

one of the inns or other rented quarters. At an early session of the court, a house was rented from Thomas Miller for twelve pounds annually, and, at the same meeting, agreement was made with Daniel Pritchard for the construction of a jail, 20 x 24 feet, and two stories high. Amos Garrett and Jeremiah Sheredine, two of the justices, were appointed to take bond from the builder and superintend the construction. The jail was never built and prisoners continued to be housed in rented quarters. However, the court continued to be active, and the justices who were also responsible for the local government were very busy with the problems confronting the new county.

We have little record of just what the town of Bush was like almost two hundred years ago, but historians agree that it was a town of some



Courtesy of Equitable Trust Co., Aberdeen

HARFORD TOWN (BUSH)

County Seat, 1773-1782

importance. Located on the main highway between the north and south and being the county seat of a new county, it became the stopping place for stagecoach travelers. It was also a meeting place for politicians and statesmen, not only of Harford County, but those of national fame, as they traveled between the cities of the East. One historian says that a directory of that date shows Bush a little town of fifteen or twenty dwellings, a gristmill, a tan yard, several inns, and stores. Another source places the number of dwellings at thirty or forty, with spacious hostelry accommodations for the court officials, citizens, and stagecoach travelers. Judge Preston says that such distinguished personalities as Washington and Jefferson, as well as other eminent men of the colonies, used it as a stopping place and that our justices and other prominent citizens met with them to discuss the problems of the Revolution and the Continental Congress.

The unrest during the years leading up to the struggle for independence and participation in that conflict during these years made this center



Photo by Dr. David C. Hodges

COACH HOUSE AT INN AT BUSH

Erected before Revolution. Only remaining building of Bush county seat.

of government a place of active participation in the rebellion against the Mother Country. The fires of discontent that were beginning to kindle throughout the colonies were uppermost in the thoughts and actions of Harford's citizens and especially in many of the distinguished men chosen to lead our new county in its government and its contacts with other similar divisions of our struggling nation.

When a convention was called at Annapolis on June 22, 1774, Harford was represented by Richard Dallam, John Love, Thomas Bond, Benedict Hall, and Jacob Bond. At this convention it was declared that the Acts of Parliament were cruel and oppressive invasions of the people's rights, and that the Stamp Act and other offensive laws should be repealed.

Our leaders had already anticipated the actions of the Annapolis Convention, and as early as June 11, 1774 a large meeting of citizens, presided over by Aquila Hall, was held at Bush and Resolutions to be sent to the Annapolis Convention were passed. The Resolutions were as follows:

1. RESOLVED, It is the opinion of the meeting that the town of Boston is now suffering in the common cause of America, and that it is the duty of every colony to unite in the most effectual constitutional means to obtain a repeal of the late Act of Parliament for blocking up the harbor of Boston.

2. RESOLVED, That therefore we will join in an association with the other counties of this Province, on oath, not to export to, or import from Great Britain, any kind of produce or merchandise after such a day as the committee of the several counties at their general meeting shall fix, until the repeal of the Boston Port Act.

3. RESOLVED, That we will deal with none of the West India Islands, colony, colonies, person or persons whatsoever residing therein, who shall not enter in similar resolves with the majority of the colonies within such time as the general committees of this province shall agree, but hold him or them as an enemy or enemies to American liberty.

4. RESOLVED, That we join in an association with the other colonies to send relief to the poor and distressed inhabitants of Boston, to enable them to persevere in defence of the common cause.

5. RESOLVED, That the merchants ought not to advance the price of their goods, but sell them as they intended, had not these resolves been entered into.

6. RESOLVED, That the gentlemen of the law ought to bring no suit for recovery of any debt due from any inhabitants of Great Britain, in this or any other colony, until the said act be repealed; except in such cases where the debtor is guilty of a willful delay in payment, having ability to pay, or is about to abscond or remove his effects, or is wasting his substance, or shall refuse to settle his account by giving bond on interest, which fact or facts are to be made appear to some neighboring magistrate and certified under his hand.

7. RESOLVED, That the following gentlemen, viz.: Rev. William West, Messrs. Aquila Hall, Richard Dallam, Thomas Bond (son of Thomas), John Love, Capt. John Paca, Benedict Edward Hall, Benjamin Rumsey, Nathaniel Giles, and Jacob Bond be a committee to meet the committees of other counties in this province, to consult and agree on the most effectual means to preserve our constitutional rights and liberties, and promote that union and harmony between Great Britain and her colonies, on which their preservation depends; and that the same gentlemen, together with the following, Capt. John Matthews, Capt. William Smith, Dr. John Archer, William Younge, Abraham Whitaker, William Webb, Amos Garrett, George Bradford, John Rumsey, Jeremiah Sheredine, William Smithson, William Bond (son of Joshua), Isaac Webster, and Alexander Cowan, be a committee of correspondence and on any emergency to call a general meeting, and that any six of them have power to act.

Signed per order,
Joseph Butler, Cl. Com.

During the next few months, the citizens of the colonies continued their opposition to Great Britain and in public meetings denounced the oppressive Acts. In March, 1775, Patrick Henry made his famous speech

in Virginia, and the Continental Congress again met in Philadelphia in May, 1775, and agreed to stop trade with Great Britain until the objectionable Acts were repealed.

