
A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland

short outline of the plan which appeared in his proposals to the Assembly of 1761. To the Lower House in that year, he announced,

“That the several Sessions shall be distinguished by their proper Dates, Names of Governors, &c. The Titles of all the Acts passed in each, inserted in their due Order, with Reference to the Records where they may be found; and an account of the several Continuations, and Time of Expiration or Repeal of such as are expired or abrogated. Each Session shall be divided into Chapters, and the Chapters into Sections with Numbers, for the easier Quotation of any Laws in Being.

“That ample marginal Notes shall be printed, with References to any subsequent Law, whereby a Paragraph may in any wise be affected or altered; and a compleat Common-Place, or short Alphabetical Abridgement of the Laws, shall be added, whereby the Whole, relating to any one Article, may easily be seen, and turned to in the several Acts at large.”

It is conceivable that to carry into effect this running commentary on the legislation of one hundred and twenty-six years was no small task. That its undertaker performed it worthily, his monumental work remains to attest.

In the winter of 1762 Bacon's work was so far advanced that he was compelled to go to Annapolis “in order to collate or examine his manuscript Acts of Assembly with the Records.”¹ We may think of him as making that weary journey many times during this winter and spring, and we may share his rejoicing that the worst of his task was over, when on July 24, 1762, Reverdy Ghiselin, Gent., Clerk of the Provincial Court, and Thomas Bacon, Clerk, Rector of All Saints Parish in Frederick County, appeared before two of the justices of the Provincial Court and

“. . . produced Six Manuscript Books or Volumes in Folio, marked No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, No. 4, No. 5, and No. 6, containing a Transcript of the Acts of Assembly of this Province, now in Force or Use from the Year 1637, to the Year 1762, . . . as the same have been collected into one Body by the aforesaid Thomas Bacon; and made Oath on the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God, That they had carefully and diligently Examined and Compared all the several Acts contained in the said Transcript, . . . with the Original Acts which Passed the Great Seal of this Province, where such Originals were extant, or to be found in the Secretary's Office of this Province; and, where the Originals of any of the said acts could not be found, with the Records of the same, as they stand Recorded in the Secretary's Office aforesaid. And that the said several Acts contained in the said six Volumes or Transcript, and by them so Signed as aforesaid, are true Copies of the Original Acts, or Records respectively, with which the same have been by them Compared and Examined as aforesaid, to the best of their Knowledge, Skill and Belief.”²

The above oath, which is to be found in the printed volume itself at the close of the session of March 1762, was signed by Reverdy Ghiselin and Thomas Bacon on the one part, John Brice and George Steuart on the other.

¹ Sharpe Correspondence, February 15, 1762, *Archives of Maryland*, 14: 20.

² Bacon's *Laws of Maryland*, at conclusion of acts of March 1762.