

## INTRODUCTION

The last session of the Assembly which had been elected in the autumn of 1761 had come to an end on November 26, 1763. Nor was another Assembly to meet until September 1765, nearly two years later. Governor Horatio Sharpe had prorogued the October–November, 1763, session to meet again on the first day of May, 1764, but on April 12 he postponed the day of meeting until July 30, and on July 10 again prorogued it until November 17, 1764. But the old Assembly was not destined ever to meet again, for on November 12 Sharpe issued his proclamation for dissolving it, and writs were issued for a general election, returnable December 24. Once more the Governor decided that he did not wish the Assembly to meet, and on December 15, 1764, issued a proclamation postponing the meeting of the new Assembly until June 10; and again on May 23 prorogued it until October 7. But public opinion, now thoroughly aroused by the Stamp Act and the Governor's delay in calling the Assembly together, forced him on September 12 to issue a proclamation advancing the date of meeting to September 23, 1765, "because some Business for the General Utility of the Province requires their attendance before that time [October]". The Governor gave as the reason for not having held the session earlier the prevalence of smallpox in Annapolis in the spring and summer of 1765, but this was rather an excuse than a reason, for it might well have been called to meet in some other place where smallpox was not prevalent, as had occurred more than once in the past. Sharpe had obviously been warned by the Lord Proprietary to postpone the calling of the Assembly together as long as possible, for under date of October 3, 1765, he thus wrote Frederick: "The Reason of my troubling your Ldp at this time is to inform you that during the Sitting of the Provincial Court all the Gentlemen of the Law & many others from different parts of the Province, several of them Members of the Lower House represented to me that as Annapolis was at length clear of the Small Pox it was the Universal Desire of the people that their Representatives should have an Opportunity of meeting in Assembly before the time to which it stood prorogued & that upon my Communicating such Representation to the Gent. of the Council they advised me to gratify the Wishes of the People by convening the Assembly on the 23<sup>d</sup> of last Month". The letter went on to say that the public demanded a meeting so that the Lower House might appoint some of its members to attend an assembly called by the Province of Massachusetts Bay to meet in New York to protest against the enforcement of the Stamp Act, the Governor adding that "so earnestly did the Inhabitants of this Province desire that some of their Representatives should be present at such meeting that I am convinced the Members would have been obliged by their Constituents to meet here even if I had not called them, & that in such Case there would have been a great Outcry raised throughout the Province against the Council & Myself which might have been productive of Disorder & ill Consequences" (*Arch. Md.* XIV; 231-232). The sitting of the Provincial Court, at which