



SURVEY FORM

Historic name Prince William County Court- Common name Third Prince William County Courthouse  
 County/Town/City Dumfries house Site [Third] Site  
 Street address or route number W. side of Duke St. between Main & Fairfax Sts., Dumfries, Va.  
 USGS Quad Quantico Quad Date or period 1760-62  
 Original owner Architect/builder/craftsmen Benjamin Tompkins (builder)  
 Original use  
 Present owner Source of name  
 Present owner address Source of date published sources.  
 Stories N/A  
 Present use Not in use. Foundation and wall const'n N/A  
 Acreage 2 lots? Roof type N/A

State condition of structure and environs Site is in good condition.

State potential threats to structure  
 Note any archaeological interest This is an archeological site.

Should be investigated for possible register potential? yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_

Architectural description (Note significant features of plan, structural system and interior and exterior decoration, taking care to point out aspects not visible or clear from photographs. Explain nature and period of all alterations and additions. List any outbuildings and their approximate ages, cemeteries, etc.)

According to a historical map of Dumfries, the courthouse complex consisted of three buildings located close together on the southwestern boundary of lots 47 and 48. The monument marker sits on the northeast corner of the parcel, probably within the public right-of-way. The site is privately owned and so far has been left undeveloped by its owners. There are a few trees on the parcel which appears to have been kept neat and regularly mowed.

Since Dumfries has so few buildings and sites remaining from its peak period in the mid-18th century, this is an important site to preserve.

Interior inspected? N/A

Historical significance (Chain of title; individuals, families, events, etc., associated with the property.)

The creation of Fauquier County from Prince William in 1759 made it necessary to move the Prince William County seat for the third time, to put it closer to the county's new population center. The Town of Dumfries on the Quantico Creek was then the county's leading commercial as well as population center. Dumfries, the county's first incorporated town, had been established in 1749 by Scottish merchants as a tobacco port. In the 1750s and 60s, Dumfries stood to rival Alexandria, a competing port on the Potomac, in the amount and value of its tobacco exports.

The courthouse (and jail) were built between 1760 and 1762 on lots 47 and 48, on Duke Street, overlooking Quantico Creek, a tributary of the Potomac. The courthouse was built by Benjamin Tompkins. According to one source, the Dumfries Courthouse closely resembled the London Town Town Hall, in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. A brick Georgian building, almost square in plan and having a hip roof, the Dumfries Courthouse supposedly differed from the London Town Town Hall in that the Prince William Courthouse was trimmed with Aquia sandstone, or "freestone."

During the two years' time it took to construct the courthouse, the County allegedly rented a residence belonging to Fouchee Tebbs for sessions of the court. Though the Tebbs House is no longer standing, historical photographs show it to have been a two-story, brick, Georgian style, central passage-plan residence, five bays across the front. It had a modillion cornice, sandstone lintels and quoins, and a hip roof.

(continued next page)

Sources and bibliography

Published sources (Books, articles, etc., with bibliographic data.)

