

# Pro Libris

Summer 2008 *The Newsletter of the Baltimore County Circuit Court Law Library*

vol. 6 no. 2

## Direct From The Director

Summer, my favorite time of the year is here. The days are filled with fun and sun. Summer is also when the library does an inventory of all library items. Every two years, the Library Staff checks that each and every book, CD, Audiotape, Video, Microfiche/Microfilm item that is listed in our catalog is on the shelf. Missing and/or out-dated items are then replaced as needed throughout the year. If you have any title or topic area suggestions for the library, please share them with Scott, Errin, or myself. This is the court's library and we want to carry those items most needed by the court.

In June, I attended a meeting of the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors in Prince George's County. Among the many topics we discussed were ways to promote our organizations and our libraries to judges, attorneys, and the public; working with Pro Se patrons in the library and the resources that are available to them and to us; the type of research questions we get on a typical day in the library; and special collections each library holds.

Baltimore County Circuit Court Law Library is one of only five libraries in Maryland that has the Legislative History Bill Files in its collection. (The State Law Library, University of Baltimore Law Library, University of Maryland Law Library and Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library are the other libraries that carry them.) Attorneys, court staff, and judges heavily use these bills in our library. We are proud to be able to supply this service/special collection to our community.

If you have any suggestions, please feel free to call us (410-887-3086) or email me (slevasseur@baltimorecountymd.gov). We look forward to your input for making this library a premiere research institution in Baltimore County.

## Loving: Maryland's Legal History

*Scott H. Stevens*

Mildred Loving passed away this year at age 68. She and her late husband Richard are often overlooked in the struggle for racial freedom and equal rights. Virginia residents, Richard and Mildred married in June 1958 in Washington, DC. Mr. Loving was white and Mrs. Loving nee Jeter was African-American and by some accounts part Rappahannock & Cherokee. At the time, Virginia did not allow white people and black people to marry. While they could marry in DC, they were arrested when they returned to their Virginia home as husband and wife. Not only was interracial marriage a crime, so was crossing state lines solely to get married and then returning home to Virginia. They were sentenced to jail time unless they left Virginia which they did. But they did not give up the dream of returning to their home.

After many years of fighting to make their marriage legally recognized by Virginia, their case finally made it to the Supreme Court in 1967 (87 S.Ct. 1817 Loving v. Virginia). Many Amici Curiae were filed on their behalf by interested parties including the Japanese American Citizens League. Various Catholic Bishops also filed briefs including Lawrence Cardinal Shehan, Baltimore's Archbishop at the time. (1967 WL 93613) This brief claimed that the miscegenation laws defied freedom of religion and denied the right to beget children and were therefore unconstitutional.

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## New Pro Se Hours

As of July 7, 2008 the Pro Se Family Law Clinic started their new hours. The only change was to the Wed. hours. They will be available in the morning instead of the evening. The full schedule is:

Monday: 9:00am - 2:00pm  
Tuesday: 2:00pm - 7:00pm  
Wednesday: 9:00am - 2:00pm  
Thursday: 2:00pm - 7:00pm  
Friday: 9:00am - 2:00pm

### CLOSED:

- 1) The week after Easter
- 2) July 4<sup>th</sup> week
- 3) Thanksgiving week
- 4) The week between Christmas & New Year's Day.

## New Library Hours

As of January 2, 2008 the Law Library's regular operating hours are:

Mon - Thurs: 8:30am - 7:00pm  
Friday: 8:30am - 5:00pm  
Saturday: 9:00am - 4:00pm  
Sunday: CLOSED

## Session Roundup

*Scott H. Stevens*

Surprisingly, none of the bills that seemed hot button issues the last time this newsletter went to press passed. Of those bills we took a sneak peek at, only SB516 came close to becoming law. This was one of two bills that denied parental rights of fathers who beget children via rape. The Senate bill did indeed pass, but the corresponding House bill 500 did not. No word yet if it will be reintroduced in the next session, since it came so close to passing.

Some of the more controversial bills did not pass. None of the marriage bills passed. Bills were introduced on both the sides of heterosexual and homosexual marriage issue. Again.

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## New Termination Fees on the way?

