

---

## *A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland*

---

Sharpe declined even to communicate the proposal to Mr. Bacon, and nearly a year passed before, moved by a demand from the Board of Trade for a printed edition of the Maryland laws, he took up in his correspondence with Secretary Calvert the project of publishing Bacon's compilation, then nearing completion. The plan for financing the volume which he proposed in his letter of January 28, 1761, was that which in the main was eventually followed.<sup>1</sup> Sharpe let it be understood that, having paid from his own pocket for a transcript of the laws demanded by the Council Office in 1755, and having been refused reimbursement by the Assembly, he was very much in favor of encouraging the publication of Mr. Bacon's compilation by general subscription, instead of having another transcript made at his own expense. He did not believe that the Assembly would ever contribute a shilling toward this or any other edition of the laws unless the editor would leave out the "Tonnage Law & the Act made in 1704 for the Support of Government," and as the expense would be large, perhaps four hundred pounds sterling, and as it would be a great pity both for Bacon's sake and on account of the Province that the result of so much labor and pains should remain unpublished, he proposed to head a list with a subscription of forty or fifty pounds toward the cost of its publication. Two or three years before this Bacon's published proposals for subscriptions had been coolly received,<sup>2</sup> but Sharpe believed that once in print the book would have a good sale, and with about three hundred and thirty copies sold the expenses would be covered and the repayment of the subscriptions begun. He asked his Lordship's approval of this suggestion, and begged that in addition to giving his approval he would put his name down as one of the subscribers to the publication.

In reply to Sharpe's definite proposal, Secretary Calvert announced his Lordship's contribution of one hundred pounds to the expenses of the work, as well as his own subscription of a quarter of this sum.<sup>3</sup> Having secured in all about twenty-one subscribers, or underwriters, from among the principal gentlemen and officials of the Province, Sharpe gave the word for the

<sup>1</sup> Sharpe Correspondence, January 28, 1761, *Archives of Maryland*, 9: 489.

<sup>2</sup> On January 25, 1759, and frequently throughout that winter, Bacon had published in the *Maryland Gazette* proposals for the publication of his complete body of laws by subscription at forty shillings a copy. In this advertisement, he estimated the cost of new type and paper to be imported, of printing and binding at £1200 currency. Sharpe's assertion as to the coolness with which his proposals were received is at variance with Bacon's statement in the *Maryland Gazette* for June 7, 1759, in which he announced that because of the gratifying number of subscriptions received, his book of laws would "infallibly be printed." At this time he still expected to receive a subsidy of £300 currency from the Assembly. The failure of that body to make an appropriation evidently made a very decided change in his plans for publishing the book by general subscription and governmental subsidy.

<sup>3</sup> Sharpe Correspondence, June 10, 1761, *Archives of Maryland*, 9: 519.