HISTORIC Leonardtown WALKING TOUR

Our History • Our Heritage • Our Architecture

For nearly three centuries, Leonardtown has been the County Seat of St. Mary's County as well as the center of commerce and social activity. Today, it is still the center of local government and a bustling town of fine restaurants, unique shops, and old-fashioned charm. Traces of its history can be found throughout its landscape and its commercial buildings, churches and residences. Your journey through our past will start at Tudor Hall Mansion and continue along Courthouse Drive where you will view the Courthouse and the Old Jail Museum. On Washington Street and down various side streets, you will view additional historic buildings, churches and businesses. Each site is numbered and highlighted on this map to assist in your tour. Some sites are open to the public, while others are private residences or offices. *Please respect the privacy of owners whose buildings are not open to the public.*

EARLY HISTORY

Records indicate that by 1654, county court was conducted at the house of John Hammond in the area known as "Newtown" or "Newtowne Hundred." During the late 17th century, it appears that court was held at various homes throughout Newtown, and that it wasn't until 1708 that an official town with a designated courthouse was established. It was during this same year that Phillip Lynes, then Mayor of St. Mary's City, Maryland's Colonial Capital, designated fifty acres of land at the head of "Brittons Bay" to be divided into 100 lots. He further ordered that one lot be set aside for a county courthouse to be built at an expense not to exceed 12,000 pounds of tobacco. At this time, Newtown was promptly renamed Seymour Town in honor of Governor, John Seymour. Nearly 20 years later, Seymour Town was renamed again to Leonard Town in honor of Benedict Leonard Calvert, who was Maryland's Governor during this period. In the decades that followed, Leonard Town became the place where local residents conducted their official business with the colony.

THE 19th CENTURY

During the War of 1812, the British blockaded the Chesapeake Bay. This crippled the Tidewater economy and subjected areas such as Leonardtown to repeated British plundering and destruction. By 1860, the Town had approximately 35 dwellings within these corporate limits. It was home to the County's newspaper, two hotels and several stores. During the Civil War, a Union Naval contingent occupied Leonardtown, searching all houses for weapons and supplies intended for shipment across the Potomac to Virginia as Southern Maryland and the Town's sympathies lay with the South. Leonardtown served as a busy port and steamboat landing until the passing of the steamboat era in the early 1900's.

THE 20th CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

Leonardtown remains the only incorporated municipality in St. Mary's County with its own elected Mayor and Town Council. The Town is experiencing a renaissance of its downtown as witnessed by recent openings of several new restaurants and businesses, some of which are located in historic buildings. Plans are underway to revitalize and transform the Leonardtown Wharf at the foot of Washington Street into a public waterfront park along with a mix of retail shops, office space, and residential units. Facilities for boating, kayaking and canoeing are also planned.

Additional information may be obtained by contacting:

Commissioners of Leonardtown
41660 Courthouse Drive, P. O. Box 1
Leonardtown, Maryland 20650
(301) 475-9791
e-mail:
Leonardtown.commissioners@verizon.net
web:
Leonardtown.somd.com

St. Mary's County Division of Tourism
23115 Leonard Hall Drive, P.O. Box 653
Leonardtown, Maryland 20650
(301) 475-4200 x 1404
or (800) 327-9023
web: www.stmarysmd.com/tourism

Read more about Leonardtown's history between 1650-1950:
A Most Convenient Place
by Aleck Loker of Leonardtown
Available at the Town Office.
Call (301) 475-9791 for details.

A variety of books on local history may be found at the Historical Society's bookstore located at Tudor Hall Mansion.

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12 DUKE'S FOUNTAIN-BAR-RESTAURANT

Duke's Fountain-Bar-Restaurant is a two-story, brick commercial building on the corner of Fenwick and Washington Streets. Constructed in the 1920's by Roland B. Duke, the building retains much of its original exterior including its storefront fenestration. A 1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance map notes that an auto sales showroom and grocery store were located on the first floor. The second floor was used as a hall for graduation ceremonies, parties, and other receptions as well as a bowling alley (unused but still in place). Today, the building hosts a restaurant and a variety of small retail businesses.

