

Soon after the State Constitution was adopted in 1776, the Assembly provided that foreigners could become naturalized by going before the Governor and Council, the General Court or any of its judges or any county court and taking the prescribed oath (Chapter 6, Acts of July 1779).

Upon the adoption of the Federal Constitution, the regulation of naturalization procedures became a responsibility of the National Government. However, Congress found it convenient to employ the local courts as its agents in handling such matters and by an Act of 1790 bestowed the power of naturalization upon any common law court of record. In Maryland, naturalization proceedings were for the most part handled by the circuit courts and, after 1851, by any of the Baltimore City Courts. They were usually recorded among the minutes of the courts, although, in some instances, special records were kept.

In 1906, naturalization procedures were reorganized by federal law and placed under the Division of Naturalization of the Department of Commerce and Labor. In the counties, the circuit courts continued to act as agents for the federal government, although in recent years there has been a tendency to concentrate this activity in the larger counties. In Baltimore City jurisdiction over naturalization was assigned exclusively to the Court of Common Pleas and the records previously created by the other city courts turned over to it. Since about 1930, naturalization has come under the control of the Federal District Court of Baltimore City and it is expected that the records now in the custody of the Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas will eventually be claimed by the District Court.

The records created under the Act of 1906 were kept in special books, as follows:

*DECLARATION OF INTENTION (RECORD OF DECLARATION OF INTENTION)*

Record of aliens who have declared their intention of becoming citizens of the United States.

*PETITION AND RECORD (PETITIONS FOR CITIZENSHIP, PETITION FOR NATURALIZATION)*

Full record of proceedings in the naturalization of aliens.

*CERTIFICATES OF NATURALIZATION*

Stubs of certificates issued to aliens who have been naturalized.

*CORPORATION RECORDS (CORPORATIONS, RECORD OF INCORPORATIONS, CHARTERS)*

Record of charters, amendments and other papers relating to the incorporation of religious, social and business organizations. The earliest general incorporation procedures applied to religious organizations only (Chapter 111, Acts of 1802). From time to time similar procedures were established for other types of organizations. In most counties, the early incorporations were entered in the Land Records or Chattel Records, but by 1870 practically all counties had separate corporation records.

*MARRIAGE LICENSES (MARRIAGE RECORDS, RECORD OF MARRIAGE LICENSES)*

Originally, a record of marriage licenses issued by the clerk of the county court under the provisions of Chapter 12 of the Acts of February 1777. The information given includes the date the license was issued, the names of the male and female and occasionally the name