
William Bladen Publisher and his Printer Thomas Reading

time before 1692, in which year he was employed by the Lower House in making a transcript of the laws and in other clerical work of the session. In the year 1694 he signed the remonstrance of the citizens of St. Mary's against the removal of the capital. He assumed prominence in public affairs in 1695 as Clerk of the Lower House, a position which he held until he became Clerk of the Upper House in 1697, in which capacity he served the Province until four years before his death in 1718. He was Collector of the Port and District of Annapolis in 1697, Clerk of the Prerogative Court in 1699, Secretary of Maryland in 1701, Attorney-General of Maryland in 1707, Architect of the State House, 1704 to 1708, and Commissary-General of the Province in 1714. He held office also as an alderman of Annapolis in 1708, and several times served as vestryman of St. Anne's Parish. In the year 1696, he married Anne, daughter of Garrett Van Swearingen, by whom he had two children. One of these was Anne, who married the Hon. Benjamin Tasker of Annapolis, and the other was that Thomas Bladen who lived prominently not only in Maryland, of which he was Governor from 1742 to 1747, but as well in England, where at a later period he sat in the House of Commons as member for the Borough of Old Sarum.¹

It was characteristic of Bladen's enterprise that he should have perceived the advantage both to himself and to the Province in the importation of a press which should be capable of larger undertakings than those which formerly had been entrusted to the Nutheads. From the beginning he proposed to perform ambitious tasks, although in the first notice that we have of the press after its establishment in the colony, the character of the work suggested for it differed in no particular from that which Dinah Nuthead had been licensed to undertake four years earlier. It should be understood that Bladen was not a printer; he was the *entrepreneur* only, and he brought in with his press a practical printer, who was without doubt that Thomas Reading of whom we shall hear a great deal as this relation proceeds. An entry in the copy of the Lower House Journal which was transmitted to the Board of Trade, omitted in the Maryland original, informs us that on September 30, 1696, it was resolved that if Mr. Bladen were successful in obtaining a printer and a press, he should have the sole benefit of their operations, and the Council was asked to concur in that resolution for the encouragement of his designs.² During the first years of the venture, although the name of Thomas Reading appeared alone on the imprints,

¹ "The Bladen Family," by Christopher Johnston, *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 5: 297; *Archives of Maryland*, passim; *Vestry Proceedings, St. Anne's Parish*, in *Maryland Historical Magazine*, vols. 6-10; article "Maryland Gleanings; Sidelights on Maryland History," by Hester Dorsey Richardson, in the *Baltimore Sun*, May 29, 1904.

² *Cal. State Papers, A. & W. I.*, 1696, No. 268, p. 155.