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## A History of Printing in Colonial Virginia

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**A HISTORY OF PRINTING IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA**

**BY**

**BERNARD E. MITCHELL**

**A Thesis Presented at the College of William and Mary as  
a Partial Requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts.**

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# A History of Printing in Colonial Virginia

## Introduction

The desire for knowledge and the new thing is as old as creation. Means of communicating ideas are as ancient as the mind of man. Indeed, these seem to have been instincts of prehistoric peoples. The ability to impart information to others was a heritage even of dwellers in the Stone Age. Before the days of barter men traded news. It was a great step forward when a crude plan was devised which enabled man to express himself to others without making audible sounds. In time the mark, the symbol, the primitive code cognizable only to a few, have played their parts in the dissemination of thought. The formation of an alphabet afforded a medium for the transcription of knowledge far more effective than any previously discovered method. In well timed steps, the facilities at the command of men to register their knowledge, so that it might be used by their generation and those that follow, have been steadily advancing.

The first newspapers were written in manuscript form and circulated long before the invention of the printing press. When the first newspaper appeared and the motives that actuated its issuance, has been a matter of much speculation among able scholars who have studied and investigated the subject. The place of its appearance also remains to this day unknown. Some give the honor to ancient Venice, and others accord the accomplishment

to Rome. A more careful research would in all probability laud China for this wonderful attainment. It is the consensus of opinion among all authorities, however, that in every country the printed paper has evolved from the old-fashioned news letters.

The germ of printing may possibly be found among the endeavors of the ancient Assyrian peoples to use wooden blocks rather than poorly constructed pens to transcribe their ideas. The attempt of Pi Sheng, in China, to print by using a form of movable type would probably be applauded today as the first milestone on the road to modern printing, were it not for the fact that his native alphabet is and has always been curious in nature. The city of Haarlem, in Holland, has presented no work in proof of its claim that Laurens Janson Coster, one of its inhabitants, invented printing in 1423. To Johannes Gutenberg the world accords the honor of having done the first printing from movable type. His invention was readily recognized by Continental Europe to contain something revolutionary in its field. The displacement of the manuscript writer and the incorporation of the printing press was a matter of only a short time.

In the efforts and accomplishments of William Caxton, the press found its home in England and from there it was brought to America in the early years of her colonial existence. In Colonial Massachusetts, where the first printing press on English American soil was set up, it was found to fill a significant place in the life of the Colony.

From there we find it spreading within a few decades to all of the other colonies.

The record that printing and journalism have made in various parts of the world has been ably handled in the past by some of the most eminent historians and scholars. The history of journalism in the United States has been written at length in recent years. But when we consider the work of Clayton-Torrence and Wroth on the beginnings of printing in Virginia, we have about exhausted the available material in collected form.

It is, therefore, the purpose of this paper to show the workings and accomplishments of printing and the newspaper in Colonial Virginia. An effort will be made to trace that most powerful factor in making articulate public opinion--the press, from its introduction into Virginia until our revolutionary struggles visibly expressed themselves by use of arms.

The writer very gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to the officials of the Virginia State Library, who have given helpful guidance in the location of information relative to early presses in Virginia, and to Dr. E.G. Swem of the College of William and Mary Library, for his painstaking direction in pointing out where all of the known facts of Colonial Virginia Journalism might be found. Acknowledgment for courtesies rendered is also made to The News Leader, a daily paper published in Richmond, Virginia: The Times Dispatch, another daily paper of the same city:

4.

Clerk of the Court of York County, Virginia: Dr. R. L. Morton, Professor of History at the College of William and Mary, and to any others who have rendered assistance in the selection of material in making this study.

Sincere thanks are extended to Dr. E. M. Gwathmey and the members of the English Department on his committee, for their painstaking care in going over the manuscript and pointing out needed improvements and offering helpful suggestions.

## Chapter One

## The First Press in Virginia

Previous to 1680, there seem to have been no printing presses in Virginia. If the government of the Colony, or any individual within the Colony wished anything printed, it must be written out by long hand and sent to a press in England. This was actually done in case of the printing of the laws of the Assembly made in 1661-2. (1)

The Lords Commissioners of Foreign Plantations wrote to Sir William Berkeley in 1671, asking a number of questions relative to the state of the royal government in the Colony of Virginia. The purpose of one of these questions was to determine the status of religious education in the Colony, and in response to this the choleric old governor made his oft quoted statement with regard to printing and the schools. Item number twenty three of this inquiry sheet read: "What course is taken about the instructing the people, within your government in the Christian Religion; and what provision is there made for the paying of your ministry?"

Berkeley's sarcastic and expressive reply was:

"The same course that is taken in England out of towns; every man according to his ability instructing his children. We have forty eight parishes, and our ministers are well paid and by my consent should be better if they would pray oftener and preach less. But of all other commodities, so of this, the worst are sent us, and we had few that we could boast of, since the persicution

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(1) Hening, W.W., Statutes at Large, Vol. II pp. 147-8



in Cromwell's tyranny drove divers worthy men hither. But, I thank God, there are no free schools nor printing and I hope we shall not have these hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy, and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them, and libels against the best government. God keep us from both!" (2)

The backwardness of Virginia in respect to printing may be easily understood in the light of the above statement. This attitude on the part of the eccentric old governor plainly doomed any effort that might have been made to establish a press in Virginia during his régime.

In 1680, John Buckner, a merchant residing in Gloucester County, Virginia, imported a printing press from England. At the same time he procured a trained printer by the name of William Nuthead to come to Jamestown and operate it. (3) The beginning of the venture appeared very auspicious for the promoter. That his undertaking received the sanction and approval of the General Assembly is supported and practically proved by the fact that he received an order from this body to print the Acts of the Assembly for the year 1680. It would appear that this action was taken

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(2) Hening, W. G., Statutes at Large of Virginia  
Vol. II p. 517  
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(3) Bruce, Philip Alexander  
Institutional History of Virginia  
Vol. I p. 402

without the knowledge of the Virginia Council for when that body learned that Nuthead was about to issue the session laws from the press, they promptly looked into the matter and immediately accused him of operating a press without a license. The ensuing action on the part of the authorities is set forth in the following account:

"Att a Councell held att James Citty February 21:1682/3 Mr. John Buckner being by his Excellency Thomas Lord Culpeper ordered to appear 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 anything whatever passe his presse, before he had obtained his Excellency's 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 thorrow the liberty of a presse, doe hereby order that Mr. John Buckner and William Nulhead 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, of what nature soever, in the aforesaid presse or any other on this Colony, untill the signification of his Maj'ties pleasure shall be known therein, which his Excellency hath promised to acquaint his Majesty with." (4)

Another record of the same action on the part of the Governor and his Council reads thus:

"Feb. 21st 1682, John Buckner called before

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(4) Cal. of State Papers, Col. Series, A. & W. I.  
1681-85 Item number 961.

"the Lt. Culpeper and his council for printing the laws of 1680, without his excellency's license,-- and he and the printer ordered to enter into bond in £100 not to print anything thereafter, until his "majesty's pleasure should be known." (5)

This order of the Governor and Council halted a worthy enterprise almost at its outset. Whether Buckner made any further attempt to secure proper license to operate a printing shop at Jamestown is not known. Of one thing we are certain and that is that he had only a short time to obtain permission to complete the task he had undertaken before the orders affecting his business were handed down from higher authority and were made more specific. On September 29, 1683, the above order of the Virginia Council was read before the Lords of Trade in England. (6) After a short deliberation on the part of that Assembly, it was decided that the new governor, Lord Francis Howard of Effingham, should pursue a policy that absolutely prohibited printing in Colonial Virginia. The order given to Howard and as put into operation in the Colony for several years reads as follows: (7)

"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

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(5) Hening, W.W., Statutes at Large of Virginia  
Vol. II p. 518

(6) William and Mary Quarterly  
Vol. VII p. 10.

(7) Calendar of State Papers,  
Colonial Series, America and West Indies  
1681-5 Numbers 1426 and 1428.

necessary orders and Directions that no person be permitted to use any press for printing upon any occasion whatever."

This order proves conclusively, in spite of the fact that it is often stated and argued otherwise, that at one time the use of a printing press for any purpose whatever, was strictly forbidden in Colonial Virginia. It was a sad stroke of fate that an endeavor so fruitful and so fraught with good for the people in that autocratic era should be so completely foiled in its initial stage. It seemed inevitable that constituted authority should do other than oppose the establishment of the press wherever it made its invasions. On a minimized scale the history of the attitude of the authorities toward the press in Virginia, was a reenactment of what had taken place with regard to its establishment in other lands before it was brought to America. In the beginning these two forces came into conflict and became marked as opposing powers. For some unseen and undetermined reason, authority and the press have ever been antagonistic to each other. In Virginia it was hard to get this conflict definitely settled and indeed, for a long time, it appeared incapable of being settled.

