

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, September 17, 2018

**William Penn (1644-1718):** William's father, Admiral William Penn (1621-1670) of the British Navy, had won decisive victories over the Spanish Navy in the Caribbean and was owed substantial sums for his services from his Majesty King Charles II. As a very young man, his son William became disenchanted with the Church of England and became vitally interested in a diverse group founded in 1652 by George Fox called the Religious Society of Friends. Fox, a powerful preacher himself, had the idea that a minister or priest was not necessary but that individuals should have direct communion with God. This idea caught on with many working families in England, and this new means of worship soon had several hundred members. In the early 1660s, the young William Penn joined the Society of Friends (called by outsiders "Quakers"), much to the chagrin of his father, the prestigious retired Admiral. (English farmers named Marshall in Derbyshire also joined Fox's "Quakers").

Suffering much persecution and jail time in England, some Quakers had fled to Holland, and the young William Penn thought that British possessions in North America might be a haven for religiously oppressed people of all faiths and nationalities. In fact, in 1634 the Crown had already given a Roman Catholic family named Calvert a colony named Maryland, although its exact boundaries were uncertain. When Penn's father died in 1670, his son pursued a close relationship with James, brother of the King and heir to the throne, with an eye on a large uncommitted area, firmly under British control, in North America. About 1680, in repayment of war debts to the deceased admiral, James convinced his brother to deed to William Penn the unclaimed land west of the Delaware River, and Penn began his elaborate plan for colonization of his new prize.

Before Penn was in the picture, small groups of Quakers had settled along the east bank of the Delaware River and established Friends Meetings at Burlington, Mount Holly, Moorestown, and Salem in West Jersey. Penn sent agents ahead to explore his side of the river and finally arranged his first trip in early fall of 1682. Sailing up the Delaware, he first set foot in the Western Hemisphere at New Castle, an old Dutch town taken over by the British in 1664 (along with New York). His sailing ship stopped next along the west bank at a point Penn named "Chester," after the English city of that name. His next stop was the important one, what is now Penn's Landing in Philadelphia. He told his agents they had chosen well, and here would be built Penn's capital of Sylvania, which almost immediately became known as "Pennsylvania" (Penn's Woods).

Penn was in his new colony only a year and a half on this first trip. He intended to stay longer, but his wife's poor health in England and his fear of losing Pennsylvania because of intrigue in the royal court, caused him to return home in 1684. While he was here, however, he laid out the town of Dover (later Delaware's capital) and did his best to establish boundaries for Pennsylvania, with limited success. He met with one of the several Lord Baltimores, and they got along well, but few boundary questions were settled, as there were no accurate surveys. More importantly, he invited Europeans of all nationalities to settle in Pennsylvania, where they would have complete religious freedom. He made many treaties with the Indians, mostly Lenni-Lenapes, many of which were broken in the early 18th century.

Back home in England, Penn's wife improved and she lived until 1694. He also gained a more permanent title to Pennsylvania, and assigned agents to run his colony until he could return. Colonization was rapid. Germans from Westphalia and Hannover settled in what was to become Berks and Lancaster Counties and were ancestors of the "Pennsylvania Dutch." Quakers came in great numbers, and Meetings (churches) were established in and around Philadelphia. A young man named John Marshall arrived about 1684, and was married in Darby Meetinghouse in 1687. He was my great, great, great, great, great grandfather.

William Penn married again and came with his new wife and his daughter Letitia, in her early twenties, to Pennsylvania in 1699. In addition to their home in Philadelphia, he built a fine English-style manor house named Pennsbury 25 miles up the river. He enjoyed his country home and entertained here, including Indian tribal leaders. He was able to attach the "3 Lower Counties on the Delaware" to his colony, as otherwise it had no access to the sea. These counties, although considered separate, were not officially chartered as the separate

British colony of Delaware until about three weeks before the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. Letitia Penn hated Pennsylvania, and the three Penns returned to England in 1701. Although he fully intended to return, he never made it, and he suffered a paralyzing stroke in 1710. Unable to function mentally, he could not prevent Letitia and her husband and also her brother William Jr. from selling vast lands to the highest bidder.

Despite the Penn family's exit from the Pennsylvania scene, the State Legislature was controlled by Quakers until the 1770s. With Pennsylvania, led by Ben Franklin, solidly on the side of the fight for independence from England, most of the Quaker legislators resigned, as they did not believe in war to settle differences. However, a group called "Free Quakers" split off from the mainstream, and its young men fought for independence. This group built a Meetinghouse at 5th and Arch Streets in Philadelphia, one block away from the large Quaker headquarters at 4th and Arch.

Just as George Washington was the "Father of his Country," William Penn was the father of Pennsylvania. When writing the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson used several excerpts from Penn's Charter for Pennsylvania in the document. William Penn's statue on top of the spire on Philadelphia's City Hall can be seen from north and south on Broad Street and from east and west on Market Street. When it was first erected, spectators could climb up the statue and walk around the brim of Penn's hat. The name "Penn" is everywhere, even though William died 300 years ago this year.