
A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland

“The Printer of this Paper, with great Pleasure, acquaints the Public, that his Proposal for Establishing an American Post Office, on constitutional Principles, hath been warmly and generously patronized by the Friends of Freedom in all the great Commercial Towns in the Eastern Colonies, where ample Funds are already secured, Postmasters and Riders engaged, and, indeed, every necessary Arrangement made for the Reception of the Southern mails, which, it is expected, will soon be extended thither. As therefore the final success of the Undertaking now depends on the Public Spirit of the Inhabitants of Maryland and Virginia, it is not doubted, from the recent Evidence they have given of their Noble Zeal in the Cause of Liberty and their Country, but they will cheerfully join the rescuing the Channel of public and private Intelligence from the horrid Fangs of Ministerial Dependents; a Measure indispensably necessary in the present alarming Crisis of American Affairs.

The following Plan, &c., hath been published and universally approved of at the Eastward.”

The “Plan” which followed set forth briefly the history of the “present American Post Office,” ministerial in its creation, direction and dependence, which not only was tampering with private correspondence, but as well, was interfering with the circulation of “our News-Papers, those necessary and important alarms in Times of public Danger.” In view of the indictment of its management which he proceeded to unfold, Goddard proposed the establishment of a new, semi-public system, and laid down in eight paragraphs rules for its maintenance and government, therein establishing a set of principles by which his Constitutional Post Office was operated and which were adopted with certain essential changes when the Continental Congress at a later time took over the system. His method of securing support for his scheme seems to have been the publication of newspaper announcements such as that which has been quoted here from the pages of the *Maryland Journal*, followed in each locality by the circulation of a subscription form, headed “The Plan for establishing a New American Post Office.”¹ He seems to have worked at this task single-handed. His proposals were entirely in his own name, and that he succeeded in his great undertaking may be accepted as an evidence of the esteem in which he was generally held. Little imagination is required to arrive at an understanding of the magnitude of his labors in carrying out an enterprise so great and complex as the establishment of a system of post offices and riders with routes and cross routes from Maine to Georgia.

On July 16, 1774,² he announced that a “New Post Office” would “shortly be opened in this and every Considerable Town, from Virginia to Casco

¹ One such broadside, with the names of the subscribers torn off, has been preserved in the John Carter Brown Library. It is dated Boston, April 30, 1774, and in Goddard's own hand it is addressed as follows, “To the Gentn. of the Committee of Correspondence for the Town of Newbury, from their most . . . humble Servt. Wm. Goddard.” The proposals and “plan” above described are printed in *American Archives*, 4th Series, 1: 500.

² *Maryland Journal*.