

clerk frequently made his office a sinecure by employing a deputy who did all the work for a third or a half of the profits.³²

As with the provincial clerkships, turnover was rapid in the earlier proprietary period, and long tenure, indeed life tenure, became the rule thereafter. Kent County, for instance, had seventeen clerks in the forty-one years prior to 1695 and only five in the remaining eighty-one years of the colonial period. One of these, Captain James Smith, served a record fifty-three years. Thomas Hayward, Jr., Clerk of Somerset County, was in office forty-four years and John Leeds of Talbot County thirty-nine years. Some fourteen other county clerks served for two decades or longer. In most counties the successive clerks were nearly related, and there are eight cases of immediate succession from father to son.

³² For instance in 1760 three Justices of the Provincial Court were county clerks who served by deputy (John Brice, Col. Richard Tilghman, and John Darnall). Such an arrangement, Gov. Sharpe wrote, was entirely improper; but he knew of no way to reward the justices for their trouble except by giving them other offices (Horatio Sharpe to Cecilius Calvert, July 7, 1760, *Archives*, IX, 432.)