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THE OLD STATE HOUSE

Col. Tilghman Finds A Valuable Copper-Plate Engraving.

RECORD OF HISTORIC BUILDING

Present Is The Third Capitol On The Site—Changes In The Circle. Senate Chamber Restored.

[Special Dispatch to the Baltimore Sun.]

Annapolis, Md., March 12.—Col. Oswald Tilghman, the Secretary of State, accidentally found recently an old copper plate of the State House. It had been used in the printing office of the Annapolis Republican as an ink plate for probably a half century, and no impressions from it are to be found in Annapolis. The picture in THE SUN is from this engraving, and a number of beautiful engravings from the plate have been ordered by the Governor.

The brick wall surrounding the circle on which the State House stands, shown in the picture, proves this copper plate to have been engraved prior to 1836, as in that year this brick wall was replaced by a granite wall surmounted by an iron fence. Resolution No. 103 by the General Assembly, relative to the repairs of the Public Circle, passed April 4, 1833, reads:

"Resolved by the General Assembly of Maryland, That the Governor and Council be, and they are hereby, authorized and directed to cause the wall surrounding the Public Circle to be finished, and to draw upon the Treasurer of the Western Shore from time to time for such sum or sums of money as may be necessary for that purpose, not exceeding $9,000, and the said Treasurer is hereby directed to pay the same out of any unprovided money out of the treasury; provided, that no part of the money hereby appropriated shall be drawn for until security shall have been given, satisfactorily to the Governor and Council, for the completion of the work in the style in which it has been commenced, including the gateways, gates, railing, steps, pavements, gutters and all appurtenances, for a sum not exceeding the $9,000."

Gov. Thomas W. Veazey in his message to the Legislature December 28, 1836, says: "The new stone wall and iron railing appear to be executed in a substantial manner." The brick wall was probably built before 1800, as in 1833, at its December session, the General Assembly passed the following resolution:

Improving The Circle.

"Resolved, That the Governor and Council be, and they are hereby, authorized and requested to cause the outhouses on the hill and the wall around the Public Circle to be repaired and some suitable covering placed thereon." At this time a shingle roof or coping was built on the top of this brick wall, which was torn down three years later.

The granite wall surmounted by the iron fence stood for 45 years, from 1836 to 1881. Chapter 174, Laws of Maryland, 1882, appropriated $15,000 "for the improvement of the State House grounds, for grading and otherwise placing in proper order and condition the State House grounds and for paving the circle around the same."

It was at this time that the circle was considerably enlarged on the north side of the grounds. The contractor who furnished and put up the iron fence and gates in 1836 was Vachel Sevier, and the contractor who removed them in 1881 was Joseph Marshall.

The massive granite gate posts now standing in front of the Claude Flats, on the northeast side of the State Circle, formerly stood at the main gateway at the head of Francis street, directly in front of the Capitol. The stone slabs which surmounted the granite wall and in which the iron rods of the fence were inserted in holes drilled to receive them can now be found along the top of the sea wall at the mouth of College creek, at the foot of the hill on which stands the beautiful Naval Cemetery.

The State House In 1841.

Ridgely in his "Annals of Annapolis," 1841, says: "The State House is situated on a beautiful elevation in the center of the city. It has elicited alike the admiration of the citizen, the sojourner and the stranger for the beauty of its structure.

"The main building is of brick and the superstructure which surmounts it is of wood. The height from the base to the top of the spire is 200 feet. From the platform of the dome, which is 133 feet high, the spectator has one of the most delightful panoramic views to be found within the United States. It commands a view of nature in all the beauty of poetic scenery—the ancient city, its environs, the adjacent country, the noble Chesapeake and the Eastern Shore beyond it, for an extent of 30 miles around, breaks upon the view of the delighted eye.

"The hill on which stands this noble edifice is inclosed by a neat and substantial granite wall, surmounted by a handsome iron railing which is entered by three gates, one situated at the head of Francis street, the second to the southwest and the third to the northwest of the circle.