One of cell phone customers' biggest complaints is the Early Termination Fees (ETF) often imposed on them if they want to switch services because of bad service. If a customer tries to break the contract before it expires, they may have to pay up to \$175 or more to legally get out of the service contract.

More and more customers are starting to file class action lawsuits against the providers to eliminate these fees. Meanwhile, in early June 2008 the FCC held a hearing to consider an industry proposal to lessen the impact of termination fees.

One of the reasons the companies impose these fees is because they subsidize the cost of cell phones. Even a typical free or low cost phone under a company plan still likely costs \$100+ if you were to purchase it without the plan. The ETF is the provider's way to recoup some of that loss.

However, with the ongoing litigation or pending litigation, the cell phone industry proposed that the ETF be waived within 30 days if the customer is unhappy with their service and that after that 30 day period, the ETF fee will be prorated to the remaining length of the contract. If this plan goes into effect, the phone companies benefit by getting absolved from all ongoing lawsuits.

No word yet on what if anything the FCC will do. So, keep an eye on the terms of your contract when you get a new phone.

In anticipation of the eventual outcome, Maryland changed its marriage laws, since before statehood Maryland criminally forbade whites and blacks from marrying. This can be traced back to a 1692 Maryland law deciding any free English or white woman who married a black man was to be considered property of her husband's owner. (See Assembly Proceedings, May 10-June 9, 1692. 547 at <http://www.msa.md.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000013/html/am13--547.html>)

In 1935 Maryland extended its interracial marriage laws by adding that whites could not marry anyone of the Malay race as well. (1935 Laws of the State of Maryland, chapter 60 added members of the Malay race to Section 365 of Article 27. Ironically, the Governor who signed this bill into law was Harry W. Nice.) Specifically, this addition to Maryland law seemed aimed at prohibiting white Americans from marrying Filipinos. Fortunately, this law was repealed in 1967. (1967 Laws of the State of Maryland, chapter 6.)

So, let us respectfully mourn the passing of this great unsung hero of the American Civil Rights Movement who, by all accounts in the media, was more interested in making a life as husband and wife than in making history. Thank you, Mr. & Mrs. Loving.

## You Can Own A Gun!

Scott H. Stevens

The US Supreme Court disclosed its opinion on District of Columbia v. Heller, 07-290 on June 26, 2008. In a 5-4 split the Court declared law abiding citizens are permitted to own guns and that DC's prohibition went too far in denying everyone access to fire arms. However, the Court recognizes the problem of handgun violence and the decision still permits the regulation of the sale of guns.

A lot of the decision came down to semantics. Scalia's majority opinion basically ignores the phrase "A well regulated militia," because it is superfluous and not an "operative clause". Among his interpretations is that the militia is an extant body that Congress can call up at any time and organize to defend the country. Therefore it is *individuals* who have the right to defend their own homes. Stevens' dissent ties everything to the militia, basically saying citizens may own guns only as long as they are in service to the militia.

While both sides throw a lot of historical context into their respective opinions, the majority opinion does take the "militia" concept one step further than the dissenters. The dissent focuses on militias as instruments of states. However, the majority brings up the very real possibility that the state can also be the oppressor, a concept that was not foreign to the average Colonial citizen of the time.

This Court ruled definitively that the Second Amendment allows individuals the right to bear arms, but don't expect the matter to be definitively settled.

## Did You Know?

Scott H. Stevens

Alaska had illegal juries prior to statehood. Apparently after the United States purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867, no one quite knew what to do with it. Originally it was a military and customs district under the War Department which also shaped the legal and justice systems. Prior to the District Organic Act of 1884, miners apparently developed their own legal system separate from any official governing body. While the 1884 Act was supposed to remedy some of the confusion regarding Alaska's legal and judicial systems, it in fact made some things worse. The Act stipulated that Oregon's laws would also be Alaska's laws. Oregon law stated that jury members had to be taxpayers. However, at the time no government entity was taxing Alaskan citizens. Therefore, any cases decided by a "jury" might not have been valid. Read all about this fascinating twist of law and more in the Library's newest acquisition: *Prestatehood Legal Materials* by Chiorazzi & Most, which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

A real surprise came with the death of House bills 380 & 1110. These bills would have prohibited texting while driving. Pennsylvania currently has a similar House Bill in Committee since September of 2007. It is Pennsylvania HB1827 for those interested in seeing what that state may pass. At least until next session, Maryland drivers may legally text while driving as long as they don't get in an accident. Also not passing was HB 77, which would have allowed broadcast media to cover, as allowed by the presiding judge, a criminal sentencing hearing.