After the complete frustration of this attempt of Buckner and Nuthead to establish a printing office at Jamestown, Buckner went back to his merchandising and planting, and Nuthead left the Colony and became a printer in the Colony of Maryland. To the former, the

undertaking had meant an enterprise of vexatious disappointment: to the latter, a project that had spelled defeat and crushed his hopes besides leaving him in rather desperate financial straits.

The Ruler of Britain, in his instructions to Lord Howard on October 9, 1690, about seven years after the use of a press had been strictly forbidden in the Colony, modified the order to conditional prohibition, making it read, "No printer's press is to be used without the Governor's leave first obtained." (8) This order placed printing upon the same basis in Virginia as was found in existence in all of the northern colonies at the time, but even then it was slow in attempting to implant itself where it had once tried and miserably failed. The result was that it was forty-seven years after the first attempt was officially quashed before another type was set in the Old Dominion. The state of lethargy in regard to printing in which we find Virginia during this period is due no doubt to this hostile attitude of the authorities and to several other causes that combined to make the field uninviting to the aspiring printer.

The settlers were face to face with the tremendous tasks of conquering the forests, building houses, subduing the Indians, and of gaining a livelihood for themselves. There were in the Colony many large landholders.

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(8) Cal. State Papers, Col. Series,  
1689-92 Item number 1099.

Towns failed to flourish and a sociability and hospitality developed that went to encourage a ruling class and not a democracy or any type of democratic institution. The large landholders of the country were more interested in other fields of endeavor and seem to have looked upon the products of any local press as entirely secondary in nature. We should not infer from the above statements that there was a dearth of newspapers and reading materials in Virginia during this period, for doubtless such was far from the actual case. The Colony engaged in a very extensive trade, and since there was a tendency on the part of the colonists to value the news of England and the Continent above all other, it is more than probable that the newspapers, books, pamphlets, and other products of the presses of Edinburg, Bristol, London, and other cities of the Motherland found their way into the homes of many of the colonists, through these commercial channels.

There is a mere indication that a printing press was operated in Williamsburg about 1700. Charles Evans in his American Bibliography lists an imprint for the year 1702 at Williamsburg by Fr. Maggot. It is included in his collection as number 1057. Other than this imprint nothing has yet been discovered concerning this press. (9)

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(9) Wroth, Lawrence, A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland  
 Note No. 4 Page 2.  
 Note No. 3 Page 72.

In 1698, Governor Andros found it necessary to transmit copies of the laws of the Colony to England in order that he might get them printed. (10) He stated that at that time there were no conveniences for printing them in Virginia. The English printers at this time had so much trouble with the handwriting sent them that they sent over paper with lines on it and instructed the colonists that whatever they wished printed in England must be written on ruled paper. (11) It is almost certain, therefore, that there was no press in the Colony in 1698, and nothing is known that shows the existence of one at the opening of the eighteenth century.

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(10) Bruce, Philip A., Institutional History of Virginia  
Vol. p. 403

## Chapter Two.

## William Parks---Public Printer.

It remained for William Parks to set up the first successful printing establishment in Colonial Virginia. As soon as he had firmly established himself at Annapolis, Maryland, he at once began to consider Virginia an excellent location for the operation of a press. Accordingly, he soon began to formulate plans looking toward the operation of a printing press within the Colony.

He had emigrated from England, either directly or by way of Pennsylvania, to Maryland and set up a printing business at Annapolis, about 1726. He was printer to the public and published a paper in that Colony. His efforts there were from the outset as well rewarded as he had a right to expect, but the scarcity of materials that he had offered to his press made the enterprise less lucrative than he expected it would be. Therefore, in February 1727, Parks came to Virginia and presented to the House of Burgesses tentative proposals for printing a collection of its laws. The terms he suggested immediately received the hearty commendation and approval of that body. A committee was appointed, composed of some of the Colony's most noted men, to arrange all of the minute details of publication with the printer. The work authorized at this time was not published until 1733.

In 1730 Parks made a trip to England with the expressed purpose of getting material for the Maryland Gazette. On



that trip he did make arrangements whereby "upon all Occasions, I shall be furnished with the freshest Intelligence (11) both from thence and other parts of Europe"; but the indications are that the mission of this voyage was to secure the press, or materials for the press, that he set up a little later in the same year at Williamsburg, Virginia. (12) In the Maryland Gazette for June 9, 1730, he stated that he had just returned from England whither he had been called in the interest of his business. While that business may have been in connection with his Maryland Gazette, which at that time was almost at the point of failure, it appears more plausible that his principal object was to purchase equipment and supplies for his projected operations in Williamsburg.

The exact date of Panks's arrival at Williamsburg is purely a matter of conjecture. It is more than likely that he started to establish <sup>himself</sup> at that place as soon as he returned to Maryland from his voyage to England referred to above. In the autumn of 1730 he mentioned several times in the Maryland Gazette, his office in the Virginia Capital and by July, 1731, he was advertising books for sale in this same paper, for which subscriptions would be received by him "at his House, near the Capitol, in Williamsburg." (13) This latter statement would seem to be

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 (11) Lee, James Melvin, History of American Journalism. P. 45

(12) Wroth, Lawrence, William Parks--Printer and Journalist of Eng. and Colonial Virginia. Page 15.

(13) ~~The Gazette~~ Ibid. p. 15

a fairly convincing indication that by the middle of the year 1731, he had not only permanently established his press in the Capital, but that he had also taken up his residence there.

During 1730 and the earlier part of 1731 the Maryland Gazette met with many difficulties and financial reverses. Wroth tells us that it was discontinued for nearly two years. (14) During this intermission before it was begun again on December 8, 1732, Parks seems to have been putting forth his strongest energies in an attempt to permanently establish his printing business in Virginia.

It is difficult if not impossible to determine the order as well as the number, of the issues of this press during the remainder of the year 1730. Of the known issues only two remain, and of these only a single copy of each has yet been discovered. The titles of these are, Typographia, An Ode to Printing, by J. Markland, and A Charge to the Grand Jury, by Governor Gooch. The names of three other products of this press during these months are known viz., The New Tobacco Law Passed May, 1730, The Dealers' Pocket Companion, and the Acts of the May Session of the Virginia Assembly, 1730. (15) The earliest issue of this press has a right to the distinction, so far as research had revealed, of being called the first book. (16)

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(14) Wroth, Lawrence C., A History of Printing in Col. Md. Page 69.

\* See (14)

(15) Wroth, Lawrence C., Wm. Parks- Printer and Journalist of Colonial Virginia. Page 16.

(16) Ibid. Page 17.

pamphlet, or paper to be printed and circulated in Virginia. But which came first and the order of those that followed cannot be definitely fixed. Since the Typographia was written in commemoration of the advent of Parks's press to the Colony it would seem that it should be selected as the first, but what little light that may be thrown on the problem indicates that others preceded its publication. The arrangement as given by Wroth for the products of this press during the first year of its operation is probably about as accurate as any. The order accepted by him is as follows:

The New Tobacco Law Passed May, 1730.  
 The Acts of the May Session, 1730.  
 The Dealers' Pocket Companion.  
 Gov. Wootch's, Charge to the Grand Jury.  
 J. Markland's, Typographia, An Ode to Printing. (17)

The publication of the Virginia Miscellany was one of the chief accomplishments of Parks, through his press in Virginia in 1731. This work consisted of a collection of poems, essays, and translations and was published in two volumes.\*

Under the date of February 22, 1727/28, the following item was entered in the Journal of the House of Burgesses:

"A petition & proposals of William Parks for printing a complete body of the Laws of this

(17) Wroth, Lawrence C., William Parks, Printer and Journalist of England and Colonial Virginia. pp. 17, 18.

\* For other imprints of Parks's press for 1731 and years following see, A Bibliography of Virginia, by Dr. E. G. Swem; The Fifth Annual Report of the Virginia State Librarian; Wroth's book referred to in (17) above.

Colony now in force, and also the Laws to be made hereafter from time to time, was refer'd by the Governor, & Council to the consideration of this House, and was read.

"Resolved, That it will be of public use and benefit to print & publish a Complete Body of the Laws of this Colony now in force.

"Ordered, That the Speaker of this House, Mr. Clayton & Mr. Blair members of this House, Mr. Randolph Clerk of this House & Mr. Robertson Clerk of the Council, or any three of them be appointed to agree with the s'd Wm. Parks for the printing of a Complete Body of the Laws of this Colony, and to take a certain number of Books to be distributed to the public charge etc." (18)

This action was taken in response to the appeal of Parks while he was yet in Maryland as referred to in an earlier part of this paper. The first official record of the laws actually being printed by Parks appears in the records of Goochland County for May 17, 1730. The arrangement whereby the County was to receive copies of these laws was stated by the Clerk in the following words:

"On Mr. Wm. Parks' letter to the Court it is ordered that there be levied for him eight hundred pounds of tobacco cask and conveniences at the next levy for which the said Parks is to furnish twelve copies of the laws of the last session of the assembly for the use of the justices." (19)

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(18) Journal of the House of Burgesses  
1727-34 Page 25.