"The main entrance to the building is through a portico of but modest pretensions and opens into a spacious and beautiful hall, in which is had a view of the interior of the dome, the stucco work of which was made of plaster brought from St. Mary's county.

"At the termination of the entrance the State Library is situated, which is appropriately fitted up. There are seven alcoves on the first floor and 10 arches on the gallery. It contains at this time (1841) 12,000 volumes and is calculated to hold 20,000. This portion of the hall was formerly occupied by the General Court of Maryland and used as a hall of justice until 1804, when that court was abolished. It remained unoccupied from that period until the year 1834, when it was fitted up and appropriated to its present purpose.

The Old Treasury.

In referring to the old Treasury Building, the top of which only is visible in the cut, Ridgely says: "Within the circle inclosing the State House, on the eastern margin of the hill, stands the Treasury Department. This building is venerable, as well as memorable, for having been the legislative hall of the Provincial Government. In the larger room the lower house and in the smaller one the upper house of Assembly sat for many years; such accommodations contrast strikingly with those of the present day."

The old octagonal or round house, shown in the print, on the northwest side of the State House, was torn down in 1858 by Samuel W. Brooks, who at that time was, and still is, messenger to the Governor, having just completed 50 years of continuous service.

Resolution No. 85, passed by the General Assembly March 15, 1834, authorized "the Governor and Council to contract for the building of a small gunhouse." This building, a small two-story frame structure, was erected just at the head of Maryland avenue, between the present circle and the old wall, shown in the print, which barely encircled the old Treasury.

The brick Comptroller's office, on the hill fronting Maryland avenue, which was built in 1859 and torn down in 1906, occupied almost the same site upon which this gunhouse stood, and in which some half dozen old brass cannon (four and six pounders) were stored. These big guns had long been used to fire salutes annually on July 4 and February 22, and notably when the Marquis de Lafayette revisited Annapolis in 1824.

The Three State Houses.

The present State House is the third one that has stood upon the same site. The foundation of the first State House was laid April 30, 1696, shortly after the removal of the Capitol from St. Mary's to Annapolis.

In June, 1697, the building was so well advanced as to be set apart for public use. The officers in charge were Gov. Francis Nicholson, Hon. Sir Thomas Lawrence, baronet, Secretary; Hon. Henry Jowles, Chancellor; Hon Kenelm Cheseldyne, Commissary-General. Struck by lightning in 1699 and entirely consumed by fire in 1704, the first State House had but a brief existence. This gave Governor Seymour occasion to say: "I never saw a public building left solely to Providence but in Maryland."

The second State House was finished in 1706. It was an oblong square entered by a hall, a cupola surmounting it. On the north side of it stood an armory, which was also the ballroom. This armory building appears in the small halftone picture of the State House, here reproduced, from the frontispiece of Ridgely's "Annals of Annapolis," as it stood in 1789, and in very close proximity to it. It was probably torn down soon after the above date.

The second State House was torn down to give place for the present one in 1773. The cornerstone of the present State House was laid by Gov. Robert Eden and Hon. Matthew Tilghman, president of the Association of Freemen, in 1774, at which time, historians tell us, a clap of thunder from a clear sky was noted, but no mention among the archives of the State at that time is made of the quaint little building, the old Treasury, which must have taken the place of the second State House for a season until the completion of the third.

The third, being the present State House, was completed, with the exception of the dome, and occupied just prior to the American Revolution. Within its walls first sat the Association of Freemen, who promulgated a declaration of independence on July 3, 1776, just one day before the Declaration of Independence was passed by the Continental Congress in the city of Philadelphia.

In the votes and proceedings, Maryland House Journal, November 20, 1792, the Committee on Claims reported that "Thos. Harwood, Esq., Treasurer of the Western Shore, had cash in hand amounting to £1,718 s. 15 d. 0 for repairing the Stadt House."

The Dome.

