

additional \$2,000, part of which, however, was earmarked for an office for the sheriff in the same building.<sup>27</sup>

## Enlargement of 1884-1886

The courthouse of 1792 had meanwhile remained intact. It was a quiet, dignified two-story structure, but hemmed in on two sides by the streets of the growing town of Elkton. When the fireproof building to house the offices of the Register of Wills, the Clerk of Court and the Sheriff was built it took the form of an extension to the rear of the courthouse but facing the side street. This addition was of brick and one-story, but it blended well with the older building and the photographs which we have indicate that the two buildings together formed a happy union. This situation continued until the eighteen-eighties when the need for additional space posed a difficult problem for the county commissioners. By that time the main building was hemmed in on every side and they were faced with the choice of tearing the whole structure down and rebuilding, either on the same site or elsewhere, or of adding a third story.

When authorization for funds to provide the needed space was first asked of the General Assembly, in 1884, the decision about exactly what should be done had not been made, and the Act which was subsequently passed provided for a maximum of \$25,000 which could be used either to enlarge or to build anew.<sup>28</sup> But two years later the decision had been made to enlarge only and, therefore, a new limit of \$8,000 was approved for enlarging and remodeling the courthouse.<sup>29</sup> What emerged was something unique in Maryland courthouse structure. The hipped roof was removed and a mansard third story added. Then, presumably in order to support this third story, a tower was built in front of the building, from the ground up. This tower contained the entrance to the building, a small balcony, a clock, a curious semi-onion dome; and the whole was surmounted by a weathervane in the shape of a fish.

## Second Courthouse at Elkton

Even with the additions of 1832 and 1886, the old courthouse soon became crowded and, in time, a new effort was made to replace it. By the third decade of this century it had become crowded almost beyond endurance; but by this time too there was little money in the county for new construction. Beginning with 1933, however, a series of acts of the General Assembly made it possible for the county to visualize a new public building to be built with the aid of Federal funds. In 1935, an act was passed authorizing the County Commissioners to expend \$5,000 for a lot of ground on which to build a new courthouse whenever it was needed.<sup>30</sup> As is normal under such circumstances, some little controversy arose over the site of the new courthouse and about the wisdom of abandoning the old building.

In the end, a new site was chosen, about 200 yards east of the old courthouse and facing the same way on Main Street. The cornerstone ceremonies took place in May 1939, and thereafter the actual building proceeded rapidly. The architects were Malone and Williams of Salisbury and the general contractor was the Lacchi Construction Company. The total cost of the building was about \$225,000 of which a large part was provided by the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works. The dedication ceremonies held July 26, 1940, marked the official opening of the building. At that time the county considered that it had solved the problem of adequate space at least for some time to come, but the multiplication of records and agencies has disappointed that hope.

The writer quotes without prejudice the esthetic judgment as to this courthouse of the late Hulbert Footner, an esteemed critic of such things:

The building stands directly upon Main Street without a tree or a bit of grass to grace it. The material is handsome enough, being the native stone of Cecil County, but the bronze trimmings seem strangely out of place and the design, inclining to L'Art Moderne, hopelessly out of character with the simple, pleasant American town that surrounds it. The desire to be up-to-date leads men into strange aberrations.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Ch. 65, Acts of 1832.

<sup>28</sup> Ch. 453, Acts of 1884.

<sup>29</sup> Ch. 240, Acts of 1886.

<sup>30</sup> Ch. 246, Acts of 1935.

<sup>31</sup> *Maryland Main and the Eastern Shore*, New York, 1942. pp. 249-50.