

work done at the Hall of Records would be that the records would never pass from the custody of the State and would at all times benefit from the protective measures in force here.

Index to the Laws

One of the great obstacles to historical research in Maryland is the lack of a comprehensive general index to the Acts of the Assembly. It is a handicap especially in the earlier period in genealogy because of the great number of private laws which were passed providing for divorces, denization, change of name, adoption and relief. Charters which were formerly granted by the Assembly are as good as lost now, if the exact year in which they were granted cannot be provided otherwise. It is almost impossible to tell what the law about any subject was at any given time, because who can be sure of having found all the amendments without a subject index?

Some years ago the Legislative Librarian, Dr. Horace E. Flack, began a card index of Maryland laws starting with 1800. Unfortunately, this work was not completed but it is usable in its present form for the years which it covers. The Laws through the middle of the eighteenth century have been printed in the *Maryland Archives*, but for these years the indexes for all the volumes must be searched and the earlier indexes are far from being as reliable as those for the later period. The engrossed Acts are failing altogether before 1732, and they are incomplete before the period of the Revolution. They were never indexed. The Recorded Laws are almost complete from the beginning, but these volumes have no indexes either. The early printed volumes are as rare as incunabula, and where they exist they are poorly indexed. The early compilations are also badly indexed and often slight the local and private laws. No more useful project could be imagined than a subject and name index to all the laws. It would not be easy to do and it would be costly, but it would be well worth the effort and price. Several states have such indexes; some others, including North Carolina, are making plans to start similar projects in the near future. This is of course, not strictly an archival task, and it might well be that it should be directed by the Attorney General or a legislative committee, but on the other hand the Hall of Records Commission might feel that no other office of the State government is equipped so well for an historical task of such magnitude.