

# QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

## Records

With the exception of some gaps in the court proceedings, the records of Queen Anne's County are almost intact. It was an extremely rich collection when listed by Louis Dow Scisco and many records have since been discovered in the attic where Scisco was advised there were none stored. His list is, therefore, not altogether accurate, nor are his courthouse dates. (*Md. Hist. Mag.* XXIV, 224-228).

## Note

That the courthouse at Queenstown was in use in 1710 has been positively proved. It is now possible to give what appears to be the exact date of completion. Benjamin Mifflin in his diary of August 4, 1762 notes: "arrived at Queens Town 7 miles . . . there are about 5 or 6 Dwelling Houses in it besides the Prison & Court House Built as appears by the Date in the Gable End in 1708." (*Journal of Benjamin Mifflin*, New York Public Library, 1935, p. 14). It may be assumed further from this note that the courthouse, or at least the gable end, was of brick.

It may be recalled that there was some problem about title to the property in Queenstown on which the courthouse and jail had been built. In 1710 (Ch. 7) the General Assembly confirmed the purchase and ordered that the former owners be recompensed. As a result of this order Mrs. Elizabeth Coursey was paid 1,100 lbs. of tobacco for the courthouse and church land. (*Queen Anne's County Court Proceedings*, November Court 1710. p. 126).

The subsequent history of the courthouse before the County seat was moved to Centreville in the 1780's is still mysterious. An Act of the General Assembly of 1749 (Ch. 10) sheds only a little light on the 2 acres of land occupied by the public buildings. This Act authorized the justices of the county to sell the old prison for whatever it would bring and have it removed from the public land. There proved to be no takers so the following year they were empowered to sell the building and the  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre of land on which it stood (Acts 1750, Ch. 16). The buyer in 1751, was Henry Jacobs (*Queen Anne's County Land Records*, R. T. No. D. f. 3, Ms. Hall of Records). The persons to whom the Commissioners sold the rest of the public land, in 1792, are known: Charles Frazier, William Coursey, John Sayer Blake and perhaps Richard Wilson (*Queen Anne's County Land Records*, S. T. W. No. 2. ff. 196, 207, 209, Ms. Hall of Records).

I noted in Volume I that the Courthouse at Centreville was "completed at least by 1794." This has now proved to be erroneous. Among the many records found in the attic of the courthouse preceding and during the remodeling of 1961-62 was the Minutes of the Court for June 1, 1796 where it is noted that "The Commissioners appointed for building a Court House & gaol in Queen Anne's County, having represented to the Court that the new Court House for the said County at Centre Ville was compleated and finished—It is ordered that the same be received, and as such taken, held and deemed to be the proper Court House of Queen Anne's County."

Since the appearance of Volume I, the courthouse has been remodelled and enlarged radically. It now boasts the first underground vault to be built for the records of any Clerk of the Court in Maryland. The architect and engineer was Thomas B. Bourne Associates, Inc. of