

LOT 73 and the SHAW HOUSE

by Shirley Batty

The earliest record of Lot 73 is contained in Stoddart's notebook. On page 76 is recorded his survey of the lot confirming the ownership of Margaret Waldon Mercier, widow of Francis Mercier, who died in October 1717. No earlier document regarding title to the lot seems to be on deposit in the Hall of Records but there is always the possibility that one pre-dating the State House fire in 1704 was lost at that time. An inventory of Francis Mercier's personal effects was filed in 1718, the same year as Stoddart's survey.

On 14 February 1720, for the sum of 25 pounds, a portion of Lot 73, running along State Circle and back to Church Street, laid out for 12,795 square feet, was sold to Cornelius Brooksby (Deeds-1) The document bears the signature of John Steele and the mark of his wife, Margaret Mercier Steele, as grantors.*

Cornelius Brooksby, a butcher by trade, is credited with building the house at 21 State Circle. It evidently was not completed, however, at the time of his death, for in the accounts of his estate rendered by Ann Brooksby Gough the final one in 1725 notes "And this account grants a further allowance for her expenses in finishing the deceased's dwelling house for the benefit of the Children." (Accts. 1)

On 11 December 1722, as he was setting out on a voyage to London, Brooksby made out his will, bequeathing "--to my children, Mary Brooksby and John Brooksby**, my land and premises lying in the City of Annapolis joining to Stadt House Circle--to be equally divided between them--my son John's part of the ground to be laid out so as to include my dwelling house and my daughter's part to be laid out so as to include my butcher's shop." An appraisal of the properties was to be made and if the house was worth more, the son was to compensate his sister. If he delayed payment the difference was to be withheld from the son's share of his personal estate. His wife, Ann, was made executrix. (Wills-1)

* The balance of Lot 73, lying along School Street, was sold by Margaret Steele, widow, 1/17/1723 to William Pountany, butcher, for 80 pounds. (M.C.-1)

** this is the only place in which Cornelius Brooksby's son is referred to as "John". His birth, recorded in St. Anne's Parish Register, and all other documents show his name as "Cornelius".

On 6 July 1723, an inventory of household effects of Cornelius Brooksby, deceased, was made, showing their total value as 221 pounds, 18 shillings, 10 pence, and signed by two of his creditors as witnesses. His will was probated 19 July 1723. One of the witnesses to his will was John Beale, Deputy Commissary. In 1736 Thomas Gough and his wife, Ann Brooksby Gough, were required to turn over to Elizabeth Beale, wife of John Beale, deceased, a quantity of household goods in payment for his having served as guardian to the children. (Deeds-2)

On 28 May 1745 Mary Brooksby, Cornelius' daughter, became the wife of Sowell Long and less than a month later, on 7 June 1745, records show Cornelius Brooksby (son) conveyed to the couple, for 5 pounds sterling, "all claim to land except such part as the said Cornelius Brooksby heretofore gave to George Johnson of the city, aforesaid perukemaker to build an addition to his dwelling house on and which part the said George Johnson has already built on and is possessed of, which part I hereby sell and convey my rights to him". (Deeds-3)

Sowell Long, who was a sailor and shipwright, is credited with adding the Captain's Walk to the roof. To reach it he built the unique staggered, or "stirrup", steps which, because of lack of space, were placed in a cupboard. They rise steeply, checkerboard fashion, with room on each step for only one foot, to a loft from which a short ladder reaches up to the trap-door in the roof, giving access to the walk. 16 August 1753 the Maryland Gazette noted Long had built the ship HANBURY for Patrick Creagh.

A series of deeds dated 19, 21, 26 and 27 August 1751, between Sowell Long and his wife, Mary, and George Johnson, arrange for the lease and re-lease of Lot #73, each containing the clause "(except and always reserved the quantity of ten foot of ground heretofore given or conveyed to the said George Johnson by a certain Cornelius Brooksby whereon part of the dwelling house of the said Johnson now stands)". (Deeds-4)

Sowell Long's will, written on Kent Island, dated 25 February 1774 and probated on 31 March of the same year, divided his property, leaving the upper half of his lot in Annapolis and the buildings thereon to his son, David Long, and the lower lot to his grandson, David Long Sudler. (Wills-2)

In February 1782 an advertisement in the Maryland Gazette read,

"David Long and Thomas Sudler [father of David Long Sudler] want to sell house and lot on Church Street at present in tenure of Mr. William Whetcroft; also house and lot adjacent above at present under rent to Thomas Pryce." It wasn't until almost two years later, on the 7th of April 1784, that David Long, a citizen of Queen Anne's County, sold Lot #73 to John Shaw, cabinetmaker, for 510 pounds. (Deeds-5)

Shaw, who was born in Glasgow 25 April 1745, had been in partnership with Archibald Chisholm in a shop located on Church Street near the Dock. The Gazette of 13 November 1776 noted that they had dissolved their partnership and requested that all accounts owed either of them be paid "at the house lately occupied by the company."

