

the fifth district, John Buchanan, of Washington County, who had been appointed an associate judge just one day earlier, was, on Mason's declining, appointed Chief Judge, and he accepted. Buchanan had been a student of Mason's, and there is an old tradition that it was Mason's estimate of the young man's qualifications (Buchanan was then thirty-four years old) that persuaded the Governor and Council to make the appointment.⁶

The position of Chief Judge of the sixth district, including Baltimore and Harford Counties, remained open for two months after Robert Smith declined it, and was finally offered to Joseph Hopper Nicholson, of Queen Anne's County, another of those half-forgotten personalities who wait by the way to reward historical investigation. He was born in 1770, probably in Chestertown, Kent County, where his parents then lived,⁷ settled at an early age near Centreville in Queen Anne's County, studied law, married a daughter of Edward Lloyd, of Wye House and of what is called the Chase House, in Annapolis, rapidly gained prominence, was elected to Congress in 1799, and in two or three years became one of the leading men in that body. It was he who in the session of 1801 to 1802 was carried into the House, dangerously ill, attended by his wife, for the long balloting to settle the contest between Jefferson and Burr for the Presidency. He cast each of his ballots for Jefferson. By the following year, though still only thirty-three years old, he was one of three men, John Randolph of Roanoke, the Speak-

6. T. J. C. Williams, *History of Washington County*, 132.

7. The parish records of births have been lost.