
A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland

year. When one learns that Thomas Reading was printing minor legislative documents in 1708, one assumes fairly that he was not neglecting the more important work for which his services had been engaged; that is, the printing of the acts passed at each session of Assembly.

Reference to the petition which William Bladen presented when in 1696 he asked permission of the Assembly to establish a press in the Province reminds us that it was his intention to make use of that press in printing the "laws made every Session," and although neither copy of session laws as printed by him nor reference to such a copy remains, yet it is quite possible that the series of Maryland printed session laws began with that which we have called the Bladen-Reading press at the time of its establishment in the year 1700. It is not intended, however, to assume upon these conjectural grounds that the printing of the annual session laws began in that year, but it is believed that the evidence which has been brought forward here indicates their beginning in and continuance for several years after 1704, the year in which Reading was constituted public printer and in which it was ordered "that he should be yearly considered by the several counties for the Annual Laws of every Assembly." In consideration of the facts here presented; namely, that there have been discovered the sheets of the session laws of 1706, which Reading printed at the behest of that year's Assembly, and that the House journals give strong presumptive evidence that all of the laws from 1704 to 1708 were printed, and that there exist actual copies of the Governor's "Speech" and the Assembly's "Answer" for November 1708, one concludes that Reading was stating a plain truth when in speaking to the delegates of the "Annual Laws of every Assembly" he used the words "the which are all ready to be produced to your Honours." It would be difficult to construe his words as meaning anything except that he had printed the annual session laws from September 1704 to November 1708. The sheets of April 1706 having been discovered, there remain to be unearthed and recorded copies of the separate editions of September and December 1704, May 1705, March 1707, September and November 1708, and without doubt of all later sessions to the year of Reading's death in 1713.

READING'S DEATH AND A SUMMARY OF HIS SERVICES TO THE PROVINCE

The next that we hear of Reading in the Assembly records is that he is dead.¹ We are able to credit him with having printed two collections of com-

¹U. H. J., November 14, 1713, *Archives of Maryland*, 29: 252. A discussion in the Upper House as to the best means to be employed in publishing the laws for the counties, whether on poor parchment or good paper, begins