



CHAPTER FIVE

*John Peter Zenger, Public Printer of Maryland—Michael Piper
and his Abortive Press—The Beginnings of the
“Votes and Proceedings” Series*



QUESTION which proposes itself for solution at this point in the narrative is that of the part played in Maryland printing activity by John Peter Zenger, the New York printer, whose trial for seditious libel in the year 1734 established in the American colonies the principle of the freedom of the press. It is a matter of record that for a period of years Zenger lived in Maryland, and it is no less certain that during this residence, at three successive sessions of the Assembly he was employed to print the laws of the Province. From the evidence of circumstance one infers that on two of these occasions, certainly, he actually printed the session laws, but immediately the question arises as to where in Maryland was his press and where are concealed specimens of its production or contemporary references to them other than the orders to print which appear in the journals of Assembly. Beyond presenting a statement of the evidence, the following discussion does little for the solution of the problem.

John Peter Zenger, “borne in the uper Palatinate on the Rhine,”¹ was brought to this country by his mother in the year 1710, among those refugees from the Palatinate whom Queen Anne had removed from a scene of persecution and transported to her American colonies. About thirteen years of age at the time of his arrival in New York, Zenger was soon afterwards apprenticed by his mother to William Bradford, the printer, who in later years was to become his relentless political adversary. Nothing is recorded of him during the customary years of apprenticeship, but at their conclusion it seems that he lost little time in seeking a community in which he might set up for himself as a master printer. Old William Bradford would have known that in the absence of a resident printer in Maryland, his son Andrew of Philadelphia had been doing the work of that Province for five

¹ Act of Naturalization, *Archives of Maryland*, 38: 277.