



## CHAPTER SEVEN

*Matthias Bartgis, Pioneer Printer at Frederick, Publisher of  
German and English Newspapers and Almanacs. John  
Winter and the Maryland Gazette*

**P**RIOR to 1777 there was no printing press in Maryland beyond the tidewater line. The history of the filling up of the back-country of Maryland with the Scotch-Irish and German immigrants who came down from Pennsylvania by way of Lancaster, Hanover and York, is one of the most interesting chapters in the development of the State. The establishment of the Bartgis Press at Frederick-Town in 1777 gives evidence of the state of literary culture there and in the surrounding district at that time. A careful study of the content and source of the material printed in Bartgis's newspaper would probably show that at this early date the connection between Western Maryland, Western Pennsylvania and the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia was much closer than that between Western Maryland and the tidewater region. The exception to this would be the contact of the merchants of Baltimore with the wheat-raising country to the West. Clarence P. Gould in his essay on *The Rise of Baltimore*,<sup>1</sup> makes an interesting study of the contact of the tidewater with the back-country by examining the advertising notices in the *Maryland Gazette* and *The Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser* in 1773 and comes to the conclusion that the circulation of the Baltimore paper was chiefly in the western country while the Annapolis newspaper circulated only along the tidewater.

Matthias Bartgis was born in 1750, the son of Michael Bartgis of Lancaster and his wife, Catherine Echternach, and was named after his grandfather, Matthias Echternach.<sup>2</sup> He learned the art of printing from William Bradford, the Philadelphia printer, whom he served as

<sup>1</sup> In *Essays in colonial history presented to Charles McLean Andrews by his students*, New Haven, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> I am greatly indebted to Mr. W. Bartgis Storm of Frederick, great, great grandson of Matthias Bartgis, for biographical information about him.