
A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland

1696, known for generations as King William's School, and finally merged with the newly established St. John's College in the year 1786. Nothing of the life of Mr. Piper is of concern in this narrative except the fact that in October 1722, he petitioned the Assembly that he be allowed to print the laws of that session and those to be made thereafter.¹ A few days later his petition was granted,² and it was resolved "that he be printer to this House and that this House will give him all reasonable encouragement from time to time so far as may be consistent with the Justice thereof." Two days later it was provided that Mr. Piper be allowed five pounds currency as his encouragement for collecting, annotating and indexing the laws made since 1718, in order, as the journal says, "that they may be printed as a 2d Volume of the Laws of this Province."³ These projects seem never to have been carried out. A year later the following resolution was passed in the House:

"On a Motion made as to the further Consideration of Michael Pipers petition last Assembly relating to the printing the Laws and Mr. Piper Appearing at the Barr and Alledgeing that the press is now at Philadelphia and that he can't print them here at present, It is Resolved that the Chancellor Transcribe the Laws . . . as usuall and that the like Encouragement proposed to Mr. Piper Last Sessions be given to the first person that will Erect a printing press at the City of Annapolis."⁴

The extracts which have been quoted here indicate little except that the Maryland authorities were not apathetic in the matter of printing. One assumes, however, from Mr. Piper's case that the old Bladen press must still have been in Annapolis in October 1722, when the schoolmaster proposed to undertake the printing of the provincial laws, and that it was probably sent to Philadelphia⁵ some time between that date and September 1723. Although Mr. Piper clearly did not print the session laws as he had proposed, yet he may have printed on this old press a few smaller and less ambitious things, such as, for example, the "printed case" of Samuel Gover which was referred to in the Assembly on September 23, 1723. He did not

¹ L. H. J., October 27, 1722, *Archives of Maryland*, 34: 445.

² L. H. J., October 30, 1722, *Archives of Maryland*, 34: 450 and 454.

³ L. H. J., November 1, 1722, *Archives of Maryland*, 34: 455.

⁴ L. H. J., September 28, 1723, *Archives of Maryland*, 34: 613.

⁵ In Franklin's *Autobiography*, Everyman ed. p. 33, occurs this description of the printing equipment of Samuel Keimer, a printer just arrived in Philadelphia. Franklin writes, "Keimer's printing-house, I found, consisted of an old shatter'd press, and one small, worn-out font of English, . . . I endeavor'd to put his press (which he had not yet us'd, and of which he understood nothing) into order fit to be worked with." This was in October 1723. It was on September 28, 1723, that Mr. Piper said to the Maryland delegates, "the press is now at Philadelphia." Keimer had lately set up in Philadelphia, and Franklin says that in October 1723 he had not yet used his "old shattered press." From this description of the press, and from the correspondence of dates and circumstances, one hazards the guess, admittedly *per saltum*, that Keimer had bought the old Bladen-Reading press from the estate of the late William Bladen.