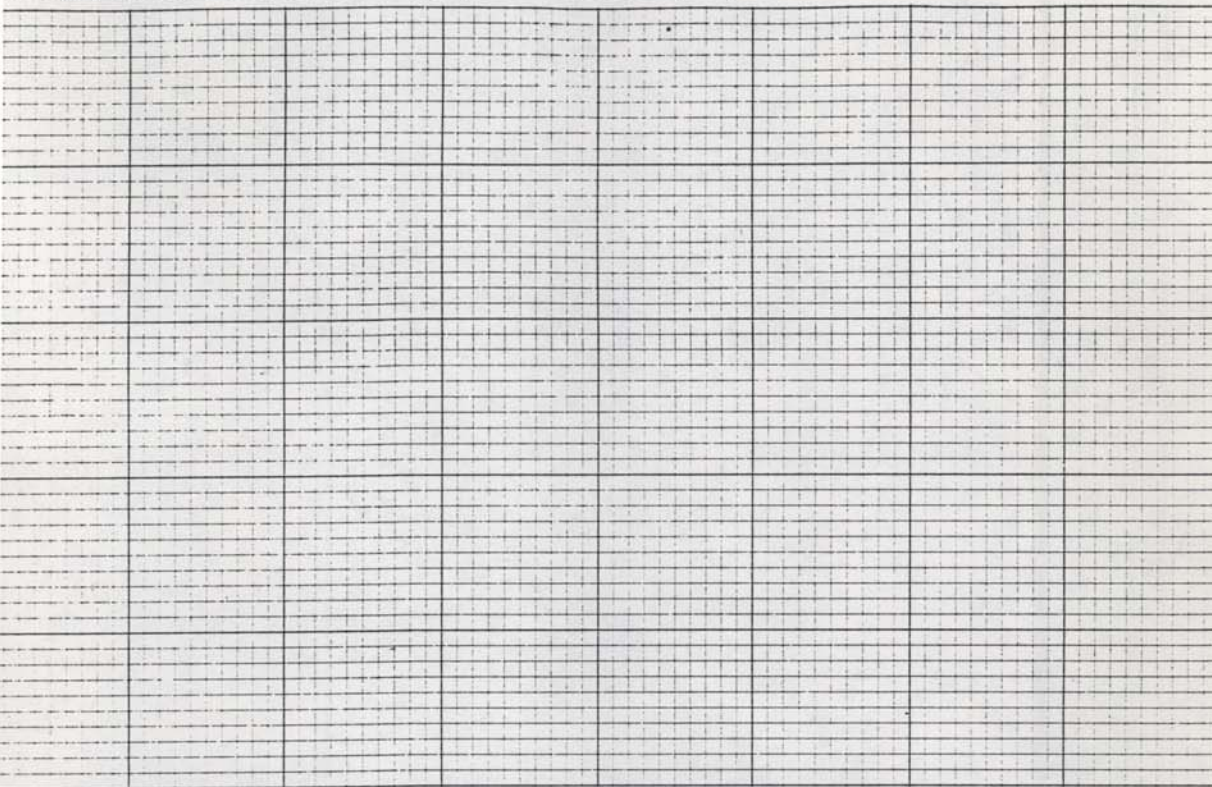
R.J. Ratcliffe, This Was Prince William (c1976), pp. 12, 42-43;

W.P.A. Writer's Project, Prince William, The Story of Its People and Its Places (c1941, 1961), p. 92-93. (cont.)

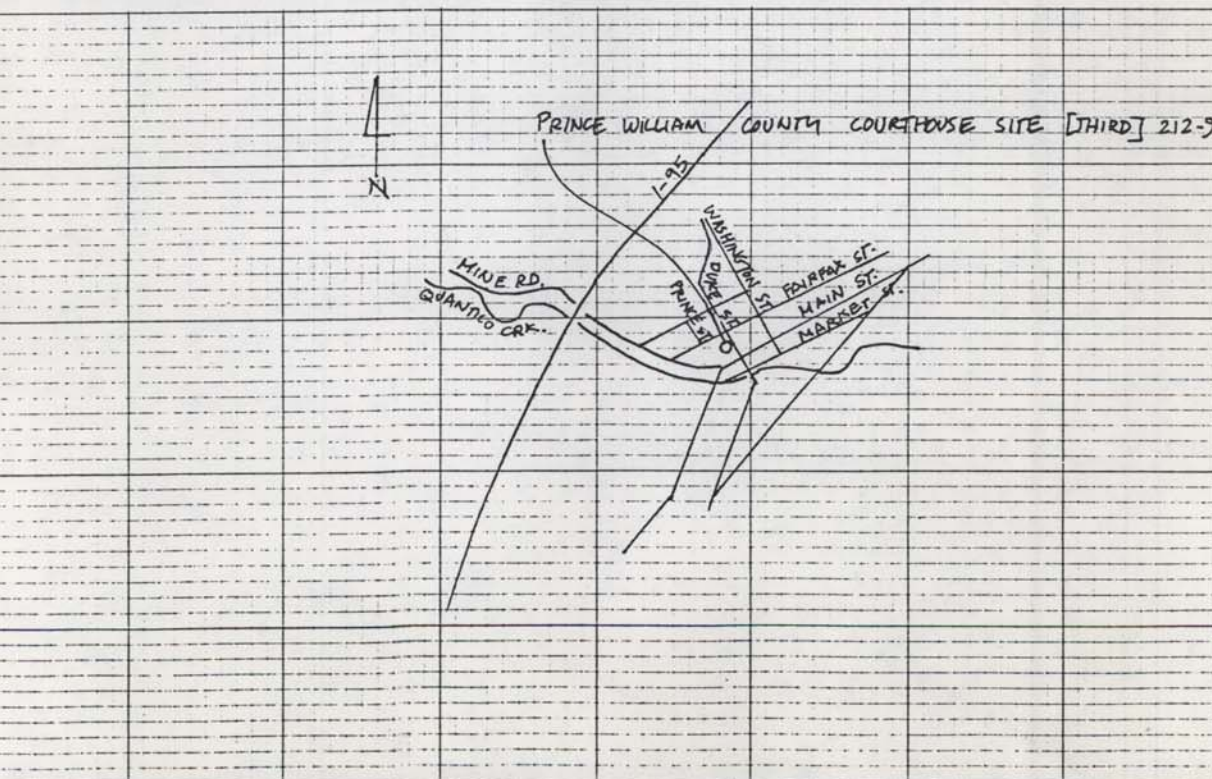
Primary sources (Manuscript documentary or graphic materials; give location.)

