
Thomas Reading and the Issues of his Press

should not be ascribed to the Annapolis press of Thomas Reading, an issue of the year 1707, and it will be so entered with a full description in the bibliographical appendix to this narrative.

THE BEGINNING OF THE PRINTED SESSION LAWS

Throughout the years that followed Reading's appointment to the office of public printer in 1704, there are to be found in the journals of the Lower House several significant references to his printing activities. It has been said generally, even by persons familiar with Maryland historical bibliography, that the printing of the session laws of the Province began with Parks in the year 1726, but to indicate the incompleteness of the current knowledge on this subject, one need point only to the copies of Maryland session laws for the year 1719,¹ printed by Andrew Bradford of Philadelphia, which are preserved in the Library of Congress and in the Peabody Library of Baltimore. The truth is, indeed, that the printing of session laws began in Maryland more than a decade before even this isolated number of the series issued from the Pennsylvania press.

It has been shown earlier in this chapter that in the resolution by which the House had recognized Reading as public printer, specific mention had been made of his obligation "to print all laws and other public matters."² That this was not a form of words, that in accordance with the intention of the Assembly, Reading began at this session to print the laws then enacted, is believed to be indicated by the several entries which are now to be cited from the Lower House journal, and by the bibliographical testimony which will be adduced as a complement to that evidence.

In the year 1706, when Reading petitioned for permission to print the body of laws and asked for the settlement of an annual salary upon him for the printing of "all publick Matters as Speeches, Answers, Votes & Proclamations &c.," the House resolved upon a rate of payment to be made him "for what other Acts" should be "passed in any future Assemblys," and ordered that he be "allowed for the same in Proportion to the present Body of the Laws."³ In the following year, April 15, 1707, it was "Resolved That all the Laws Enacted this Session be printed pursuant to a former Order of the House. And the Printer to be allowed for the same according as before contracted for."⁴ Finally in the petition which Reading presented to the Assembly in the year 1709, and in the action taken upon it by the

¹ See following chapter and bibliographical appendix.

² L. H. J., September 12, 1704, *Archives of Maryland*, 26: 129.

³ L. H. J., April 8, 1706, *Archives of Maryland*, 26: 577.

⁴ L. H. J., April 15, 1707, *Archives of Maryland*, 27: 128 (improperly headed April 13).