13 THE PICTURE BOX (Real Estate Office)

Constructed in 1938 by Herbert and Arvilla Dunkle, the "Picture Box" is a one-story, L-shaped commercial building on the northeast corner of Pope and Fenwick Streets. The Dunkles used it as a photography-developing laboratory and portrait studio. The building has since served as a florist shop as well as a shoe repair shop. The building was renovated in the 1980's and is now a real estate office.

14 THE FIRST ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL (Law Offices)

By the early 20th century, it was clear that a hospital was needed in Leonardtown, but no funds were available for a permanent building. A group of leading citizens established the first hospital in 1912 in a dwelling on Fenwick Street owned by Margaret and Francis Greenwell. The rent was $10 a month. This 1880's building served as the hospital until 1916 when a new hospital was erected on Route 5. While the building has been extensively renovated, it retains its distinction as the first hospital in Leonardtown.

15 HENDERSON HOUSE (Office building)

Located on the west side of Washington Street, this building's complex form is the result of a series of additions. These additions express the Folk-Victorian style popular at the turn of the 20th century. Its two and one-half story frame rests on a low brick foundation. Constructed circa 1910 for use as a funeral home and residence, the front door is surmounted by a three-paned transom, while tall windows with pedimented trim grace the front. Its overall design relates the house visually to its larger Colonial Revival, Second Empire, and Victorian-era neighbors along Washington Street.

16 ST. PETER'S CHAPEL (Law Offices)

In the late 1860's, St. Andrew's Parish recognized Leonardtown's population had grown sufficiently so as to support the construction of a new chapel. St. Peter's Episcopal Chapel, Washington Street, is an example of a vernacular Gothic-style church. The church epitomizes Gothic design with its steep roof, slender windows with pointed arches, its Gothic-style "skeleton" pews, and its detailed interior roof work. The stained glass windows have been restored.

17 ST. ALOYSIUS CATHOLIC CHURCH

The present-day St. Aloysius Church (1962) was constructed in the Colonial-style on Washington Street adjacent to Father Andrew White School (1954). This church replaced the earlier St. Aloysius Church (1846) that stood on the south side of the parish rectory overlooking the Town Square. In 1959, the old church, with its belfry and graceful spire, was deemed structurally unsound and demolished. The covered arched walkway that connected the rectory to the old church remains intact. The 1885 Jenkins' Memorial Bell, presented in honor of Father Charles K. Jenkins, was saved and installed in the new church. He is noted for his success in bringing the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky to the community in 1885.

18 ST. ALOYSIUS CHURCH RECTORY

The St. Aloysius Church Rectory (1933) is located next to the church. In 1870, Thomas A. Dillow transferred his 1858 carriage-wheel-coffin shop and three acres to the Associated Professors of Loyola College in exchange for nearby White Hall. The frame building was remodeled and converted into an attractive residence for the Jesuit fathers serving several local parishes. This rectory served their needs until it fell into disrepair in 1933, and a new red brick rectory was built and stuccoed to match the church of 1846. It features a center hall, library, meeting room, office and sleeping quarters on the second floor.

19 LEONARDTOWN NAZARENE CHURCH

Located on the Town Square, Leonardtown Nazarene Church (1915) is a Gothic-style, concrete block building that exhibits six different types of blocks whose ornamental faces match those advertised by Sears, Roebuck, and Company of Chicago. Manufactured pressed tin panels were used on the interior walls and ceiling.

