

First Escape

The Jail in Brentsville opened for business in March 1823 with Abraham Millan, the first jailor. The brick building, as far as is known, was not without occupants for almost 70 years. Men, women, black, white, rich and poor all were incarcerated there, and at times all could have been there at the same time. It appears to be the one place in the county that was completely integrated.

It is not known who the first prisoner was, but, without question, the first known jail break came within a month of construction. Enoch Calvert was sent to the jail by a magistrate examining court to await a trial for highway robbery. On the night of March 28th 1823, Calvert made his escape and went at large. He was described as 5 foot 10 inches high, sparse made, bow legged, red hair, light colored eyes, and florid complexion.

Abraham Millan mailed a letter on April 4 to James Pleasants Jr., the governor of Virginia, notifying him of the escape and soliciting his help. Five days after the letter left Brentsville, the governor issued the following proclamation: "Whereas it has been represented to the Executive by the Jailor of Prince William County, that a certain Enoch Calvert, who had been secured to the Jail of said County for further trial, by an Examining Court thereof on a charge of highway robbery, did on the night of the 28th Ultmo. make his escape from the said Jail and is now going at large: I here therefore thought proper, with the advice of the Council of State, hereby to offer a reward of one hundred & fifty dollars to any person or persons who shall apprehend and convey to the Jail of Prince William County the said Enoch Calvert: And I do moreover require all officers civil and military, and exhort the good people of the Commonwealth to use their best endeavors to apprehend the said Calvert, that he maybe dealt with as the law directs."

Given under my hand as Governor, and
under the seal of the Commonwealth
at Richmond, this 9th day of April 1823.

James Pleasants

Ron Turner