

known Key family, at this time extending their holdings from St. Mary's County to more northern parts of the colony.

Mrs. Key comments on the friendship between her husband and Governor Eden and bears it out with several anecdotes. Robert Eden arrived in Annapolis in 1768, bought Edmond Jenings' fine house which had been rented by his predecessor, Horatio Sharpe, and employed Robert Key to enlarge it.³² William Eddis, that faithful chronicler, writes home in October 1769:³³

The governor's house is most beautifully situated and when the necessary alterations are completed, it will be a regular, convenient, and elegant building. The garden is not extensive, but it is disposed to the utmost advantage; the centre walk is terminated by a small green mount, close to which the Severn approaches; this elevation commands an extensive view of the bay, and the adjacent country. The same objects appear to equal advantage from the saloon, and many apartments of the house; and perhaps I may be justified in asserting, that there are but few mansions in the most rich and cultivated parts of England, which are adorned with such splendid and romantic scenery.

Key added a rounded bay to the ballroom of the square brick house, extended wings for offices and kitchen and enlarged coach-house and stables. For some of this work, he was not paid until the Governor left the colony in 1776, when he was told to take the crystal chandeliers, valued at £1200. To the Keys' indignation the Committee of Safety for Maryland got there first and condemned all the Edens' personal property as enemy assets. Mrs. Key credits Governor Eden with further patronage to his architect friend by giving him the new Ball Room to design and build. This is the building still on Duke of Gloucester Street, Annapolis, but now with little to identify it with the Eighteenth Century. Eddis describes it as of elegant construction, illuminated to great advantage. Those who did not want to dance fortnightly could retire to the card rooms at either end for an evening of gaming.³⁴

Robert Key is called "long a worthy and respectable citizen of Annapolis" but there are few records to prove it.³⁵ Fairly regularly during 1772 and 1773 he took his "today" at 1/6 with the other patrons of William Faris' tavern. Occasionally he is down in Faris' books for "supper and club"; once he hired a horse for

³² R. C. Key, *op. cit.*

³³ William Eddis, *Letters from America* (London, 1792), p. 17.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁵ David Ridgely, *Annals of Annapolis* (Baltimore, 1841), p. 244 n.

three days and once he borrowed a small sum.³⁶ In March 1774 he bills the Commissioner of the Loan Office for repairs, "Myse and man one day each @ 7/6." In 1774 he, like Joseph Horat Anderson, signed the protest against the proclamation renouncing debts to British creditors.³⁷ Mrs. Key tells of his banishment from Annapolis because of his Loyalist leanings. She makes him something of a hero when he gives Eden warning that a deputation is on his heels, and helps speed the Governor from his garden seat to H. M. S. *Fowey*, lying off the point to carry him back to England. Once when his wife was ill, he paid her a visit incognito but the word got around and the house was surrounded. With the prevailing civility the patriots allowed Mr. Key to finish his term before escorting him across the river, headed for Baltimore. Key apparently decided later to renounce his unpopular attitude for he took the oath of fidelity in Anne Arundel County in 1779. His only wartime service to his adopted State seems to have been in acting as courier and carrying a letter to Governor Lee from Baltimore Town in 1781.³⁸ To be sure there is a mysterious entry of £26:19 for services rendered the State in 1779 but whether for architectural or military work, we do not know.⁴⁰ Again in 1785, an account is rendered "For view of State House, etc. 12:16:8."⁴¹

If ever Key was in need of a meal or a little pocket money, he could count on the patronage and generosity of Edward Lloyd I of "Wye" and Annapolis. For a period of twenty-eight years, 1774 to 1802, he served the Lloyds at both town house and plantation.⁴² Often the entries in the Lloyd business ledgers are for small repairs such as: "Repairing Stable with one new Slate making a coach jack, etc." More pretentious was his "Building a Temple," presumably a garden house at "Wye." Once he is credited with 51½ days' work at Wye House and again "for 10 days' work about Green House, Mansion House and Sundry Repairs." What he did in Talbot County and what he did in Annapolis are generally carefully separated and, of course, in his year

³⁶ Faris Account Books, Md. Hist. Soc.

³⁷ Ridgely, 155, *op. cit.*

³⁸ Scharf Papers, Md. Hist. Soc.

³⁹ *Arch. Md.*, XLVII, March 1781, p. 142.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, XII, 543, Oct. 2, 1779.

⁴¹ Intendant's Day Book #2, 39 and Orders #2, 3; Revolutionary Records, Hall of Records, Annapolis.

⁴² Lloyd Papers, Md. Hist. Soc.