20 THE LEONARDTOWN MURAL

The Leonardtown Mural was created to depict various periods in Leonardtown's history. On the left, the painting presents a turn-of-the-century theme; to the right, the chronology advances to the mid-1950's. Illustrated in sepia tones is the 1865 arrest of Congressman Benjamin G. Harris on charges of treason on the porch of the Fenwick Hotel.
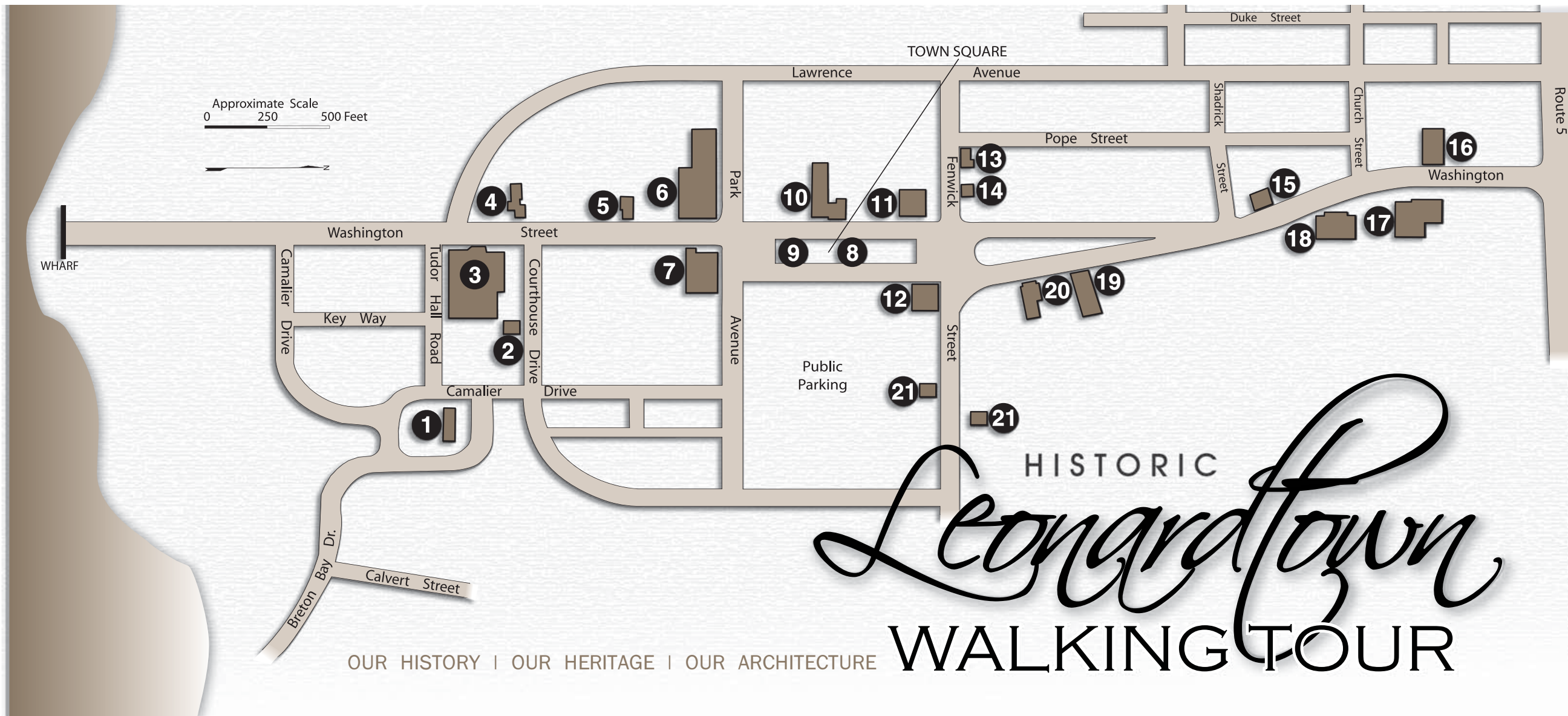
21 THE ORCHARD (Home Impressions)

In 1919, I. Stanley Johnson and his wife, Ida, built the Johnson House and Store on 12 acres known as "The Orchard." The house still retains its original character defining windows and doors, hip roof and overall form. In the early 1920's, the land was subdivided when the Johnsons sold a lot to Mrs. Johnson's sister, Mildred and her husband, Stephen Jones. Mr. Jones came to town to work as cashier of the Eastern Shore Trust Company. He served as both town commissioner and mayor for many years. As Mr. Johnson's business continued to expand, he had a new home built next to the Jones', and another for rental property on the east side of Fenwick Street. This grouping of homes is a good example of the practice of "family subdivision" where family members actively chose to live in close proximity to one another.

