NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

New Light on Pennsbury

Since the search for data began from which to recreate Pennsbury, Penn’s manor house in Bucks County, many interesting documents have been assembled particularly from the Penn Manuscripts in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.\(^1\) Recently another pertinent document was discovered among the papers of the late William Logan Fisher and it is here printed.

This undated letter in William Penn’s autograph was sent to one of the gardeners at Pennsbury. Richard Smyth, or Smith, was a New Englander who had migrated to Pennsylvania and Penn in his letters to his chief steward, James Harrison, refers to him several times. His comments lead the reader to believe that Smyth was an independent spirit, possibly hard to work with. These instructions give some interesting details regarding the plans for the river approach, walks, fencing and orchards at Pennsbury. As Smyth died in the third month of 1685, it is possible that the letter may have arrived after his death. Its date is probably late 1684 or early 1685. Whether these instructions were followed we do not know.

University of Pennsylvania

ROY F. NICHOLS

Directions to Ralph Smyth

1. Gett the Court yards paled & gates like Philadelphia in \(y^e\) places I have appointed before, behind & on each side the house, more then \(w^ch\) need not be, save one ag\(^st\) the gate \(y^t\) goes cross \(y^e\) waterside court into the garden.\(^2\)

2. lett the land in \(y^e\) water court be levied, & steps be made of brick covered \(w^th\) stone, or stone such as by waterside, covered \(w^th\) quary stone.

\(^1\) The most important letters regarding Pennsbury were printed in the General Magazine and Historical Quarterly, XLI (1939), 397-410. The originals are in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

\(^2\) The following words were crossed out in the original: “& so in \(y^e\) front court before the house to goe into \(y^e\) garden or orchard & \(w^th\) a last.”
3. sett out the garden by the house, plant, sweet herbs, sparro
grass, carrots, parsnaps hartechokes, salatin, & all flowers &
kitchen herbs there.
4. lett a peach be planted between every appletree.
5. lett all the peeches about the grounds in Indian feilds be saved,
make a barreell of wine or two, & dry ye rest, save ye a five [few?] be preserved when almost ripe.
6. gett more quick setts to sett about the pales at least in the
orchard.
7. Gett ye walks to ye hous in the Courts gravelled, 20 broad.
8. lett handsome steps be made at ye water side, ye present gate
is not right agst the house.
9. gett w't good seeds thou canst gett here lay out for.
10. Remember to make both wine & vinegar—

WP

The preceding directions, in the original writing of William Penn,
were given by him about the year 1684 to Ralph Smith, who was
his gardener at Pennsbury mano [r.]
The paper has descended to me from among those left by James
Harrison, one of my ancestors, who had the chief management of
William Penn's affairs of a domestic nature, during his absence in
England.

Philadelphia July 4. 1842.  

James P. Parke.³

³This note was written by Mr. Parke on the back of the original document.