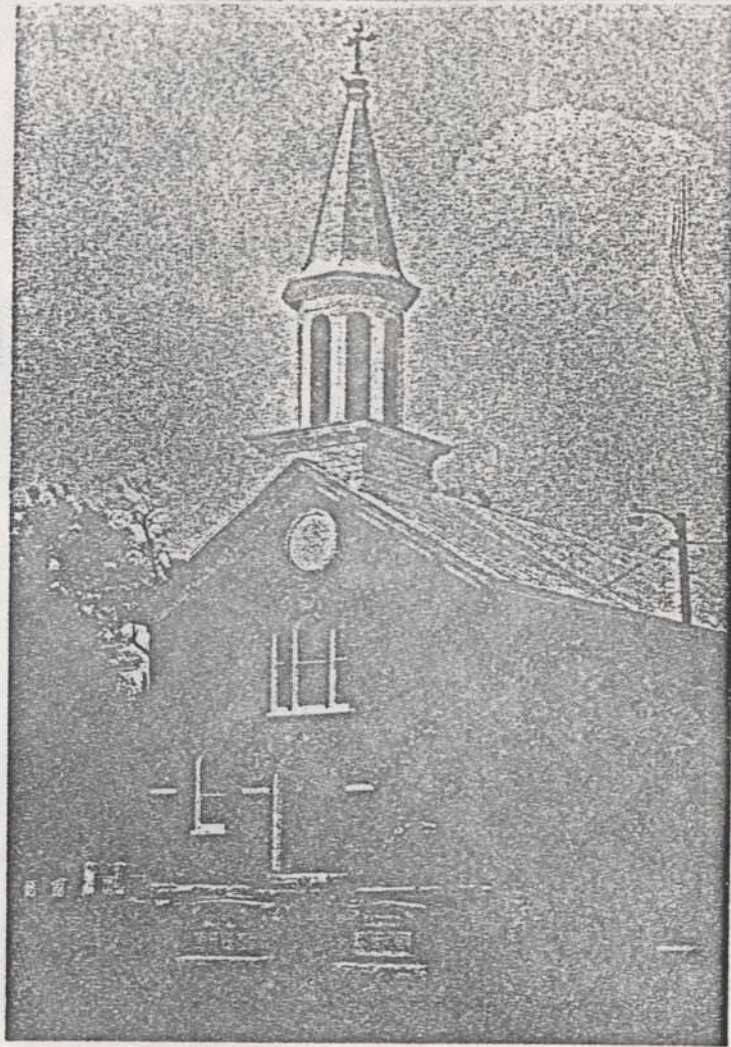






*Saint Paul's Episcopal Church in Haymarket was originally built as a courthouse for the district composed of the counties of Prince William, Fairfax, Fauquier, and Loudoun. During the Civil War, it was used as a hospital on at least three occasions. Soldiers are buried in the churchyard. Federal troops burned the building and left only the walls standing, but it was rebuilt in 1867.*



*A view on Cedar Run near the site of the second courthouse. The courthouse that stood here served the county from 1742 to 1759.*





*W. Augustus Duc de Cumberland*  
*W. Augustus Duc de Cumberland*  
**HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS**  
**William Duke of Cumberland.**  
*Engraved from a portrait in the possession of the Hon. the Earl of Mansfield, Esq. by J. Goussier, May 1761.*

Prince William County was named for William Augustus, duke of Cumberland, son of George II. Dettingen Parish, formed in Prince William County in 1745, and Cumberland County were also named for the duke of Cumberland.

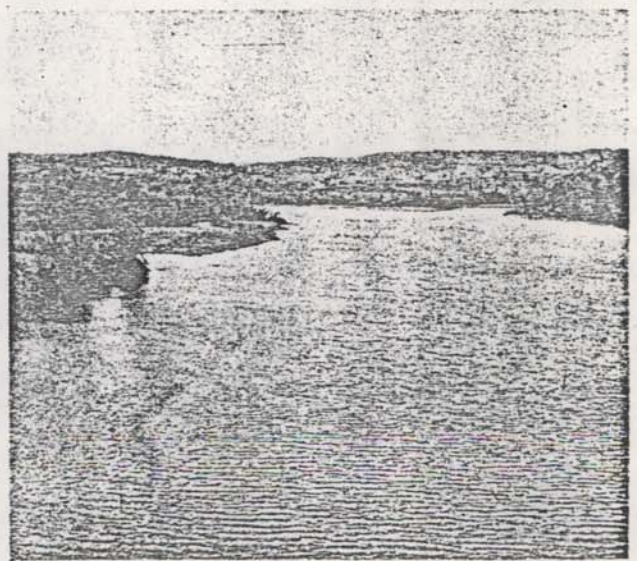
parish, Hamilton, was created at the same time as the new county. The parish boundaries were almost the same as Prince William's, and, in 1730, the parish church was built north of the Occoquan River. Governor William Gooch and the council in 1731, perhaps influenced by the location of the church, specified that the courthouse should be built north of the Occoquan, but the gentleman justices of the county disagreed and in 1731 built it on the south side of the creek at the ferry landing on George Mason II's land which was later known as Woodbridge. The building has disappeared and only a stone marker commemorates the first courthouse built.