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*The **open door** symbol means this building is open to the public.*

*The **binoculars** symbol means this structure should be viewed from the street.*

Map — Historic Leonardtown Walking Tour

Approximate Scale
0   250   500 Feet

WHARF

Duke Street

TOWN SQUARE

Lawrence Avenue

Pope Street

Washington Street

Key Way

Camalier Drive

Tudor Hall Road

Courthouse Drive

Camalier Drive

Park Avenue

Fenwick Street

Shadrick Street

Church Street

Route 5

Washington

Breton Bay Dr.

Calvert Street

Public Parking

HISTORIC
Leonardtown
WALKING TOUR

OUR HISTORY | OUR HERITAGE | OUR ARCHITECTURE

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1 TUDOR HALL (Historical Society)

Overlooking Breton Bay stands the Georgian-style Tudor Hall Mansion. This house has served as a private home, public library, Town Hall and presently houses the St. Mary's County Historical Society. The mansion was constructed on a 1,096 acre Tidewater plantation that shared boundaries with the county seat of Leonardtown.

The original land grant was issued in 1649. This tract was referred to as "Little St. Lawrence," and on later rent rolls as "Shepard's Old Fields." In 1744, the land was resurveyed and patented to Colonel Abraham Barnes, who changed the name to *America Felix Secundus.* The house, started sometime before 1744, was small with a central hall and a room on either side. The second floor had dormered bedrooms. The dependencies for the house would have been separate, typical of plantation homes, consisting of a kitchen, laundry unit, a garden house, slave quarters, and perhaps even an office. Col. Barnes served the town, county and state in a variety of positions as well as being the tobacco inspector for the Port of Leonardtown. By 1776, Col. Barnes was defending the County against the invasion by the British Fleet. He died during the War of Independence and his estate was bequeathed to his youngest son, Richard.

In the early 19th century, the roof of each wing was raised to two stories, and the roof of the main block was altered to the present hipped form. Unusual features of the house are the inset portico or loggia on the front of the house, the hanging staircase in the main hall and the rooftop captain's walk. From 1817 until 1950, the Key family, relatives of Francis Scott Key, author of the *Star Spangled Banner,* owned the house. Today, the Historical Society operates a research center, office and bookstore in the mansion.

2 OLD JAIL (Museum)

In 1876, the county commissioners specified the following for modernizing the one story 1858 jail that had become too small: a building 20 by 36 feet, two stories high, to be built of stone and brick. The contract was awarded to F. D. Adams, a Mechanicsville builder, who completed it in October 1876. The first floor was used as living quarters for the jailer's family while the second floor cells housed inmates grouped by gender and race. The building served as the county jail until 1942 when a new jail was constructed behind the courthouse. The St. Mary's County Historical Society maintains the Old Jail as a museum. An original cannon from the "Ark," one of the ships that carried some of the first colonists to Maryland in 1634, is mounted in front of the Old Jail Museum.

3 ST. MARY'S COUNTY COURTHOUSE

A courthouse has existed in Leonardtown since 1710. In 1736, the General Assembly authorized the justices of St. Mary's to build a new courthouse to replace the original wooden structure. This building survived until 1831, when it accidentally burned, destroying valuable records. A new courthouse was reconstructed on the site by 1832. For nearly 100 years, the courthouse was the scene of civic gatherings and meetings. Because of concern for the stability of the 1832 structure, another courthouse was constructed on the site in 1901. In 1957, the courthouse underwent extensive remodeling. The exterior red bricks replaced the yellow bricks used in 1901 and a more unified, pediment facade was incorporated. The most recent renovation and addition, completed in 2001, houses three circuit courts and related judicial offices.

