

laid upon their respective offices for the public uses by act of Assembly. To some extent the clerk of the county acted as an administrative arm of the Provincial Court, being charged with posting at the court-house or some other public place the dockets of causes triable at the next Provincial Court.<sup>41</sup>

*Clerk of the Indictments*

At the May 1696 court William Bladen was sworn clerk of the indictments. At the June court a commission was entered from George Plater, attorney general of the province, dated June 17, 1696, constituting Bladen clerk of the peace, *viz.*, clerk of the indictments.<sup>42</sup> The oath to be administered the clerk of the indictments, drawn up by William Dent, solicitor general, at the order of the Governor and Council in October, 1695, and presumably taken by Bladen, read as follows:

You shall well and truly Execute and perform the Office of his Majesties Clerk of the Indictments for prosecutor of his Majesties pleas in \_\_\_\_\_ County Court according to the jurisdiction of the Court. You shall not decrease or lessen his Majesties Dues, by any Fines, Forfeitures or other legall means accruing, but to the Utmost of your skill and power do his Majesties service therein. You shall not be of Councill or give Councill with any against his Majesty or whereby his Dues or profits may be lessened or diminished, but in all things according to the best of your skill and power well and truly serve his said Majesty in the said Office while you shall continue therein, and to see all Criminalls duly prosecuted. So help you God.<sup>43</sup>

Bladen continued as clerk of the indictments until the June 1698 court when the justices appointed William Stone to the office during pleasure. Then at the January 1698/9 court Joshua Cecil was admitted to office upon presentation of a commission from the Attorney General, William Dent, appointing him clerk of indictments and "Prosecutor of his Majestyes Pleas actions Suites and demands of what Nature or Kindesoever Ariseing within the Said County and Cognizable by the Justices of the Said County Court." Cecil continued as clerk of the indictments under Governor Blakiston.<sup>44</sup>

Neither the *Liber* nor the Council records indicate the degree of supervision exercised by the attorney general over the various clerks of the indictments. In October 1698 and July 1699 there are references in the Council minutes to some instructions which the attorney general intended to give to the several clerks of the indictments and which were "well aproved", but we have seen no copy of any such instructions, although presented to the House upon the later occasion.<sup>45</sup> That the office of clerk of the indictments was not considered lucrative appears from the fact that the annual payment for the public use required by law for such office holders was only 200 pounds of tobacco.<sup>46</sup>

*Minor Court Personnel*

Two minor court officials were the crier and the drummer, only the former being recognized by law as an officer of the court. John Joyce was crier for most

41. 20 *id.* 288 (*cf.* 20 *id.* 330); 23 *id.* 110; 20 *id.* 524; 23 *id.* 205; 25 *id.* 30; 38 *id.* 57.

42. *Infra* 7, 14.

43. 20 *MA* 310.

44. *Infra* 347, 435, 522. In cases in which the grand jury found a true bill the clerk of the indictments received 200 pounds of tobacco of the criminal. 38 *MA* 113; 22 *id.* 502. Why Bladen ceased to be clerk of the indictments is not apparent. In 1698/9 Nicholson characterized him to Blakiston as very loyal to his Majesty and ready in his duty. 25 *id.* 44.

45. 25 *id.* 20; 22 *id.* 346, 440.

46. 38 *id.* 50.