Some of the bills that did pass (and became Law) were:

- SB166/HB76 (ch. 565) – increased the fines for the civil offense of providing alcohol to minors to \$2,500 & \$5,000 for the first and subsequent violations, respectively.
- SB1013 (ch. 133) – reverses deregulation legislation from the 1990s resulting in a rebate for BGE customers in the \$170 range. According to newspaper reports the credit will show up on customers' bills in the Autumn. Also reported by the newspapers is the rise in electric costs will add about \$120 to the average BGE customer's bill this year. This is the follow-up to last issue's Breaking News column.
- SB417 (ch. 129) – This Republican sponsored and almost unanimously passed bill requires electric & gas utility companies to notify customers of charges & benefits of energy efficiency and conservation programs.
- SB745 (ch. 702) – redefines "beer" in Maryland law.
- SB347 (ch. 34)/HB852 (ch. 35) – specifies the fees charged by credit lenders & the conditions under which they may be imposed.
- SB597 (ch. 599) – allows residential property transfers between domestic partners to be exempt from transfer taxes. [See elsewhere in this issue "Domestic Partnerships & Common-Law Marriages"]
- SB177 (ch. 20) – increases to 600 the number of annual leave hours state employees may carry over to the next year. N.B. they still only receive compensation for up to 400 hours of unused time upon termination of employment.
- SB789 (ch. 455) – requires children under 8 years old to be secured with a safety seat unless the child is over 4 feet 9 inches or weighs more than 65 pounds.
- HB1425 (ch. 694) – authorizes a recipient of the U.S. Department of Defense Gold Star as the surviving spouse, parent, or next of kin of a member of the armed forces whose life was lost in combat to apply to the Motor Vehicle Administration for a special Gold Star license plate
- SB546/HB957 (ch. 189) – requires the governor to annually proclaim June 20 as Maryland Charter Day to honor the day King Charles I granted a charter for the colony that became Maryland.
- HB83 (ch. 486) – makes the Friday after Thanksgiving Day a legal holiday called American Indian Heritage Day to "honor the rich cultural heritage, proud history, and vital contributions of American Indians"

The following were emergency legislation in response to the unexpected snowballing of foreclosures as the housing market bubble burst. The following appeared in the final edition of the 2008 Legislative Wrap-Up:

- SB 216/HB 365 (Ch. 1/Ch. 2) change the laws governing recordation and foreclosure of mortgages and deeds of trust. The bills alter the requirements for recordation, notice, service of process, court filings, and cure of defaults. Provisions include lengthening the foreclosure process and providing homeowners with more time and notice before a foreclosure sale and codifying the right to cure, which allows homeowners to stop foreclosure by paying what is owed up until one business day before the sale;.
- SB 217/HB 360 (Ch. 3/Ch. 4) create a comprehensive mortgage fraud statute with criminal penalties and authorize the Attorney General, a State's Attorney, and the Commissioner of Financial Regulation to enforce the statute. The new law also authorizes a private right of action for violations of the statute. Provisions include imposition of fines and imprisonment for violators and authorization for court-ordered restitution and forfeiture and enhanced penalties for cases involving vulnerable adults.
- SB 218/HB 361 (Ch. 5/Ch. 6) alter several provisions of law including prohibiting foreclosure rescue transactions, broadening the scope of the current law, and expanding the enforcement powers of the Commissioner of Financial Regulation. The changes are aimed at providing additional consumer protection for people who are trying to sell their homes because they are in default.
- SB 270/HB 363 (Ch. 7/Ch. 8) make several changes in the law governing mortgage lending, including prohibiting prepayment penalties for mortgages, requiring lenders to verify a borrower's ability to repay, authorizing the Commissioner of Financial Regulation to set licensing, examination and investigation fees, and expanding the licensing requirements for mortgage lenders and mortgage originators.
- HB 645 (Ch. 286) amends the Maryland Contract Lien Act to extend the time during which any action to foreclose a lien may be brought, from 3 to 12 years following recordation of the statement of lien.

