
Jonas Green, his Family and his Associates

In the year 1774 Sparrow's name was signed to a petition of certain citizens of Annapolis protesting against that clause in the "non-importation agreement" which sought to prevent citizens of Great Britain from collecting debts in Maryland until the Boston "Port Act" should have been repealed in Parliament.¹ The last glimpse that one has of him is in November 1776, when he was on the Eastern Shore of Maryland acting as a confidential agent of the Committee of Safety.²

The following extracts from Charles Dexter Allen's *American Book-Plates* summarize Sparrow's position and activity in the world of art:

"T. Sparrow was an obscure engraver on wood, who worked at his trade in Annapolis from 1765 to about 1780, and who did considerable work for "Anne Catherine Green & Son, Printers," of that town, on title-pages, tail-pieces, etc. He engraved on copper the title-page for the "Deputy Commissary's Guide of Maryland," published by the above firm in 1774, and which is a creditable piece of work. All the book-plates known at present are on wood, and they are but two in number: the *Richard Sprigg* and the *Gabriel Duvall*, both of whom were men of prominence in the colonial times, in Maryland."

Elsewhere in the same work, Allen says in describing Sparrow's book-plates,

"Always using a border of floriated scrolls he never omitted an original contrivance which is the characteristic mark of his work—a group of thirteen stars surrounded often by a wreath. This is always found in a prominent place, and is an indication of his patriotism as well as that of the owner."

Sparrow's work was generally crude. The single exception to this description of it is that example on copper which served as title-page to Elie Vallette's *Deputy Commissary's Guide*, published by Anne Catharine Green & Son in 1774. Poorly conceived, but delicately executed in the thin and flowing lines of the chaser of metals, this work has interest for us as the single engraved title-page to issue from a Maryland colonial press, but from an artistic standpoint it indicates only that with proper training its maker might have become an acceptable engraver on metal. The paper money which he engraved on wood for Anne Catharine Green from 1770 to 1774 is heavy and crowded in design, and the armorial seal of the Province on the title-page of Bacon's *Laws of Maryland* is incorrect from a heraldic standpoint and coarsely executed withal. Obviously wood was not Sparrow's medium, and when one learns that whether on wood or metal, engraving was a secondary pursuit with him, one is quick to condone the inexperience of his burin.

¹ Riley, E., *Ancient City*, p. 167.

² Ms. letter of Maryland Committee of Safety to Thomas Sparrow, November 28, 1776. In *Red Book*, 16: 33, in *Maryland Historical Society*.