

---

*William Parks, Public Printer of Maryland and Virginia*

---

He advertised himself as one "Who binds old Books very well, and cheap," and in the same advertisement announced that he had for sale "A parcel of very curious Metzotinto Prints" at reasonable rates.<sup>1</sup> He imported books from London to sell to his Maryland customers, and in the case of certain religious works such as primers and catechisms, he seems to have imported the sheets, later to be folded and sewed in his own establishment. It is probable that as bookseller, he had for sale a variety of other articles, for the booksellers of the time traded busily in small stores of the unclassified sort; Bradford<sup>2</sup> of Philadelphia had in his stock such dissimilar articles as whale-bone, live goose feathers, pickled sturgeon, chocolate and Spanish snuff, while a few years later, Hugh Gaine<sup>3</sup> of New York dealt in everything from medicines to flutes and fiddle strings.

Until the year 1737, when he was brought to book by the House, the relations of Parks with the Assembly were such as to indicate that his merits were appreciated by that body,<sup>4</sup> while on his part there seems to have been no dissatisfaction with his treatment by its members. Almost from his first coming to Maryland, however, Parks had recognized the possibilities of greatly increasing his business by uniting with it the printing of the colony of Virginia. He made tentative proposals to the Virginia Assembly for its printing work in the year 1727, and so well were his proposals received that three years later he set up in Williamsburg a branch office of his Maryland establishment. Eventually, the new office overshadowed the old in importance, so that Parks began to neglect his Maryland business in favor of that of the colony to which later he was to transfer all of his interests. In an act of the Maryland Assembly of April 1737, wherein he was still described as "of the City of Annapolis," it was set forth against him that he had neglected to print the laws of the previous session, and that because of this neglect the Province had been put to the expense of having the laws of that session transcribed. As a consequence of this defection by the printer, it was enacted that thereafter the counties should not pay him unless he should have delivered the printed laws within four months after the conclusion of each session. This was the last incident in connection with the

<sup>1</sup> *Maryland Gazette*, July 15, 1729.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas, 1st ed., 2: 31.

<sup>3</sup> Ford, P. L. ed., *Journals of Hugh Gaine, Printer*. 2 v. 1902, 1: 27 and 28.

<sup>4</sup> In the first appendix to this narrative is to be found a copy of the Act of 1727 for the encouragement of William Parks, the first enactment on the Maryland statute book in which provision is made for printing. Following it is an abstract of later printing legislation in the Province. Isaiah Thomas, 1st ed., 2: 128, asserts that Parks was paid two hundred pounds a year by the Maryland Assembly. With tobacco at ten shillings a hundred in 1730 (*Archives of Maryland*, 37: 136) it is probable that Parks's allowance of twenty-four thousand pounds of tobacco for the counties for printing the laws, and his extra allowance from the Lower House for printing its votes and proceedings amounted to about the sum specified by Mr. Thomas.