(19) Virginia Historical Magazine, Vol. III. Pages 214, 215.  
Clayton-Terrence, William, A Trial Bibliography of Colonial Virginia. Note to entry no. 121.  
Wroth, L.C., Wm. Parks, Printer and Journalist of Eng. and Colonial Virginia. Page 18.

In the eighteenth century even Virginia, which was more populous than several of the other colonies, could not offer a subsistence to the printer who solicited only private patronage. Parks at the beginning of the eighteenth century realized this fact and, therefore, entered a petition for the business of the government before he made any effort to invest capital and start to work. In his attempts he met with gratifying response from the very outset and later, on May 18, 1732, he secured all of the government printing. He was thereafter designated by the title of "Printer to the Public" (20) On January 7, 1733, Parks presented another petition to the House of Burgesses "praying that the House will establish such a Salary for Printing the Laws, Proclamations, and Journals of Assembly, for the Public Use as may enable him to continue and carry on his Business of Printing in this Colony." (21)

This same record in the Journal further reads with regard to the petition of Parks:

"Ordered, That the Petition do lie upon the Table.

"Ordered, That a Committee be appointed to receive the Proposals of the said William Parks; and that they do report the same, with their Opinions thereupon to the House!"

On June the tenth the committee made a favorable report to the assembly resulting in allowing Parks one hundred and twenty pounds annually for doing the public printing.

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(20) Journal of the House of Burgesses 1727-34  
entry for June 7, 1732.

(21) Ibid. Page 138.

This action made the preservation of the laws fairly certain and placed the business of Parks upon a firm foundation. From this time on he devoted the greater part of his time and effort toward advancing his interests in Virginia almost to the neglect of his duties in Maryland.

Parks remained "Printer to the Public" to the time of his death in 1750. In 1738 he petitioned the House of Burgesses for an increase and as a result his compensation was raised to two hundred pounds annually. A second petition with the same purpose in view was presented in 1742, which resulted in bringing his salary to two hundred and thirty pounds per year and when a third and final request was made in 1744, his tremendous worth to the Colony was acknowledged by increasing his emolument to two hundred (23) and eighty pounds a year. He was a neat printer and used good paper with the result that he rendered an inestimable service to the state in giving to it records that can easily be read by the generations that have followed him.

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(23) Wroth, L.C., A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland  
Page 72.

## Chapter Three

William Parks and The Virginia Gazette

William Parks was a native of England and it seems more than likely that he learned the printing trade in that country. (24) A man by that name engaged in the printing business at Ludlow and the evidence seems to warrant the assumption that he was the same man that later settled at Williamsburg in Virginia. The indications that Parks of England, Maryland and Virginia was the same man as noted by Wroth are:

1. There was an identity of name, and name of wife.
2. There was an identity of trade, and the periods of activity were consecutive.
3. There is a striking similarity in the extant products of the various presses
4. The similarity of typographical style would mark the products as having the impress of the same person.
5. William Parks owned a negro named Ludlow and we may surmise he was named [by Parks] after the town in England in which Parks had spent his boyhood.
6. He named the place of his residence in Maryland Park Hall possibly after Park Hall in England.
7. In the list of his subscribers to the Maryland Gazette were the names of quite a number of Englishmen that had no reason yet given for being there unless Parks was acquainted in England. (25)

The early history of Parks is practically unknown and very few facts have been definitely fixed by research

(24) Thomas, Isaiah, History of Printing in America  
1st. edition 2 Page 143

\*See note 2, page 73 Wroth's, History of Printing in Col. Md.

(25) Wroth, L.C. (Printer and Journalist of E<sup>ng</sup> and Va.  
Pages 11 and 12.

concerning him before his emigration to America. Early in life he acquired a love and devotion for literature and letters sufficient in intensity to lend a tinge of literary taste and character to the products of his pen and press. He possessed great initiative and enterprise. In Colonial America where most of the printers were content to rest quietly from their labors after printing the government documents and whatever other books or pamphlets that might be presented to their presses, Parks kept ever busy trying to create a reading public and to give it the literature necessary to accomplish that end. There is hardly any doubt that the outstanding service rendered by Parks in Virginia was his indefatigable endeavor to give a medium of expression to the potential yet dormant literary talent of its people. Wroth very aptly phrases the attainment of this Virginia pioneer printer and journalist thus:

"It is as the nurse of literature in a land where literature hitherto had gone untended that we find him in the realm of his greatest accomplishment." (26)

He was the true man of affairs and not easily daunted in his attempts to consummate his plans when they were fully formed. He seems to have been the type to consider calmly the factors affecting any situation and then to deliberate upon its possibilities before resolving to utilize his energies in prosecution of a specific undertaking. He established papers in two colonial towns



of America and printed the collected laws of two colonies. The successful operation of a printing press in a country like Virginia in these early days when the only meeting places were the churches and courthouses was an undertaking of no small proportions. He soon brought the Colony that came into the field so much belated, into a position of importance favorably comparable to the typographical establishments of the other colonies. (27) It has been said of him that during his youth "he seems to have possessed foot-loose qualities that distinguished the printer" in the later years of his life. (28) Throughout all of his career he manifested no signs of dreading or fearing the difficult task. Enterprise and genius combined with an enthusiastic determination won for him the coveted goal of success in his chosen field. To him as much as any printer of his day, Franklin alone excepted, America owes a tremendous debt of gratitude for the services he rendered as a pioneer printer and journalist. (29)

Having made a success of his printing projects and raised himself in the estimation of the people to the point where they were willing to place confidence in him

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(27) Wroth, L.C., History of Printing in Col. Md. page 73.

(28) Wroth's, Wm. Parks, Printer and Journalist of Eng. and Va.  
Page 10

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(29) Wroth's, Hist. of Printing in Md.

he next conceived the idea of publishing a paper in the Colony. His previous experience in connection with his papers in England and Maryland made this a familiar and no doubt, inviting field for him. However, in a land where local papers were unheard of, communication exceedingly slow as well as limited, and in territory where mail was taken from colony to colony only once a week, he is to be highly commended for his resolution. After carefully weighing the situation and talking the matter over with his friends he commented upon the papers published in other colonies and made known his intentions in Virginia in the following words:

"From these examples and the encouragement of several gentlemen on the prospect I have of success in this ancient and best settled colony of Virginia, I am induced to send forth weekly papers here, --- not doubting to meet with as good encouragement as others, or at least as may enable me to carry them on." (30)

He accordingly advertised that he would begin a Gazette and that he would accept subscription for the same at fifteen shillings per annum. (30)

On August 6, 1736, Parks brought out the Virginia Gazette, the first paper to be published in Colonial Virginia.

This primal issue has been described as follows:

"a small dingy sheet, containing a few items of foreign news, the ads of Williamsburg shopkeepers, notices of the arrival and departure of ships; a few chance particulars relating to persons or affairs of the colony; and poetical effusions celebrating the charms of Myrtilla, Florella or other belles of the period." (31)

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(30) Lee, James Melvin, History of American Journalism. P. 50

(31) Ibid. Page 50.

The Gazette was issued regularly on Friday of each week. The earliest copy known to be in existence today is number six. The caption of that reads as follows:

THE  
VIRGINIA GAZETTE NUMB 6

Containing the freshest Advices, Foreign and Domestic

From Friday, September 3, to Friday, September 10, 1736

The gaps in the flow of this paper are numerous and in several cases rather long. There seems to be no ground, however, to assume anything other than that the papers were destroyed. If any break was made in the line of publication of the paper before the death of Parks no reference was made to it in the papers that are extant. Issue number 52 came from the press on July 29, 1737, which proves conclusively that there were no breaks during the first year of its publication.

The fact that Parks did not travel a primrose path in the editorship of this paper is proved by the following letter taken from the Gazette for Friday, July 29, 1737:

"To Subscribers of Virginia Gazette  
Gentlemen;

"This paper, being no. 52, completes the year, from the first publication of them; and I have, as near as possible, comply'd with my proposals, printed in the Introduction of the first Gazette. I hope I have given such Satisfaction, as will induce you to continue your subscription for another year.

"Men of Learning will readily acknowledge the Usefulness of a Press, especially in an Infant Country; & I have great Reason

to hope from the experience I have made that there are Gentlemen of Learning, Genius and Public Spirit, in this Colony who will be ready to encourage this and all laudable undertakings. I find indeed, a general Inclination among my Customers, to have the Virginia Gazette carried on, only some who live remote complain of the difficulty in getting them because of their Miscarriage, which has been chiefly occasion'd by persons breaking them open, who are desirous of news, but are too mercenary to pay for it. However, I hope that Practice will be prevented for the future, by the method I have taken, of writing the Owners Names on the Paper itself, as well as on the cover; & by my publishing my resolution to prosecute those who shall be found offending therein. If this method fails, I am willing further to oblige; and do hereby promise, that I will send messengers on purpose with them, to such counties as shall have a sufficient number of subscribers to defray the charge, and as often as they shall in reason require, and the weather will permit. On this offer, which will be attended with much trouble and expence, every Good-natur'd Person will judge how desirous I am to please the Gentlemen of the Country. I have received much encouragement from (which I take this opportunity gratefully to acknowledge) and I flatter myself with the continuance of their favor, as I shall use my utmost Endeavor to merit it."

