
A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland

this day before him & the Council to answer for his presumption, in printing the acts of Assembly made in James Citty in November 1682, and several other papers, without lycence, acquainted this board, that he had several times commanded the Printer not to let any thing whatever passe his presse, before he had obtained his Excellencies lycence, and that noe acts of assembly are yet printed, only two sheetes, wch were designed to be presented to his Excellency for his approbation of the print: This board having seriously considered, what the said Mr. John Buckner has said, in his defence, are well satisfied therewith, but for prevention of all troubles and inconveniences, that may be occasioned thorow the liberty of a presse, doe hereby order that Mr. John Buckner and William Nulhead (*sic*) the Printer enter into bond of one hundred pounds sterling with good security, that from and after the date hereof, nothing be printed by either of them, or any others for them, of what nature soever, in the aforesaid presse or any other in this Colony, untill the signification of his Maj'ties pleasure shall be known therein, which his Excellency hath promised to acquaint his Majesty with.

NICHOLSON: SPENCER, Secr'ty.

Several months later, on September 29, 1683, this order of the Virginia Council was read before the Lords of Trade in England, and it was by them decided that the new governor, Lord Francis Howard of Effingham, should pursue a policy of absolute prohibition in regard to printing in his government. On December 14, 1683, they approved the King's letters of instruction to Howard, in which his Majesty had written,

"And whereas We have taken notice of the inconvenience that may arise by the Liberty of Printing in that Our Colony, you are to provide by all necessary orders and Directions that no person be permitted to use any press for printing upon any occasion whatsoever."¹

Seven years later this restriction was modified to accord with the usual form of conditional prohibition under which the press operated in other colonies. In his instructions of October 9, 1690, Howard was told that "No printer's press is to be used without the Governor's leave first obtained,"² but even then, after it had been put on the same footing of sufferance as it stood upon in the northern colonies, the press in Virginia did not revive as might have been expected.³ It was not until the coming of William Parks to Williamsburg in the year 1730 that printing became an established feature of life in the oldest of the American colonies, although as has been shown, it had been practised there for a short period nearly half a century before this time.⁴

¹ *Cal. State Papers, Col. Series, A. & W. I., 1681-1685*, Nos. 1426 and 1428; new number in P. R. O. is C. O. 389/8, pp. 267-272. Colonial Entry Book. Plantations General, 1679-1684.

² *Cal. State Papers, 1689-1692*, No. 1099.

³ The lethargy of Virginia in regard to printing during the ensuing forty years is not easily accounted for. In Maryland, during the same period, as the narrative will bring out, various presses existed and were patronized by the government, and in Pennsylvania in spite of the disapproval of William Penn (*Minutes of Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia, 1852, 1: 278), the press thrived from its first establishment.

⁴ A single Williamsburg imprint of the year 1702, with printer's name given as "Fr. Maggot," has been recorded. It is generally supposed that this imprint is false. As far as the author knows, it has never been made the subject of an extended investigation. Evans No. 1057.