NADER
Informatie en Bericht
Voor die gene die genegen zijn, om zich na America
te begeven, en in de Provincie van
Pennsylvania
Geinteresseerd zijn, of zich daar zoeken neder
tezetten.

Met een
VOORREDEN
Behelzende verscheidene anmerkelijke zaken vanden te-
genwoordige toestand; en Regering dier Provincie;

Nooit voor dezen in druk geweest: maar nu
eerst uitgegeven door

ROBERT WEBB.

Amsterdam,
By Jacob Claus, Boekverkoper in de Prinsstraat, 1686.
A RARE DUTCH DOCUMENT CONCERNING THE PROVINCE OF PENNSYLVANIA IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

BY DANIEL B. SHUMWAY, PH.D.

In 1686 there appeared in Amsterdam a pamphlet in the Dutch language whose title translated into English reads: Detailed Information and Account for those who are inclined to go to America and are interested in settling in the Province of America, with a Preface containing various noteworthy things concerning the present condition and the government of the Province. Never before printed but now first published by Robert Webb at Amsterdam at Jacob Claus, Bookseller in Prince Street, 1686.

The writer, Robert Webb, was an Englishman who, according to his own statement, had been seven years in America at the time he wrote the pamphlet. According to the Quaker register of Phila. he died in 1700 and was buried as non-Quaker, tho his wife was a member of the Society of Friends. She was a widow when he married her, as is evidenced by a record found in the Minutes of the Board of Property of the Province of Pennsylvania,¹ which states that Robert Webb was

granted a warrant for the High Street lot proportionable to John Barber’s purchase of 2500 acres, he having married the said Barber’s widow. The records also contain a letter of attorney, given by Robert Webb and his wife to Patrick Robinson, empowering the latter, as his attorney, to sell the property; another entry records the conveyance of the lot to William Salsbury, July 22, 1693. Webb appears also as a witness to two different wills, one of Charles Sanders, 7 mo. 30, 1698, and that of Edward Robinson, Sept. 7, 1697, showing that he was residing in Philadelphia at that time. He is further mentioned in the Colonial records (vol. 1,538) as seizing as Marshall of the Admiralty some goods in June 1697. If now Webb had been seven years in America when he wrote his pamphlet, he must have come here in 1679, provided the pamphlet was published the same year as written. Since Philadelphia had not as yet been founded at this date, and the country, with the exception of a narrow strip of land along the Delaware where a few Swedish hamlets were situated, was sparsely populated, Webb probably had been for a good part of the time in Maryland and Virginia. In his preface he mentions the fact that he had associated with the planters, especially in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and further states that he was in Philadelphia towards the close of his stay. In a conveyance of a property in Philadelphia which he made to William Salsbury in 1693 he is spoken of as “a merchant of the County of Talbot in the Province of Maryland.” A Robert Webb of Talbot County, Maryland is also mentioned in the Proceedings of the Council of Maryland as appearing with others in a certain legal matter before this body on October 15th, 1683. This is presumably the same Webb, as the

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1 See Justin Winsor, Narrative and Critical History of America, vol. iii, p. 318.
Pennsylvania in the Seventeenth Century. 101
date corresponds very well with the time of his probable sojourn in this province. An inquiry concerning Webb, directed to the Maryland Historical Society, elicited only a negative response. Nor was it possible to obtain any information about him from the Reference Library of the Society of Friends in London, except his authorship of the pamphlet under consideration.

Webb's pamphlet was part of the extensive propaganda, organized by William Penn for the purpose of obtaining settlers from Holland and Germany. It was under the direction of Benjamin Furly, an English Quaker, residing as a merchant in Rotterdam. Furly was Penn's trusted agent and was quite effective in turning the tide of German emigration toward America. He was one of the organizers of the Frankford Land Co. and negotiated the first land purchase of the Crefelders. It was through his efforts that passage was engaged on the "Concord" for the 33 German emigrants who landed on October 6th, 1682 in Philadelphia and were met on their arrival by both Penn and Pastorius.