Again, Bush came into prominence by having as its guests men like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry, as they journeyed through Harford to Philadelphia. In this Congress our distinguished citizen, William Paca, who was born at Abingdon, together with Matthew Tilghman, Thomas Johnson, Jr., Robert Goldsborough, and Samuel Chase, represented Maryland.

By the early part of 1775 almost our entire citizenry had become so stirred by the national controversy that a most important event took place at Bush. Just three days before Patrick Henry made his well known speech, a committee of thirty-four Harford citizens met at the Bush Tavern and, after deliberation, signed the famous Bush Declaration, which is quoted in full with its signers in another chapter.

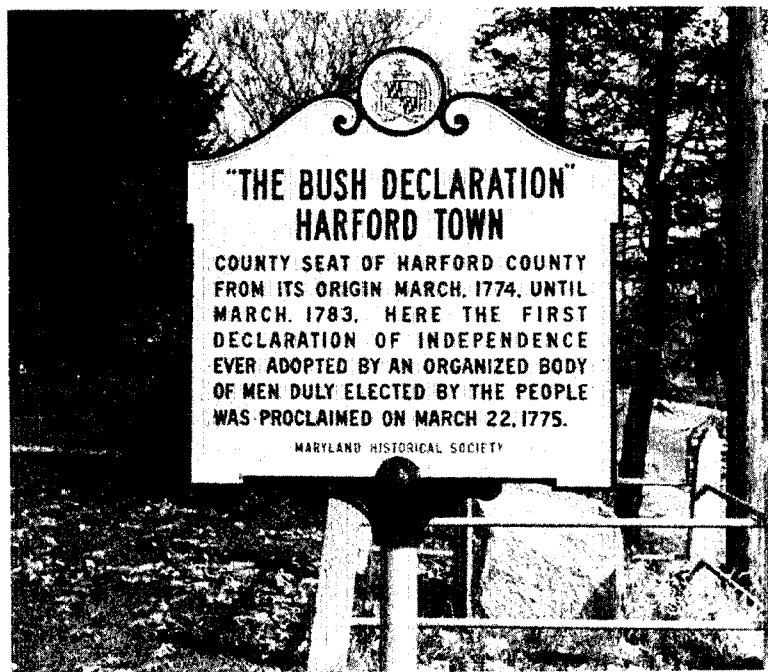


Photo by Dr. David C. Hodge

The committee was in no sense just a mass meeting, but its members were duly elected by the 10,000 inhabitants of Harford County, and was composed of prominent men, many of whom are ancestors of citizens of today.

THIS TABLET
 MARKS THE SITE OF THE BUILDING IN WHICH WERE HELD THE COURTS OF
 HARFORD COUNTY FROM ITS ORGANIZATION IN 1700 UNTIL 1783. IN 1774
 HERE IN THIS PLACE THE COMMITTEE OF HARFORD COUNTY
 HELD ITS MEETINGS BEFORE AND DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF THE
 REVOLUTION. HERE AT A MEETING HELD ON THE 22ND DAY OF MARCH
 1775 THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PASSED AND
 SIGNED A FORMAL DECLARATION PLEDGING THEIR LIVES AND FORTUNES
 TO THE CAUSE WHICH A YEAR LATER RESULTED IN THE DECLARATION
 OF INDEPENDENCE.

ADAM HALL	THOS. BRICE	WM. SMITHSON
JOS. ORVAL HALL	THOS. JOHNSON	JOHN DUNSTON
GEOR. PATTERSON	ALEXR. HIGDON	JOHN PATRICK
WM. MORGAN	EDW. RARD	DANIEL SCOTT
FRANK HOLLAND	ASHTHRIKER	BEND BRADFORD NORRIS
SAML. CALWELL	CHARLES ANDERSON	JAMES HARRIS
W. PAGA	WM. FISHER, JUN.	EDWARD PRALL
JAMES LYALE	RICH. DALLAM	GREENBERRY DORSEY
ADAM HALL, JUN.	JOHN DURHAM	JOHN ARCHER
BT. MORGAN	JOS. McCOMBS	W. SMITH
BT. LEMMON	WM. BRADFORD, SR.	WM. WEBB
		JOHN TAYLOR

Photo by Dr. David C. Hodge

Tablet marking the site of the building in which Court was held 1774-1783.
 Bush Declaration signed here on March 22, 1775.

Just as the former county seats of Old Baltimore and Joppa had served their day, so Bush ceased to be and soon faded into decay. Of all the dwellings, stores, and inns, only one—the large old coachhouse on Route 7—remains to remind us of the glorious history of 200 years ago.

Scott's Old Fields

(Bel Air)

1782-

By the end of the Revolution, the population of Harford had increased to almost 12,000, and the new settlers were beginning to occupy lands in central and northern sections. Consequently, there was demand that the county seat be located somewhere more accessible to the whole population.

On January 22, 1782, an Act was passed by the General Assembly enabling the voters to select a new location for the seat of government. The places named in the Act to be voted for were Harford Town (Bush), Gravelly Hill, Lower Cross Roads, Otter Point, and Scott's Old Fields (Bel Air). By the same Act, the justices were authorized to purchase four