The Prince William County courthouse remained on the lower side of the Occoquan at the ferry landing until 1742 when the area above the river became

Fairfax County. The residents in the western section of Prince William, an area that would later become Fauquier County, demanded that a new courthouse be built nearer to them. The move was agreed upon, but the issue was complicated when not one but five sites in or near the huge Brent Town Grant were recommended by various parties. The thirty-thousand-acre Brent Town Grant was created in the late seventeenth century as a haven of religious toleration, and it attracted Huguenots from France and Roman Catholics from Maryland. In an effort to decide upon the new location, Governor Gooch and his council were asked to render a decision. The governor, in turn, submitted the question to a group of three arbitrators: colonels Henry Fitzhugh, William Fairfax, and John Colvil. The gentlemen agreed upon a site on the land of Philemon Waters, a descendant of French Huguenots who settled in the area. The land was situated on Cedar Run just south of the Brent Town Grant area and the second courthouse was constructed there in 1743. The building was used for less than twenty years and, like its predecessor, it has disappeared.

With the formation of yet another new county, Fauquier, in 1759, it became necessary again to move the Prince William County courthouse. Dumfries, established in 1749 and the leading center of commerce as well as population in northern Virginia, was

*Occoquan Creek, looking west, in the vicinity of the first courthouse. The courthouse was located on the left bank and served the county from 1731 to 1742.*







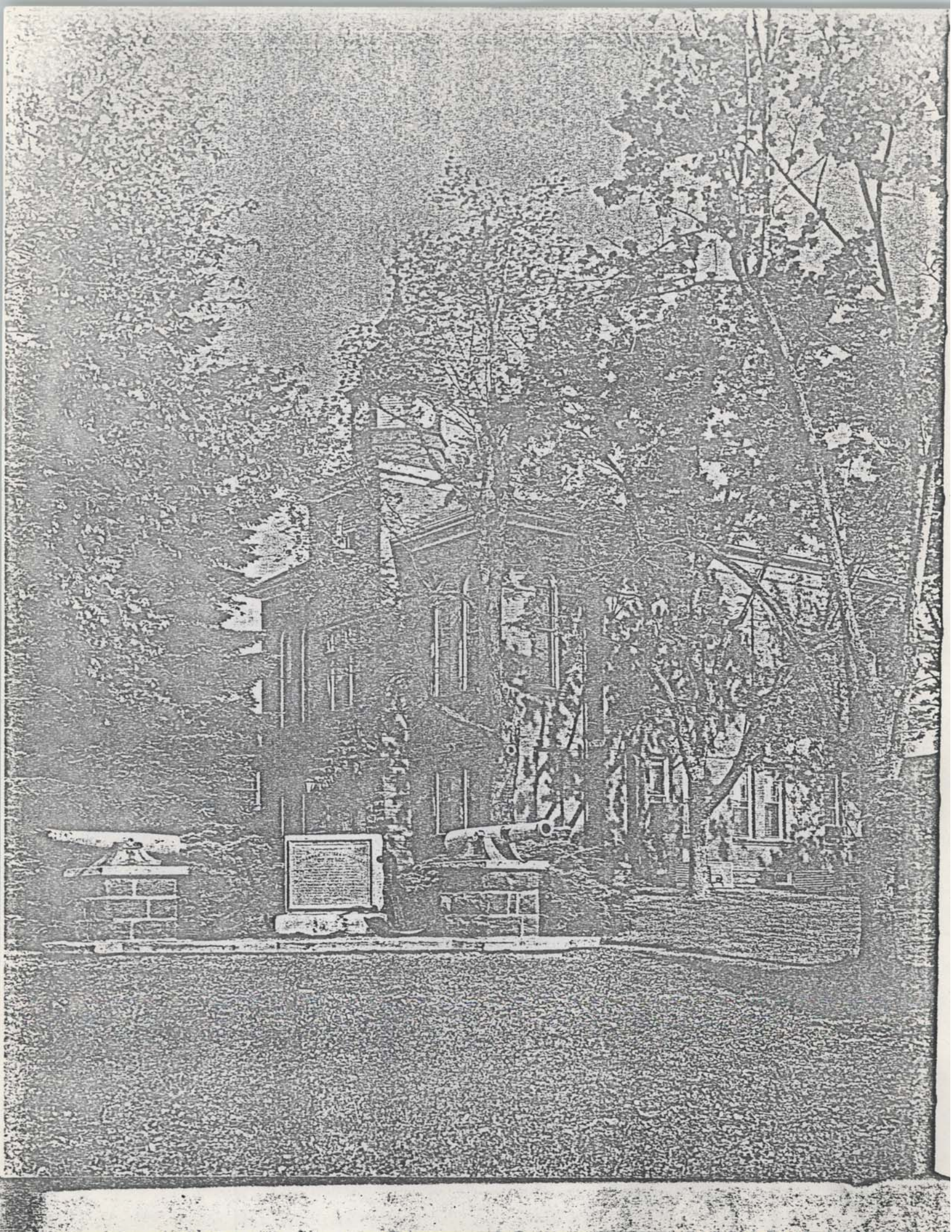
*This crucifix was erected in memory of the first Roman Catholic settlers in Virginia. The monument is located on Route 1 near the southern boundary of the Brent Town Tract, and members of the Brent family are buried close by.*

