

appointed commissioners to build a new courthouse immediately. These gentlemen borrowed \$8,510 for the purpose from Robert Gilmor of Baltimore. The architect was William F. Small of that city and the builder, Ignatius Mudd of Washington, D. C. On August 6, 1831, the cornerstone was laid by Captain George Dent, a veteran of the Revolution, and the oration was delivered by Henry G. S. Key. Among the items deposited in the cornerstone was the motto "May the arrow of death quiver in the hearts of those who attempt to stifle the pure ermine of Justice within these walls."¹³

Such was the impressive beginning of the handsome Italian Renaissance structure created by William Small.¹⁴ Legislative authorization for the project was forthcoming at the next session of the General Assembly¹⁵ and the county seems to have taken possession shortly thereafter.

Additions to the Courthouse at Leonardtown

This building continued in use until 1899 when it was razed to make room for the Victorian courthouse, which was completed by 1901 at a cost of about \$22,000.¹⁶ This building was not so imposing as its predecessor, but it provided adequate space for fifty years. It was designed and built by the B. I. Smith Company, Contractors. The chronology of the building is quite full because the minutes of the building committee on which his grandfather, Enoch Booth Abell, served have been preserved by Thomas E. Stokel of Leonardtown. We know from this source that the removal of the old building was completed on May 4, 1901, and the foundation of the new begun May 6. We are also told that Joseph H. Key was selected as orator at the cornerstone ceremonies and that George B. Dent was chosen to lay the stone. It has undergone extensive remodeling in recent years, and in 1957 it was entirely rebuilt according to the plans of Frederick Tilp, Architect of Washington, D. C. The contractor was Mervell M. Dean, Hollywood, St. Mary's County. The approximate cost of the work was \$450,000, part of which was derived from a bond issue authorized by Chapter 108 of the Acts of 1955.¹⁷

¹³ This information is from *Chronicles of St. Mary's*, I, No. 1. Leonardtown, St. Mary's County Historical Society, June 1953.

¹⁴ For other examples of his work see Richard H. Howland and Eleanor P. Spencer, *The Architecture of Baltimore*, Baltimore, 1953, pp. 59-60.

¹⁵ Ch. 55, Acts of 1831.

¹⁶ The bond issue to pay for the building was authorized by Chapter 4, Acts of 1902.

¹⁷ This information was courteously furnished by Mrs. Sara M. King, Clerk to the County Commissioners, and the Honorable C. Benedict Greenwell, Clerk of the Circuit Court for St. Mary's County.