And then as a post-script to the above letter he adds:

"As I have been at much Trouble and Expence, for Intelligence, Paper, Printing, Directing and Conveying these Papers, I hope the Gentlemen will contrive their Subscription-Money to me as soon as they can conveniently."

Parks had entertained hopes of making his paper an integral part of the life of the Colony. He seems to have possessed an earnest desire to make the Gazette an expression of the literary tendencies and accomplishments of the leading personalities among his constituency. That he had hoped to serve his people with constructive articles representing the expressed views of the people in the Colony, as well as furnish them with local and foreign news,

is shown in his letter printed in the Virginia Gazette for August 10, 1739. It reads in part as follows:

"When I first published these Papers, I propos'd to entertain my Customers, now and then occasionally, or when there was a scarcity of News with Pieces instructive or Diverting; in which I flattered myself with the assistance of the Gentlemen of this Country, many of whom want neither Learning, or fine Natural Parts, to qualify them for the task: But I cannot help taking, that either thro' their too great Modesty, or want of application in the Service of the Public, I find myself greatly disappointed in my Expectation of their Assistance. And therefore have sometimes been obliged to collect from authors, (which perhaps may not be in the Hands of a great Part of my Readers) such Pieces, as may answer the Ends propos'd."

For thirty years the Virginia Gazette was the sole newspaper printed in the Colony. In a certain sense we have to admit that it was hampered by what amounted to little less than official censorship, but nevertheless, it stood the test. It is true that these early issues were only the merest chroniclers of most concise bits of news. They gave the people the meagre happenings, devoid of philosophy, that might be used by them and their progeny in getting a view of the age. They served as a guide for the people of that early day and mirror to us the popular life of our persevering ancestors. The modern type of editorial found no place in the paper of Parks or in those of his successors during the Colonial Period in Virginia. A small amount of space was given to communications concerning the foremost topics of the day. News from other parts of the world, a little information as to local

happenings of importance, and usually a part of a column of advertisements, made up the paper.

It is interesting to note the large percentage of foreign news in these issues when compared with that of the community and country. Now and then we find a paper that contains almost wholly foreign events and happenings. Almost invariably this news was many months, and in numerous cases, a year or more old. The foreign content was exclusively European, and especially English.

The language used was inclined to be pompous in style, certainly when viewed in the light of modern journalistic expression, but it was truly characteristic of the times. A glance at a few of the earlier notices and articles will, I am sure, serve to substantiate this claim. I quote first several articles in the form of announcements copied from the earliest extant Gazette. This paper is dated September 3-10, 1736.

"Mr. Jonathan Gibson, whose Election was declared void, as mentioned in the Gazette NO. 4, is rechosen a Burgess for the County of Caroline."

"We are informed, from several Parts of the Country, that there will be a great Scarcity of Cider, this Year, the Apple-Orchards having generally fail'd: So that 'tis believed it will bear a good Price to those who will bring it from other Parts to sell."

"This Evening will be performed at the theatre, by the young Gentlemen of the College, The Tragedy of Cato: And on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday next, will be acted the following Comedies by the Gentlemen & Ladies of this Country, viz. The Busy-Body, The Recruiting-Officer, and The Beaux-Stratagem."

Another from the same paper but at a much later date:

"The subscription purse of seventy-five pounds, was run for at Richmond on the 12th inst., that being Fair Day, and was won by Mr. William Hardyman's sorrel mare."

These brief notices selected at random from among the many that appeared in the first Virginia Gazette during its eventful <sup>course</sup> (duration), serve to portray the stilted and in many cases indirect method of expression, so prevalent in Colonial Virginia. The attempt to be politely formal led not infrequently to a type of punctiliousness that approached awkwardness. In an honest attempt to avoid verbosity the language often appears ostentatious. The editor of the Virginia Gazette was a master in the condensation of news. He never used two lines if he might possibly express what he wished to tell in one.

We find the same characteristics present when we come to consider the advertisements of this paper. The inclusion of a few samples here will serve to demonstrate the thought in mind. These are selected at random from the Gazettes and tell their stories as follows:

"To be Lett of Sold very reasonably.

"The House which belonged to Col. Jenings, in which the Eristel Store was lately kept, being the next House to John Clayton's Esq; in Williamsburg. It is a large commodious House, with Two Lots, a Garden, Coach-House, Stable, and other Outhouses and Conveniences. Enquire of Capt. William Rogers, in York, or of William Parks, Printer in Williamsburg."

"To be Sold by the Subscriber, in Goochland County, a tract of valuable, well-timber'd land,

containing 4000 acres, lying on Great-Guinea Creek, in the said County. Any Person inclinable to Purchase, may have any Part of it for ten Pounds per Hundred Acres, or at a cheaper rate for the Whole Tract."

Perhaps no other part of these early papers more vividly portrays the prevalent literary talent of the age and the life and customs of the people than these early advertisements. They to a great degree, represent the literary ability of the leading men of the Colony as it showed itself in the efforts of these men to sell their property or to have something returned to them that had strayed or been stolen.

Vivacity and literary value as well were given to the Gazette by the occasional (<sup>inclusion</sup> incorporation) of letters, essays, epigrams, anecdotes, and poems. Most of these were contributed by an unpaid staff of newspaperwriters, composed almost wholly of the friends of the editor. An example of how the pent-up poetic ability of the age could express itself when occasion required it is afforded by "An Ode to the Prince and Princess of Wales", composed by Stephen Duck, in commemoration of the visit of the Prince and his bride to Richmond Gardens. This visit was made in May 1736, and the Gazette for September 24-October 1, 1736, carried the following poem:

"Ye Muses Hail the Roial Dame,  
Whose Charms Report excel;  
Charms! brighter far than Sounding Fame,  
With all her Tongues, could tell.

"Oh! Glorious PRINCE! Brittania's Pride,  
Welcome to Richmond Seats,  
Where Nature proved to please your Bride,  
Displays her choicest Sweets.



"See! Fragrant Beauties deck the Green,  
The Branches bloom Delight;  
Gay Flora paints the verdent Scene,  
To charm your CONSORTS Sight.

"Hear! how the Feather'd warbling Throng  
Congratulate your Fair!  
Not more melodious was their song  
To the First Wedded Pair.

"The Pair in Eden, Ne'er repos'd  
Where Groves more lovely grew;  
Those Groves in Eden, Ne'er inclos'd  
A lovelier Pair than You.

"You! happier than the Former Two,  
Have nobler Tasks assigned;  
'Twas Theirs to curse the World; but You  
Were born to bless Mankind."

While the poem as a whole inadvertantly discloses the fact that it was the spontaneous outpouring from the pen of an amateur, the poet reaches a few heights of rhythmic fervor that are worthy of the congratulation of true genius. Where in literature is there a more expressive phrase than "the Feather'd warbling Throng"? It was just such rhythmical effusions as this, combined with the essays of ~~the time~~ that gave the Virginia Gazette its literary value at the time.

There is a poem printed in issue number 12, entitled "The Lady's Complaint." This also appears to be the product of inspiration created by the happenings of the hour. It is a poetic plea seeking more freedom for woman of less for man. There are many other such outbursts dotted here and there through the pages of this early paper giving silent testimony to the fact that the poetic instinct was not wholly dormant and also, that it was the desire of the editor to give his customers the best he could obtain in the literary field, through this newly developed medium.

In another strain we find the age-long topic of woman's dress discussed. As early as <sup>W</sup>the second extant issue we find an article touching on the fashions of the time. The departure of the young ladies of the day from the styles of their paragons of grandmothers is bewailed in dolorous tones by dumbfounded correspondents. The opinion is expressed by some writers that the ladies were giving over their whole time to parties, dancing, and such frivolous affairs as following the extremes of fashion.

The above considerations are sufficient to show that the Gazette of William Parks was really a part of the life of the Colony in which it was published. At its inception the people were unorganized and there was little concerted action. Through its pages the problems of the people were revealed to them in a more forceful light than they had been accustomed to see them. Thus this instrument served to advance civilization and to bring the people closer together. Its coming inspired the Colony to higher aims and caused the colonists to give voice to their aspirations.

## Chapter Four

## Other Services of Parks---His Death and Will

In 1742 Parks opened a bookstore at Williamsburg in an attempt to supply the reading public with the books and pamphlets from his press and to make available reading materials that were not readily accessible elsewhere. He soon thereafter proposed to the Faculty of the College of William and Mary that he be allowed to furnish the students with textbooks. According to Dr. Tyler, the (32) Faculty Minutes of the College show that his offer was accepted provided, "he would take all the textbooks now in College at 35 per cent advance on the sterling cost, to make it currency." This store seems to have been quite a success. That Parks continued to operate it in connection with the publication of the Gazette is indicated by the frequent advertisements in that paper of both ancient and modern classics for sale at the "bookstore in Williamsburg."