named by the governor and council on June 13, 1759, as the new location. The same council order specified that the court should be held in the old location until the new building was completed. Entries in a newly discovered court order book for the years 1759 through 1761, however, show that the court was moved to the house of Foushee Tebbs in Dumfries in November 1759. The new courthouse was constructed by Benjamin Tompkins, and judging from the rent that Tebbs received for the use of his house, it was not occupied until October 1762. The building that Tompkins constructed no longer exists, but a description of it indicates that it was a Georgian structure similar to the building commonly known as the town hall in Londontown, Maryland. Unlike the building at Londontown, however, the courthouse at Dumfries was trimmed with Acquia stone. For the next fifty-seven years the building would serve Prince William County.

The years following the move of the courthouse to Dumfries were momentous ones, and Dumfries and its courthouse shared in the excitement. In the furor that arose following the famous Boston Tea Party, the citizens of Prince William County met at Dumfries on June 6, 1774, to affirm their support for the Bostonians, who were suffering under the Coercive Acts, and to show their support for the cessation of all trade with Great Britain. They endorsed a document known as the Prince William County Resolves which was printed in the *Virginia Gazette* in Williamsburg on June 9, 1774. Evidence suggests that these resolves as well as the Fairfax County Resolves of July 1774, were written by George Mason, who gained his greatest fame as the author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights that was incorporated into the United States Constitution as the Bill of Rights.

Even the Revolution did not keep the citizens of Prince William from agitating for a courthouse at a third location. In October 1779, only twenty years after the courthouse had been moved to Dumfries, residents of the county sent a petition to the General Assembly asking that the courthouse be moved to a more central location in the county. With the formation of Fauquier County in 1759, according to the petition, "Governor Fauquier, for reasons best known to himself, . . . fix[ed] the Court of [Prince William County] at the Town of Dumfries, a part of the Cou[nty] Inconvenient to at least three fourths of the Inhabitants thereof, it being situate[d] not above two miles from the River Potowmack, and forty miles at least from the Exterior part of the County." More-