Penn's visits to Germany, of which he made three, and for which he was coached by Furly, as Sachse expresses it, resulted in a number of interesting tracts, four of which were left with Furly for revision and translation. They were later published by Furly at his own expense (Sachse, p. 121). It is therefore not unlikely that Furly was also responsible for the translation and publication of the pamphlet which forms the subject of this paper. This is all the more likely, as it was printed by the Amsterdam bookseller Jacob

See Maryland Archives, xvii, 167.
See Julius Sachse, The Fatherland, p. 8. A biographical sketch of Furly will be found in the PENNA. MAG. OF HIST., vol. xix, pp. 277-305.
It is not impossible that Furly did the translation himself, as he is said to have written with equal facility in English, French, German and Dutch.
Claus, who accompanied Penn on his first visit to Germany in 1671 as companion and interpreter. (Sachse, p. 117.)

These visits of Penn to Germany and the subsequent efforts of Furly resulted, as is well known, in the formation of two companies among the religious separatists in and around Krisheim. The one, the Frankfurt Company, purchased 15,000 acres of land in the new Province of Pennsylvania and sent out Francis Daniel Pastorius as their representative. The other company, the Crefeld Colony purchased the land as individuals through Furly.7

Almost immediately after Penn received the confirmation of the grant of the Province, he began to issue accounts of it. The first one, of 1681, entitled: Some Account of the Province of Pennsylvania in America, was translated into both German and Dutch and published the same year, the one in Amsterdam, the other at Rotterdam. Presumably in the following year, 1682, there appeared a pamphlet furnishing information for prospective settlers in Pennsylvania, entitled: Information and Direction to such Persons as are inclined to America, More especially Those related to the Province of Pennsylvania. The author of this pamphlet is not known, but it has been attributed to Penn, altho without definite proof. At any rate it was most certainly prepared under his direction.8

According to Sachse one Dutch translation of this was found among the Penn papers of the Historical Society. It bears the title: Nader Informatie of Onderrechtinge voor de gene die genegen zijn om na America te gaan, etc.9

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8 Originals of this exist in the Carter Brown Library and in that of the Historical Society of Penna. A reprint will be found in the PENNA. MAG. OF HISTORY, vol. iv, p. 330, et seq.
9 Facsimiles of the title pages of all these pamphlets will be found in the Appendix to Sachse's work.
Other documents on Pennsylvania continued to appear in rapid succession and were translated into French, Dutch and German, but do not concern us here further. Four years later there appeared the pamphlet for which Robert Webb wrote the preface. It is not generally known that the main part of Webb’s pamphlet is a later translation, or at any rate a later edition of the Information and Direction mentioned above. F. D. Stone, former librarian of the Historical Society, who wrote the chapter on the Founding of Pennsylvania in Winsor’s History simply says: In 1686 the series (of pamphlets) only shows a brief Dutch tract; in a foot note he quotes the title from the Carter Brown catalogue. He does not seem to be aware that the library of the Historical Society likewise contained a copy. Julius Sachse, who had access to the documents in the Historical Society, simply says that a later Dutch edition with a somewhat different heading was issued in 1686. His remark may be based on that of Stone, quoted above. Scholars have been misled by the statement on the title page of Webb’s pamphlet to the effect that it had never before been printed, but was now first published by Robert Webb at Amsterdam. A comparison of the main part of the pamphlet with the original of 1682 shows at once that it is only a translation, albeit a rather free, one of this latter. Webb can claim originality only for the preface and his remark only applies to it. A careful search made at the Historical Society has failed to disclose the earlier edition which Sachse claims to have seen, so that there exists a fair doubt as to whether Sachse did not make a mistake and that there never was any Dutch translation prior to 1686.

