
William Bladen Publisher and his Printer Thomas Reading

might easily have them in their houses without being troubled to goe to the County Court house to have recourse thereto—That the house made (*sic*) an Order for the printeing thereof and that every County be Obliged to take one faire Coppy endorsed and Titled to be bound up handsomly and that for the encouragement of the undertaker each County pay him therefore 2000 lbs of Tobo upon delivery the said booke of Laws.”¹

In the same document Bladen proposed to build a prison for the Province, and in conclusion added piously, “All which will be readily undertaken and with the blessing of God Carefully accomplished by yor most humble Servant to command W. Bladen.” Planter, clerk, architect and publisher—this W. Bladen was a valuable citizen in a community such as Maryland was at this time.

Bladen’s proposal to print the body of laws was timely. In the year 1699 the Assembly had passed an “Act Ascertainning the Laws of this Province,” by the terms of which were repealed all laws which had been made theretofore except those of that session, and selected ones of other sessions mentioned in an annexed schedule. This Act had been disallowed by the King for specific reasons, and because in general the advisers of his Majesty had disapproved of legislation whereby, as it was explained later, “the vallidity of all the Laws of the Province, are . . . made to depend upon this one Single act, whereas Each of them ought to have been Enacted Separately.”² Accordingly, in the following year, the Assembly changed a specifically named law in the schedule to which his Majesty had objected, that is, the Act for Religion, but in framing a new ascertainning act, disregarded the general ground of his veto, and proceeded on May 9, 1700, to pass an “Act for Repealing certaine Laws in this Province and Confirmeing others,”³ a piece of legislation which differed only in small details from its predecessor of 1699, to which, as a matter of legislative method, his Majesty had taken exception. It was on the day that this law was sent to the Governor for signature that Bladen had proposed to the House that he be given permission to print the body of law of the Province, and the delegates believing that body of law to have been determined finally by their recent enactment, granted his petition and ordered that

“Mr. Bladen according to his proposall have liberty to printe the body of the Law of this Province if so his Excy shall seem meet And it is likewise unanimously resolved by this house that upon Mr. Bladen’s delivery of one Printed body of the said Laws to each respective County Court within this province for his encouragement Shall have allowd him Two Thousand pounds of tobo in each respective County as aforesaid.”⁴

¹L. H. J., May 9, 1700, *Archives of Maryland*, 24: 83.

²L. H. J., April 27, 1704, *Archives of Maryland*, 24: 371.

³L. H. J., May 9, 1700, also “Acts” of 1700, *Archives of Maryland*, 24: 78 and 104.

⁴L. H. J., May 9, 1700, *Archives of Maryland*, 24: 84, where the phrase “his encouragement” reads “this encouragement.”