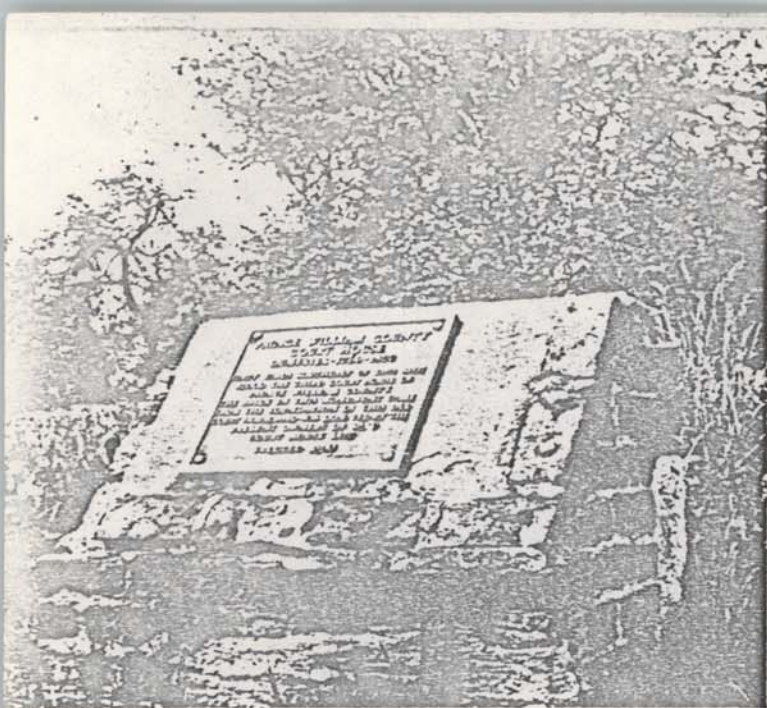








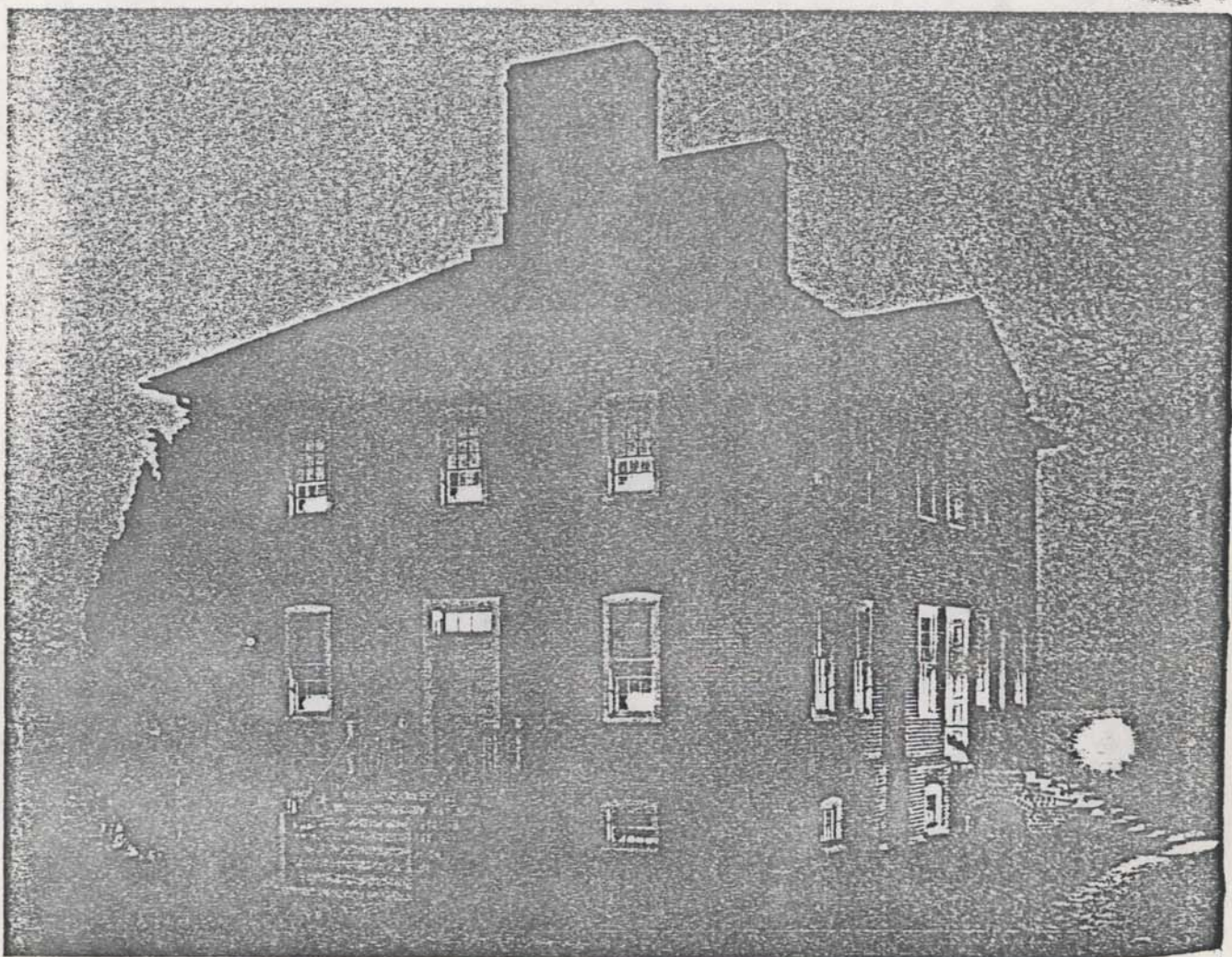




*The marker on the site of the third courthouse at Dumfries was constructed from bricks used in the building's foundation. Except that it was trimmed with Acquia stone, the third courthouse closely resembled the London Town Public House in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, pictured below.*

over, the only people benefiting from the court's location were a "few Tavern keepers in the Town." In addition, the townspeople who were mostly merchants had "too much Business of their own, therefore [they] neglect that of the Publick." If the court were moved to the center of the county on Cedar Run, almost all of those attending would be able to return home by nightfall.

In May 1780 several petitions rebutting the proposals for relocating the courthouse were sent to the legislature. In defense of Dumfries the petitioners noted that the courthouse originally had been located there because it was the only place of trade in the county. Furthermore, the county had undergone the expense of building an "elegant and Comodious Court House" and prison, which would be lost if a new one had to be constructed. Finally, the cost would be incurred at a time when taxes were being collected to wage war, and the additional burden of erecting a new courthouse would be more than the taxpayers could bear. The legislature found these petitions "reasonable" and rejected the proposal to move the courthouse from Dumfries.





Following the Revolution, the desirability of Dumfries as the county seat gradually diminished. The war had driven away many of the Scottish merchants who had made Dumfries a thriving commercial center. Agriculture in the Northern Neck was also changing and, slowly, grain began to replace tobacco as the main staple crop. Dumfries, whose trade depended solely on tobacco, forfeited its position to the town of Alexandria where, in addition to the tobacco trade, the flour and grain trade had early and wisely been added to the economy. Quantico Creek was also beginning to fill with silt and other obstacles that made it dangerous, and in some cases impossible, for commercial vessels of any size to come to the Dumfries docks. In the early 1790s William Loughton Smith commented that Dumfries was "a small town which has some trade, though said to be on the decline, owing to the way of navigation, as the little river on which it is placed is filling up." Dumfries's fate was apparent to anyone who bothered to look.

