

From the beginning the Court of Common Pleas has had exclusive jurisdiction over insolvency proceedings; the Clerk has had the authority to issue marriage and other licenses required by law.

2. SUPERIOR COURT

The Constitution of 1851 gave this court civil jurisdiction over all suits where the debt or damage claimed exceeded the sum of five hundred dollars. Since 1867, the Superior Court has had concurrent jurisdiction in civil cases with the Court of Common Pleas and the Baltimore City Court. Originally, the Superior Court also had jurisdiction as a court of equity, but this was abrogated by the Constitution of 1867.

The Constitution of 1851 made the Clerk of the Superior Court responsible for receiving and recording "all deeds, conveyances and other papers which are required by law to be recorded. . . ." He was also charged with custody of the records formerly belonging to the Clerk of the Baltimore County Court which had remained at the Courthouse in Baltimore City.

3. CRIMINAL COURT

This court has had exclusive jurisdiction in all criminal cases since its creation in 1851.

4. CIRCUIT COURT

This court was established by Chapter 122 of the Acts of 1853. It had concurrent jurisdiction in equity cases with the Superior Court until 1867, when it acquired exclusive jurisdiction for about twenty years. In 1888, an additional equity court, Circuit Court No. 2, was established and the two courts have shared jurisdiction in equity cases ever since.

5. CIRCUIT COURT No. 2.

This court was established by Chapter 194 of the Acts of 1888 and was assigned the same jurisdiction as the Circuit Court. Since 1943, Circuit Court No. 2 has also had jurisdiction in juvenile causes.

6. BALTIMORE CITY COURT

This court was created by the Constitution of 1867 and assigned concurrent civil jurisdiction with the Court of Common Pleas and the Superior Court. It has exclusive jurisdiction in cases of appeal from judgments of justices of the peace or cases of appeal arising from the ordinances of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore.

Administrative Responsibilities of County Court

During the colonial period, the county court, in addition to its judicial functions, also served as the executive body of the county. As such, one of its chief responsibilities was laying the county levy. This meant examining and passing upon the claims of public creditors and other expenses of the county, determining the total amount needed to defray these charges and establishing the tax rate to be assessed against county taxpayers in order to raise the necessary funds. In similar fashion, the General Assembly laid the public levy, which covered the expenses of the Assembly and other charges against the provincial government. The county levy and the public levy were collected at the same time by the sheriff of each county, for which he was allowed a commission of ten percent.

The county court appointed constables, road supervisors, keepers of standards of weights and measures, and other minor officers. After 1661, the court nominated three persons from whom the Governor selected the county sheriff.