

Have by and with the advice of our Dear Brother &c. and according to the tenor of our Letters, under our hand and seal bearing date at Portsmouth in the realm of England 8th August 1636 and enrolled by our Secretary of our said Province granted enfeoffed &c. unto the said William Britton, all that neck of land lying in Potomack river &c. (ut supra in survey) To Have and To Hold &c. to the said William Britton and his heirs &c. to be holden of our Mannor of Little Britain Yielding therefore at our usual receipt at St. Maries fifteen shillings in money sterling or one barrell and a half of good corn, &c. Given &c. this tenth of July 1640."

LIBER No. 1, folio 68.

In the foregoing extracts may be perceived the origin of the Land Office establishment, and the rudiments of those forms which now prevail in public grants of land. It is true that land affairs were, at this period, jumbled in the then only existing office of record with public matters of every description, and even with private contracts and transactions; but the process in the former still consisted essentially of those particulars which form it now; namely, 1st, a public officer, authorised under certain regulations and restrictions to issue Warrants of survey for vacant land; 2nd, a claim, order, or other legal cause shewn to that officer for the issue of such Warrants, consisting then of *rights*, general or special, substantiated in the forms required, and recognized by their admission on record; answering in their effect to the present orders or titlings of the Treasurer, which inform the Register that the parties presenting them have done what is requisite to entitle them to Warrant; 3rd, the Warrant itself; being an authoritative precept to another officer, directing him to lay out and survey for the party therein named a certain quantity of land, and to return a Certificate of his survey; 4th, the Certificate so returned; and 5th, the Grant or Patent; to which may be added the attendant proceedings of assignments, petitions, caveats, trials, and decisions; all, with some changes in point of form—still in use; with various other matters gradually disused when land transactions ceased to be, as they then were, the main business of the Country. Having thus endeavoured to shew, in those early proceedings, the *origin* of that establishment the history, law, and practice of which form the professed subject of this work, I shall proceed to develop the progress of the system, by noticing such positive rules as were from time to time prescribed for its regulation and improvement; by selecting the most remarkable incidents,