

tus, that the project was originally not my own. I had, indeed, been accustomed to hear of the obscurity of the rules of the land office: I had heard that the late chancellor, Mr. Hanson, had been solicited to prepare a publication on this subject: Upon being appointed to the land office, I was naturally led to enquire for some written directions applicable to the cases that came before me, and was then informed that there was no collection of rules or precedents in the office, but that the business was regulated by laws and established usages, and was to be learned by reading and practice. On my making a visit to Baltimore a few days after my appointment, this design was suggested to me by an experienced member of the bar, who told me that such a publication had *long been required*; that it was *left for me*, and that I *must undertake it*. On my return, I found other gentlemen prepared to offer the same thing to my consideration. I was startled at the difficulty of such an undertaking; but, considering that the thing was to be done at leisure, that it was not becoming or reputable for me to learn the business of my office by rote, without knowing the foundation and reason of the matters to be transacted, and that there was no way to avoid this but by searching into the origin of the system, and tracing things from their causes and beginnings, I resolved, at least, to enter upon such a research, and to be regulated, as to the rest, by the degree of success which might attend this first design. In a few months I became satisfied of the practicability of combining with my own instruction the plan which had been suggested to me, and began to make extracts of what I observed in the records. I communicated my intention to the chancellor, who confirmed what had been said relative to himself, and seemed to regret that circumstances had not permitted him to execute the design, but cheerfully promised me all the assistance in his power. The work had not advanced, at the time of his death, to that point at which I had proposed to submit it to his inspection. This is the history of the present undertaking; and, if it does not exempt me from the charge of a considerable degree of confidence, in beginning to write upon a subject which I did not then thoroughly understand, (if I may be said now to understand it) it will at least shew that this confidence was excited by others, and pushed into action by laudable considerations; in fine, that I have not unasked obtruded myself upon the public.

In regard to the difficulties that have attended this undertaking, and which have so long protracted its accomplishment, I have to observe that, when my design was announced to the public, I was but little aware of the extent of the enquiry which it involved. I had collected all the matter to be found in the records of the land office, and there, with exception of a few documents in the office of the late general court, I had supposed that my research was to end. After having actually begun to prepare my compilation for the press, I was led by accident to inspect the records of the council room, and soon found that it was principally from them that the history of the provincial land office was to be collected. The book from which the erection of the land council, and many other important matters relative to the ancient practice, have been obtained was found lying, as an article of mere lumber, in the chancery office. I examined these records page by page, and spent several months in extracting and digesting the matter which they contained. My work, which had been commenced on imperfect information, was, of necessity, to be new modelled, and the loss of some months more, comprising two sessions of assembly, during which the necessary attention to the duties of my office obliged me lay aside this undertaking, may easily account for the time that has been spent in completing it. In short, at every period I found something new to engage my attention, and it was with difficulty that I put a stop, at length, to my enquiries, and prepared to offer the fruit of them to the public.

Concerning the manner in which this investigation has been conducted have to say that I have adopted that kind of arrangement which appear-