
The Nuthead Press · William and Dinah Nuthead

of hand, and that this Deponent did promiss to finish the same by Twelve of the Clock the next day if in case this Depont had the assistance of a Joyner, which said Joyner did the Wooden Worke and was paid for the same in Money; afterwards the said Coll Darnall & Mr. Richard Smith came again to this Deponts house and Required him to perform his promiss, to which this Depont made Answer that the Press & Letters were none of his and therefore could not comply therewith without Order, and that the said Coll Darnall & Mr. Smith were pressing & Urgent for this Deponts printing the said Warrants, but this Deponent did not print the same and further saith not. . . .

Whereupon it was Ordered by advice in Councill, that the Printer hereafter presume to print noething but blank bills & Bonds, without leave from his Exncy or the further Order of this Board."¹

It is not perfectly clear what Nuthead meant by his disclaimer of ownership of the "press and letters," unless it be that he intended to convey to his importunate clients the idea that his equipment was theoretically the property of the government as long as he continued to use it under a government license. Later it will be brought out that, unlike many of the colonial pioneers of typography, he was the actual owner of his press, and that at his death it passed as personal property into the possession of his widow. The importance of his deposition, however, lies not in any question of the ownership of the press, but in the testimony which it bears to the fact that there was in Maryland in 1693 a printing press in such customary use that demands might be made upon it for work "to be done immediately out of hand," and that such service under normal circumstances might be rendered.

In April of this year 1693, William Nuthead and two others were named in a warrant which directed them to search the lodging room and closet of Sir Thomas Lawrence for certain papers which they were ordered to seize, seal in a bag and bring straightway to the Governor for perusal. In so far as the record indicates, the issue involved had nothing to do with the story of Nuthead's life as a printer; it is likely that he was named for this duty simply because of a probable familiarity with the papers which the Governor wished to examine. Doubtless our printer man was thankful that he was not the person designated to make the search of the baronet's pockets which was ordered at the same time.² In October of the year 1694, William Nuthead was one of the signers of the petition addressed to the Governor by the citizens of St. Mary's, protesting against the removal of the capital from its ancient site to the settlement on the Severn which later was to be known as Annapolis.³ In the act of the September session of 1694 for paying

¹ Council Proceedings, October 14, 1693, *Archives of Maryland*, 20: 33 and 34.

² Council Proceedings, April 8, 1693, *Archives of Maryland*, 8: 501.

³ U. H. J., October 13, 1694, *Archives of Maryland*, 19: 75.