

the courthouse was in the neighborhood of \$65,000.¹⁴ With this money the courthouse was enlarged by twenty feet in depth on the south side, the courtroom was removed to the second floor, the offices of the clerk of court and register of wills were enlarged and a room for the county commissioners was provided. In addition, the appearance of the building, both inside and out, was improved and beautified. The architect employed for this purpose was Frank E. Davis of Baltimore, and the finished building, to judge from surviving pictures, was handsome and a credit to him and to the county.

Unfortunately, this fine structure was not destined to survive. At 1:30 of a cold morning, January 5, 1893, the cry of "fire! fire!" was heard in the streets of Cumberland, and soon the telltale glow which lighted up the neighboring mountains proved the cry was not false. It was the courthouse burning, and nothing that the citizenry or the firefighters of Cumberland were able to do could stem its course until the courthouse was totally gutted. Only the vaults in the offices of the clerk of court and the register of wills survived.¹⁵

Third Courthouse at Cumberland

After the fire the county court found a home in the council chamber of the city hall; while the clerk of the court, the register of wills and the county commissioners took up temporary quarters in the Allegany County Academy and in the adjacent house. Work began almost immediately to clear the ground and to begin construction on a new seat of justice. Authorization to issue bonds for the courthouse had to wait, however, until the next meeting of the General Assembly, early in 1894. At that time an act was passed authorizing the county commissioners of Allegany County to issue coupon bonds in the sum of \$100,000 "to provide the means for building and furnishing the new courthouse for said county."¹⁶ Plans for the new building were drawn by a local architect, Wright Butler, and construction was in the hands of Garber Brothers, "a firm of contractors from the South." The total cost of the structure was \$97,000. According to Thomas and Williams,

The laying of the corner stone of the new Court House took place on the 5th of October, 1893, and was accompanied with appropriate public ceremonies. The formal laying of the stone was in charge of the Masonic fraternity, whilst nearly all the civic and fraternal societies of the county took part in the brilliant parade which preceded it. And thus has Allegany County built her fourth Temple of Justice.¹⁷

This courthouse is a typical late Victorian public building, ornate and undistinguished in style, but solidly constructed of red brick and native limestone. It measures one hundred and eighty feet in length by one hundred and twenty-five in width by seventy-five in height, excluding the square steepled tower. It is situated on the site of old Fort Cumberland, overlooking the Potomac on one side and Wills Creek on the other. It has changed but little since it was first built. In 1916, \$15,000 was appropriated for an addition to the office of the clerk of court.¹⁸ In 1925, the quarters of the county commissioners were enlarged and additional space was released thereby for the use of various other officers.¹⁹ The sum of \$50,000 was authorized for this purpose.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

¹⁵ Accounts of this disastrous fire are to be found in the *Orphans' Court Proceedings, Liber 1*, p. 438, and with great vividness in the *Cumberland Sunday Times* of January 8, 1893.

¹⁶ Ch. 249.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 131-32.

¹⁸ Ch. 480.

¹⁹ Ch. 513, Acts of 1924.