The dome of the State House—certainly the interior workmanship on it—was not finally finished until 1798, as the following letter, unearthed recently by the Secretary of State, conclusively proves:

"His Excellency the Governor and Council:

"Sirs—I take the liberty of offering to your Excellency and the Council my service to execute the carpenters' work of the dome on the Stadt House agreeably to the design of Mr. Joseph Clark for the sum of five hundred and six pounds.

"I am induced to make this proposal from my having lately met with two very good workmen whom I could readily engage if your Excellency and Honors should think proper to favor my application. I remain, with respect, your Excellency and Honors obedt. humble servt.

PATRICK DUNN.

"Annapolis, June 18, 1792."

A workman by the name of Dance, who put the finishing touches on the stucco work on the interior of the dome, in stepping back on the scaffold to look up at the effect of his handiwork, lost his balance and fell headlong to the floor of the main hall below. He was, of course, killed instantly. His widow, Mary Dance, in 1793, petitioned the Governor and Council "that her husband was unfortunately killed by a fall from the dome of the Stadt House, praying for an annuity for life or a sum of money to defray the passage of herself and daughter to her native country." The State records show that her petition was nonconcurred in.

Prof. J. D. Warfield in his "Founders of Anne Arundel and Howard Counties, Maryland," says: "Judging from the want of record after 1604, the inference is clear that our historic little Treasury Building was built after the organization of Anne Arundel town as a port of entry in 1683, and at the time of Governor Nicholson was the house in which he called his council together for the organization of the Capitol."

The late George H. Shafer, chief clerk in the Land Commissioner's office for some 30 years, had an interesting old print of the Treasury Building, with a group of provincial or continental soldiers in uniform standing near the front entrance. It may yet be found among his papers.

Annapolis In 1694.

A writer who visited Annapolis at a very early date is quoted by Oldmixon in his "British Empire in America" as saying:

"There are, indeed, several places allotted for towns; but hitherto they are only titular ones, except Annapolis, where the Governor resides. Colonel Nicholson has done his endeavor to make a town of that place. There are about 40 dwelling houses in it, seven or eight of which can afford a good lodging and accommodations for strangers. There are also a State House and a free school, built of brick, which makes a great show among a parcel of wooden houses; and the foundation of a church is laid, the only brick church in Maryland." Francis Nicholson convened the first Assembly at Anne Arundel town September 21, 1694, and at this session the removal of the seat of government from St. Mary's was decided upon. Prof.

J. D. Warfield says: "The State Stadt House, as it was first eal ably as a delicate compliment William'), was finished about 16 free school, referred to above, w William's School," founded in 1 valuable library presented by W of England was increased by Nicholson, who used a portion of lic revenue in the purchase of books. Many of the volumes pre the King to the city of Annapoli in the library of St. John's Co recent magazine article entitled " dred Years Ago!" well says: " venerable State House, ashame modern additions that almost o its grandeur, has been relieved of blemishes; new legislative and g rial halls and committee rooms, original designs, have been added Senate chamber has been resto was when Washington therein l his commission as commander-in- made good-by to the Continental therein assembled, passing to So and thence to Mount Vernon. F liam School long since gave up i the south of the State House. mory, on the north, no longer bris muskets—a gallant fighting fore Kalb) stands upon the site of th and now let us have the hands of our fighting Revolutionary Thomas Sim Lee, on the latter, fo him and his Maryland soldiers th have been no Revolution."

As to the trees formerly upon House hill, the venerable Sa Brooks, above mentioned, says th a half dozen very large Lombard stood in a row directly in fro State House, one in front of the Building; a few large locust tr on the north side, a large alan on the south side of the gateway Francis street, and another nea pump on the northeast of the Sta These trees, being very old, were by him in 1858.

In aoout 1856 Richard Swaun, t Librarian, planted a circular row poplars just inside of the iron f an avenue of the same trees lead the main entrance of the State the gate at the head of Franci These grew to be large trees. dug up in 1881, when the stone iron railing were removed and the graded and enlarged to their pre

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