

not reside within the state or county in which the record office is located. Again, some depositories do not have funds for correspondence and will not answer an inquiry unless a stamped envelope or post card is enclosed. Finally—and this is the shabbiest treatment of all—there appears to be, in some quarters, an accepted but unofficial fee without which no record can be found.

Of the inquiries received at the Hall of Records there are, of course, many which we cannot answer, either because the records do not exist at all or because they are not in our custody. In the first case we are careful to point out that the record was never kept, as, for example, for colonial immigrants to Maryland, or that they were kept but have been lost, as in the case of the records of Calvert and St. Mary's Counties, which were destroyed in courthouse fires. In the second case—that is, records not in our custody—we are careful to point out that while Maryland recorded its vital statistics in the colonial period they are to be found in Church rather than in State records. If the information wanted has been the subject of a printed work, we will refer the inquirer to this work. This service requires, in addition to a knowledge of our own records, a study of the general record history of the State, of printed materials relating to these records, and a knowledge of the Maryland holdings in other depositories of this State, of the great agencies of the Federal Government, and of certain of the larger depositories throughout the country, such as the Huntington Library, the Library of the City of New York, and the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina. The objection that this kind of service is extravagant is not valid: if not the professional archivist, who should know what the record holdings of this country are?

But if the records are available at the Hall of Records, we are faced with our most difficult problems. In the first place, how much time should we give to the inquiry of an individual? If he comes in person, there is no problem; but assume that he writes. He may ask whether we have the will of a certain George Brown. In that case we examine our will indexes, and we normally will give him the information given on the index card: the exact