As to Webb’s preface it would seem probable that he, as an Englishman, wrote it in English and that it was

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10 Detailed accounts of them will be found in Winsor and Sachse.
11 See Winsor, p. 506.
then sent over, translated and prefixed to the 1686 edition of the Dutch translation of the *Information and Direction*. The preface was evidently written in England, as he uses the adverbs 'there' and 'thither' in speaking of America, and in one case says directly 'here in England.' However no English print or manuscript of Webb's preface has come to light. It is one of the rarest documents pertaining to the early history of Pennsylvania, existing, as far as we know, in only two copies, one in the Carter Brown Library, the other in that of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. It is the aim of this article to give a general idea of Webb's preface and of the Dutch translation of the *Information and Direction* of 1682 and to print an English translation not only of Webb's preface but also of the main part of the pamphlet.

**WEBB'S PREFACE.**

Webb begins his account of the Province of Pennsylvania with the statement that he is as well qualified to speak of the country as any one, as he had lived seven years there and had made it his business to inform himself of the nature of the land and the customs of the people. In fact he considers his account to be the most accurate that has appeared. He dwells at first on the advantageous position of Pennsylvania, lying in the centre of the English Colonies, having on the southwest Maryland, Virginia and Carolina and on the northeast New York and New England. The location is advantageous, not only for safety, but also for trade, as the Spaniards are located on the other side of Carolina and the French beyond New England.

He speaks of Philadelphia as lying forty miles above salt water and 120 miles from the Capes, on two navigable rivers, the Delaware and the Schuylkill. Tho but three and one-half years old, it has not less than 800 houses and is surrounded by more than one hundred
villages. He emphasizes the excellence of the government, the governor being at great pains to make it as good as possible and maintaining at his own expense, not only his position as governor, but defraying the expenses of the government itself.

Webb states that he travelled into the interior to examine the quality of the soil, the rivers and springs and considers the land to be fully the equal of Virginia and Maryland which are commonly thought to contain the best land. It is well supplied with excellent forests consisting of oak, black walnut, cedar, locust, chestnut and ash trees. He speaks of the great Onestoga Valley which stretches to the Susquehanna. By this he probably means the Conestoga Valley. He waxes enthusiastic over the beauties of the Susquehanna, a river a mile wide and with not a rock or reef to be seen. He tells us he spent fully ten days and nights along the river and comes to the conclusion that, whether it be the question of the wholesomeness or excellence of the land, the number of springs, the abundance of fish, birds and game, or of the healthful air, one could wish no better or more pleasant location for planters. He gives an instance of how quickly money may be made on land by relating the case of a man who bought ten thousand acres for 200 pounds sterling and later sold one thousand acres for the sum he had paid for all, without a hand having been employed to clear it, so that in consequence he owned nine thousand acres for which he had paid nothing. Beef does not seem to have been especially cheap, costing three groats (24 cents) a pound, but bacon at three and mutton at six cents a pound make one long for the good old days again. He praises the wheat and rye of Chester County and speaks of the prospects of obtaining a good wine from the experience which some Frenchmen have had with the grape vines which grow wild there. Linen, he tells, is a young but promising industry, whale oil is being made
from captured whales, one furnishing several thousand barrels of oil. The tobacco harvest on the low lands yields two thousand hogsheads yearly, and but for the lack of hands might be fully a hundred times as much. Much of the land is marshy, but is excellent for tobacco and even the uncultivated can support herds of cattle in winter as well as in summer. It can be drained at slight expense and will produce sixty fold, as a recent test had shown. Handicrafts are well represented, especially in Philadelphia where there are enough carpenters and masons to build a hundred houses thirty feet square and three stories high in the space of a year.

The government, he tells us, consists of the governor, his council and a state assembly, chosen by the people of the six counties. The council, we learn, consists of eighteen members, three from each county. All bills originate in the council and are adopted or rejected, as the case may be, by the assembly. He describes at great length a new contrivance, a balloting box, designed to prevent partiality and bribery. He tells us it is a secure box made in the shape of a house, having within a partition, and each compartment being of a special color. In the top of the roof there is an opening like a chimney through which one thrusts one’s hand and lets a bean fall into whichever compartment one will, without any of the bystanders being able to see on which side one lets the bean glide into it, after one has agreed beforehand which compartment shall be reckoned for one person and which for another.

