

and restored to the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court for Calvert County, was the original survey of a parcel of ground said to contain three (3) acres of land, the same was dated "July 4, 1726" and signed by one "Adderton Skinner, Deputy Surveyor . . . for the purpose of establishing a County seat for Calvert County. . . ."<sup>6</sup>

The same act of Assembly which provided for building the courthouse also changed the name of the county seat from Williams Old Fields to Prince Frederick Town, a name which it has kept until today. We cannot be certain when the courthouse was finished; however, it was still under construction in 1731 when the commissioners were granted authority to levy another 10,000 pounds of tobacco to finish the work.<sup>7</sup> But the courthouse was surely in use before 1739, for in that year extensive repairs were already required. An act was passed at the May 1 - June 12 session of that year providing for reshingling the roof and rebricking "the Under Works," but none of the acts of this session were allowed.<sup>8</sup> Thereafter this courthouse survived but nine years. Its end is described in the *Maryland Gazette*:<sup>9</sup>

Wednesday Evening last, [April 20] a Fire happened in a public House belonging to Mr. John Wood at Prince Frederick Town, in Calvert County; which entirely consumed the same, with most of the Furniture: the Fire in the meantime communicated itself to the Court-House, which was adjacent, and could not be prevented from laying that commodious Building in Ashes; but by the Diligence of the People, the greatest Part of the Records were preserved.

## Second Courthouse at Prince Frederick

At the next session of the General Assembly, which convened only a few weeks after the fire, the county was authorized to levy £1,000 current money for a new courthouse, and an additional £500 was provided for a jail out of the funds set aside for that purpose for each county by the Commissioners for the Emission of Bills of Credit.<sup>10</sup> Calvert County had fortunately not drawn its share of these funds before the fire. For some reason now obscure, the commissioners appointed to carry out the provisions of this act did not do so, and the act was repealed and reenacted at the next session.<sup>11</sup> The terms of this new act were identical with those of the act of 1748 except that a new group of commissioners was designated.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the new building to be erected is not described except that it was to be of the same proportions as the one that had burned and that it was to be built on or near the site of its predecessor.

We are not told what material was used, but it was probably brick because of the building habits of the period; because, at least for Calvert County, it lasted a long time; and because after it was destroyed the walls still stood. It lasted, as a matter of fact, until the British burned it, July 19, 1814.

## Third Courthouse at Prince Frederick

The Congress of the United States, in 1838, repaid the county in part for the damage caused by the British, but this future windfall could not be foreseen.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the General Assembly of 1816 authorized the levy court of Calvert County to repair or rebuild the courthouse on the same site and for that purpose to borrow up to \$6,000, and in the meanwhile to rent a suitable building in any part of the county in which to hold court.<sup>14</sup> The additional sum of \$3,000 to complete the "improved" plan of the courthouse was authorized in 1819.<sup>15</sup> This last act seems to indicate that the courthouse was about ready for use at that time and, if so,

<sup>6</sup> *Deeds, G.W.D. No. 9, 42-43.* Microfilm copy, Hall of Records.

<sup>7</sup> Ch. 1, Acts of 1731.

<sup>8</sup> *Arch. of Md., XL, passim.*

<sup>9</sup> April 27, 1748.

<sup>10</sup> Ch. 18, Acts of 1748.

<sup>11</sup> Ch. 5, Acts of 1749.

<sup>12</sup> Scisco, *op. cit.*, p. 38, interprets the second act as a supplementary one designed to provide additional funds for the completion of the building, but this writer has found no evidence that such was the case.

<sup>13</sup> Ch. 331, Acts of 1838.

<sup>14</sup> Ch. 158, Acts of 1816; Ch. 105, Acts of 1817.

<sup>15</sup> Ch. 22.