

A bill embodying this plan was introduced in the Upper House on December 4th. On the following day other inhabitants of Baltimore County petitioned the Councillors against the passage of such a law. This petition was rejected, however, and the bill introduced on December 4th was passed with an amendment making Bush Town, on the Bush River, instead of Joppa, the alternate place of holding the election in Baltimore County (pp. 12, 14, 16, 126-127).

Not long after the Assembly reconvened on September 25, 1770, the Lower House sent a message to the Upper House which referred to the petition of those inhabitants of Baltimore County who had protested against the passage of the law as enacted. The Delegates contended that the petition reflected upon the proceedings in the Lower House, and asked that it should be given to them in order that they take such steps as were necessary to maintain their rights and privileges. Severe weather had compelled the Lower House to postpone the consideration of this matter to the present session (pp. 117, 177, 221, 222-223).

In their reply to this message, the Councillors said that as the petition to which reference had been made had been rejected by them it had been withdrawn by the parties who had presented it. Under these circumstances and also as no copy had been made, it was impossible to comply with the request of the Lower House (pp. 178, 223).

This discouraging reply did not deter the Delegates from going ahead with their plan to uphold their dignity as a legislative body. On October 13 there was introduced in the House what purported to be a copy of the petition which had been presented by some of the inhabitants of Baltimore County to the Upper House. In this petition it was claimed that the bill providing for holding an election in Joppa, as well as in Baltimore Town, because of the prevalence of smallpox in the latter place, was introduced to please a few individuals and was of no benefit to the public. The petitioners further maintained that the bill was repugnant to the laws and customs of the colony, that it provided for a new mode of election based upon the assertions of a few individuals, not supported by, but "devoid of Truth."

After considering this petition, the Delegates ordered the serjeant-at-arms to take into his custody the men who had signed it to answer before them for their false and scandalous petition which reflected on "the Honour, Justice and Impartiality of this House, and highly derogatory of it's Rights and Privileges" (pp. 251-253).

Several days later, John Smith, John Purviance and James Sterrett, appeared before the Lower House. As all three testified that they had never signed the petition in question, all three were discharged.

Some of those who were signers of the petition wrote a letter of apology to Edward Tilghman, Speaker of the Lower House. They said that they hoped that the Delegates would accept this written apology and excuse their personal appearance before the House because of the inconvenience it would cause them.

Far from accepting this kind of apology, the members of the Lower House resolved that all who signed the letter of apology were guilty of contempt of the order of the House by not appearing in person. According to the testimony of Philip Meroney, deputed by the serjeant-at-arms to serve the order of the