Lawyers must have stood a small chance of making a living, for he writes: ‘Every one may plead his own cause and no one may plead the cause of another for money.’ Complete liberty exists in worshipping God according to one’s own fashion. All foreigners become naturalized by swearing allegiance to the government. Peace makers or arbiters are yearly chosen from each county to adjust differences. The institution of the
Orphans Court already existed, to which all persons entrusted with the care of orphaned children are obliged to give an accounting. The care taken by the Quakers for the education of the young is shown by the fact that a large school had been established to which children from several English colonies, including the Barbadoes, are sent. The methods were up to date, for they employed the new reform ideas of the Moravian, Comenius, which represented the last word in education in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Board and tuition amounted to only ten pounds sterling a year.

Taking up the question of finances Webb informs us that families of six that start with a capital of one hundred pounds can get along comfortably, those that have but thirty pounds must either consist of fewer persons, or content themselves with a third of the amount of stock. Instead of three milch cows with their calves, a yoke of oxen, a mare and two sows with a boar, which is considered the normal quantity of stock, they may have only one cow, one goat, no oxen, no mares. They may use only half of the quantity of meat and must live on a porridge of herbs with bread broken into it, mead with hominy and a porridge of Indian corn, which he praises as being a wholesome and nourishing food.

Taking it all in all it is quite an attractive picture that Webb draws of life in colonial Pennsylvania and it was probably of considerable influence in inducing people to emigrate to America. In closing he pays enthusiastic tribute to Penn's new province, for apart from its safe location and its exceptionally good climate, never, as he says, has a colony been founded by a more sober and able people, nor has one ever been conducted anywhere with the regularity, dispatch, progress, success and good and honest means, a thing which must necessarily make for the advancement and interest of all concerned. The which, dear reader, I
heartily wish you may know as well as your dutiful friend Robert Webb.

THE TRANSLATION OF THE INFORMATION AND DIRECTION.

Who it was that translated the English document and Webb's Preface into Dutch we do not know. No mention of any translator is made. It was most likely done in Holland at the order of Benjamin Furly who, as we have seen, was at the head of Penn's propaganda work in Holland and who was capable of making it himself. There is also a possibility that Jan Roelofsz van der Werf, a merchant of Amsterdam, may have had a hand in it, as he is mentioned in connection with Furly as a person from whom more detailed information could be obtained. Moreover the pamphlet appeared in Amsterdam where van der Werf lived, while Furly resided in Rotterdam. One thing, however, is certain, the unknown translator was well acquainted with English, for he has made no slips in the translation, a rather rare thing for those days. But while the translation is accurate, it is by no means a slavish one. On the contrary the translator makes frequent changes in the interest of clearness and understanding. He not infrequently expands the original and adds explanations of foreign words or terms which he thinks are unfamiliar to his readers. Let me give a few illustrations of his method. On page 1, where the original speaks of pieces of eight, he adds: 'or Spanish pattacons.' Similarly he interprets 100 pound sterling as being equivalent to 450 pattacons or rix dollars. In another place he gives 100 pounds as being the equivalent of 1100 gulden. Again instead of £1.5s.10d. of the original he writes 23 English shillings, one penny, that is about 12 guilders, 14 stivers Dutch. At times he takes the

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12The Spanish word was the equivalent of a dollar. The Dutch rix-dollar is a corruption of rijks daalder = the German Reichsthalder.
liberty of changing an arithmetical calculation of the original. Thus on page 8 he increases the percentage of gain from 25 to 30, which results in nine pounds gain instead of £7.10. He also adds a new item of profit on goods carried amounting to £15.8.9 and calculates a total profit of £161.3.9, as compared with the original £144.05.