Names and addresses of persons interviewed

Plan (Indicate locations of rooms, doorways, windows, alterations, etc.)



Site plan (Locate and identify outbuildings, dependencies and significant topographical features.)



Name, address and title of recorder

Frances Jones, Architectural  
Historian - Surveyor, NYPDC

Date

APR

1961

CONTINUATION SHEET  
PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE SITE [THIRD]

Published Sources (continued)

Tommye Burton, "Courthouses of Prince William County," in Virginia Cavalcade (Summer 1978), pp. 34-47;  
Fairfax Harrison, Landmarks of Old Prince William (c1924, 1964), pp. 316-17.

Historical Significance (continued)

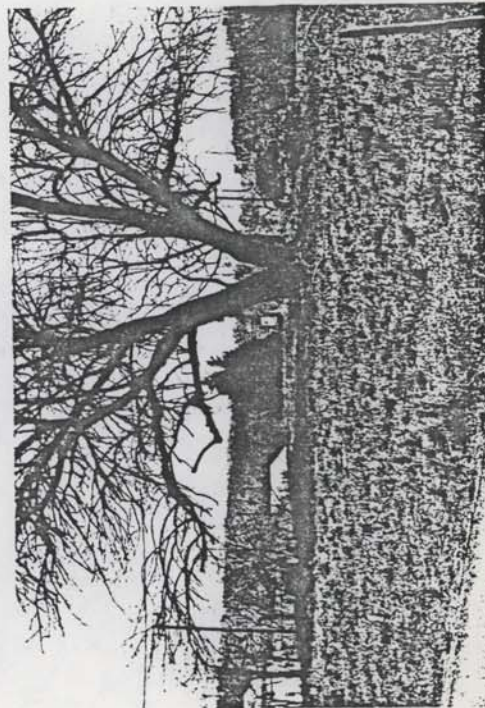
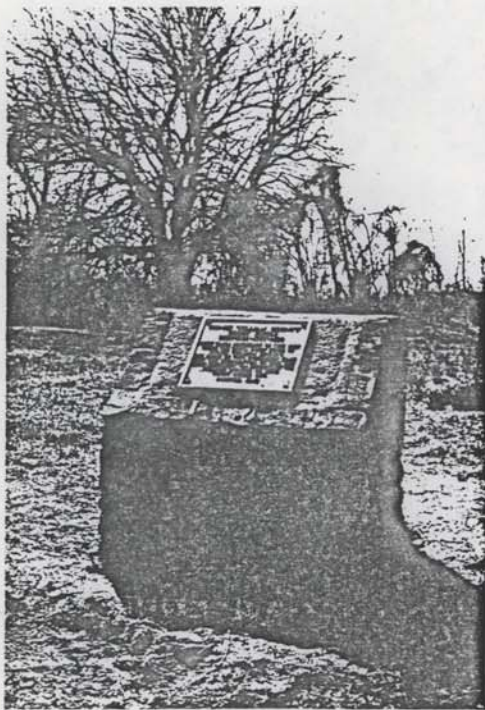
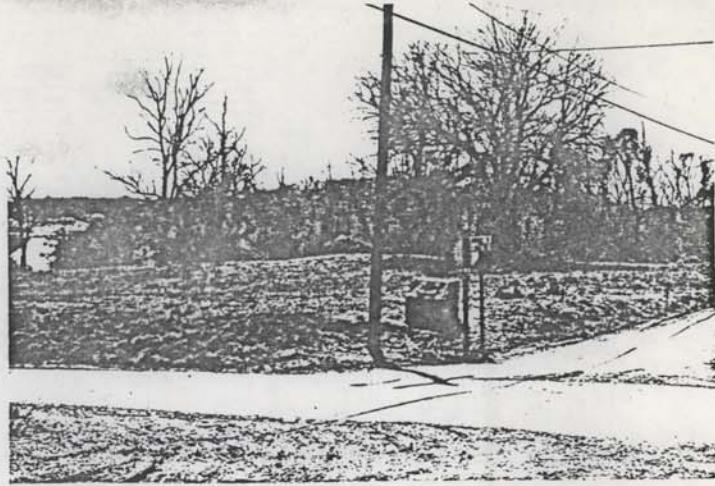
The Dumfries Courthouse was the meeting place on 6 Jun 1774 of Prince William County citizens who supported a set of resolutions known as the Prince William County Resolves (possibly authored by George Mason, who wrote the Fairfax County Resolves). The document, a direct reaction to the Boston Tea Party and the subsequent closing by the British of Boston harbor, was a set of instructions approving of revolutionary actions. Prince William delegates to the first Virginia Convention on 1 August 1774 carried the resolves to that convention.

