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## *A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland*

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### MR. WILLIAM BLADEN PROPOSES TO ESTABLISH A PRESS

In the period intervening between the two recommendations, however, William Bladen, then clerk of the Lower House, had made a proposal which was to result eventually in the printing of the compiled laws, and in the establishment of the typographic art upon a stable basis in the Province. On October 1, 1696, the burgesses made the following representation to the Upper House:

“Upon proposall of William Bladen Clerk of this House that a printing press would be of Great Advantage to this province for printing the Laws made every Sessions &c and that he the said Bladen at his own proper cost and charges would send for such press with the Appurtenances provided his Excellency the Governor would give him Leave to make use of the same this House are of opinion that the same will be of Great advantage to this Province & humbly desire his Excellency will be pleased to Give leave to the said Bladen to make use thereof when arrived according to his proposal.”<sup>1</sup>

Immediately the recommendation of the Lower House as expressed in this message was approved, provided the petitioner should give “security according to his Majesty’s Royal Instructions to his Excellency.”<sup>2</sup>

From the phrasing of Bladen’s proposal to the Assembly one acquires the impression that he intended to send outside of the Province for his printing equipment, a necessity which would have existed only if Dinah Nuthead had sold her press, or if it had become too old and worn for use. Whatever the case may have been with regard to Dinah’s equipment, however, the sense of Bladen’s words makes it manifest that her printing office had closed its doors within five months of its establishment. Lacking the opportunity to purchase her plant for any reason, almost certainly Bladen would have been forced to send to England for his press and letters, and even there, he would have experienced difficulty in procuring decent fonts of type. The event will show that from whatever source he obtained his plant, he was compelled in the end to satisfy himself with a second-hand equipment whereof the types and furniture were notably worn and broken.

At the time of his proposal to the Assembly, William Bladen was a youth of three and twenty years of age, but he was then the same industrious and versatile man that he continued to be throughout his life in the Province. Born in 1673 of a well-known Yorkshire family, he came to Maryland some-

<sup>1</sup>U. H. J., October 2, 1696, *Archives of Maryland*, 19: 466.

<sup>2</sup>These instructions to Nicholson, dated March 8, 1694 (*Archives of Maryland*, 23: 549), were composed in the usual terms in which instructions regarding printing were transmitted to colonial governors at this time. See *ante*, instructions to Lord Howard of Effingham in 1690, and Copley’s instructions of August 26, 1691 (*Archives of Maryland*, 8: 279): “And forasmuch as great inconveniences may arise by the Liberty of Printing within our Province of Maryland, you are to provide by all necessary Orders that no person use any Press for printing upon any occasion whatsoever, without your special License first obtained.”