He interprets the expression 'long leases' as running 21 and 31 years. He explains the term 'good improvements' to be made by a family by adding: 'it being well understood that they will build on it (the land) and plant it and leave it in good condition, whereby the remaining land will acquire a good reputation.' Again, in explanation of the expression 'at an Improved Rent in Fee,' he adds: for example in place of one penny, which is the quit rent for an acre of uncultivated land, one will perhaps obtain four pence for each acre. Where the original speaks of purchasing 3000 acres with 100 pounds, the translator first puts 5000, as that was the original figure according to Webb's preface, and then adds: 'but because the land has risen greatly in value and the sale among the Indians is much higher, one can buy now only 3000 acres for it which is as much land as is required at present for a village.' Similarly, where the original speaks of settling ten families on 5000 acres, the translator adds: 'pursuant to the ordinance of the country which requires that a family should be placed on every 500 acres within one year after the land has been staked off, or else they must take up land farther inland.' In explanation of the words 'half increase' he adds: 'that is to say, they shall enjoy the half of what the soil produces above that which they need for their family, and the half of the cattle which they shall breed. And if so be they are skilled in one or another art, and with the idea of greater profit apply themselves to their handicraft, then
they must renounce their equal share, since the land cannot be worked by them in the meantime."

Another long explanation is added on page six. Speaking of settling families on the land and giving them at least 30 acres (the original has 20) of land within fence and improved to corn and grass, he adds: "I say at least, for one can clear more land, especially when more than two persons are at work, which is the supposed number, and if the land is not more than ordinarily obstructed with trees, moreover one needs nothing more to spur them on than half the profit, the which they shall enjoy from the land thus cleared." He then adds a little calculation of his own: "and then I will assign to each one of them an hundred acres of my 5000, which cost me £3.6.8. which they shall own in perpetuity, provided only that they pay me for it one English shilling a year, which is the rent that the governor receives." In describing the utensils and goods needed in America for various purposes and handicrafts, the original makes no mention of planting vineyards. The translator, however, knowing that the Germans were fond of this occupation, adds: "and for the planting of vineyards, those who have been skilled in this in Germany know well enough what tools they need." In one passage the expression was evidently not understood at first by the translator. The original in describing the construction of the houses, speaks of clapboards which are 'rived feather-edged.' This he first translated 'clapboards split on both sides, then corrected into 'feather-wise (veders gewyse) and then added by way of explanation: 'or like a knife whose back is thicker than the edge.'

How little potatoes were known in Europe at the close of the seventeenth century is shown by the fact that the translator felt it necessary to explain the word by adding: 'a certain sort of Spanish earth fruit or root, an excellent crop.' Another vegetable, gala-
vances, which I fancy few would know the meaning of today, is glossed as a sort of Turkish bean. Our attention is also called to the fact that peas are not indigenous to northern Europe, but were imported from the south and east, by his calling them Indian Pease. This, however, is contained in the original.

The independence of the translator is shown not merely by these additions and explanations, but also by a number of omissions which were made for various reasons. In a list of vegetables for which Indian corn might be considered a substitute, he omits the word Fetches of the original, probably because he did not understand it. He may have been misled by the spelling with an F, instead of the more usual V. Similarly he omits a number of technical words used in describing the building of a house. The original reads: 'several other small pieces: as Wind-beams, Braces, Studs, etc., which are made out of the waste Timber.' The translator writes: 'in addition various other small pieces which come from the ends of the beams.' On page 7 the translator omits the two following sentences of the original where an estimate is made of the cost of settling ten families on the land. 'I think I have been modest in my computation. These farms are afterward fit for Leases at full Rent, or how else the owner shall please to dispose of them.' The reason for this omission is not clear, perhaps it was merely carelessness. A similar omission is found in the next paragraph but one. The original in speaking of giving each family thirty pounds English, adds: 'half in hand and half there, which in the whole comes to £300.' This the translator perhaps did not understand and therefore omitted it. In one case the substituting of a pronoun for the nouns of the original renders the translation less explicit. Thus on page two, where the English reads: 'This Scheam of Grazing and keeping of Stock may inform inquirers,' etc. The Dutch reads
simply: 'This may well inform Inquirers,' etc. In another place he omits the computation of what the interest on money invested in land might amount to. The original writes: 'an acre of land producing a like quantity with English Ground will cost £8.15s.10d. which at eight years purchase ought to yield three shillings two pence three farthings per Annum.' The translator omits everything after the amount of money, not agreeing, perhaps, with the calculation. There are also a number of minor omissions. Thus on page four in an item: 'For three Milch Cows and Calves by their sides, the words 'by their sides' are omitted as unnecessary. Similarly on page six after the word 'Orchard' the translator omits the words: 'I paying for the trees.'

