

Richard Dallam, Amos Garret and three gentlemen named Hall, Aquila, John of Cranbury and Benedict Edward. Baltimore County delegates in the Lower House continued to sit, representing the county in which they lived, and others were elected to fill the vacancies.

The location of the county seat of Harford continued to plague the inhabitants for ten years. In the statute, the commissioners were directed in the usual way to buy four acres of land in or near Bush Town for the court house and prison, and the justices of Harford County were directed to contract for a place in Bush Town to hold court and keep county records, and one to serve as a jail (p. 199) until the proper court house and prison were built. Because the taxables of what was now Harford County had contributed toward building the new Baltimore County court house, Baltimore County was directed to pay 154,666 pounds of tobacco toward the cost of the Harford County buildings, and the Harford Countians were taxed 200,000 pounds for them. After the court house and prison were built, the name of Bush Town was to be Harford Town. That was the normal procedure in opening a new county. But in this case, something happened. The original act was passed on December 9, 1773: On April 13, 1774 a petition from sundry inhabitants of Harford County for the location of the court house near the centre of the county was read and referred till next session of assembly (but there never was a next session). Immediately thereafter leave was given to introduce a bill "for suspending the Power of the Commissioners for building a Court House" in the county and three of the Harford County delegates were a majority of the committee to draft it (p. 339). One of the three, Richard Dallam, was also one of the commissioners whose power was thus to be suspended. The bill was passed without incident, and it cancelled not only the power of the Commissioners to erect the court house and prison, but also any contracts to that end which they had already made. For the remainder of the stay of the county seat at Bush Town, the court met and the prisoners were kept in rented buildings.

In January 1782 an act of the state legislature provided that an election be held to determine where the county buildings should be put. The places to be voted for were named in the act: Harford Town or Bush, Otter Point, otherwise Gravelly Hill, Churchville and Aquila Scott's Old Field now called Bel Air (Session laws, Nov. 1781, c. 10). Bel Air won, and April 27, 1782 Aquila Scott conveyed to the county two and five-eighths acres of land for the court house and prison. The lot thus bought was that on which the present court house and jail now stand, but they were not erected at once. Feeling was running high, and the sheriffs and the commissioners named in the act of 1773 refused to pay over the money they had collected, until an act of the legislature empowered the justices of Harford to use the resources of law to collect it from them (Session laws, 1784, c. 10). Opposition to Bel Air remained alive and led to still another act of the legislature (Session laws, 1786, c. 24). This time the vote was by law limited to Bel Air and Havre de Grace, and when Bel Air won, the prison and court house were in due course erected there.