The purchase of the property at 21 State Circle was necessitated by the fire which one night destroyed Shaw's workshop, an event reported in the Maryland Gazette 6 February 1783. In his new shop he carried on a diversified business, as items in the Gazette attest. For example, in 1784 he advertised looking-glasses, teachests and maps of North America; in 1787, tables, mirrors, etc., and that he made and sold drums; 1796, Griffith's map of Maryland and that a liberty print was on display; in 1799, he announced second hand furniture for sale at the Stadt House; 1800, a few elegant prints of Thomas Jefferson and George Washington for sale. On 1 March 1804 he advertised as "already made and for sale at his house near the State House, the following articles of household furniture, viz., mahogany desks, a desk and bookcase, bureaus, wardrobes, secretaries, side boards, dining, breakfast and card tables, easy chairs sofas, bedspreads of different kinds and sundry other articles for house-keeping which will be disposed of on very moderate terms for cash or the usual credit".

To further illustrate his versatility we need only note some of his other activities. During the Revolutionary War he served as Armorer for the State. Cabinetmakers also constructed coffins. This fact along with records of fees paid him for black silk handkerchiefs, black cloth and gloves, indicate he probably functioned as undertaker. According to the minutes of the Mayor's Court in 1783, he was the inventor of scales for weighing hay. On 7 December 1789 he was paid 100 pounds by the state "for his account of disbursements in finishing the Privy House" on State Circle. And in 1804 when a lottery was inaugurated to raise money to improve the streets of Annapolis, to purchase "a large and forcible fire-

engine and to deepen the basin", he was named as one of the managers. At various times he served the city as councilman, street commissioner, and fire-engine keeper. In the latter capacity (1783-84) he was paid a salary and for repair of engine and fire house.

It was, of course, with his cabinet-making that John Shaw made his lasting mark on the history of Annapolis. The book "World Furniture" credits him with developing his personal version of the Hepplewhite style and today his beautiful works are prized possessions or museum pieces.

John Shaw was married twice. His first wife, Elizabeth, died 8 March 1793 "in the 45th year of her life". They were the parents of six children who reached maturity: John, George (born 7/31/1790) who married Elizabeth Robinson 4 April 1819, Thomas, James, Elizabeth (born 10/21/1786) who married Thomas Franklin 12 November 1818, and Mary. On 3 March 1798 he married Margaret Steuart; she died 5 July 1806 at the age of 47. They were parents of a daughter, Jane, born on the 1st and baptised on the 22nd of October 1799.*¹

Of the children the most distinguished was Dr. John Shaw. He was born in the Shaw home 4 May 1778 and became a student at St. John's at its opening in 1789. He was classmate and fellow graduate, as well as a friend, of Francis Scott Key and it's thought the latter was a frequent visitor to the house on State Circle. John studied medicine two years under Dr. John T. Shaaf of Annapolis and then continued his studies at the University of Pennsylvania and in Edinburgh. From 1801 to 1805 he practiced in Annapolis with his former teacher, Dr. Shaaf, but after his marriage to Jane Selby in 1807 he moved to Baltimore. There, with two partners, he secured a state charter for the College of Medicine of Maryland, the fifth medical school in the United States and the forerunner of the University of Maryland. He also achieved some fame as a poet in the early 1800's. Having contracted tuberculosis he moved south and while on a voyage from Charleston to the Bahamas he died at sea 10 January 1809.

The elder John Shaw also owned other pieces of real estate. On November 1784 Archibald Chisholm, for 34 pounds, conveyed to the former full control of a lot running between Cornhill Street and East Street on which they had jointly held the balance of a 99-year lease initiated in 1770. In his will dated 18 September 1826 he wrote, "I give and devise unto my son, James Shaw,--all that lot and parcel of ground and the buildings thereon lying on Doctor Street in the city of Annapolis, running 41

feet from Jacob B. Slemaker's house to the Court House fence, then at right angles 77' until it intersects Temple Street, then 41' with Temple Street, then to the beginning on Doctor Street".

On February 1827, Shaw sold to the Mayor, Recorder, Alderman and Common Council of the city of Annapolis the section of his lot known as Chancery Lane, a section 3' 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide running from Church Street to the street leading around State House Circle, parallel to the dwelling of a certain Washington G. Tuck~~r~~. (Deeds-6)

It seems likely at the time a codicil was added to his will on 7 January 1829 he had become incapacitated for it is signed only with his mark. 26 February 1829 he died, his will bequeathing all his other real property to his five surviving children as tenants in common, requesting, "it is my wish and desire that the house in which I now reside may not be sold out of the family but that my son, George Shaw, should occupy the same and that my said son, George Shaw, pay to my other children a reasonable rent for the same annually." Detailed instructions were also given for the dispersal of his various slaves. (Wills-3)

Within a few months George Shaw was also dead, his will dated 7 August 1829 leaving his estate to his wife and her heirs. (Wills-4) Because the two men had signed a \$600. note for him, to settle the debt, on 28 December 1829, Thomas Shaw conveyed "to Thomas Franklin and James Shaw as tenants in common--all that lot of ground in the city of Annapolis fronting on the public circle, it being the late residence of John Shaw, deceased, together with all the buildings and improvements thereon". (Deeds-7) By the latter part of 1830 James Shaw had died and on 13 December of that year his survivors renounced right to administer his estate. Somerville Pinkney was appointed administrator by two of his creditors. (Wills-5)

The Chancery Court, on 4 June 1833, appointed Somerville Pinkney and Thomas Alexander as trustees to dispose of the real estate of the late James Shaw. They sold to Thomas Franklin on 18 November 1833, for \$4015., "all that house and lot fronting on Church Street and the Stadt House Circle--being part of Lot 73--except such part thereof as was transferred by said John Shaw to--the city of Annapolis." (Deeds-8) With this settlement Thomas Franklin and his wife, Elizabeth, assumed sole ownership of the property.

