

Thomas O. Williams is noted as the owner in Upper Newfoundland and Severn Hundred of a tract of land called "Young Man's Delight," containing two hundred acres and improved by "1 framed Court House, 3 framed dwelling houses and 4 old out houses."⁷

First Courthouse at Rockville

In the next year, the General Assembly authorized a levy of £800 in addition to the 1300 which had been previously authorized by the Convention and of which at least two-thirds had been levied. The purpose of this new levy was to compensate for the depreciation of the currency.⁸ Unhappily, this Act of 1784 gave authorization to spend the additional funds to the original building commission which proved to be unable to act because of its loss of membership through death, illness and removal since the Convention of 1776. The next General Assembly, that of 1785, solved this problem by appointing a new commission.⁹

It must have been this same structure in which on April 13, 1783, according to Scharf, "The glorious event of peace and independence was celebrated . . ." ¹⁰ Shortly thereafter, in 1784, the Williams family prepared to lay off this 200-acre plot in lots.¹¹

The newly appointed commission for building a courthouse and prison tried to purchase a suitable plot for this purpose in 1787 and failing in this, the area chosen was condemned the next year.¹² Of this courthouse we know nothing unless we credit Scharf's statement that Francis Kidwell, carpenter, built it.¹³

We are given some few indications of the early life of this courthouse from items found here and there in the incomplete levy record series which has survived. In 1806, a sum was levied to provide a new roof; in 1807, Upton Beall was allowed twelve dollars and fifty cents to purchase chairs. In the same year, Henry Lansdale, who seems to have been in charge of maintenance, was asked to make shutters for the lower windows and to put glass in both the upper and lower windows. In 1810, Honore Martin, Upton Beall and Jesse Leach were commissioned to solve the problem of smoking chimneys even if it required rebuilding them altogether.

The courthouse seems to have been of sufficient size to accommodate not only the courts, but the other officers of the county as well, until 1810. In that year it became necessary to make provision for a separate building in which to house the clerk of the court and his records.¹⁴ The Act of Assembly authorizing a levy for this purpose does not fix the amount, nor does it name the builder or in any way describe the building. We are told only that it was to be built on the public ground from which it has long since disappeared.

Second Courthouse at Rockville

But as always, during this period of growth, the proliferation of separate buildings for offices and other purposes could only be of temporary usefulness. Sooner or later a new courthouse is demanded. Montgomery County proved to be no exception. By 1835, this demand

⁷ Information furnished by Miss Poole from the Scharf Papers, Ms., Md. Hist. Soc. This tract was part of "Exchange" and "New Exchange," part of which forms Rockville.

⁸ Ch. 17.

⁹ Ch. 16.

¹⁰ *History of Western Maryland*, I, 740, fn. 3.

¹¹ *Montgomery County Land Records, Liber B*, 285-86, Ms. Here the original tract names of "Exchange" and "New Exchange" were used instead of the later title "Young Man's Delight."

¹² *Montgomery County Land Records, P No. 16*, 592, microfilm copy, Hall of Records. For some reason now unknown, these proceedings and the accompanying plat were not recorded until 1812. In the meanwhile, some doubt having arisen as to

the boundaries of the lots laid off in 1784, an Act of Assembly was passed in 1801 (Ch. 76) requiring a new survey of Williamsburg and also changing its name to Rockville. A supplemental act of 1802 (Ch. 28) was required in order to get the work done properly. It is not possible to tell now whether the new courthouse was built on the site of the temporary courthouse rented from Williams; all that we can be sure of is that it was located within the same 200-acre tract.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, I, 740. If we cannot accept such evidence as I have mustered that a new courthouse was built sometime in the period 1783-1785, then we must assume that it was the converted house of Williams then still in use and which continued in use until 1840; a possibility if not a likelihood.

¹⁴ Ch. 93.