

not to be had but at a great charge and difficult to get at any cost, and then but in [a writ]ten hand. . . .

[T]he Justices perfect knowledge of the Laws will be a great means to facilitate the tryal of every such cause, and prevent the turning over books to find out the laws, when they shall know at first mentioning what the law is and how it stands related to other laws; and be able to direct the tryal by their own knowledge, and distinguish on the different arguments of each Party which will be a happyness no less to themselves then the suitors.⁴

This lack of an accessible collection of laws may be one reason why so little resort was had to the many popular and remedial actions provided by the statutes of the province.

Most of the ranking lawyers in the province appear to have been quite familiar with the better-known acts of Parliament. While little direct evidence appears in the *Liber* with respect to the extension of various acts of Parliament to the province (some of the presentments are annoyingly ambiguous), the *Liber* appears to confirm a number of the conclusions reached by Kilty in his authoritative treatise on the subject.

Studies in depth of any legal institution tend to culminate in intellectual myopia. Desiring to avoid such end, we submit the instant study as one endeavor to describe and evaluate the workings of a so-called "inferior court" in an important American colony during the latter part of the seventeenth century. In our opinion the county courts, such as that of Prince Georges County, played a more significant role in the judicial system of the province than generally believed. The pages of the *Liber*, when placed in perspective, fully support this conclusion.

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4. Dodd, *Maryland Compiled Laws of 1700*, 5 MHM 187-88 (1910). See also Wroth, *A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland, 1686-1776*, 22-26, 163.