## Domestic Partnership or Common Law Marriage ?

Scott H. Stevens

There is an interesting question arising from the issue of Domestic Partnerships as defined in Acts 2008, ch.599: is a Domestic Partnership a common-law marriage, and if so, does Maryland now permit common-law marriages? To address these questions, we must first look at what constitutes a common-law marriage. Derived from English common-law, it is a marriage entered upon by two parties without a religious or civil ceremony. In his book *Maryland Family Law* John F.Fader states the criteria courts look for when deciding if a common-law marriage exists:

1. An actual intent to marry
2. Agreement by the parties that they are married
3. Continuous habitation
4. Public declaration of being married.

Maryland has never recognized a common-law marriage. An excellent discussion of the origins of common-law marriages can be found in *Henderson v. Henderson* 199 Md. 449, 87 A.2d 403 (1952), which traces American marriage laws back to Canon (Church) Law which became English Law. *Henderson* also goes on to cite cases that upheld Maryland's requirement that for a marriage to be valid, it must be solemnized in some way in accordance with Maryland law. i.e., there must be an official ceremony.

However, Maryland will recognize a common-law marriage formed out of state. *Goldin v. Goldin* 48 Md.App. 154, 426 A.2d 410 (1981), somewhat humorously, reinforces that stance. The parties in *Goldin* began their alleged common-law marriage in Virginia, where they took the same last name, had children, etc. After seven years they continued their "marriage" in Maryland for another fifteen years before the "marriage" fell apart and parties filed for divorce. However, since neither Virginia nor Maryland recognized common-law marriages, they relied on their winter weekend ski trips to Pennsylvania, which did recognize common-law marriages, as the "keystone" argument that their "marriage" was valid. The judge did not feel the Goldins met the burden of proof that going on the ski trips was to validate their marriage. The judge also declares that Pennsylvania is not part of Heaven.

*Henderson* also takes the same position and reinforces *Jackson v. Jackson*, 82 Md. 17, 28, 33 A. 317, (1895) which also delves into why Maryland recognizes common-law marriages:

"We accept the general rule that a marriage valid where contracted or solemnized is valid everywhere, unless it is contrary to the public policy of the forum. *Jackson v. Jackson*, 82 Md. 17, 28, 33 A. 317; *Bannister v. Bannister*, 181 Md. 177, 29 A. 287. The reason for this rule is that it is desirable that there should be uniformity in the recognition of the marital status, so that persons legally married according to the laws of one State will not be held to be living in adultery in another State, and that children begotten in lawful wedlock in one State will not be held illegitimate in another."

The key to this opinion is the phrase: "unless it is contrary to the public policy of the forum." The opinion clarifies the Court's stance on recognizing common-law marriages by stating: "However, the State is not bound to give effect to marriage laws that are repugnant to its own laws and policy. Marriages that are tolerated in another State but are condemned by the State of Maryland as contrary to its public policy will not be held valid in this State. One illustration of this exception to the general rule arises from the Maryland statute declaring void any marriage of a white person and a Negro. In *Jackson v. Jackson*, 82 Md. 17, 30, 33 A. 317, 319, the court said that, although such marriages may be valid elsewhere, they will be absolutely void in Maryland as long as the statutory prohibition remains unchanged."

This last sentence is a key point to the creation of domestic partnerships. Since Maryland expressly defines marriage as between one man and one woman, a situation like California's recent implementation of same sex marriages would not be recognized in this state unless someone were to find a statute that would permit such a union. Most likely, if a state agency moved to recognize same sex marriages from out of state as New York's governor recently did without a change in the laws, then there would surely be lawsuits filed to help clarify the issue.

