

Before the State House or, as it was sometimes called, the Court House, in Annapolis was completed, the General Assembly and the other agencies of the Colonial government met in private homes or inns and the County Court probably did the same, although there are no records extant to prove this.

When the State House was nearing completion, the General Assembly passed an act allotting space for the various offices of province, county and town. The title to the act and the part relevant to Anne Arundel County follow :

An Act Directing and appointing to what use the severall Rooms in the State house in the Town and Porte of Annapolis shall be applied to.

Whereas this Province hath been att a great Charge and Expences in the building of a State house or a Publick house of Judicature att this Porte of Annapolis which is now allmost finished and Compleated and to the end that the said house and the Severall rooms and apartments therein may in time present and to Come be applied and appropriated to the uses and purposes the same was Designed for and no other

Be it Enacted by the Kings most Excellent Ma^{ty} by and with the Advice and Consent of this present Generall Assembly and the Authority of the Same That the said State house and the Severall Rooms and apartments therein for the time present and to Come be and is hereby Appointed and Appropriated to the uses and purposes hereafter mentioned and no other that is to say the great Room below staires for Courts and Assemblys to sitt in . . . the two Rooms on the Right hand in the upper Loft one for the County Clark to keep the County Records in. . . .¹⁸

It is also known that the Anne Arundel County Court held its meetings in the State House, at least as early as March of 1697/98.¹⁹ However, there is no evidence as to the room which was allotted for its use. The Clerk of the County, as we have seen, was given one of the loft rooms and, of course, the court might have met here, but since this room was no doubt extremely small, that is not likely. It is more probable that it met in “the great Room below staires for Courts and Assemblys to sitt in. . . .” It might easily have been arranged for the Anne Arundel County Court to meet when the Provincial Court or the Assembly was not in session. In any case, there is no record that the court met anywhere else and there is at least one bit of evidence which may be interpreted to mean that the meeting place of the Anne Arundel County Court and the General Assembly was the same. I quote from the Minutes of the County Court for September 12, 1704:

Whereupon the Court considering the great inconvenience that will attend their sitting to proceed upon any business because of the assemblies now sitting which is likely to continue a considerable time adjourned til the second Tuesday of November next.²⁰

Courthouse in the Second State House

On the night of October 18, 1704, this first combination State House and Courthouse burned. The building, with the exception of the walls, was a total loss. Some of the records of the State government were lost²¹ as were all of the county records with the exception of the current volumes of the court and land records which perhaps were out of the office during the night of the fire. After an examination of the ruins, the General Assembly decided that it would be feasible to rebuild the State House on the foundations of the one which had burned. We do not know when this work was completed but we believe that by the end of 1706 the building had been reoccupied.²²

Since the General Assembly did not make a reallocation of space, and since the building was constructed on the old foundations, it may be assumed that it was of the same size as the

¹⁸ *Arch. of Md.*, XIX, 594-95. Ch. 6, Acts of 1697.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, XXII, 102. March 23, 1697/98.

²⁰ *Judgments, G*, 612, *Ms.*

²¹ *Arch. of Md.*, XXXIV, 679.

²² For an account of this and other state houses see Morris L. Radoff, *Buildings of The State of Maryland at Annapolis*, Annapolis, 1954.