



Although the Fairfax County courthouse was constructed at the conclusion of the eighteenth century, it achieved its main historical significance during the Civil War. The County Seat of Fairfax County was forced to move from Alexandria when that city was incorporated into the federal capital. The search for a new courthouse site was completed when in May, 1798, a group of commissioners was appointed to inspect a site consisting of four acres owned by Richard Ratcliffe at Earp's Store. The deed was recorded on June 27, 1799.

Work began on the site in January 1799, after a design by James Wren, credited with the designs of Christ Church in Falls Church, Christ Church in Alexandria and the Pohick Church. John Bogue, an immigrant carpenter and builder, and his partner, Mungo Dykes, constructed the building and the County took possession on January 27, 1800. The war years of 1861-1865 made the operation of normal civil government in Northern Virginia impossible. The courthouse was, for the most part, on the front lines of both opposing camps. In May, 1861, a company of Warrenton Rifles established a camp at Fairfax Court House. On the morning of June 1, 1861, a body of Union Cavalry rode through Providence, and in the confused exchange of fire which followed, a captain of the Rifles, John Quincy Marr, became the first battle casualty of the war.

In the spring of 1862, the Confederate Army retired from Fairfax Court House to its line of fortifications at Centreville. From this time until the end of the War, Union troops remained in nominal control of this important crossroads and court house. Irregular Confederate troops plagued the Union Army in this area. This fact was dramatized in the famous raid on Fairfax County Court House by General John S. Mosby when, on the night of March 3, 1863, he, with about thirty men, captured and carried off Union General Edwin H. Stoughton, thirty-three prisoners, and a large number of horses and quantity of supplies. From 1863 until the end of the War, there were continuous guerilla raids.

The task of renovating the courthouse after the War Between the States was extensive. Valuable historic records from the beginning of the court system are preserved in the Clerk's Office today. The original wills of George and Martha Washington, along with historical deeds, wills and slave manumissions are protected there.



Fairfax County Courthouse and Jail

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places May 3, 1974