The principal changes, however, which the translator makes in the original consist of corrections of the calculations of interest and of a few other things with which the translator does not agree. There are in all eleven such changes. Thus on page three where the original gives the cost of clearing land with four men at 15 pence per Day for each hand and states that this amounts to 25 shillings per acre, the translator corrects 25 into 22 shillings and 5 pence. The calculation of the original is evidently based on 125 days in four months. The translator, however, deducts thirteen Sundays and bases his calculation on 112 days. As a matter of fact there are 17 Sundays in four months, so that the proper figure should be 20 shillings per acre. In the same paragraph the translator corrects the ten pence per acre, given as the cost of uncleared land, into eight pence and the sum total correspondingly from £1.5sh. 10d. into 23sh. one penny, adding the Dutch equivalent 12 guilders, 14 stivers Dutch. Not caring, perhaps, to make a new calculation the translator then omits entirely the statement of the original as to the amount per annum this would yield. Farther down where the original states that the profit is almost four to one,
the translator disagrees and writes: 'nearly ten to one.' Evidently the translator felt at times that wages and prices no longer corresponded to what they were when the English original was written, for he makes a number of such corrections. Thus on page nine he gives the wages of a day laborer as half a shilling a day instead of 18 pence, as in the original. Where the original adds that this will pay the rent within half a crown, the translator writes: 'will produce the income of £5 sterling a year within half a shilling. In section vi where the original gives the cost of stocking a farm at £360, the translator changes this to £300. Farther along where the original speaks of 360 of the original 1000 pounds as having been spent and 540 left, a miscalculation of 100 pounds, the translator changes the figures to 400 and 600 respectively. On page nine the original makes a curious slip, stating that forty-nine pounds, eleven shillings want but twelve shillings of fifty pounds. This the translator rightly corrects into nine shillings less than fifty pounds. In similar fashion the translator corrects the mistake in the calculation in the original where the total cost of an investment of 600 pounds plus the interest for seven years at six per cent is given as 832 pounds, to 852, since the interest on 600 for seven years at six per cent is 252 and not 232. Again he changes the number of acres that would be fenced in after seven years from twenty to thirty.

Another interesting case where the translation differs from the original in regard to the character of certain things required in the new country is found on the last page of the pamphlet. Here the original stipulates that a treble quantity of six and eight penny nails should be brought by the emigrants, because they were used in shingling the houses. The translator evi-
dently disagrees with this, as he changes the size to ten and fifteen penny nails.

Further instances might be adduced but they would only weary the reader. These will suffice to show the character of the translation. It is evident, as I have already pointed out, that the translator has an excellent knowledge of English and that he is well informed as to conditions in Penn's new colony. Furthermore he shows independence of thought and has an eye to accuracy of detail, or he would not have made the numerous corrections and changes that have been listed. As far as I can judge, the translation is couched in excellent Dutch, tho certain peculiarities seem to point to the provinces of either North Holland or Friesland. As the translation differs in many particulars from the English original, it has been decided to print a literal English rendering of it in addition to the translation of Webb's preface, the original English of which has never come to light.