

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

The early history of several Maryland counties is still obscure. They are invariably among the first counties, and they are also alike in that they all suffered the loss of records. Anne Arundel County is a prototype. It was established in 1650 and immediately became a battlefield between the Puritan settlers and the Proprietary's men from St. Mary's, a state of affairs which was not conducive to the holding of courts and the making of records. A half century later, all such records as had been created were destroyed by fire. Some effort has already been made to locate the various county seats from scattered evidence, but a closer examination of the same material has dispelled some—but not all—of the mystery heretofore accepted as impenetrable, and new material not heretofore accessible has helped as well.

The legal origin of the county is found in Chapter 7 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 1650, April term, as follows:

An Act for the erecting of Providence into a County by the name of Annarundell County.

Be it Enacted by the Lord Prop^r by and with the assent & approbaçon of the Upper and Lower House of this Assembly That that part of the Province of Maryland on the west side of the Bay of Chesapeake over against the Isle of Kent formerly called by the name of Providence by the Inhabitants there resideing and inhabiting this yeare shall from henceforth bee erected into a Shire or County by the name of Annarundell County, And by that name hereafter to bee ever called.¹

County government was initiated by an order of Governor Stone of July 30, 1650, appointing the following Commissioners: James Homewood, Thomas Meares, Thomas Marsh, George Puddington, Matthew Hawkins, James Merryman and Henry Catlyn. Among other things, they were ordered to "appoint Courts to be kept within and for the Sd County. . . ." ²

Court at Annapolis

No doubt a court was "appointed" and the names of its members recorded in the first volume of the Judgment Record which was lost in the fire of 1704. That the place chosen was Annapolis we learn, however, from a deposition of 1658, found in the archives of the Provincial Court. The clerk records that the deponent "Saith That beinge At a Court at Sciverne some time aboute fflower or five yeares since. . . ." ³ In December of the previous year the same court clerk entered the notation "Whereas by former Judgment at Severne. . . ." ⁴

Some sort of crisis occurred in the year 1658 for on July 12 of that year the Council toke into debate the settlement of the Court for the County of Ann arundell & the defects in the former Commission. And Ordered That William Burges Thomas Meares Robert Burle Thomas Todde Roger Crosse Thomas Howell Richard Wells, Richard Ewen John Brewer Anthony Salway & Richard Woolman Gent should be comrs for the said County & that they should by the Sherriffe be summoned to appeare on the 22th Instant at the house of Mr Edward Lloyd to take the oath of Commissioners & Justices of the Peace; and that the 23th Instant should be the first court day.⁵

¹ *Archives of Maryland*, 67 Vols., Baltimore, Maryland Historical Society, 1883—, I, 292. This work is hereafter referred to as *Arch. of Md.* The same Act is numbered "8" in Thomas Bacon, *Laws of Maryland At Large*, Annapolis, 1765.

² *Ibid.*, III, 257-58.

³ *Ibid.*, XLI, 113.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 348.