

satisfaction with the location of the county seat and that there was already sentiment for removing the place of government to Chester Mill, later Centreville.<sup>4</sup>

## Courthouse at Centreville

In 1782, the desire to remove the county seat was expressed in a petition to the General Assembly. The petition was granted, and certain commissioners named in the act were authorized to abandon and sell the public buildings in Queenstown which were described as "in ruinous condition" and to build a new courthouse and jail at the head of Corsica Creek or in that neighborhood.<sup>5</sup> Because of the loss of the court records for this period we know nothing of the details of the new buildings; we do know, however, that selling the old buildings and the public ground at Queenstown proved difficult because the bounds had not been accurately measured or the records had been lost. To resolve this impasse the General Assembly, two years later, authorized a resurvey of the town of Queenstown.<sup>6</sup> The resultant plat which was ordered to be filed among the records of the county was either never filed or has long since disappeared.

In any case, the sale of the ground did not provide enough money for both the purchase of new ground and the erection of new buildings; therefore, in 1788, the General Assembly was again called on for help. This time a levy of £1,500 current money was authorized, and the commissioners were given the privilege of selling the new land purchased for this purpose by the former commissioners or choosing a new site altogether.<sup>7</sup> In the next year, an act was passed to provide for the continuity of the board of commissioners, and in 1791, an additional £600 had to be authorized in order to continue work on the public buildings.<sup>8</sup>

The courthouse and jail seem to have been completed at least by 1794, because in that year the General Assembly was asked to give legal status to the settlement which was growing up around the center of county business. Authorization was granted to survey the area, lay off lots and name the town Centreville.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the resultant plat was recorded in the land records of the County as directed in the act.<sup>10</sup>

Extensive repairs were authorized for the courthouse in 1868 and again in 1876. The architect employed for this latter remodeling was J. Crawford Neilson of Baltimore; the builder was Captain James Smith, who undertook the job for \$6,800. The building was ready for occupancy again shortly after October 15, 1877, when the contract was let to the same Captain Smith to finish the courtroom.<sup>11</sup> Since then it has been much altered insofar as the interior is concerned, but the exterior has remained without much change. The grounds have, however, been spoiled in part by the location of a water standpipe behind the courthouse.

<sup>4</sup> Frederic Emory, *Queen Anne's County, Maryland*, Baltimore, 1950, p. 115.

<sup>5</sup> Ch. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ch. 16, Acts of 1784.

<sup>7</sup> Ch. 29.

<sup>8</sup> Ch. 38.

<sup>9</sup> Ch. 23.

<sup>10</sup> *Queen Anne's County Land Records, S.T.W. No. 5*, p. 353, April 1798.

<sup>11</sup> Information from local newspaper clippings in the scrapbook of the Queen Anne's County Public Library.