

As the members of our Records Management staff survey the records of various State and county agencies for the purpose of preparing retention schedules, they often find records of archival value which are no longer needed in the current operations of the office. These records are recommended for transfer to the Hall of Records. Last year, for example, two volumes of Judgments dating in the Seventeenth Century were discovered in the basement of the Talbot County Courthouse. Similar surveys account for the miscellaneous items received from the Register of Wills and the County Commissioners of Talbot County. Our Records Management staff members have been especially instructed to look for the proceedings of the Levy Court and County Commissioners when they are in the counties. Last year they brought in the proceedings for Somerset County. The absence of the Levy Court proceedings before 1827 is not too surprising, but to discover that several volumes of the Commissioner's proceedings, especially those dating in the Twentieth Century, are missing is disappointing to say the least.

Among the numerous items transferred from the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Somerset County are 32 volumes of so-called "Judicial Records" extending our holdings of this series from 1665 to 1848. Although the title never varies, this unique series undergoes a complete metamorphosis. The Seventeenth Century volumes are typical of the court proceedings of any Maryland county of that period. Early in the Eighteenth Century, land commissions begin to appear in the record. This is not unique although in most counties land commissions were recorded in separate volumes. In 1818 certain chancery records relating to ownership of land began to be entered in this series. From 1827 to 1848, the Judicial Records contain only land commissions and those judgments and chancery records that relate to land titles.

Included in the same transfer were the records of Washington Academy which originated in 1767 as Somerset Academy. In 1779, it was incorporated by act of assembly under the name of Washington Academy. It drew its students and also the members of its board of trustees from Delaware and Virginia as well as from Maryland. In 1872, it was integrated into the public school system of Somerset County and eventually lost its independent status and identity.

For all practical purposes we have now acquired all of the Protestant Episcopal church records of the Diocese of Easton. It may well be, however, that an occasional volume will turn up which has escaped our attention and from time to time we shall be microfilming some of the current records.

In all, records were acquired from twenty-two separate parishes or churches. Among them were the records of three of the original thirty parishes created in 1694 under the act establishing the Church of England in Maryland. These are North Sassafras Parish in Cecil County, Shrewsbury Parish in Kent County and Somerset Parish in Somerset County. Each of these parishes has suffered some losses in its records, but, fortunately, most of them have been preserved. We also acquired the records of Trinity Parish in Cecil