
A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland

fact that Sharpe did not transmit copies to England until July 31, 1766, and from the further evidence that it was not until August 21, 1766, that it was offered for sale in the *Maryland Gazette* by Mr. Lancelot Jacques of Annapolis, one concludes that the printing of the index and preface, and the binding of the book, referred to by Sharpe a year before, had held up its publication much longer than had been anticipated. Into its making had gone thirteen years of toil on the part of Bacon and four years of honest labor on the part of Green, not to speak of much concern and activity exercised by Sharpe and others prominent in the Provincial government. Green died about a year after its publication, while Bacon lived long enough to see his laborious compilation become a work of unquestioned public usefulness. In scholarly and systematic arrangement as well as in accuracy and completeness it excelled any of the former bodies of law which the Province had possessed. Since the Revolution and its constitutional changes, Bacon's compilation has been of little practical value in the courts, but until the publication of the *Archives of Maryland* was begun in the closing years of the nineteenth century, it remained to the historian and the antiquarian the most useful single source on the past of the Province of Maryland. As an easy and dependable guide to the store-house of Maryland history it remains still without a rival. To possess a collection of works on Maryland history from which a copy of Bacon has been omitted is to have a house built upon sand, while a collection of colonial laws or of works illustrative of American printing which does not include that work, by this omission confesses itself incomplete.

Green issued Bacon's great book in two distinct editions; that is, on an ordinary, thin but crisp and opaque paper, suitable for book work, and on a thick, creamy writing paper of the same make and watermark as that which the Province imported for many years for the volumes in which were written its acts of Assembly.¹ In this "large paper" edition the Bacon presents a quiet splendor, a mellow and harmonious blending of paper and types which was not surpassed in any book printed in colonial America.

In Green's masterpiece of typography there is perceived a lapidarian dignity of intention, a determination, one seems justified in thinking, that these laws of a free people should be inscribed in a manner worthy of the spirit in which they had been enacted.

¹ From various evidences one concludes that this was a Dutch paper. The author sent a description of its watermarks to Mr. G. J. Honig of Laandijk, Holland, who asserted the probability in a courteous reply that this paper had been made by the house of L. van Gerrevink, at Egmond op de Hoef, near Alkmaar in Noord, Holland.