
A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland

an earlier edition of Maryland laws, that ingenious codifier makes the following assertion: "As to the Laws of Maryland," wrote Mr. Trott,

"I have by me three editions in print: The first was that edition out of which that Abridgement of the Laws of Maryland was made which is in the Abridgement of the Laws of the Plantations, printed at London in 1704."

That Mr. Justice Trott was speaking literally "by the book" is rendered certain when one discovers that his own references by act and page to this work, which he described as the first edition of the Laws of Maryland, likewise correspond to the pages of the volume in the Library of Congress, designated here the Bladen-Reading collection of Maryland laws, published at Annapolis, by authority, in the year 1700.

WILLIAM BLADEN RETIRES FROM THE PUBLISHING BUSINESS

A brief remark will be permitted as to the amount of the subsidy which Bladen received from the Province for his publication of the laws. If the terms of the House resolution were complied with as intended, he was paid twenty-two thousand pounds of tobacco by the eleven counties, a sum which, rating tobacco at a penny a pound, would have been the equivalent of about ninety-one pounds sterling. In an address of the Assembly to the Governor in the year 1702,¹ it was stated that with one year and another, the average wage of the laboring man in the Province was two thousand pounds of tobacco, so that when one adds to the amount of Bladen's subsidy for the work the money which he must have received from its sale to individuals, it seems at first thought that his proprietorship of the press must have been a profitable undertaking in comparison with current wages and salaries, but when the expense of its establishment, the cost of paper and the wages or shares which he paid Reading are deducted, one feels that his enterprise must have turned out after all to be more for the public benefit than for his own profit.

It is probable that Bladen himself reasoned the case in this fashion, for we hear no more of him as a publisher after that day in May, 1701, when he agreed to have printed and sent out a list of the typographical errors committed in the body of laws of 1700. The printing activities of our pioneer American publisher seem to have ceased entirely with almost his earliest venture, and it is to his journeyman or partner, Thomas Reading, that we turn now in the continuance of our study of the press in Maryland.

¹U. H. J., March 24, 1701/1702. *Archives of Maryland*, 24: 227. It is very difficult at this time to render these sums into modern equivalents. The cash equivalent of Bladen's payment would probably be represented by a sum at least five times as large as it was in the year 1700.