

COMMISSIONER OF THE LAND OFFICE

J. Lee Ball, Commissioner, 1951

Arthur Trader, Administrative Assistant

Hall of Records, Annapolis

Telephone: Annapolis 3451

The Commissioner of the Land Office is appointed by the Governor, with the consent of the Senate, to hold office during the term of the Governor (Const. 1867, Art. VII, sec. 14). The Land Office keeps records pertaining to boundaries of land, including records of all warrants, certificates and patents for land from the settlement of the Province of Maryland in 1634, records of deeds, or abstracts of same, from 1786 to the present time, and abstracts of mortgages and releases from 1900 to the present time. Every clerk, after he records any deed, mortgage, release of mortgage or lease of real estate must make or have made a 35 mm. microfilm copy of every such record and transmit it to the Commissioner of the Land Office at the end of each year (Acts 1949, Ch. 504). The Commission hears and determines all disputes which may arise concerning the validity of surveys. The Land Office is now engaged in making, filing, and recording plats for subdivisions of land; copies of such plats are sent to the Supervisors of Assessments upon request. All plats that have been filed with the Clerks of Courts before June 1, 1945, are being microfilmed by the Land Office (Code 1947 Supp., Art. 17, secs. 72C, 72D).

All land now included in the limits of the State of Maryland was granted to Cecil, Lord Baltimore, in 1632. In 1680, there was established a Land Office, and four years later "The Land Council". This body was authorized to hear and determine all matters relating to land. Four years later when Maryland became a crown colony, the Land Office was closed. In 1715, after a long contest with the Governor and Council, the Secretary and the Assembly, the Lord Proprietor emerged with his rights restored, and the Land Office was reopened. After the Revolution, the State assumed the control of the Land Office (Act of Assembly of April Sess. 1777). From 1781 until 1841, there was a Land Office for the Western Shore and another for the Eastern Shore. The Constitution of 1851 created the office of the Commissioner of the Land Office.

Expenditures, 1949	\$27,116.55
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Appropriation, 1950	30,519.00
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Staff: 7