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The reader may ask “if the domestic partnership is between one man and one woman, is it not the same as a common-law marriage?” On first glance, domestic partnership as defined in this Act may look very similar to a common-law marriage. The Act defines a Domestic Partnership as a relationship between two individuals who:

- (1) are at least 18 years old;
- (2) are not related to the other by blood or marriage within four degrees of consanguinity under the civil law rule;
- (3) are not married or a member of a civil union or domestic partnership with another individual;
- (4) agree to be in a relationship of mutual interdependence in which each domestic partner contributes to the maintenance and support of the other domestic partner and the relationship, even if both domestic partners are not required to contribute equally to the relationship; and
- (5) share a common residence where both domestic partners live....

And evidence of a domestic partnership means providing:

- (1) an affidavit signed under penalty of perjury by two individuals stating that they have established a domestic partnership; and
- (2) evidence of any two of the following:
  - (i) joint liability of the individuals for a mortgage or other loan or for a lease;
  - (ii) the designation of one of the individuals as the primary beneficiary under a life insurance policy on the life of the other individual or under a retirement plan of the other individual;
  - (iii) the designation of one of the individuals as the primary beneficiary of the will of the other individual;
  - (iv) a durable power of attorney for health care or financial management granted by one of the individuals to the other individual;
  - (v) joint ownership or lease by the individuals of a motor vehicle;
  - (vi) a joint checking account, joint investments, or a joint credit account;
  - (vii) a joint renter’s or homeowner’s insurance policy;
  - (viii) coverage of one of the individuals under a health insurance policy of the other individual;
  - (ix) joint responsibility for childcare, such as school documents or guardianship documents; or
  - (x) a relationship or cohabitation contract

Though it sounds a lot like criteria for a common-law marriage, a domestic partnership clearly is NOT a common-law marriage, nor can a common-law marriage miraculously morph into a domestic partnership in this state. The definition above clearly defines a domestic partnership as a relationship between two people who are not married. Further, the law states “That this Act may not be construed to have any effect on § 2–201 of the Family Law Article,” which states “[o]nly a marriage between a man and a woman is valid in this State”.

So, no, a domestic partnership is not the same as a common-law marriage, nor is Maryland attempting to create a back door entry into allowing common-law marriages in this state. At this time. Finally, contrary to the judge’s opinion in *Goldin* some people do feel Pennsylvania is part of Heaven.

## Periodical Articles

*Scott H. Stevens*

### “Lessons From The Subprime Mortgage Debacle”

David Scudde, *Practical Real Estate Lawyer*, May 2008

This excellent article summarizes the basics of the subprime mortgage fallout. The author talks about what exactly happened, who the major parties involved are and their involvement in the current mess, how issues arising from subprime mortgages are being resolved, and how lawyers are participating in the aftermath as blame and finger pointing abound.

### “The Lawyer’s Evolving Role As...IT Specialist?”

Ortego & Eisenberg, *Practical Litigator*, January 2008

The authors review how amendments made to the Federal Rules of Procedure in December 2006 regarding electronically stored information impacts all lawyers in this day and age where so much is electronically stored.

They provide concrete examples of how to apply these changes as well as tips on how to compensate for lack of technical expertise. The main caveat they give builds upon Moore’s Law that roughly translates to: technology evolves exponentially, doubling approximately every 18 months. So, be prepared to constantly re-learn the latest technology.

**Trivium**  
**Answers & More Questions**  
*Scott H. Stevens*

Answers to last newsletter's trivia questions:

- Which Maryland Republican governor served on the Indian Claims Commission?  
**Theodore McKeldin was appointed a commissioner from 1967-1969 by Lyndon Johnson.**
  
- What was the Indian Claims Commission (ICC) and which courts succeeded it?  
**The ICC “heard and determined claims against the United States on behalf of any tribe, band, or other identifiable group of American Indians residing in the United States.” The independent agency was established by 60 Stat. 1049 on August 13, 1946. The Commission ceased to exist as of September 30, 1978 in accordance with 90 Stat. 1990. Pending cases were transferred to the U.S. Court of Claims. Congress abolished this court in 1982, and cases were transferred to the U.S. Claims Court, which later became known as the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. However, many of the cases in the U.S. Claims Court were shuffled over to the U.S. Court of Appeals Federal Circuit. For further information, please check out <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/279.html> and [http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf/page/coc\\_bdy](http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf/page/coc_bdy). (As an aside, the claims courts mentioned above all actually fall under Article I of the Constitution, not Article III. They were created under the jurisdiction of Congress, though the Supreme Court has at times throughout history taken various roles in the judicial process when cases were heard in these courts. See *Williams v. United States*, 289 U.S. 553.)**
  