Another distinctive service rendered Colonial Virginia by this pioneer journalist was the establishment in its capital city of a paper mill, the first in America south of Pennsylvania. The exact date of its construction is not known but signs point to the year 1744. A poem entitled "The Paper Mill" was published in the Virginia Gazette for July 26, 1744, which is nothing more than a humorous request for rags with which to operate this mill. Paper for printing purposes in the Colony had been very expensive, extremely scarce, and hard to obtain and Parks conceived this idea

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(32) William and Mary Quarterly Vol. VII, Page 10.

of making his burdens lighter. This undertaking meant a great deal to the Colony and it is not to be doubted that an inestimable service was rendered in this regard. He had been running a book store at Hanover Courthouse for some time prior to his death. The record of the settlement of his estate found in the Clerk's Office at Yorktown shows that this business was disposed of in carrying out the orders of his will.

There is a deed on record at Yorktown that reveals Mrs. Sarah Packe, the widow of Captain Graves Packe, as a partner with Parks in his printing business and storehouse at Williamsburg. The object of this deed is to procure a settlement of existing accounts between him and Mrs. Packe\*. Just how much settlement was done in execution of this deed is, more or less, a matter of conjecture since the account with Mrs. Packe is represented by him later in his will as being "open".

Parks continued to play an important role in the life of the Colony until 1750. On March 23, of that year he embarked for England and while on board the ship was taken with the pleurisy and died April 1, after only a few days illness. He was taken on to England and there his body was laid to rest at Gosport.

His will was proved at Yorktown June 18, 1750, by two of those that had formerly witnessed its formation.

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\* Mrs. Packe's name is spelled twice in the will of Parks and each time it is spelled Mrs. Pack.

In part it reads as follows:

"I bequeath my Soul to God hoping through the Merits of Christ the same shall be saved and my Body to be buried in a decent manner.

"Imprimis I give and bequeath all my Estate whether Real or Personal to my Daughter Eleanor Shelton and the Heirs of her Body lawfully begotten after all my Just Debts and Legacys hereafter bequeathed are duly discharged.

"Item I give and bequeath to my Sister Jane Spilsbury\* fifty Pounds Current money of Virginia.

"Item I give and bequeath One hundred Pounds like money to be divided\*\* equally amongst my said sister Jane Spilsburys Children to be paid to my brother in Law Thomas Spilsbury or his lawful attorney.

"Item I give and bequeath to my sister Elizabeth Parks fifty Pounds Current Money of Virginia aforesaid. It is my desire that my wife Eleanor Parks and my Son in Law John Shelton do carry on and complete Printing the Laws of Virginia which I have undertaken. And it is my desire that the Accounts now Open between Mrs. Sarah Pack and me be settled by Mr. John Garland on her part and Mr. Benjamin Waller on my part and all the Contracts or Agreements between the said Sarah Pack and me to stand void til the determination of John Garland and Benjamin Waller aforesaid." (33)

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\*This name is often spelled Spitzburg but the will of Parks recorded at Yorktown shows it as being spelled Spilsbury.

\*\* The will of Parks is quoted as stipulating £100 to each of Jane Spilsbury's children which is obviously contrary to fact. Dr. Tyler makes this error in a reproduction of the will in the William and Mary Quarterly Vol. VII, Page 12f.

*See Grand m.  
Quarterly  
Vol. II. p. 92  
No portion of*

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(33) The portion of the will of Parks quoted here was copied from the original found in Wills and Inventories, number 20, for the years 1746-1759, in the Clerk's Office at Yorktown, Virginia. It differs slightly from any reprint of it I have seen. This record as it has been bound by the Virginia Association for the Preservation of American Antiquities is easily legible and readily accessible.

At the death of Parks the settlement of his estate on record at Yorktown reveals that his assets were only a little more than his liabilities. He left property valued at a little more than six thousand pounds while his indebtedness was only a little short of that sum. We see therefore, that his labors were, from a pecuniary standpoint, unrewarded and that his heirs had to be content with knowing his will concerning them rather than by receiving an expression of it in tangible form.

## Chapter Five

## The Successors of William Parks

After the death of Parks the Gazette was discontinued for several months. On January 3, 1751, William Hunter, a native of Yorktown, revived the paper and published issue Number 1. He placed the Gazette again before the public under its former title, "The Virginia Gazette, With the Freshest Advices, Foreign and Domestic." It was his aim to influence the life of the people and mold public opinion through the columns of his paper. In this endeavor he had many more chances to make a success than his predecessor.

Hunter was a friend of Benjamin Franklin, and through him was appointed deputy Postmaster General in 1753. He continued to hold this office until his death in 1761. In conjunction with the above office Hunter was also Postmaster in Williamsburg. These offices gave him a much better chance to get the news of the day and consequently to publish a more worthy paper. Under his editorship the Virginia Gazette continued to make its impress upon the life of the people, but that it yet had obstacles to overcome is shown by the following notice inserted by Hunter in issue Number 52, for December 27, 1751:-

"This paper concludes the first year of the Gazette publication and as I have been at great expense, as well in printing as sending them to different parts of the country, by special messengers, I hope my customers will favor me with their subscription money as soon as possible that I may be enabled to continue them---I am sensible there are many who complain of not getting their papers so regular as they desire, but hope they will be kind enough to excuse it, when they

Consider the many inconveniences the colony labours under both in this and other respects, for want of regular posts through the country. However, as we daily expect the arrival of a postmaster General<sup>e</sup>, we have no reason to doubt, but that the Post-Office will be regulated in such a manner as will give content. In the meantime, as I shall do all in my power to dispatch the Gazettes, as well by different posts, as favorable opportunities, I hope my customers will continue their favors, and oblige their very humble servant, The Printer."

This Gazette shows a noticeable improvement over the earlier paper by Parks. It reveals a great ability on the part of the editor to plan and publish a paper pleasing in appearance as well as content. On the pages of Hunter's Gazette are to be found some of the best written and best edited essays that appeared in the entire country during the colonial period. Many contributions contained in its columns proclaim the fact that the Old Dominion of that day was not devoid of literary talent.

On August 15, 1750/51, before Hunter began his work as editor of the Gazette, he purchased "lot 4<sup>o</sup>" on which the office of Parks had stood, from Ellyson Armistead, Sheriff of York County. Thus the property came into his possession, and in order that the Gazette be continued after his death he provided in his will that his executors should enter into partnership with Joseph Royle and continue to operate the printing office.

Hunter's plan for the perpetuation of the Gazette was entirely successful, for we find that at his death in 1761 Royle at once took up the publication of the paper under the name of J. Royle & Company. He no doubt had been associated with Hunter before. He had married Rosanna, Hunter's half-sister and

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\*This word should begin with a capital letter but in copying it from the original I copied it as a small letter. I find that it is given the same way by J. M. Lee in his History of American Journalism pp. 50 and 51.



consequently the paper remained in the family. The crown sheet used by Hunter in publishing the paper was enlarged to a full demy size in the issues of Royle's press. The only extant copy of the Gazette under the editorship of Royle that has yet been located is the issue of February 12, 1762.

The will of Joseph Royle was proved at Yorktown on the nineteenth of May, 1766. It reveals a similar provision to that previously laid down by Hunter, for the continued publication of the Virginia Gazette and operation of the printing business.

A Scotchman, by the name of Alexander Puffie, who had been living for some time in the home of Royle became his successor as the publisher of the Gazette. The first issue under his editorship came from the press March 7, 1766, a few months after the death of Royle. In this initial issue he inserted the following indication of his purposes and plans:-

"Tired with an involuntary recess from business for three or four months past, the advantage which a newspaper is generally looked upon to be of in a community, and the encouragement I have already met with from a number of late customers to the Virginia Gazette, have determined me to resume its publication, at the usual price of fifteen shillings a year and to insert advertisements as formerly. I intend sending the Gazette to all the old customers, flattering myself they will countenance this undertaking; and should they choose to decline, they will please acquaint me. No pains shall be spared to give satisfaction, nor will the price of the Virginia Gazette, notwithstanding my proposal to ask the same for it as usual, be greater than that of any other paper that may be published in the Colony. The press shall likewise be as free as any Gentleman can wish, or desire, and I crave the countenance and favor

of the publick no longer than my conduct may appear to merit their approbation-----.

"I take this opportunity to acquaint all my brethren printers that I shall expect them to send me their several papers weekly, as they may expect the same piece of complaisance from me."

