
A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland

A LAST WORD ON MARY KATHERINE GODDARD

It would be an ungracious act to conclude this chapter without a final word on Mary Katherine Goddard, the devoted woman who was ready always to take up the tasks of her erratic brother where he had pleased to drop them, and willing, without complaint, to assume the consequences of his indiscretions. Hers was no small accomplishment. In 1774 she assumed the management of an infant newspaper and conducted it successfully through all the years of a War in the course of which, for economic reasons, many vigorous journals ceased publication. In 1784 when she might have begun to reap where she had sown with such assiduity, she relinquished her journal, a prosperous concern, to the brother in whose interests she had been acting throughout that decade. In spite of the ill feeling which William Goddard's defense of General Lee had engendered in the summer of 1779, she had found herself able to announce in November of that year that her journal circulated as extensively as any newspaper on the Continent.¹ Compelled frequently during these ten years to issue her news sheet in reduced form, she had nevertheless contrived always to issue, approximately on time, a journal which was second to none in the colonies in interest.² Isaiah Thomas asserts that she was herself "an expert and correct compositor of types." She must be thought of, therefore, not simply as a business executive whose part was to direct the labor of others, but as a craftsman whose manual labor was a considerable element in determining the success of her establishment.

During these years Mary Goddard's activities were not confined to the composing room and editorial office. Her advertisements indicate the maintenance by her also of a well-stocked book and stationery store, her job-printing office was a busy one where copper plate work and the finer kinds of printing were carried on, and where books of various sorts were creditably produced. It has been claimed for her, too, that she operated the local paper mill, but whether her appeals for rags and her advertisements of paper for sale indicate so close a connection with the enterprise as this is not certain. At any rate, she did much to foster the difficult infancy of paper manufacturing in Maryland.

To all of these activities which made Mary Goddard's Market Street office a very busy spot in old Baltimore must be added another important

¹ *Maryland Journal*, November 16, 1779.

² That her task was sometimes a disagreeable one appears from her complaint to the Baltimore Committee of Safety in June 1776 that Mr. George Somerville had "abused her with threats and indecent language on account of a late publication in her paper," for which attack upon the freedom of the press, Mr. Somerville was severely censured by the committee. (*American Archives*, 4th Series, 6: 1460 and 1461.)