- What Native American tribe predominated in the Baltimore area when the Province of Maryland was settled and where are they now?  
**The Susquehannock were an Iroquoian speaking tribe that stretched from New York to Maryland along the river now bearing their name. Susquehannock is actually an Algonquian word meaning “people of the muddy river.” They were physically impressive people according to Captain John Smith. They were also fairly aggressive people. While they traded with some settlers, they fought others and fought most other Indian tribes including fellow Iroquoian speaking tribes. Over time, the constant fighting along with exposure to new diseases unfortunately caused their number to dwindle dramatically. Many tribal members eventually became part of other nearby or similar tribes. Finally, in 1763 the remaining score of now-peaceful Susquehannocks were brutally slaughtered for no reason save their being Indian by a group of ignorant white men from the Harrisburg area called the Paxton Boys who traveled to Conestoga Town (somewhere in Lancaster County, most likely close to Millersville or between Millersville and the Susquehanna River) to perform the deed. For more information check out <http://native.brokenclaw.net/wp/archives/susquehannock> and <http://www.dickshovel.com/susque.html>**
  
- Where do the popular names of many Native American tribes come from?  
**A variety of places. Oftentimes tribal names for themselves translate roughly as “the people.” Sometimes current English names are slight variations on the tribal name like Hopi is also Hopi in English. Other times the names are very far off, because when first introduced to a new tribe by an existing tribe, explorers tended to use the name the existing tribe gives the newly met tribe. For example, the Mohawks (an Algonquian word meaning “man-eaters”) actually call themselves Kanienkehaka or “people of the flint”. And other times the current tribal name was given by the explorers and stuck. An example of this is the Lenape who are more readily known by their English assigned name, the Delaware. For more information on tribal names, check out <http://www.native-languages.org/original.htm>**
  
- What are the two closest Indian Reservations to Maryland?  
**The Mattaponi and the Pamunkey reservations are in King William County, Virginia along the respective rivers sharing their names. Reservations are usually Federal entities based on various historical events and treaties. However, tribal recognition is a separate issue and may be federal and/or state. For example, the Mattaponi are recognized by the state of Virginia, but are not a Federally recognized tribe though the Bureau of Indian Affairs recognizes their reservation which was designated by the state. Hopefully, Indian Law lawyers are paid enough to untangle these Gordian Knots.**
  - BIA map of Federally recognized reservations can be found at: <http://www.nps.gov/history/nagpra/DOCUMENTS/ResMAP.HTM>
  - Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to receive services from the BIA can be found in the March 22, 2007 issue of the Federal Register: <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsd/biaind.pdf>
  - A primer on Indian Law and tribal sovereignty can be found at <http://www.airpi.org/pubs/indinsov.html>

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- According to the 1898 Treaty of Peace between the US & Spain, how much did the US pay Spain for the acquisition of the Philippine Islands?

**\$20,000,000** A text of the treaty can be found at the Avalon Project which was mentioned in the last issue. Check out Article III at <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/diplomacy/spain/sp1898.htm>

