
A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland

there is, in general, a paucity of personal details in our knowledge of this outstanding figure in American typographical history. The surname of Eleanor, his wife, is conjectural, and there is uncertainty also in regard to his descendants. He left at his death a daughter, Eleanor, who married John Shelton of Hanover County, Virginia, and became the mother of Sarah Shelton, who was presumably the first wife of Patrick Henry. At Parks's death his estate was found to be almost valueless. In the accounts filed in connection with its settlement mention was made of a sum paid Mr. Macnemara of Maryland for his services in connection with docking the entail of a tract in that Province known as "Park Hall,"¹ and of a lot in the city of Annapolis. This bare outline and the circumstances of his death comprise practically all that is known of importance in the personal life of William Parks.²

MARYLAND PUBLIC PRINTING ASSUMES A NEW DIGNITY WITH THE COMING OF PARKS

Soon after the establishment of the Parks press in Annapolis, the office of public printer of Maryland assumed a dignity which formerly it had not possessed. Until this time the work and remuneration of the several resident printers had been determined at successive meetings of the Assembly by ordinance and resolution, but in the session of October 1727, the status of Parks as provincial printer, his duties in and salary for the performance of that office were fixed by statutory enactment, as always thereafter were the status, duties and salary of his successors. Two years were to pass, however, before the passage of this, the first law for printing in Maryland, but from the very beginning of his residence, the relations between printer and Assembly took on a more businesslike character than had pertained to them in earlier days. In the March Assembly of 1725/26, Parks made definite proposals as to the terms under which he would operate his press in the service of the Province. In briefer form than in the original, these "proposals³ humbly offer'd by William Parks" were as follows:

1. He would print the session laws of each Assembly for the sum of two thousand pounds of tobacco from each county, one copy to be delivered to

¹ This tract, in what was then Prince George's County, was surveyed for William Parks on April 9, 1731. It contained 1,550 acres. It is not to be confused with another "Park Hall" surveyed for James Carroll on November 24, 1727, lying in what is now Carroll County, the earliest survey of land made in that county. Mr. William B. Marye of Baltimore, has kindly transmitted the foregoing facts to the author. See also *The Old Indian Road*, by William B. Marye, Part 1, *Maryland Historical Magazine*, June 1920.

² See note on p. 73 of this narrative. See also references in Thomas, both editions; and in the *William and Mary College Quarterly*, 7: 11. Parks's will and the inventory and accounts of his estate are preserved in the Court House at Yorktown, Va. Copies are in the Maryland Historical Society.

³ L. H. J., March 21, 1725/26, *Archives of Maryland*, 35: 475-476.