

Annex to the First Courthouse at Cumberland

This combination courthouse and jail was obviously too small to begin with and it was not long, therefore, before the General Assembly was being asked to authorize a levy to build record rooms for the Clerk of the Court and the Register of Wills. The sum allowed for this purpose, in 1806, was \$1,200, and the new offices were ordered built on the public ground near the courthouse.⁷ Both offices were housed in a one-story brick building located on the northeast corner lot of the public square, and separated from the courthouse by the width of Johnson Street. This office building continued to serve its dual purpose until it was torn down at the completion of the second courthouse which provided quarters within its walls for the clerk and the register.

Second Courthouse at Cumberland

Even with this annex, the courthouse rapidly became too crowded. In 1834, the General Assembly, acceding to the request of various citizens of Allegany County, provided that a new courthouse could be built, and authorized a levy of \$5,000 for this purpose.⁸ The same act authorized the building commissioners to close Johnson Street and thereby gain additional space on the public grounds if they so desired; and this was done. The act also made it possible to hasten the work by permitting a loan to be made at six percent interest in advance of the annual courthouse levy of \$1,000. As was so often the case, the original appropriation proved to be insufficient for the purpose. An Act of Assembly five years later permitted an additional levy of \$1,000 per year for as many as four years for "finishing and completing said court house."⁹

The new courthouse appears to have been occupied in 1841, but unfortunately, it was not yet paid for.¹⁰ Some money had been borrowed from school funds, and some of the builders and furnishers had not been paid at all. An act which provided for the repayment of the school funds and for the payment for work already done, plus \$500 to be used to pay for work still to be done, was passed in 1843.¹¹

A full description of this second courthouse is given in Thomas and Williams as follows:

The courthouse . . . was a rectangular building, of brick, two stories in height, fronting eighty feet on Washington Street and forty-three and one-half feet in depth. The courtroom occupied the center of the building on the first floor and was thirty-five by forty feet in size. The clerk's office and vault were sixteen by twenty feet each, separated by a corridor seven feet in width on the east side. The register's office and vault, on the west side, were of the same dimensions as those of the clerks.

William Strickland, of Philadelphia, an eminent architect and civil engineer, prepared the plans. The brick work was built under the supervision of Alexander B. MacFarlane, chief superintendent of masonry on the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, who was a master of his craft. He erected the groined arches of the fireproof vault. . . . The excavations for its foundation was not begun until the fall of 1836, and the building was not completed and occupied until 1841.¹²

Additions to the Second Courthouse at Cumberland

Thirty years were to pass before this new courthouse became crowded in its turn. At that time the General Assembly was asked for, and it granted, authority to the county commissioners to issue bonds in the sum of \$75,000 for enlarging and remodeling the courthouse and for building a new jail.¹³ Thomas and Williams estimate that the amount expended on

⁷ Ch. 23, Acts of 1806.

⁸ Ch. 89, Acts of 1833.

⁹ Ch. 56, Acts of 1839.

¹⁰ According to one authority, the courthouse was already

open and in use by April 28, 1840. See Will H. Lowdermilk, *History of Cumberland*, Washington, 1878, p. 347.

¹¹ Ch. 210, Acts of 1842.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

¹³ Ch. 65, Acts of 1872.