### New Questions:

- Who is the Mondawmin Mall named after?  
**The name was inspired by the Indian corn god Mondamin in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Song of Hiawatha." For more info see: <http://www.urbanitebaltimore.com/sub.cfm?issueID=53&sectionID=4&articleID=759>**
- To mark the passing earlier this year of comedian George Carlin, what are the seven words you can't say on broadcast TV and where in the Law Library can you find this routine?  
**F.C.C. v. Pacifica Foundation (438 U.S. 726) contains the complete transcript of Carlin's skit. No, we're not printing the words here. You can do the research at your favorite library.**
- Who was the first Native American Vice-President?  
**Charles Curtis was a Kaw tribal member and Vice-President under Republican Herbert Hoover from 1929-1933. He grew up on the Kaw reservation in Kansas. For more info check out [http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2008-06-06-indianvp\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2008-06-06-indianvp_N.htm)**
- Where is the last covered bridge in Baltimore County?  
**According to the Baltimore County Public Library, <http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/News/trivia/quizzes/marchquiz2007.html>, it is on Jericho Rd over the Gunpowder Falls River.**
- Where can you find Baltimore County Circuit Court's Local Rules?  
**Nowhere. There are no special Local Rules for Baltimore County.**
- What is a geological Benchmark and where is the nearest one to the Baltimore County Circuit Courthouse?  
**The National Geodetic Survey (formed as the Survey of the Coast back in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson) created a network of metal disks mounted in a concrete block or on stable buildings called benchmarks. These survey markers are used to determine an exact location on land without having to reinvent the wheel in figuring out where places are every time someone needs to survey. Even with the proliferation of GPS today, these markers are still used. You can find out more about these markers including their locations at <http://www.ngs.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/datasheet.prl> Check the datasheet thoroughly, since the marker may no longer be there after 200 years. By the way, the nearest one to the Baltimore County Circuit Court is on the Old Towson Courthouse's Washington Ave. porch on the southwest outside wall corner. It is mounted vertically.**



## Spotlight On:

### *New Books*

*Scott H. Stevens*

### **Prestatehood Legal Materials: A Fifty-State Research Guide, Including New York City and the District of Columbia**

Michael Chiorazzi & Marguerite Most

This book dovetails nicely with our recent looks into Maryland's legal history before statehood. The chapter on Maryland, written by librarians at the Maryland State Law Library, highlights some of the earliest legal structure of the colony. The authors briefly cover the revolutionary [Religious] Toleration Act and the less than revolutionary first state constitution among many other topics. The earliest days of each branch of government are summarized with just enough interesting incidents to make the reader want to learn more. Fortunately, the authors include an extensive bibliography of print and internet resources for those extra curious readers. This book makes a great starting point for folks who want to learn about the legal structure of states before they became states.

# Your Thoughts

*Pro Libris* welcomes your thoughts on topics discussed in this issue. If you'd like to share your thoughts with us, then please submit them to the editor of this newsletter via [sstevens@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:sstevens@baltimorecountymd.gov)

Thoughts should be approximately 150 - 200 words (about 2 paragraphs). Submissions will not be accepted unless accompanied by the author's name and contact information. Submissions will be screened for appropriate language for a business publication. Not all submissions will be reprinted. The author's first name only will be included.

We look forward to hearing from you!

## Pro Libris Team

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## Book & Movie Reviews

*Stephanie Levasseur*

### *Friendship Test*

by Elizabeth Noble

Elizabeth Noble's story of four friends: Freddie, Tamsin, Sarah and Reagan who meet in Oxford and sustain a lifelong friendship is a story of women's relationships and their loyalty to each other. The story opens on the day Freddie's father dies and her husband announces he is having an affair and wants a divorce. With her friends by her side for support, Freddie returns to Boston, MA to confront her childhood demons and to decide what the future holds for her now.

The reader is immediately drawn into the story and captivated by the girls' likeability (Tamsin) and hate ability (Reagan). Noble sets an easy tone in her tale of the complexities of women's relationships and how each relationship affects each girl's life.

This is Noble's second novel (*Reading Group* was her first) but clearly the more popular one. The girls deal with marriages, children, estranged parents, and high stressed jobs yet always make time for each other in their lives. This is a fun novel, full of surprises and delights throughout yet the ending is predictable. It makes a great beach read!

### Where Do Angels Go

This quaint old 1956 movie tells the tale of five Nuns escorting forty high school girls across the country in a school bus to attend a rally in California. Along the way they encounter "wild Indians", flat tires, run out of gas in the desert, and stormy weather. They meet all sorts of interesting characters who help them get out of their scrapes, like the Rancher with six teenage sons who let the Nuns and girls stay at their ranch for 2 days while the bus is being fixed and the movie director played by Milton Berle who was filming a Western picture when the school bus just happened to drive right through during an important scene – the attack of the Indians on the Settlers!

This is a funny, touching and endearing story about friendship, learning about oneself and accepting others. This timeless classic is sure to be fun for the whole family.