

1678, however, they were cut to half their previous value. They were further reduced by the fee act of 1719 and by the Inspection Law of 1747. Certain additional fees, including one for the drawing of ordinary licenses, were established by law as occasion arose. In addition to his fees each clerk received a commission for collecting alienation fines and paying them to His Lordship's Receiver General.

The county clerk paid his own assistants but was probably allowed in the county levy for his paper, books, and writing materials. A further expense was the purchase of his appointment from the Secretary and, at least after 1692, the payment to that officer annually of a tenth of his gross revenue.²⁹

Despite these expenses, and a progressive reduction of fees, this office became steadily more valuable as the population increased. However, as the value of each clerkship depended on the number of law suits and land transfers in that county, some of them became more profitable than others. Thus in the two first settled counties, St. Mary's and Calvert, the clerkships declined in value after all land had been taken up. Meantime those offices in the northern counties, which were later settled, had become the more lucrative.³⁰

The average value of a county clerk's office in 1745 was about £ 115 sterling a year. However, those of St. Mary's and Calvert Counties brought in only about £ 80 each, while that of Baltimore was worth £ 250 sterling. The clerkship of Frederick County, organized in 1748, must have brought in yet more.³¹ The county

²⁹ These obligations of the county clerks are treated in more detail in our chapter on the two Secretaries.

³⁰ On conditions affecting the value of a county clerkship see Daniel Dulany, "The Case of Mr. Dennis Dulany," 1760 (Dulany Papers). According to Dulany, Baltimore, Frederick, and Cecil Counties offered the most valuable clerkships. Those of St. Mary's and Calvert Counties were the least valuable, and the others were about alike.

³¹ An estimate of about 1745 (see note 15 above) values the county clerkships at £ 115 each "but more in peace time," and Gov. Sharpe, in his report to the Board of Trade, Dec. 21, 1761, rates them conservatively at £ 80 to £ 200 sterling (*Archives*, XXXII, 27). See also the dispute between Secretary Lawrence and Cleborne Lomax, 1692, over the value of the Charles County clerkship (*ibid.*, VIII, 401-03). The sanguine Henry Callister may have overvalued the Dorchester County office in 1746 when he rated it at 50,000 pounds of tobacco, about £ 210 sterling (Callister Papers, I, 58). The income of the Baltimore County office, as here quoted, is derived from the fee book of John Beale Bordley, clerk of that county, for the years 1759 through 1761 (Bordley Papers).