
A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland

The project was now carried out with diligence. The book was set, printed and distributed among the counties within one year following its authorization, for in May 1701, we find a reference to it which leaves us in no doubt as to these facts and as to certain of its features. On May 17th Bladen was summoned to the Lower House and told by the Speaker "of the many Erata's Comitted in printing the body of Laws." Whereupon, the record continues, "it was required by the house tht he cause the Erata's to be fourthwith printed and sent into the severall Countys. To which he readily concurred and promised to gett the same forthwith printed and sent out . . ."¹

THE UNIQUE COPY OF THE "LAWS" OF 1700 IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

There has been preserved in the Library of Congress a volume which the bibliographers of that institution have identified as the collection of laws which has been described here as having been printed on the Bladen-Reading press of Annapolis in the year 1700. Unfortunately the title-page of this unique copy has disappeared, so that one is compelled to turn to the evidence of circumstance to verify the attribution. Briefly summarizing the preceding pages, the circumstances related in them are found to be these:

In the year 1700 William Bladen established a press and a printer in Annapolis for the purpose of printing laws and other governmental matters.

In the session of May 1700, in answer to his petition, William Bladen was given permission by the Assembly to print a body of Maryland laws.

In the session of May 1701 William Bladen was ordered by the Assembly to have printed and distributed throughout the counties a list of errata committed "in printing the body of laws."

Keeping these facts in mind one takes up a volume of Maryland laws in the Library of Congress and finds that it contains a dedication "to my Honoured and Ingenious Friend Mr. William Bladen at the [Port] of Annapolis," and this personage is complimented by the unknown editor for his cleverness in having devised so excellent a scheme for the benefit of the Province and of himself as the printing and publication of a body of laws at a price sufficiently cheap to enable all persons to purchase a copy of the volume containing it;² and further that the laws which make up the collection comprise the body of Maryland laws confirmed by the Assembly on the same day that Bladen was given permission to print the laws of the Province, together with the additional laws passed in that session; and fi-

¹ L. H. J., May 17, 1701, *Archives of Maryland*, 24: 198.

² *Archives of Maryland*, 38: 427, gives as much of the "Dedication" as remains decipherable in the Library of Congress copy.