INTRODUCTION

Rich in content, diversified in form and broad in coverage, the papers of the Maryland State Colonization Society have an appeal to an audience hardly less varied in its way. Researchers and others of a scholarly bent will be rewarded by an exposure to this collection, as might be expected, but so would the adult reader in general, not excluding the browsing room habitue.

The primary aim of the colonization movement was to send free blacks out of the country. The deportation of blacks to Africa, however, is but one of the wide-ranging, if related, topics encompassed in the papers of the Maryland State Colonization Society. Not only do these primary source materials throw fresh light upon antebellum socio-economic conditions and black-white relationships in a key border state, the state with the largest free black population in the country, but they tell us much about nineteenth century West Africa, particularly Liberia.

The varied types of documents in the collection suggest its broad usefulness, indeed in many instances an almost unique usefulness. In numerous quantity in all classifications, the papers of the Society include the minutes of the Board of Managers, correspondence received and sent including the letter-books of the agents of the Society, the financial journals, ledgers and account books, the census reports of the Society's colony in Liberia with the accompanying manumission books and emigrants lists, travel diaries of tours in Liberia, annual reports of the Society, the files of the Maryland Colonization Journal, plus those of the Liberia Herald, and a miscellaneous collection of colonization pamphlets and books.

Up to now the use and hence the value of this historically important body of materials has been greatly lessened by its poor physical condition. In producing microfilm copies Rhistoric Publications performs a rescue operation for the custodian of the papers, the Maryland Historical Society, while simultaneously permitting it to share this rich collection with readers outside its walls.

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