

---

## *The Nuthead Press · William and Dinah Nuthead*

---

The foregoing incidents in the history of the neighboring colony are related here for the reason that they have a direct bearing upon the story of the press in Maryland, and in particular upon the life of the first Maryland printer. It seems clear that the orders which Howard brought with him to Virginia effectually put an end to the venture of John Buckner and William Nuthead. To Buckner, the merchant and planter, the failure of the press meant only disappointment and vexation; to Nuthead, the printer, it meant ruin. Under circumstances so distressing as this, it has been the immemorial custom for the Virginian to move to Maryland, and Nuthead, not long after his press had been stopped, packed his equipment and betook himself to the traditional place of refuge. In Lord Baltimore's province, he lived and worked at his vocation from 1686, or earlier, until his death in the year 1695.<sup>1</sup>

### “WILLIAM NUTHEAD OF ST. MARYS CITY PRINTER”

The decade from 1685 to 1695 is less well known than almost any other period of Maryland history, for the reason that the documentary record for these years contains many lamentable gaps. During the Protestant Revolution of 1689, and for two years thereafter, the records were kept either badly or not at all, and in the removal of the capital from St. Mary's to Annapolis in the year 1694 many of the precious documents of earlier years were damaged, while of those which remained intact a number of important volumes were consumed by the fire which destroyed the State House in the year 1704. On account of these several losses, it is not possible to tell the story even of the principal events of the period in satisfactory detail, much less to relate consecutively the history of an individual citizen of the Province in those troublous years. In the documents which have survived accident and neglect, however, there remain a sufficient number of references to one William Nuthead of St. Mary's to enable the investigator to delineate in outline his life in Maryland, and to claim for him the distinction of having established and operated the first Maryland press. The existence of his or of any other printing office in seventeenth-century Maryland has been questioned, but it is believed that the evidence which will now be adduced establishes beyond doubt the fact that the press of William Nuthead was in more or less regular operation at St. Mary's during the years from 1686 to 1695.

The first recorded evidence of the presence of a printer in Maryland occurs in an act of Assembly for October 1686, in which provision was

<sup>1</sup>For a brief statement of Nuthead's venture in Virginia, see Bruce, P. A., *Institutional History of Virginia in the 17th Century*. 2 v. N. Y., 1910, 1: 402 and 403.