
INTRODUCTION

records of Maryland had been collected and published, Mr. Thomas asserted that printing in Lord Baltimore's province began with the press which William Parks set up in Annapolis in the year 1726, and succeeding writers have repeated his error and continue still to repeat it in spite of the accessibility to them of records unknown to the pioneer historian. Occasionally, it is true, a writer has discovered traces of an earlier group of Maryland printers than that which Mr. Thomas had knowledge of, but as a general thing these discoveries have not been made the matter of permanent record, so that for all practical purposes the current knowledge of Maryland printing origins remains today in the state in which Thomas left it,¹ and this is true in spite of the efforts at correction made by the editors of his second edition in the year 1874. On the other hand, if in the accepted chronology of American printing, the date of the Maryland origins is set a generation later than is correct, the traditional date of its beginning, a tradition fabricated less than half a century ago by J. Thomas Scharf,² has been placed at least two generations earlier than is warranted by the evidence.

It is proposed by the writer of the present work, dismissing as indefensible Scharf's unsupported assertions, to demonstrate that printing began in Maryland probably forty years before Parks set up his press in Annapolis, and that three printers operated in the Province and two others were licensed to operate there before the year which is usually accepted as marking the inauguration of the typographic art on the shores of the Chesapeake. The history of the later presses also will be set forth with some minuteness, and in an appendix to the narrative will be placed a list of all Maryland imprints between the years 1689 and 1776, in so far as these could be collected either at first hand, from printed bibliographies, or by title from records presumptive of their publication.

If it seem at times in this narrative that undue attention has been given

¹ In the face of this generalization, one must call attention to the fact that various Maryland writers, particularly William Hand Browne and Bernard C. Steiner, editors of the *Archives of Maryland*, have consistently pointed to evidence of the existence of earlier printers than were known to Thomas. Hugh A. Morrison cited evidence of the operations of the first Maryland printer in a note, pp. 62 and 63, in his *Catalogue of the Books, Manuscripts and Maps Relating Principally to America, Collected by the late Levi Z. Leiter*. Washington, 1907; and an anonymous writer in the *Baltimore Sun*, June 2, 1907, adduced similar evidence from the Provincial records.

² Scharf, J. T., *History of Maryland*. 3 v. Baltimore, 1879, 1: 190; for a discussion of Scharf's story, see appendix of this narrative.