In 1788, the Virginia General Assembly revamped Virginia's court system and created a system of District Courts. The seat of the district comprising Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties was placed at Dumfries. In 1799, the Virginia Assembly decided to move the District Court to a more central location. A new building was completed at Haymarket in 1802, and in 1803 the District Court was removed to it.

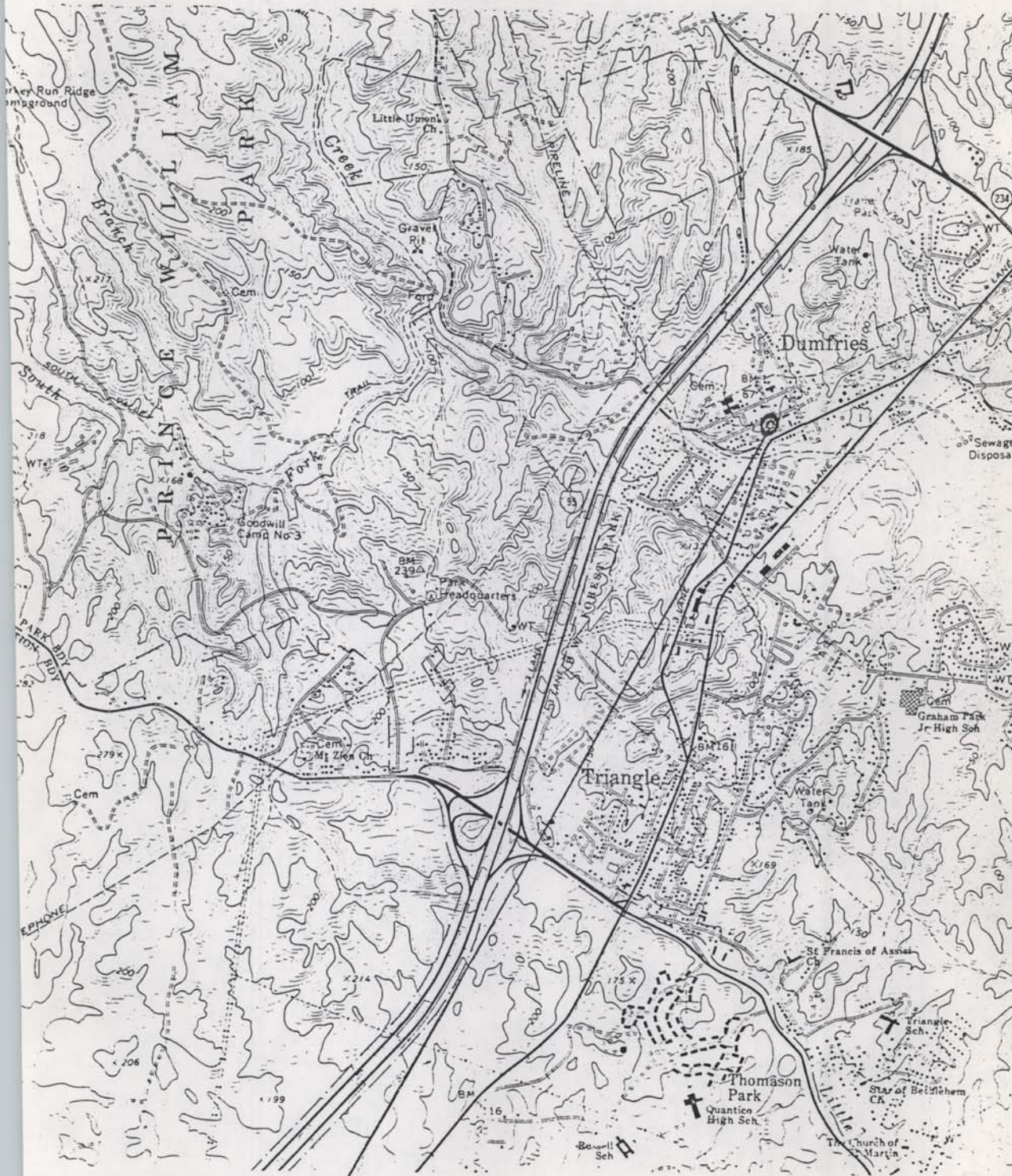
Two events in the late 18th century caused a decline in Dumfries' population and prosperity, and in turn led to the relocation of the county seat. They were the decline in tobacco growing in Northern Virginia and the silting up of the Quantico Creek upon which Dumfries had been built. Both processes, which had begun in the 1750s and were complete by 1800, caused the demise of Dumfries, whose single trade, tobacco, depended on a navigable Quantico Creek.

