

II. Construction, First Phase , 1771-1779

~~Undertaker~~ 0

The first step taken in the construction of the new State House was the razing of the sixty-year old second State House. From a letter of Joshua Johnson to Charles Wallace, written from London on December 1, 1771, in reply to one of 25 August from Wallace:

"I am told altho you were above doing it that J. Pinkney has bought the old Court House in Order to make Friends with you. its damd hard Chas. & must touch Pluck. I suppose tho he found it his Interest."¹

Wallace signed the contract to build the State House on June 20, 1771.² As soon as the site had been cleared by Jonathan Pinkney, Wallace began the work of building anew. He soon progressed to the point of preparing for the cornerstone laying which was held March 28, 1772. The account in the Maryland Gazette describes the ceremony as follows:

"On Saturday last about Twelve o'Clock, his Excellency the Governor, attended by a Number of the principal Gentlemen of this City, was pleased to lay the First Stone of the Foundation of the Stadt House; on which occasion a cold collation was provided for the Company, and after a few loyal and constitutional Toasts had circulated, the Gentlemen retired, the workmen giving Three Cheers on their Departure."³

Apparently the workmen made good progress - at least for those days - for in June of the next year, 1773, the General Assembly was asked to consider Wallace's suggestion that he not be required to comply with the specifications for the roof given in the Act, that is, "good Slate Tile or Lead ..." for reasons which will appear here below, a substitution was felt to be desirable. The Lower House favored wooden shingles but the Upper House did not concur. Consideration of the problem began in June and ended December 22 when there was passed "An Act to Enable the undertaker for building the Stadt House to cover the same with Copper." The Act is of great antiquarian interest, and it is, therefore, given here in full: