

ARCHIVAL HIGHLIGHTS OVER THE YEAR

One of the goals of the Archivist during the past year has been the return of obvious Maryland archives which have somehow strayed from the custody of the State over the years. A good many of these are contained in the J. Thomas Scharf Collection now in the custody of the Maryland Historical Society. Some of these, for example, are the early rent rolls, early tax lists, the statewide assessment of 1783, etc. The Archivist requested consideration of the return of these archives of the State by the Director of the Society, who in turn offered to take the matter up with the Council of the Society. That is where the matter is at present.

The whole question of the dispersal of Maryland archives will have to be considered. Only recently it was called to the Archivist's attention that a large collection of Frederick County original court records of the eighteenth century was offered for sale by a Baltimore dealer. When I advised the Clerk of the Court of Frederick County of the facts in the case, he immediately took steps to repossess the records. He asked the Court for a Writ of Replevin which was granted and with the cooperation of the Sheriff of Baltimore County, the records were returned. Some of them are now in the Frederick County Courthouse and others at the Hall of Records. They await the defendant's answer at a hearing in court which has not yet been scheduled.

To replevy strayed records is a harsh method indeed for effecting their return, but it has been used by other states. The Hall of Records has avoided it, but perhaps now it should be used. Taking into consideration the thirty-five years we devoted to the recovery of records from the Library of Congress, it may be preferable method.

From time to time, we have removed from the various recesses of the Frederick County Courthouse attic, records of the Clerk fo the Circuit Court and Register of Wills. Last year we obtained permission to remove the early records of the County Commissioners. More than two hundred volumes were transferred. The minutes of the County Commissioners and their predecessor, the Levy Court, date from 1795 to 1891, but there are several extensive gaps. The Assessment Books, which are often useful in tracing land titles or the history of old houses, cover the period 1798-1896. Other records of interest are the Levy Lists, which record county expenditures, the Road Records and the Almshouse Minutes.

Our explorations further produced a number of items which supplemented our holdings of the records of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, notably three Judgment Records, a number of Minute Books and Dockets and a volume containing records of Certificates to Free Negroes.

Since 1947, when Governor Herbert R. O'Connor agreed to transfer the papers of his administration to our custody after he left office, such transfers have been made routinely. However, the sudden emergence of former Governor Spiro T. Agnew as a figure of national prominence, made the transfer