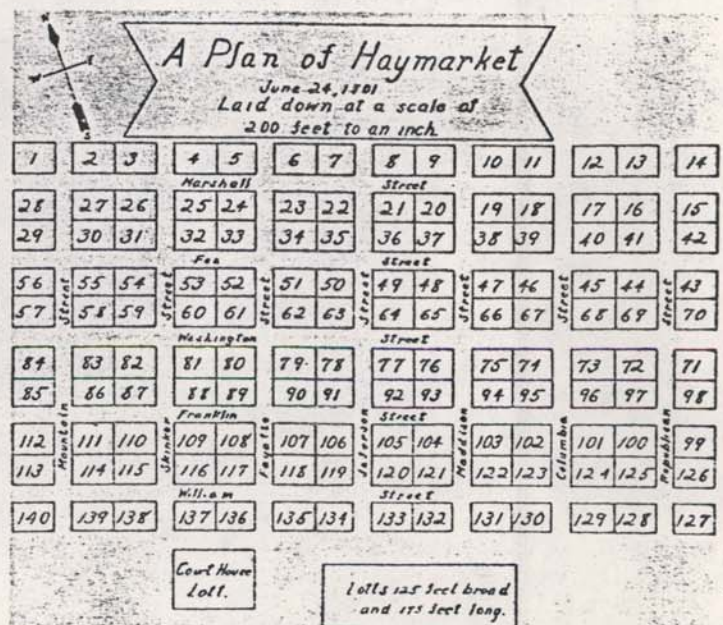
Enterprising residents initiated several projects that, they hoped, would restore Dumfries as an important port city. In the late 1780s two towns, Newport and Carrborough, were founded at the mouth of Quantico Creek to support Dumfries. The towns did not flourish and, consequently, attracted little trade to the region. Efforts to raise money to deepen the channel and to remove obstructions from Quantico Creek failed, as did the attempt to build a permanent canal from Dumfries to Granary Landing. The canal that was built to bypass obstructions in the creek was quickly destroyed in a violent thunderstorm.

In the early 1800s some of the residents became convinced that if a bank were established in Dumfries, prosperity would return. A bank would allow the merchants of Dumfries to compete favorably with the merchants of Fredericksburg where there were two banks and with the merchants of Alexandria where there were six. They also argued that a bank would supply a financial resource that could provide money for building a permanent canal from Dumfries to the Potomac. Residents petitioned the legislature for a bank in 1816 and again in 1817, but their petitions were not reported out of committee and Dumfries did not receive a bank.

During its declining years, Dumfries did have moments of hope. In the late 1780s the General Assembly enacted legislation creating district courts throughout the commonwealth because of the "delays inseparable from the present constitution of the general court." For Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, and

Prince William counties, Dumfries was chosen as the site for the new court and this, of course, gave Dumfries new luster. The district court sat at Dumfries for little more than a decade before disgruntled residents of the four counties it served asked the General Assembly to move it to a more central location. Two sites were suggested for the new court, one in Prince William County and one in Loudoun County. Commissioners appointed by the General Assembly chose the Red House or Haymarket, a town established in Prince William County in 1799 on land owned by William Skinker, and they contracted with James Wright and John Hord to build the necessary court structures.

The new court building was ready for use in September 1802. Even with the building standing and waiting, however, the commissioners had to struggle to have the court moved to Haymarket. Their first problem was to persuade Prince William County to pay its share for constructing the new building, and their second was to get the district court clerk, John Lawson, to deliver the court records to Haymarket. The commissioners blamed their failure to accomplish these tasks on the people of Dumfries who owned valuable property in the town and who did not want to see the value of their land diminished. Convinced that the magistrates from the Dumfries area were using their power to prevent the removal of the district court, the commissioners asked the assembly for help. Although the legislature did nothing to force Prince William to contribute to the cost of construction, it did enact a bill providing that the district court be held in Dumfries during the May 1803 session, and thereafter at Haymarket. More than a year after the





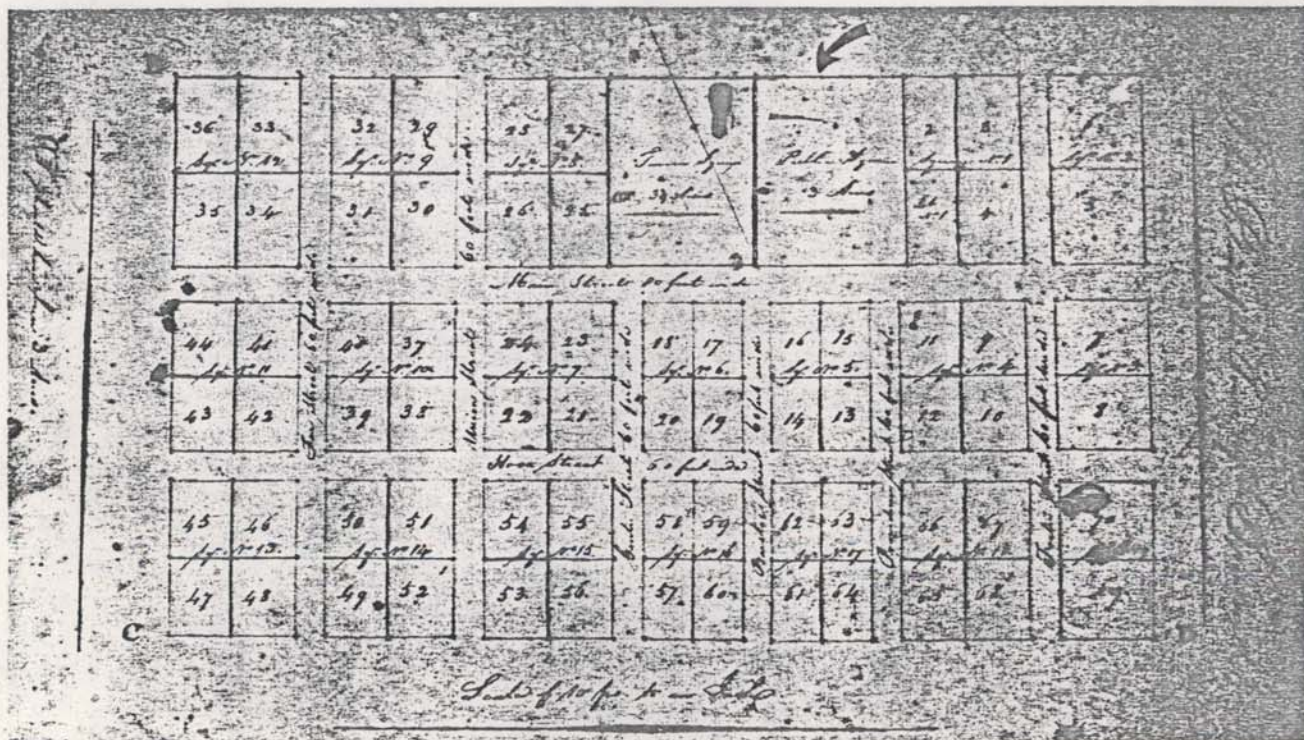
building was completed, the court was moved and the first session held at Haymarket.

