

the Land Office causing a great stir again.<sup>52</sup> So, although rent rolls and debt books came more and more to be classified among the Proprietor's revenue records—in 1760 the Proprietor wrote that he "thinks it proper that the Rent Roll Keepers place should belong to the Office of the Receivers General"<sup>53</sup>—the connection between the revenue system and operations of the Land Office was nevertheless so close as to make it almost impossible to separate the two completely from each other. Thus it seems that while it is safe to call rent rolls and debt books private in contrast to patents and warrants it is not permissible to exclude them as non-Land Office records.

The rent rolls and debt books are the books in which the Lord Proprietor kept track of the rents due him. Each piece of land granted to a person was subject to a yearly rent according to the terms in the patent. The original owner might die and his son inherit; in such a case the son then paid the rent. If a man sold his land the new owner was then to pay the rent. In any case the Lord Proprietor was to continue receiving his annual rent on every tract of land granted. A rent roll consists of entries of each tract of land patented plus the name of the person for whom it was originally surveyed, the present owner and the acreage and rent. Alienations, or subsequent sales and leases of the piece of land, are also included. A debt book consists of a list of persons owning land with the names and rents of each tract he owns all listed in one place under his name. In other words debt-book entries are by the name of the owner whereas rent-roll entries are by the name of tracts of land. They plainly represent a more efficient method of collecting rents—a corollary and later refinement of rent rolls. Since debt books do not appear until a hundred years after the rent rolls and are more or less just a modification of them, this series will necessarily receive subordinate treatment. Rent rolls and debt books as we have them are always made out by counties but it is to be assumed that in the very earliest days a common rent roll was kept for all tracts of land.

The first rent roll of the series dates from the year 1659 but, as has just been suggested, there were probably earlier ones in one form or another. Keeping wills, patents and court proceedings all in the same volume was all very well, but to depend on such a

<sup>52</sup> *Lower House Journal*, November 22, 1771; Mereness, pp. 71-75.

<sup>53</sup> *Arch. Md.*, IX, 404.