4 SPALDING/CAMALIER HOUSE

In 1858, the original County Jail was abandoned and offered for public sale. Dr. Andrew Jackson Spalding purchased the old jail and lot and used the bricks in constructing his new home, which was eventually called Camalier House. The house is a two-and-one-half story, side-passage plan dwelling that represents one of the earliest extant in-town residences. Boasting modest Greek Revival detailing and proportions, the exterior features painted wood lintels over the doors and windows and distinctive bridged chimneys situated on the north gable end of the house. After the Civil War, the home was sold to Frank Neale Holmes, who also owned a store and the steamboat pier at Leonardtown Wharf.

5 LEONARDTOWN BANK OF THE EASTERN SHORE (Office Building)

The Leonardtown Bank of the Eastern Shore, constructed in 1913, is an excellent example of Classical Revival architecture. Located on the west side of Washington Street near the Courthouse and Bell Motor Company, this one-story, brick office building with classical details conforms to the surrounding architectural streetscape. While exhibiting a high degree of architectural integrity, the building also illustrates the growing importance and need for commercial banks in Leonardtown during the early 20th century.

6 BELL MOTOR COMPANY

J. Ernest Bell and T. Webster Bell opened a Chevrolet car dealership in Pearson, Maryland in 1923. In 1939, they erected a modern, two-story, five-to-one common bond brick building in Leonardtown at the corner of Park Avenue and Washington Street for their expanding business. Distinctive characteristics of the building include the large picture windows and tan brick surrounds. While extensively modified, the building remains a key commercial site in Leonardtown. Bell Motors is the second oldest Chevrolet car dealership in the world, and is still owned and managed by the Bell family.

7 MERCANTILE BANK OF SOUTHERN MARYLAND

The Mercantile Bank of Southern Maryland is a two-story, brick commercial building designed in the Classical Revival-style. Constructed in 1921, it serves as the southern visual terminus for Washington Street. Its classical design illustrates a style commonly used by banking institutions in the early 20th century. This building served as a symbol of the economic prosperity of Leonardtown — a town that was increasingly seen as not only the seat of government, but as the social, religious, commercial, and financial center of St. Mary's County.

8 WORLD WAR I MEMORIAL

Located in Town Square, the World War I Memorial lists the names of 27 men who made the supreme sacrifice for their country. It was dedicated on November 11, 1921. Ceremonies included a parade complete with a brass band, ex-servicemen in uniform, and the Red Cross. There were 1,500 people in attendance. Since then, the memorial has served as the focal point for the Town and an annual Veterans Day parade which is among the largest in the State.

9 DECEASED VETERANS MEMORIAL

Also on Town Square, the Deceased Veterans Memorial honors 79 St. Mary's County men killed or missing in action: 61 in World War II, 5 in the Korean War and 13 in the Vietnam War. The dedication followed the annual Veterans Day parade on November 11, 2001.

10 THE NEW THEATER

This structure was originally a movie theater known as "The New Theater." It was constructed, circa 1945, of cinder blocks supported by brick buttresses that permitted the walls to reach a more elevated height. Movies were shown here until the late 1970's. While the front of the theater has been drastically changed, the actual theater space has been preserved and is undergoing renovation for use as a banquet room.

11 UNION HOTEL (The Carousel)

The Carousel, originally known as "The Union Hotel" (1850), is located on the west side of Washington Street. According to a notice of sale posted in the November 26, 1857 issue of the *St. Mary's Beacon,* the Union Hotel could accommodate 100 guests and had stables for 200 horses. After the public sale, the hotel was renamed "The Fenwick Hotel." Due to its ties to court and government functions, the hotel played a critical role in housing visitors on court and voting days as well as boarding tradesmen. The hotel was also popular for barbecues and public debates.

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