by the royal government and open to the public, rent rolls were the private business of the Proprietor. As such then, rent rolls were kept by the Proprietor's agent and did not become public records in the sense that patents, etc. recorded at that time did. A second fact to be taken into account is that between 1717 and 1733 a law provided for payment of a tobacco tax on every hogshead of tobacco shipped out of the province to take the place of payment of quit rents. It is not strange that during this period, as Mereness points out, the rent rolls fell into confusion by disuse.⁶¹ A third consideration, and a most likely one it seems to me, is that the rent rolls as the Land Office has them (with the exception of Liber 0) were compiled in 1733 and thereafter, but were based on earlier rent rolls then in existence. The year 1733 marked the end of the system of paying tobacco tax in lieu of quit rents and with the re-establishment of the quit rent system the proprietor took steps to improve the rent collection system. What more logical than the compiling of fresh new rent rolls to resume the system with, especially if recent ones had been incomplete and ill-kept?

⁶¹ Mereness, p. 65.