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*The Nuthead Press · William and Dinah Nuthead*

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There are several items in the Nuthead inventory which are of interest in this narrative. If the "printed papers" which were discovered among his effects had been listed in good bibliographical form, the activities of the first Maryland printer doubtless would have been clearly outlined for us, but having little idea that Nuthead's work in St. Mary's would ever be of interest to posterity, the appraisers contented themselves with only the briefest description of his office file. They were equally terse in recording that they found "In the Printeing house a printing press, Letters & a parcell of old Lumber," and as cautious as they were terse when they set upon this item the modest valuation of five pounds. An entry of somewhat pathetic interest in this short and simple catalogue of a poor man's goods was "one old sorrell horse hardly able to stand valued at . . . 5 shillings." It is not improbable that the beast had been brought to this pass through long journeys undertaken by his owner in the hope of collecting those outstanding debts.

The fact is significant that Nuthead had on his books at the time of his death sixty or more accounts with individuals of his own county, and of Kent, Cecil and Talbot, for there is no reason to believe that he was at any time engaged in a trade other than that of printing for which these accounts might have been opened; he had no tools, no merchandise, no farm stock; the printing press was the only implement listed among his effects by means of which he might have gained a livelihood, and the general employment of his press in that pioneer country, as indicated by the number and geographical distribution of its patrons, is cause for astonishment. It may be that an explanation of its apparent popularity is to be found in a petition which Thomas Reading, the third Maryland printer, presented to the Assembly in the year 1706, in the course of which the petitioner prayed that

" . . . whereas there hath been a former Ordinance of this House to Mr. W. Bladen and others that had printing Presses in the Province obliging all Clerks, Commissarys, Sheriffs, and other officers to make use of printed Blanks [that ordinance] may be renewed and settled on your Petitioner."<sup>1</sup>

It is likely that Nuthead, in no less degree than his successors in Maryland, carried on a lively business in printing the legal and mercantile forms in daily use in the Province. In this day he would be considered the veriest "job printer," but such as he was, he deserves commemoration as having been the pioneer of printing in Virginia and Maryland, the first individual to practise the art of typography in any colony south of Massachusetts.

<sup>1</sup>L. H. J., April 8, 1706, *Archives of Maryland*, 26: 577. As Bladen and Reading began printing in Annapolis in the year 1700, the phrase "others that had printing Presses in the Province" must refer either to William and