

is proposed to publish in two volumes what remains of the court records of these four counties down to about 1675, as part of what hereafter will be known as the Court Series of the Archives. Their value to local historians and to students of the early history of Maryland jurisprudence will be great. The handwriting, often scarcely legible, and the bad condition of much of the paper will make their preparation for the press a matter of great difficulty.

The only existing record of a manorial court that has been preserved is that of the Court Leet and Court Baron of Saint Clement's Manor, St. Mary's County, for 1652-1672, printed in 1883, in J. Hemsley Johnson's *Old Maryland Manors*.

Only passing reference need be made to the Court of Admiralty. Although not organized as a separate court until 1684, its judges seem thereafter to have been selected from the bench of the Provincial Court, and the relatively few references to its meetings at this period are to be found recorded in the proceedings of the Provincial Court. A few such cases will be found in this volume.

Nor need we discuss in much detail the history of the courts having jurisdiction in testamentary matters, as it is not proposed by the Committee to publish the testamentary records. Down to 1673 the Provincial Court and the county courts had jurisdiction in all such matters, and as late as 1658 the records of wills probated, and of administration accounts and inventories filed, are to be found scattered throughout the proceedings of the Provincial Court already published. Most, but not all, of the wills preserved down to 1658 are also to be found copied in old Will Book, number I, of the Prerogative Court records. This court was established in 1673. The record of wills probated, as well as of accounts and inventories filed in Maryland, prior to the year 1657, is fragmentary and no more complete than is the general record of the proceedings of the Provincial Court to this date. Beginning with the year 1657, however, the Provincial Court seems to have begun to keep a separate series of records, usually known as the "Testamentary Proceedings" for its routine testamentary work, which was under the immediate supervision of the Secretary of the Province. In addition to this series, there were also kept special books for recording wills. In 1673 the administration of all matters testamentary was taken out of the Provincial Court and placed in the hands of the newly created Prerogative Court, presided over by a Commissary General having similar broad powers in testamentary cases to those of the Chancellor in equity cases. The transition from Provincial Court to Prerogative Court control in 1673 was a smooth one, and the records were kept as before, except that inventories and accounts were no longer recorded in the books known as the Testamentary Proceedings, separate books being thereafter provided for them. As it was obligatory upon the clerks of the several county courts, and after the establishment of the Prerogative Court in 1673, upon the deputy-commissaries in the various counties, to furnish the central court of the Province having jurisdiction in such matters with copies of all testamentary records, and as this seems to have been faithfully done, Maryland, notwithstanding the destruction of several county court houses by fire, has in the records of this court a practically complete file of testamentary proceedings, wills, inventories, and accounts from