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Interim Report of Committee on legal History of the West Virginia Bar Association

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and upon forms to be furnished them by the said judicial council, which statement shall be forwarded to the judicial council.

Sec. 5. The judicial council of West Virginia shall propose to the Supreme Court of Appeals such changes in the practice and procedure of the state as it shall deem expedient. It shall also file with the governor an annual report of its proceedings and recommendations and results thereof, together with such proposals for legislation as it may deem necessary for making the administration of justice more efficient.

Sec. 6. The faculty of the college of law of West Virginia university shall constitute a bureau of research on legal problems and the legal aspects of industrial problems, in so far as funds may be conveniently made available by West Virginia university for work in the summer time, and for diminishing the teaching load of those members engaged on said work during the school year. In so far as it may be possible, without interfering with the teaching schedule of the college of law, the faculty or members thereof designated by the dean, shall prepare reports on matters within the scope of the powers of investigation by said council.

Sec. 7. All members of the council shall serve without compensation.

INTERIM REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON LEGAL HISTORY OF THE WEST VIRGINIA BAR ASSOCIATION

Pursuant to the resolution of the West Virginia Bar Association, adopted at its annual meeting, in Clarksburg, on October 19, 1933, a special Committee on Legal History has subsequently been appointed and duly organized. The objectives of the Committee may be characterized succinctly as the locating, inventorying and preserving of source-materials in the development of West Virginia law. It is anticipated that a careful survey will ultimately in the future be undertaken, for the purpose of collating and safeguarding the older and more important legal records and archives.

The Committee will co-operate with the endeavors of the Institute of Legal History of West Virginia University, to promote the study of the growth of legal doctrines and institutions in the counties that now make up the state. Effort will be made to encourage the scholarly editing and publication of valuable source-materials. In general, the Committee intends, wherever possible, to assist in the accomplishment of the aims of the recently-formed

The Committee has held meetings in Clarksburg and Morgantown, for the purpose of securing federal aid looking to the plan of a state-wide inventory of county archives. Such a project has been carried through, as a relief measure, in Pennsylvania and in other states, and would prove invaluable in the preservation of West Virginia records. More in detail, the present situation has been summarized in the following statement contained in the original C. W. A. application:

No survey of historical materials has ever been attempted in West Virginia. Little, if any, is known as to the content and value of local records and documents. Research in legal, social and economic history of the people has been almost impossible, except in instances where private gifts have made the study feasible. So far as preservation is concerned, the situation has been deplorable. Extremely valuable non-official collections have been discovered and shipped out of the state, without West Virginia scholars being apprized of the loss. Even official archives have been seriously neglected, sometimes through incompetence but more often by mere inattention. Important records of the Virginia period have been lost, simply through careless keeping; and it is but the common practice of officials to burn up old papers, in order to make room for new current files. From another angle, the central problem in any historical survey is the ascertainment of the exact materials which still do exist, — which have in fact survived decades of indifference. It seems almost incredible that there are to-day, in West Virginia court-houses, vaults and safes the contents of which are partially or completely unknown to incumbent officials. In many cases, there has been no effort whatsoever to examine or to check over such musty files, despite their immense worth to historians. The present project contemplates, just as in Pennsylvania, a stock-taking of what remains to West Virginia by way of archives and documents. A necessary by-product is the salvaging of much that is very valuable, along with prevention of further costly destruction.

No definite start has as yet been made, however, in the setting up of such a state-wide survey as a relief measure.

Meantime, the Committee would welcome any suggestions or assistance in the collation and preservation of these important legal materials.

E. G. SMITH,
Chairman.