The first six numbers of this paper were published, according to the imprints themselves, by Alexander Purdie and Company. With the issue of June 20, 1766, it appears as having been printed by Alexander Purdie and John Dixon. The imprint of the Gazette of Purdie had been:

"Williamsburg: Printed by Alex. Purdie, and Company, at the Post-Office; by whom Persons may be supplied with this Paper. Advertisements of moderate Length are inserted for Three Shillings the first week, and Two Shillings each week after."

The issue of June 20 shows a different imprint. The explanation for the change is given by Purdie in a letter to his customers published in that issue. The letter in full is as follows:

"I beg leave to acquaint my friends and customers that I have just entered into partnership with Mr. John Dixon, in conjunction with whom I have purchased all the materials, stock in trade, etc, belonging to the estates of the late Mr. William Hunter and Mr. Joseph Royle. The acquaintance which Mr. Dixon has had in the business, and the satisfaction that I believe he has hitherto given in his department, encourages me to hope that we shall have the countenance and favor of all former customers to his office as well as of the public in general, we being determined to make it our constant study to merit approbation."

The partnership confirmed above, continued until December of 1774. At that time the partnership was dissolved

and Purdie retired from the firm. In the Gazette of Purdie and Dixon for December 1, 1774, Purdie in a note of very gentle tone thanked the people for their generous support in the past and announced his intention of withdrawing and setting up a printing business of his own the first of the year. He also stated that just as soon as he should "receive sufficient encouragement" from his friends and former customers that he would begin the publication of a paper on his own resources. He said his motto, in case he should undertake the venture, would be "Always for Liberty and the Publick Good."

The same issue referred to above carried also a statement by Dixon of his appreciation of the public patronage in the past and <sup>that he</sup> looked forward to the continued reception of it in the future. He announced that beginning *with* the first of the year he and William Hunter\* would resume the publication of the Gazette that had for some time been published by him and John Dixon in collaboration. He expressed the hope that this venture might meet with public approbation and that the partnership might result in general good.

The permanent dissolution of the Purdie-Dixon firm took place just after the issue of the Gazette for December 18, 1774. The recess taken by the original Virginia Gazette was very short before it again came from the press, but this time under the imprint "Dixon and Hunter." The first paper issued by this firm bears the date of January 7, 1775.

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\* The William Hunter here chosen as a partner was the son of the William Hunter that had been associated with William Parks and that had formerly edited the Gazette.

Alexander Purdie went immediately to work and set up a printing office in Williamsburg. Before long he received "sufficient encouragement" to justify his publication of a Gazette of his own. The first number of the Purdie Gazette came from the press on February 3, 1775.

## Chapter Six

## Rival Gazettes

During the agitation connected with the Stamp Act the Colony of Virginia became very much excited. There was only one newspaper published in the state at the time and that was adjudged to be unduly biased toward the officers of the government. Consequently, a number of influential patriots became eager to have an unprejudiced press through which they might make known their views and opinions. The fact is fully attested that the people in certain parts of the state were doubtful about the political temper of the Gazette of Parks and his successors. They accordingly considered the situation and determined to remedy it by securing another press for the state. Thomas Jefferson, in a letter dated July 1809, states that he had a part in procuring this opposition press for Virginia. He wrote: (34)

"I do not know that the publication of newspapers was ever prohibited in Virginia. Until the beginning of our revolutionary disputes, we had but one press, and that having the whole business of the government, and no competitor for public favor, nothing disagreeable to the governor could be got into it. We procured Rind to come from Maryland to publish a free paper."\*

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(34) Thomas, Isaiah, History of Printing in America 1st edition  
See index.

\* This statement of Jefferson is often stated as proof that there was only one press in Virginia before the Revolution. Obviously, Jefferson said nothing of the kind because the disputes preceding the war endured for a period of about ten years. The above statement clearly means there was only one press in Virginia at a time prior to the struggles that ended in the Revolution itself about a decade later. The statement seems to lend itself rather easily to being misquoted by the person that is not willing to consider its language very carefully.

It is generally conceded that Jefferson was the prime instigator of this press in Virginia. Since he and other prominent men deemed it expedient that an opposition press be started, they invited William Rind, who was at that time an apprentice to Jonas Green of Annapolis, Maryland, to establish a press in the state. In response Rind came to the Colony, set up a press, and started the publication of a paper at Williamsburg. He states his purpose very clearly in an advertisement in Purdie and Company's Gazette on May 9, 1766. His proposals and intentions are set forth to the public as follows:

" William Rind, Printer: Takes this opportunity of informing the publick that he is now settled at Williamsburg, and has furnished himself with all Materials necessary for carrying on the Printing Business, he therefore begs the favor of those Gentlemen with whom he has left subscription papers, to return the lists of those who have already signed, as he proposes to begin the publication of a Newspaper on Friday next, which will be regularly continued, if it meets with a sufficient number of subscribers to encourage his undertaking."

The paper appeared as planned, bearing the title, "The Virginia Gazette, published by Authority; Open to all Parties, but influenced by none."

It was imprinted:

"Williamsburg: Printed by William Rind, at the New Printing Office, on Main Street. All persons may be supplied with this Gazette at 12 s. 6d. per year."

At the end of the first year the words "published by Authority" were omitted from the title. It was due no doubt to the fact that the general tenor of such a title was not in keeping with the purported loyalty of the home government.

This paper was published by Rind until his death on August 19, 1773. His widow, Clementina Rind, succeeded him to the editorship and the imprint of the paper for September 16 bears her name. By some, as yet unexplained mistake or purposive turn of events, the same paper for January 13, 1774, is imprinted "Printed by William Rind." Mrs. Rind continued the publication of this Gazette until her death on September 26, 1774.

There was no break in the flow of the paper at the death of Mrs. Rind. John Pinkney assumed the role of editor immediately and printed the issue of September 20, 1774. He imprinted this issue "Printed by John Pinkney for the Benefit of Clementina Rind's Estate." On October 6, 1774, this caption was changed to read:

"Printed by John Pinkney for the Benefit  
of Clementina Rind's Children."

And still later, on April 6, 1775, this heading was made to read: "Printed by John Pinkney." He was the last editor and owner of this Gazette before it passed out of existence in the tide of the Revolution.

It is evident, therefore, from the preceding account that the close of the colonial period found three papers being regularly published in the Virginia Capital. Each of the three had the honor and distinction of being called the Virginia Gazette. No titles have developed that would serve to differentiate one from the others. The circulation of each was very small. As a matter of fact a subscription list of a few hundred, <sup>in</sup> colonial days, considered as being sufficient "to encourage" a printer to go about his

task with enthusiasm. One noteworthy observation in connection with the operation of three printing presses within the confines of one small town, is that no ill feeling that merited mention seems to have existed between them. In Williamsburg these brief disseminators of the happenings of the day when happenings were momentous, and many things tried the temper of men, lived and prospered without strife or serious disagreement. Journalistic animosity was born of party hatred early in the period that followed these colonial days. Toward the close of the era under our study the tendency toward critical and courageous debate began to wax strong. These early editors, however, sought to mould public opinion in earnest sincerity and in the finest spirit of enthusiasm and offered little space to futile diatribes.

After Parks succeeded in getting the appointment to the position of "Printer to the Public" in 1732, the office became one for which there was much competition to obtain. Parks served in that capacity until 1750. He started at an annual salary of one hundred and twenty pounds per annum and reached a maximum of two hundred and eighty pounds shortly before the end of his eighteen years of activity was reached. In 1751 William Hunter received the appointment at an emolument of three hundred pounds per year. He succeeded in getting this amount raised to three hundred and fifty pounds before his death in 1761. Joseph Royle followed Hunter into this office and printed the government documents through the Assembly of June 1765.

At the death of Royle in the spring of 1765, there



were several applicants who perseveringly sought an appointment to the position. By this time the office of "Printer to the Public" had come to be considered very lucrative as well as carrying with it a certain amount of public favor. The firms of Purdie and Dixon and William Rind were probably the best known of the competitors, but William Starke and Robert Miller, in behalf of their printing interests, also sought to obtain the favor. When the vote was finally taken Rind received the position, getting fifty three votes to his opponents' forty six. Rind began the public printing at a salary of three hundred and seventy five pounds a year and had that increased to four hundred and fifty pounds annually in 1770. At his death in 1773, his widow took the task in hand, but served only a few months. She was elected on May 24, 1774, and died Sept. 25. The House of Burgesses next elected Alexander Purdie as "Printer to the Public" to fill the vacancy. He was the last public printer under the old colonial government and served for an annual compensation of four hundred and fifty pounds.

John Holt and the Virginia Gazette of Norfolk

John Holt, a native of Williamsburg, Virginia, was born in 1721. He was well educated and bred to the mercantile business from early youth. He engaged in commercial pursuits for several years, became a prominent citizen of his home town, and finally rose to the position of mayor. He met with serious financial reverses very early but was saved in 1754, when he gained an appointment to one of the two existing postmaster generalships of America, because of his family connections. He was stationed at New Haven, Connecticut. It is more than likely that he secured his knowledge of the printing business from his brother-in-law, William Hunter, in his early years at the Virginia Capital. About 1774 he started a printing establishment in Norfolk, Virginia. Practically all of the management of this press was left in the hands of his son, John Hunter Holt.