In 1807 the General Assembly created the Superior Court of Law to replace the district courts. This court was to convene at each county's courthouse twice yearly, and a judge of the General Court was charged to ride from courthouse to courthouse within his circuit to preside over the court. As a result of this circuit court system, the building at Haymarket was abandoned. In 1811 the General Assembly authorized William Skinker, Jr., to sell the unused buildings. The Hygeia Academy was established there, but it failed in 1816, and six years later the legislature allowed the academy's trustees to sell the property. According to one history of the building, William Skinker, Jr. repurchased the building and during the next eight years it was used as the meeting place for a Methodist and a Presbyterian church, as a school, and for other purposes. Although the deed cannot be located, Skinker in 1830, apparently conveyed the building to the Episcopal church in memory of his wife. St. Paul's Episcopal Church was established and continues to use the building.

At approximately the same time that the district court was moved to Haymarket, efforts were renewed to persuade the legislature to relocate the county courthouse in a more central area. Added to their earlier complaints was the statement that the "eccentric" location of Dumfries was especially burdensome for those people who lived north of Cedar Run because much of the time the creek was impassible or difficult to cross. Furthermore, the greater number of the population lived north of Cedar Run as did the larger proportion of its "majestraty," all at a distance of fifteen to twenty miles from Dumfries. The General Assembly, however, allowed the petition to "lie on the table."

By 1816, those residents who wanted to change the site of the county courthouse were beginning to muster enough influence to gain their objective. Two separate petitions were sent to the Assembly asking for the change on the same grounds that had been used in the past. Opponents of the proposal also sent a petition outlining the reasons for building the courthouse at Dumfries and explaining why it should remain there. Strangely enough, the opponents had

On this plan of Brentsville the arrow indicates the three acres set aside for the courthouse; adjacent to the courthouse site was land reserved for a tavern.









copied a similar petition of May 1780 and included a statement urging that the War of the Revolution be considered a valid reason for saving the county taxpayers' money. They also maintained that there was no place in the center of the county with enough wood and water to support a new courthouse. Not until 1820 did the legislature remedy the situation that proponents described as "becoming more oppressive daily" and agree to move the courthouse.

When the commissioners appointed by the General Assembly met to choose the new courthouse location, they selected the Bristow tract. This land was part of the original Brent Town tract and before 1779 it had belonged to Robert Bristow a British subject living in England. Under an act of 1779 that confiscated British-owned lands in Virginia, the state took over the Bristow tract, and subsequent appeals by Bristow's heirs failed to restore the land to the family. The commonwealth rented lots in the tract, and after 1811, when the literary fund was created, gave the proceeds to the directors of the fund for the use of public schools. The town of Brentsville was created in 1822 on fifty acres surrounding the six-acre courthouse site.

The Brentsville courthouse, which is still standing, was built by William Claytor, of Orange County, between 1820 and 1822. It is a two-story brick building laid in Flemish bond, with a gabled roof, octagonal domed cupola, and two slender chimneys. The information that it was built by William Claytor is cited in an oval inset in the gable. Still standing as well, is the two-story jail of simple brick construction.