Beginning in about 1803, there was a movement underway to persuade the Virginia legislature to relocate the county courthouse to a more central place. Proponents of the move cited the inconvenience in crossing the often impassable Cedar Run and the fact that the majority of the population lived north of Cedar Run. In 1820, the Virginia General Assembly agreed to move the courthouse. The new site was to be on the Bristow tract, part of the original 30,000-acre Brent Town Grant. The Town of Brentsville was established in 1822 around the new courthouse.

The old courthouse in Dumfries was converted for use as a church, the old church nearby having fallen into disrepair, but by 1857 the old courthouse had been abandoned. The site of the courthouse is commemorated with a brick marker erected in 1941 and made from the foundation of the old courthouse.



QUANTICO QUAD.



PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY  
COURTHOUSE SITE [THIRD] 212-9

ARCHITECTURAL FORM

VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION  
Room 1116, Ninth Street Office Building  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

1. County *Prince William*  
 Town *Dumfries*  
 Street No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 USGS Quad Name *Quantico*  
 Quad Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Scale *7 1/2*  
 Original Owner *Prince William County*  
 Original Use \_\_\_\_\_  
 Present Owner \_\_\_\_\_  
 Present Owner Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Present Use *SITE*
2. Historic Name *(Site) 3rd Prince William Courthouse*  
 Present Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date or Period \_\_\_\_\_  
 Architect \_\_\_\_\_  
 Builder, craftsman, etc. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Source of Date \_\_\_\_\_
3. No. stories (dormers count as 1/2 story): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wall construction: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Acreage \_\_\_\_\_

4. Historical Significance (Chain of Title, Families and Events, etc., connected with the property):

100 PUBLIC

5. Architectural Significance (Note interesting interior and exterior details, etc. cite significant alterations and additions).

161

6. Condition of structure (check one):  
 (a) sound  (b) in need of minor repairs \_\_\_\_\_ (c) in need of major repairs \_\_\_\_\_  
 (d) unsound \_\_\_\_\_

7. State potential threats to preservation of structure:  
*None*

8. List Number of Photographs: \_\_\_\_\_ Exterior \_\_\_\_\_ Interior \_\_\_\_\_ Outbuildings

9. Sources and Bibliography:

A. Published Sources (author, title, date, page number, etc.)

B. Primary Sources (original or later drawings, old photographs, pictures, manuscripts and their location).

C. Names and Addresses of People Interviewed.

10. Name, Address and Title of Recorder:

*Leu  
Falmouth  
Jan 1972*

Date of Record:

11. First Floor Plan (Rough Plan indicating arrangement of rooms, doorways, windows on ground floor).

12. Site Plan (Locate and identify outbuildings, dependencies, and significant farm structures):