

CARROLL COUNTY

All that part of Maryland now included in Carroll County had been before the formation of that county a part of Frederick and Baltimore Counties. Shortly after conclusion of the definitive peace with Great Britain, this rich agricultural area began to fill up rapidly, drawing its settlers from Pennsylvania and the North as well as from the populated parts of Eastern and Southern Maryland. By 1829, it had become thickly populated, and the need for a more convenient place of county government began to be felt. To parts of the area involved, both Fredericktown and Baltimore City were, according to the standards of the time, quite remote. Various solutions to this problem were proposed but by December of that year the solution which was finally adopted, that is the creation of a new county, had gained strong support. The General Assembly considered such a solution, but no action was taken at that session.¹

At the next session, another petition was presented praying the formation of a third county from parts of Frederick and Baltimore Counties, but after the appearance of a counterpetition, both were withdrawn.² In January 1833, a meeting was held in Baltimore City by a group of interested citizens and a new petition to the General Assembly was prepared which if enacted would have named the county Westminster. Then followed another counterpetition and more bitter agitation.³

Finally, Delegate William Cost Johnson of Frederick County introduced a resolution which would, subject to a referendum of the areas affected, create a new county with approximately the present bounds and named after Charles Carroll of Carrollton, who had died a short time earlier. This bill was enacted March 2, 1833.⁴ At the election which followed, the proposal did not carry in some of the districts affected, and an effort was begun to eliminate these districts from the proposed new county; but before that could occur the constitutionality of the whole procedure was questioned and the matter dropped, not to be revived until the Session of 1835 when the admission of this new county was undertaken by means of an amendment to the constitution.

The procedure at that time consisted in the passage of an initiating act by one session of the General Assembly to be followed by a confirmatory act of the next General Assembly. The two acts in this case were Chapter 256 of the Session of 1835 and Chapter 19 of the Session of 1836. The date of passage of the last act was January 19, 1837, and since the Governor's signature is not needed to validate amendments to the constitution, this is also the actual date of the county's establishment.

First Courthouse at Westminster

The same General Assembly also passed a series of acts to provide the new county with a government and public services, and among them was a measure to authorize the construction of the necessary public buildings.⁵ This act provided for a special levy not to exceed \$20,000 which was to pay for a suitable plot of ground in Westminster, the county seat, a courthouse, a clerk's office, a register's office, a jail and a poorhouse. This fund was to be raised and

¹ *Proceedings of the House of Delegates*, 1829, p. 357.

² *Proceedings*, December Session 1831, p. 117.

³ *Address of Hon. Francis Neal Parke at the Carroll County*

Centennial Banquet, January 19th, 1937, no pagination, 4.

⁴ Ch. 312, Acts of 1832.

⁵ Ch. 138, Acts of 1836.