By the time that the courthouse was built and the town of Brentsville established in 1822, seventy years of waste and neglect of much of the Bristow tract that was rented out by the commonwealth had left the land "ravaged of all its timber and for the most part 'ploughed down to the barren' by an unmerciful course of cultivation, under a numerous tenantry." The area had never prospered, a situation which apparently did not change even after the courthouse was established there. Still, the court sat at Brentsville for seventy years even during the stormy period of civil war. The war, however, bred a rival, and in the years after 1865 the rival, Manassas Junction, won the contest for the seat of local government. Prior to the war, Manassas was a small village containing blacksmith shops and a few general stores, but it was advantageously located at the junction of the Manassas Gap and the Orange and Alexandria



*Manassas Junction (above) shortly after it was evacuated by General Joseph E. Johnston in the spring of 1862. The monument to Stonewall Jackson (below) rests on the battlefield at Manassas and was erected in 1938 by the commonwealth of Virginia. Jackson received his nickname in the first battle of Manassas.*





Railroads, unlike Brentsville which was not situated near a railroad. This gave it great strategic importance when war came in the spring of 1861 and the little village achieved fame far exceeding its size.

In July 1861 the First Battle of Bull Run, or Manassas, was fought in the adjacent countryside. Although the battle resulted in a Confederate victory and Confederates held the village until March 1862, General Joseph E. Johnston was forced to abandon the town and move his army to the Peninsula to oppose General George McClellan. For several months the Federals controlled Manassas and established a supply depot there. They wanted to cut Confederate rail communication with the Shenandoah Valley and incorporate Manassas Junction within the Federal defenses of Washington, D.C. In August 1862, the Second Battle of Bull Run, or Manassas, was fought between generals Stonewall Jackson (who had acquired that nickname at the first battle) and John Pope. Once again the South emerged victorious, destroying the Union supply depot and taking the surrounding territory. This time, however, both sides abandoned the village. It was retaken in October 1862 by Federal forces and did not again come under Southern control.

Following Lee's surrender, Manassas continued to grow around the railroad station and to expand its economy. It developed a lively trade in sumac leaves, which were used in a solution for tanning and dyeing leather. This enterprise was so important that a special warehouse was constructed to house the operation.

Conscious of their increasing importance to Prince William County, citizens of Manassas began lobbying to have the county courthouse moved there in 1872, the year in which Manassas was incorporated as a town. A referendum that year failed, but in 1892 a second referendum passed. The citizens of Manassas were required to furnish the necessary lot, enclose it, and erect the courthouse without expense to the county's



"THE BLUE AND THE GRAY"

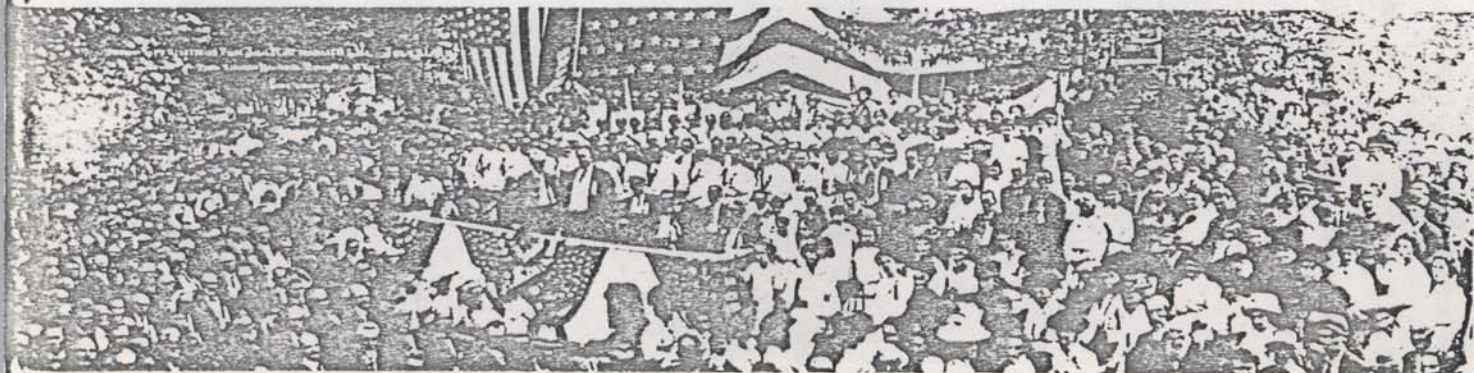


"LET US HAVE PEACE"  
GRANT.

"DUTY THE SUBLIMEST  
WORD OF HUMAN LANGUAGE"  
LEE.

