

prosecution and Conviction of the Incendiary or Incendiaries, who fired the Court House of this County on the 9th Instant and that the same be published in the Cambridge Chronicle and Democrat for three Months.¹⁴

If the fire was really of incendiary origin, then the culprit or culprits were never found and the reward went unpaid. Meanwhile, all the offices of county government began to function again in temporary quarters and for the most part without records. Fortunately, the General Assembly was then in session, and before adjournment on May 31, 1852, just three weeks after the fire, two acts were passed for the relief of the county. The first was "An Act to authorize the appointment of a Commissioner to take testimony to provide for the recording of copies of wills and other papers, of which the originals were lost by the burning of the Court House in Dorchester County, and to remedy as far as practicable the evils likely to ensue from the destruction of the records of said County."¹⁵ The second act appointed a group of Commissioners who were authorized to build a new courthouse on the ground where the burned one had stood and for this purpose to levy up to \$12,000 on the taxables of the county.¹⁶

Third Courthouse at Cambridge

The records of the commissioners for building the new courthouse have not survived; however, there is now in the Hall of Records a handsome architectural drawing superimposed on a plat of Cambridge, dated February 14, 1853. Since its date precludes the possibility that it was drawn after the building was finished, and since there can be no doubt that it represents the present courthouse, we may assume that it was prepared to accompany his bid by the successful architect or bidder. It is signed Geo. (?) Winthrop. In the lower righthand corner appear the names of the following individuals: Thomas W. Anderson, Alexander H. Bayly, William Wingate, Lewis Ross and Charles A. Mitchell, who are listed as "Commissioners" (no doubt, "Commissioners for Building the Courthouse," although the individuals are in several cases different from those mentioned in Chapter 324 of the Acts of 1852). William Rea was Clerk; he was also Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners.

Some of the subsequent chronology of the building is sketched out roughly in the Proceedings of the County Commissioners. On June 28, 1853, two gentlemen were appointed to seek out a proper place of meeting for the Circuit Court which was to include jury rooms "until the completion or erection of the court house." Then, there is no further mention of the new courthouse until the meeting of March 20, 1854. The minute of that date is interesting enough to be quoted in full:

Whereas James Wallace Esquire a Member of the late general assembly having called the attention of this board of Commissioners to an Act of the late general assembly entitled "An Act to authorise the Commissioners appointed by virtue of the Act of 1852 Chapter 324 to build a New Court House in Dorchester County to borrow a sum of money to furnish said House and enclose the ground" and having urged this board to an immediate action thereon assuring them he would assume the responsibility of all Complaints from the public growing out of the Sanction of this board with the provisions of said law—And whereas after a mature Consideration of the Application in Connection with the Act of Assembly; the board determined to postpone present Action thereon and adjourned Whereupon Thomas H. Hicks and William H. Allen Esquires urged upon the Commissioners the reassembling of the board and a reconsideration of their postponement of action; thereupon the Commissioners reassembled their board and not with standing their Manifest reluctance to such hasty action in the premisses, Ordered and do hereby Authorize at the earnest appeal and solici-[ta]tions aforesaid the Commissioners appointed by the Act of 1852 Chapter 324 to borrow the additional sum of money contemplated by the Act of the last session afs^d.; Provided they do not exceed the sum limited by the Act afs^d. 3000\$ The Commissioners then adjourned until April 24th 1854.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Proceedings of the County Commissioners for Dorchester County, Liber W. R. No. 1*, no pagination—first page, Ms.

¹⁵ Ch. 316.

¹⁶ Ch. 324.

¹⁷ *Liber W. R. No. 1*, no pagination, Ms.