John Hunter Holt and his father published a paper and called it "The Virginia Gazette or Norfolk Intelligencer." Young Holt was a man of ardent feelings and a good writer. From the start to the finish of the colonial struggles he warmly espoused the cause of his country. He edited his paper well and boldly defended the principles that he believed in and held dear. Soon after the inauguration of the paper, Holt and Company printed an article in its columns, that in some way slightly reflected upon the character of one of Dunmore's ancestors. This caused Dunmore to become angry and he soon sought out a means to give vent to his

temper and take vengeance upon the printers of the article. He was not long in making them suffer severely. He immediately ordered the seizure of the press by some of the soldiers under his command. A number of the citizens of the town made violent protests at the time, but to no avail. One of those that became greatly stirred as well as astounded because of the action maintained that Dunmore must have known that by law "the persons of the men, and property of the printers were sacred." Continuing in the same strain this irate individual asks: "How then could you dare invade the privileges of the one or the property of the other, and thereby deprive the public of a press, by which their wrongs are made known, and through which all knowledge is conveyed? Must Genius bow the neck, and court the smile of Nero, while fair Science flits melancholy, deploring her unhappy state!" (35)

The description of the seizure of the press was given in the Pennsylvania Gazette for October 18, 1775. The seizure had taken place on October 8, 1775. A portion of that letter reads as follows: (36)

"Yesterday came on shore about fifteen of the King's soldiers, and marched up to the printing office, out of which they took all the types and a part of the press, and carried them on board the ship Eilbeck, in presence, I suppose, of between two and three hundred spectators, without meeting with the least molestation; and upon the drums beating up and down the town, there were only about

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(35) Hugo Falsits, John Holt, Printer and Postmaster  
A pamphlet in the Virginia State Library.

(36) Ibid.

thirty-five men to arms. They say they want to print a few papers themselves; and they looked upon the press not to be free, and had a mind to publish something in vindication of their own characters. But as they have only a part of the press, and no ink as yet, it is out of their power to do anything in the printing business. They have got neither of the compositors, but I understand there is a printer on board the Otter. Mr. Cummings, the book binder was pressed on board, but is admitted ashore at times; He says Capt. Squire was very angry they did not get Mr. Holt, who happened to be in the house the whole time they were searching, but luckily made his escape, notwithstanding the office was guarded all round. Mr. Cummings also informs that the Captain says he will return everything in safe order to the office, after he answers his ends, which, he says will be about three weeks----- it was extremely melancholy to hear the cries of the women and children in the streets etc."

During this part of the colonial period the people had come to value the press very highly as a means whereby they might make their influence felt in matters of government as well as in matters of less timely import. The people had come to look upon the press as an indispensable asset and consequently, lost no time in addressing a petition to Lord Dunmore, after the flagrant action mentioned above. The Governor was importuned to see that the materials were immediately returned to their owners in the petitionary letter drawn up by the officials of the Corporation of Norfolk. The rather lengthy entreaty reads as follows:\*

"To his Excellency the right Hon. John Earl of Dunmore, his Majesty's Lieutenant and Governor General of the colony and Dominion of Virginia, &c. &c, We his Majesty's faithful subjects, the Common Hall Assembled, beg leave to represent to Your Lordship, that on this day a party of men under command of Capt. Squire, of the Otter sloop of war,

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\*Hugo Palsits, John Holt, Printer and Postmaster. A Pamphlet.

Lying in this harbor, landed in the most public part of this borough, in the most daring manner, and, in open violation of the peace and good order, seized on the printing materials belonging to an inhabitant of this town, as well as the persons of two of his family.

" We beg also to represent to your Lordship that this act is both illegal and riotous; and that, together with a musket ball fired in the town yesterday, from on board the Kingfisher, has greatly alarmed and incensed the inhabitants, and has occasioned a great number of women and children to abandon this borough; and that, if these arbitrary proceedings pass unnoticed by your Lordship, as chief magistrate of the Colony, that none of the inhabitants are safe from insult and abuse. We therefore, as our duty, represent this matter to your Lordship for your interposition.

" We, my Lord, as men, and as a Common Hall, have ever preserved the peace of this town, and have never prevented the ships of war and others from being supplied with provisions, or any other necessaries and have carefully avoided offering any insult to his Majesty's servants. We had therefore hoped, that the inhabitants would never be molested in their lawful business. We are sorry, however, to have it in our power to state this fact to your Lordship; which we must and do think a gross violation of all that men and freemen can hold dear.

" Allow us to observe to your Lordship, that if the inhabitants had been disposed to repel insult, that they were sufficiently able either to have cut off, or taken prisoners, the small party that came on shore; and this, we hope, is another proof of their peaceable intentions.

" We the Mayor, Aldermen and Common Council of the borough of Norfolk, do most earnestly entreat your Lordship that the Captains of the men of war may not reduce the inhabitants to the dreadful alternative of defending their persons, or tamely suffering themselves

to be abused, and request that your Lordship will interpose your authority to put a final stop to such violent infringements of our rights, and to order the persons seized upon by Captain Squire to be immediately put on shore, and the property to be replaced from whence it was taken."

The fate of Norfolk's only colonial newspaper press was definitely sealed in the reply of Governor Dunmore to the above appeal of the authorities of that promising town. His reply to the urgent request of the authorities was published in the Pennsylvania Gazette on November 1, 1775. I quote it here from Palsits's pamphlet referred to before. It read in part as follows:

"I was eye-witness to a party, belonging to the Otter sloop of war, landing at the hour and place you mention, and did see them bring off two of the servants belonging to the printer, together with his printing utensils; and I really think that they could not have rendered the borough of Norfolk, or the country adjacent to it, a more essential service, than by depriving them of the means of poisoning the minds of the people and exciting in them the spirit of rebellion, and by that means drawing inevitable ruin and destruction upon themselves and country. As to the illegality of the act, I am afraid some of you, in this very common hall assembled, ought to blush when you make use of the expression; as I know you cannot but be conscious that you have, by every means in your power, totally subverted the laws and constitution and have been the advisers and abettors in throwing off all allegiance to that Majesty's crown and government, to whom you profess yourselves faithful subjects."

During the remainder of this letter Dunmore undertakes to show the people of Norfolk that his act was committed only to remove the source of poison from their midst. He avers that this press was only a means whereby the people were being deluded "concerning the present

contest", and that they could never be furnished with a "fair representation of the facts" so long as this press remained "under the controul of its present dictators." Dunmore had his way and the press was not allowed to operate again in Norfolk.

## Chapter Eight

## Characteristics of the Early Gazettes

All of the papers published in Colonial Virginia, judging by the extant copies, carried some representative heraldic device with their titles, except those issued by William Parks. These designs and devices were changed to express the various sentiments of the different editors and prevailing feeling of the people. A copy of the arms of the Colony was a part of the caption of the first extant Gazette of William Hunter's press. This innovation was taken as a basis for the title by all of the later colonial newspapers in Virginia. Dixon and Hunter made this cut more attractive by placing it in a wreath. Alexander Purdie made a change in the shield of the arms in the early part of the revolutionary struggles. In the issue of May 17, 1776, he omitted the arms and placed a fancy square in the caption in which he printed the words, "Thirteen United Colonies, United we stand---- Divided we fall." He continued the use of this device for a few issues and then on June 7, 1776, he did away with the square and put a shield in its place. On the shield he placed a coiled rattlesnake with supporters, a bear, and the motto: "Don't Tread on Me." Had this contrivance have appeared elsewhere than in the title it would have no doubt been characterized as a cartoon, when viewed in the light of the happenings of the day. He was very probably influenced to the use of this device by that designer of so many innovations, Benjamin Franklin.

The papers of the latter part of the colonial period in Virginia were great advertising mediums. Through their



columns, merchants, traders of every description, and men of all walks of life, made known their wishes and advertised their wares. The printer early recognized the remunerative possibilities of the advertising service of the press and the patrons were only a little more dilatory in utilizing this effective agency for disposing of their goods. In this case the development that proved to be a real godsend for the struggling printer at the same time offered a worthwhile remedy for a long existing ill.

Many are the advertisements of land for sale, horses that have strayed or, been stolen, and negroes that have fled. The later Gazettes added greatly to the effectiveness of these advertisements by placing a picture to illustrate the thing advertised in the column beside it. In this new type of depicted advertisement a horse attracts the reader's eye to the concise note telling of a horse that has strayed or been stolen; the picture of a house and its immediate surroundings illustrates that a house or a piece of land is offered for sale; while a black figure, with a stick or cane in his hand, in the act of running, invites the reader's attention to the fact that a negro slave has sought freedom in flight or that a servant has left his master.

