

---

*William Parks, Public Printer of Maryland and Virginia*

---

sylvania. It is generally believed, however, that Parks's paper mill was not established until the year 1744.<sup>1</sup>

Although late in the field, the Virginia press soon obtained a position of importance among the typographical establishments of the colonies. Parks was a neat printer and an intelligent man of affairs. In Maryland he had been the first to establish a newspaper, and to print works of a literary nature; in Virginia also, he was the pioneer journalist, and to his publication of works of *belles lettres*, he added those of history and general literature. Copies of his Williamsburg edition of Stith's *History of Virginia*, published in 1747, are among the much sought after items of Americana; *Typographia*, an ode on printing by J. Markland, which he published in 1730, would bring a great price as the first American contribution to its subject if the single known copy of it should ever emerge into the auction room from the shelves of the John Carter Brown Library. For his more important works he chose an excellent quality of paper, and in general his typographical execution was neat and dignified. His session laws of both colonies present a good appearance, and his edition of the *Laws of Virginia*, printed in the year 1733, contends for first place in typographical excellence with two or three other well known works of the first half of the century.

Until his death in the year 1750, Parks continued to fill an important place in the public life of Virginia. In the course of a voyage to England undertaken in this year, he came down with a pleurisy and died after a short illness. His body was carried to England and there buried. That his labors after all had been unrewarded may be inferred from the fact that at his death his assets were found to be slightly more than six thousand pounds, while his liabilities were only a few pounds less than this amount.<sup>2</sup> There was no printer of his day, however, Franklin alone excepted, whose service to typography and letters in America presents a greater claim on the interest and gratitude of posterity.

<sup>1</sup> See Weeks, L. H., *History of Paper Manufacturing in the U. S., 1690-1916*, N. Y. 1916, for an account of the first Virginia paper mill, particularly the verses from the *Virginia Gazette* quoted there, in which praise of the enterprise of Parks is united to a plea for rags to be used in the mill. Many will be amused at this jocular admonition to men and maidens to contribute their worn linen to Mr. Parks's mill. This mill probably continued in operation until Parks's death, for it was sold by his executors for £96, 3s. 9d.

<sup>2</sup> For information as to Parks in Virginia, consult the *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia*, [for the years 1727-1758]. Richmond, 1909-1910; Thomas, *History of Printing in America; William and Mary College Quarterly*, 7: 10-12; Weeks, L. H., *History of Paper Manufacturing in the U. S., 1690-1916*. N. Y. 1916. See also his will and inventory and accounts in the Court House, York Town, Va. Copies of these are in the Maryland Historical Society.

After this account of William Parks had been set and paged, and consequently when it was too late for an extensive investigation, the author came upon a clue which may lead to the discovery of the origin and early life of this interesting printer. In the *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Books—Illustrative of the History & Progress of Printing and Bookselling in England, 1477-1800, Held at Stationers' Hall, 25-29 June 1912*, by the International