

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Records

Prince George's County is unique among Southern Maryland counties in that it has preserved almost complete series of records. There was never a fire in the courthouse, and the British troops who passed through after burning Washington in 1814 are said to have respected everything in the village but the poultry and other edible domestic animals.

None of the records of Prince George's County has been published at this writing but Liber A of the Court Proceedings is now being prepared for publication under the joint auspices of the Maryland Hall of Records Commission and the Littleton Griswold Committee of the American Historical Association.

Note

In the first volume of this work I noted that on June 28, 1698 the Court adjourned to the new (first) courthouse (p. 118). I assumed that the courthouse was finished and it may have been, but the evidence may persuade the reader otherwise. Here follows the story from the beginning.

On June 24, 1697, the justices entered into a contract with Robert Brothers carpenter to erect a frame building for 50,000 pounds of tobacco, half to be paid at the next levy, the other half the next year. At November Court 1697 the justices were busy with courthouse matters: David Small was paid for the five acres of ground for the courthouse and church, Thomas Addison was granted a fee for surveying the same two parcels of land and David Small was allowed a modest sum "for the use of his store to keep Court in." Apparently, the courthouse was only beginning and Robert Brothers was paid his one-half of 25,000 pounds of tobacco (Liber A, ff. 256-7).

Brothers seems to have accomplished little during the winter because of a "very Sick family" but he promised to get ahead with it. Thereupon the Court gave him until April 15 to "bring over the Frame of the Court house to Charles towne." On June 28 it was far enough along so that the court could meet in it. Brothers died sometime between March Court and May 10, 1699, the day his will was probated (Wills H, 253-4). He named Elisha Sedgewick as sole executor. In August the court summoned the said Sedgewick to appear at next Court "for makeing addition to the Court house." (P. G. Court Proceedings, Liber A, f. 459). "Additions" must have meant "finishing" for Sedgewick seemed to satisfy the justices at September Court that he would be responsible for "the Building and Finishing the Court house"; and they thereupon voted him 25,000 lbs. of tobacco as last payment. Apparently, this was only an order to be paid out of the next levy for at January Court 1699/1700 it was "Ordered that the Sherife pay noe More Tobacco to Brothers Executor til he ffinish the Court House." (Proceedings Liber B. f. 20). Sedgewick must have finished the work quietly and been quietly paid by the sheriff for no more is heard of it in the court. The next year, June Court 1701, it was "Ordered that Mr. Robt. Bradley agree with John Deavor to add a pent house to the Court house as he thinks meet and to return an acct of the agreement the next Court." (Court Proceedings, B. f. 117). But this seems to have been an afterthought.

When the first volume of this work was being written I could find no connection between Benjamin Henry Latrobe and the building of a courthouse at Upper Marlboro in spite of the