Save for the headlines, advertisements were set up like the rest of the reading matter. They were usually put in as small a place as possible and told their stories briefly. We of today need a glossary to read intelligibly many of the advertisements of the colonial stores. Many

articles of clothing and various types of cloths listed in these early newspaper advertisements no longer have a place in our wardrobes and the names of much of the paraphernalia of that day have passed into history. The economic history on the country during its most plastic years may be easily gleaned from the advertising columns of these colonial heralds of Virginia.

The earliest of the colonial papers in the United States were delivered by the post offices free of postage. A little later there was a nominal charge for such service. At first in Virginia it seems to have been a matter of making arrangements with the rider over the local post roads. William Parks apparently had to pay only a small sum annually for the delivery of his Gazettes. For a long time there was no definitely fixed status for newspapers in the regular mail of the land. It is said that Franklin was fortunate enough to be able to get most of his papers through the mail without having to pay postage.\* The postal system in Virginia was far from perfect, when it came to the safe delivery of papers through the mail, if we may judge from the experiences that Parks and others that followed him had in getting their papers to their subscribers. The post besides being slow and infrequent was at the same time a very uncertain means for delivering newspapers. One of the

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\* A brief account of how the earliest papers of the country were delivered is given by James Melvin Lee in his History of American Journalism on page 75.

great advantages that seemed to go with the dual position, postmaster and printer, so earnestly sought by the editors of the early days, apparently, was the ability of the publisher more nearly to guarantee the safe delivery of his papers.

It is apparent that a change had to take place before the newspapers could be delivered regularly to the customers as they should. Some constructive plan was imperative or the newspaper age must be very transient. So long as the Post riders were carrying papers for a mere pittance, and there was no uniformity in the amounts paid by the various printers, the system could not work out satisfactorily. The printer was not being given a fair chance to make his undertaking a success, and the patron did not consider that he was getting his money's worth when he never received a large part of the issues he subscribed for. The delivery of the newspaper was given a definite status in 1753, by Benjamin Franklin and William Hunter, who were at that time in full charge of the general post offices of the colonies. On the tenth of March, 1753, they issued the following order with regard to the carriage of newspapers by post riders:

"Whereas the Newspapers of the several Colonies on this Continent heretofore permitted to be sent by the Post free of charge, are of late years so much increased as to become extremely burthensome to the Riders, who demand additional salaries or Allowances from the Post Office on that Account, and it is not reasonable that the Office should receive no Benefit from the Carriage of of Newspapers, should be at any Expence for such Carriage; and Whereas the Printers of Newspapers complain that they frequently receive orders for News-papers from distant Post-offices, which they comply with by

sending the Papers tho they know not the Persons to whom the Papers are to be directed, and have no convenient means of collecting the Money, so that much of it is lost; and that for Want of due Notice when distant Subscribers die, become Bankrupt or remove out of the County, they continue to send Papers some years directed to such Persons; whereby the Posts are loaded with Many Papers to no Purpose, and the Loss do great to the Printers, as that they cannot afford to make any allowance to the Riders for carrying the Papers; And Whereas some of the Riders do, and others may demand exorbitant Rates of Persons living on the Roads, for carrying and delivering that do not go into Any Office, but are delivered by the Riders themselves.

"To remedy these inconveniences, and yet not to discourage the Spreading of Newspapers, which are on many Occasions useful to the Government, and advantageous to Commerce, and to the publick; You are, after the first Day of June Next, to deliver No News-paper at your Office (except the single Papers exchange'd between Printer and Printer) but to such Persons only as do agree to pay you, for the Use of the Rider which brings such Papers a small addition Consideration per Annum, for each Paper, over and above the Price of the Papers; that is to say, For any Distance not exceeding 50 miles, each Paper is carried, the Sum of 9d. Ster. per Annum, or an equivalent in currency: For any Distance exceeding 50 miles, and not exceeding One Hundred Miles the Sum of One Shilling and Six Pence Ster. per annum; and in the same proportion for every other Fifty Miles which such Paper shall be carried;-----

-----, And you are to suffer no Rider employed or paid by you to receive more than the rates above for carrying and Papers by them delivered on their respective Roads: Nor to carry and deliver any Papers but such as they will be accountable for to the Printers, in Consideration of an Allowance of the same Commission as aforesaid for Collecting and paying the Money." (36)

This order was signed by Franklin and Hunter and remained in force in Virginia and the other colonies until broken up by the uncertainly and turmoil of the approaching

Revolution. Under the order the printers seem to have met

(36) Lee, James M., History of American Journalism. pp. 76, 77.

with greater success in getting their papers to their customers and not so many Gazettes were sent haphazardly to persons whose names had almost been forgotten in the communities to which they were sent. During the agitation immediately subsequent to the Revolution, Holt refers in his paper to the difficulty he had in getting his papers into the hands of his patrons, but that condition seems to have been largely due to the abnormal state of affairs in the country at the time. During the latter part of the colonial period many of the newspaper publishers in the country sent their papers to the subscribers by riders whom they employed themselves for that purpose. This was true also to a limited extent in Virginia.

In Colonial Virginia the printers would take almost anything in exchange for his paper. This tendency on the part of the editors made the operation of a store in connection with the printing establishment a very suitable undertaking. Several of the early Virginia printers were very successful with their stores. William Parks, William Hunter, and Joseph Royle, all three, did a good business as stationers, booksellers, and in handling other commodities that found their way into the printing office as well. They endeavored to offer the best obtainable in literature and religion to the readers of their day. Paper, almanacs, school books, and any other reading materials of the age that they could procure, were to be found on the shelves of their stores.

Franklin in his "Autobiography" according to Lee (37) states that none of the colonies were especially interested either in the books or the newspapers that came from the (37) Lee, J.M., Hist. of Am. Journalism page 68.

presses of this country. Even those that did wish to buy books and papers and keep abreast of the times preferred to get both from England. This attitude on the part of the colonists probably accounts for the presence of so much English news in the newspapers of that day---it was merely an attempt on the part of the editors to give the people the type of news that they showed an interest in reading.

The conditions and conveniences of the time prevented the paper from gaining the foothold on popular favor that it otherwise might have got. The people were sparsely settled and, as aforesaid, those that lived at a distance had to pay, not only the subscription price, but the cost of transporting the paper as well. Most of the people of the Colony were farmers and after a man had toiled all day in the field it was not very inviting to come in at night and read a compendium of dry, deep facts by the light of a tallow candle or dim glow of a pine knot.

The size of these early Gazettes vary, according to the taste and available news of each individual editor. The shape was also changed to meet the varying demands of the printers. One variety of type runs from the beginning to the end of nearly all issues. There is a great difference in the style of the typography used by these colonial typographers. In most of the papers all nouns were capitalized and the printers used their discretion in capitalizing other words as well. The use of the large initial letter for the opening of the most important essay or news item is a mechanical device almost unanimously used

by the Colonial Virginia typographers. That the orthography of the day was not fixed is evident to anyone who casually glances over the quotations of the preceding pages. Words were not infrequently spelled in different ways within the space of a single article or single column.

In the "gazettes of Virginia there were no "scare headlines" of the type that practically predominate in our modern journalism when dealing with subject matter that will permit it. These colonial papers published the most astounding and unusual happenings and events without attempting to strike sudden terror to the minds of the readers by the use of the horror-inspiring title. Sensationalism found little place in the journalism of that age. Nothing scurrilous or indecorous blurred the pages of these early journals at the will of the editor. The actual happenings were related in the elevated style so prevalent at the time. The colonial editor was not of the sedentary type but rather one who was given over to various kinds of activity. His diligent efforts to secure "Intelligence" for his paper carried him freely about among the people of his community. Many of the items that he included in his news columns contained a modernistic flavor. Moses Coit Tyler is quoted by Lee (38) in summing up the literary influences of early journalism. The quotation, which follows, seems fully as applicable to Colonial Virginia Journalism as to that of the country at large:

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[38] Lee, James M., Hist. of Am. Journalism page 81.

"Our colonial journalism soon became, in itself, a really important literary force. It could not remain forever a mere disseminator of public gossip or a placard for the display of advertisements. The instinct of critical and brave debate was strong even among these puny editors, and it kept struggling for expression. Moreover, each editor was surrounded by a coterie of friends with active brains and a propensity to utterance; and these constituted a sort of unpaid staff of editorial contributors, who, in various forms---letters, essays, anecdotes, epigrams, poems, lampoons---helped to give vivacity and even literary value to the paper."\*

Thus we see that these early disseminators of the latest news from various parts of the world played no mean part in the development of a higher civilization in the "Mother of States." They filled a place in the life and actions of the people in these pioneer days that otherwise must necessarily have been void. They pointed a perplexed and struggling Colony to a plane of higher and nobler things. Their worth to the burden bearing Virginia Colony in days that called for the best that mankind could devise cannot be fully expressed in words nor counted in silver and gold.

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\*This quotation is from Moses Coit Tyler's American Literature but is reprinted here from Lee's, Hist. of Am. Journalism p. 81.



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