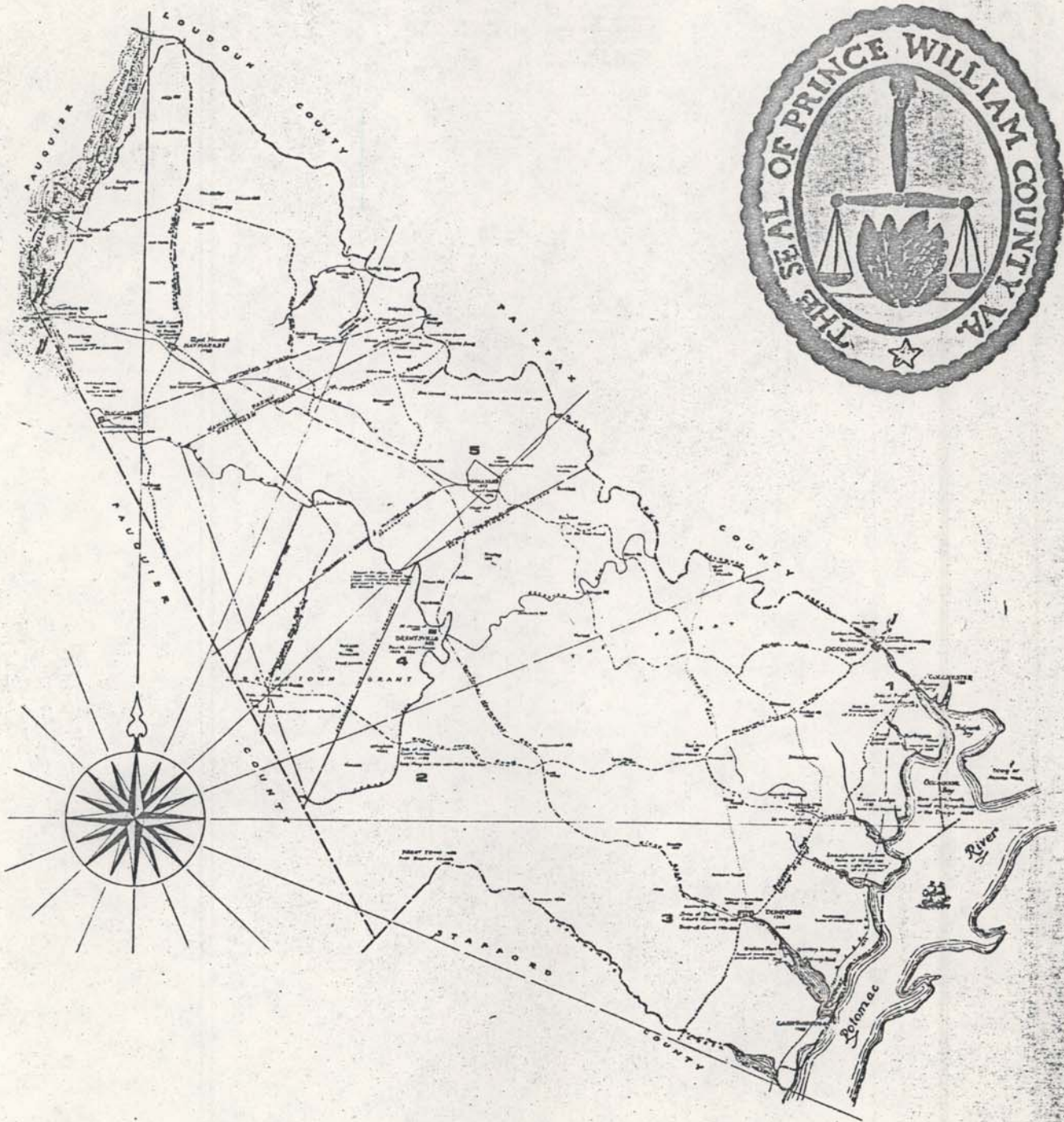
MANASSAS  
VIRGINIA.  
JULY 21, 1911.

*The badge worn by the veterans who attended the Jubilee of Peace and who heard President William Howard Taft's plea for international peace (below)*





Map showing the locations of the five courthouses of Prince William County





residents. The legislature authorized Manassas to issue bonds for this purpose. Built between 1892 and 1893, the courthouse is of brick in the style of architecture characteristic of the 1890s.

This building, now 85 years old, has seen much human drama and many memorable events, one of which was the Jubilee of Peace in 1911. More than one thousand veterans of both the Union and the Confederate armies came to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the First Battle of Manassas. The celebration which lasted for five days culminated in a speech on July 21 by President William Howard Taft and a reenactment of the battle by the old soldiers. Standing twelve feet apart, four hundred fifty of them marched across the field towards each other and met to "clasp hands in token of everlasting peace."

A special report by the Virginia State Bar Association in 1929 noted that Prince William's court facilities were not adequate for the county's needs. To remedy the lack of office space, the county constructed an L-shaped building in the early 1950s and later converted several apartment buildings, along

with three buildings formerly used by the Bennett School, and built a temporary metal structure for office use.

By early 1978 many in the county thought that these makeshift office arrangements, and the county's loss of sales tax revenue generated by courthouse employees and visitors, that resulted when Manassas had become an independent city on May 1, 1975, would necessitate a change. Nevertheless, on March 2, 1978, county voters rejected the proposal to move the courthouse to Independent Hill, near the site of the second Prince William County courthouse, at an estimated cost of 18.3 million dollars. According to the Code of Virginia, ten years must pass before another vote can be taken on the matter. Thus Prince William County has come full circle. Its courthouse was moved in 1743, 1759, and 1822 because of shifting population and the creation of other jurisdictions within its original boundaries. Now in 1978 a situation similar to those that faced the county in the past seems to confront it once more, as the citizens may be asked to decide whether all or part of the Prince William courthouse complex should be moved again.

*The bronze tablet below was unveiled in 1915 in front of the courthouse at Manassas to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of peace between the North and the South. Franklin D. Roosevelt, then assistant secretary of the Navy, sent from the New York Navy Yard two four-hundred-pound anchors with chain that, along with two cannon, stand guard beside the tablet.*