Elizabeth Shaw Franklin died 4 January 1865 and Thomas Franklin's will, dated 7 January 1865, stated, "I give, devise and bequeath to my daughter, Ann Franklin--the dwelling house in which I now reside on the

Public Circle". He wrote in the will about the law office next to the house, noting that he had previously bequeathed it to his son, James Shaw Franklin, but that since he was not in a position at that time to inherit it (the son was a Lt. in the 2nd Maryland Infantry, Col D, a unit of the Confederate Army. During two days of skirmishes, 18 and 19 August 1864, along the Weldon Railroad south of Petersburg, he had been taken prisoner by the Federal troops.) he, Thomas Franklin, was leaving it also to his daughter, Ann, until such time his son should once more be available to claim his inheritance. (Wills-6) James eventually returned to Annapolis. He died 7 March 1881 and in his will probated 23 March 1881 he stated, "I give, devise and bequeath to my sister, Ann Franklin, on fee simple, my law office and the land upon which the same is erected, situated on State House Circle". (O.C.-1)

At least as late as 1888 the long veranda of today had not been added, for a picture which appeared that year in Leslie's Weekly shows the front of Shaw house flush to the brick sidewalk with a small covered porch not much wider than the doorway extending out over it, a stairway descending to the west.

On 29 October 1901, John W. Randall, executor for Ann Franklin, as the result of a public sale, authorized transfer of the property, "the two lots being adjacent and now forming one lot with no divisions whatever", to Charles E. Scharf for \$5050.00 (Deeds-9) Less than three months later, on 10 January 1902, Charles Scharf conveyed the title to B.F.O.E., Annapolis Lodge #662. (Deeds-10)

The Elks occupied the building for about 59 years. When it was announced by the Lodge that the house was to be sold at auction, to avoid any risk of losing it to "progress", the Assembly was prevailed upon to purchase it. A price of \$80,000 was agreed upon and the transaction completed on 10 October 1961. Today it is used to house the four largest delegations to the Legislature, those from Baltimore City, Baltimore, Montgomery and Prince Georges counties. The interior is cut up into many small rooms but in the former cellar, the section behind the lattice work, two old fireplaces are visible and, of course, the staggered stairway remains.

REFERENCES

DEEDS:

- 1 - A.A. Co., Liber CW 1, folio 333 (1720)
- 2 - A.A. Co., Liber RD 2, folio 443 (1736)
- 3 - A.A. Co., Liber RB 2, folio 107 (1745)
- 4 - A.A. Co., Liber RB 3, folio 403-7 (1751)
- 5 - A.A. Co., Liber NH 2, folio 20 (1784)
- 6 - A.A. Co., Liber WSG 12, folio 337 (1827)
- 7 - A.A. Co., Liber WSG 15, folio 44 (1829)
- 8 - A.A. Co., Liber WSG 18, folio 286 (1833)
- 9 - A.A. Co., Liber GW 23, folio 399 (1901)
- 10 - A.A. Co., Liber GW 23, folio 400 (1902)

WILLS:

- 1 - A.A. Co., Liber 18, folio 147 (1723)
- 2 - Kent Co., Liber 39, folio 884 (1774)
- 3 - A.A. Co., Liber TTS 1, folio 23 (1829)
- 4 - A.A. Co., Liber TTS 1, folio 39 (1829)
- 5 - A.A. Co., Liber TTS 1, folio 92 (1830)
- 6 - A.A. Co., Liber 42, folio 53 (1865)

MAYOR'S COURT:

- 1 - Liber B, folio 107 (1723)

ORPHANS' COURT:

- 1 - Liber RFD 42, folio 438 (1881)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Volume of Maryland Records
- Buildings of the State of Maryland at Annapolis
- American Dictionary of Biography
- The Maryland Line in the Confederate Army
- St. Anne's Parish Register 1708-1785
- Maryland Gazette
- Anne Arundel County Marriage Records 1777-1813, page 68

ACCOUNTS:

- 1 - A.A. Co., Liber 7, folio 191 (1725)

Additional information from the Shaw Family Bible (G-465)

*1 First wife was Elizabeth Wellstead Pratt whom he married
7/20/1777. ~~She was born~~ Thomas was b. 4/17/1780; James
was born 3/17/1782; Mary b. 1/20/1784. Jane Shaw d. 5/22/1801

*2 W.S. was William Shaw b. 9/1/1788.