

Museum Around the Corner

Georgetown County Historical Society Museum

Prior to 1788, there are references to the city market being across from the Baptist Church on Church Street, the northern end of Screven St. By 1788, citizens complained that the market was too remote from the center of town so the legislature enacted that a new one be built at the southern end of Screven on Front Street. The lower half had stalls for the selling of food and produce, and meat could not be sold any place other than in the town market. Inspection of meat was critical to good health so one central place was designated here.

The upper story served as the town hall. Being in a more central location in the town, a bell was located somewhere on the market grounds to serve as a fire alarm. When the bell sounded, every citizen was required to turn out to attend the fire. Each household had a leather bucket with their name imprinted on it. After the fire, all buckets were gathered at the scene by the town officials and personally returned to each family with their thanks. If your bucket was missing from the scene, a different kind of visit occurred to find out why. Fines could be imposed if the reason was not sufficient.

Along came the hurricane of September, 1822, which almost destroyed the town. Many buildings suffered damage great and small. Reports stated, "...the building over the market, occupied by the Town Council, is nearly down, every pillar which supports it, being fractured." Although efforts were made to render the building safe enough for use, it was never fully repaired.

On October 19, 1841 a fire broke out at about one o'clock in the morning. It began in the tailor shop of Mr. C.A. Magill located in the center of the 600 block's south side. The fire spread both east and west consuming the entire block from Queen to Screven on the river side. The Town Hall building was free standing and rickety as a result of the hurricane of 1822. It was easy to throw ropes around it and pull it down to be a fire break. The new market/Town Hall was rebuilt in the same style as before, but this time built out of brick. It has certainly stood the test of time.

The Georgetown Times of July 1, 1857 printed the story of the building of the steeple and town clock. A bell, weighing upwards of fourteen hundred pounds, "was elevated to its proper position by the polite services of Capt. Robins, of the schooner Path-finder and Captain Roberts, of the Brig Globe, with a part of their crew now in port. To the uninitiated in such matters, it looked as a ponderous undertaking but to the skilled in rope and tackle, it was conducted with the utmost ease and safety."

On July 15, 1857 the report that the clock to be placed in the newly erected tower was found broken upon opening the box that contained it. To the dismay of the townspeople, who had looked forward to knowing the time of day, the services of Mr. Howard from the Boston Clock Factory were required and "...he has for the past week been employed in fixing and adjusting the clock in the Steeple of the Town Hall, which was erected for the purpose; and we are glad to say that it is not only an ornament to the portion of the town in which it is situated, but that it is also a very useful appendage. And now that we have it and enjoyed its use for a short time, the wonder is that we have never had it before and how we have done without it so long." By September 16, the clock was regularly tolling the passage of time.