

## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

### *William Penn's Prayer for Philadelphia*

**T**WO HUNDRED and eighty-five years ago, on March 4, 1681, King Charles II signed a charter which bestowed on William Penn a vast province in the New World, which, said the charter, was henceforth to be called Pennsylvania. A year and a half later, Penn landed at New Castle and then at Upland (Chester) to spend twenty-two months in the colony that bore his name.

He accomplished a great deal in that short period. He called together the Assembly and Council and saw them adopt the Frame of Government and the Great Law which he had drawn up in England. He saw settlers come in by the hundreds—English, Scots, Irish, Welsh, Dutch, German. He watched the town of Philadelphia, laid out before he came by Thomas Holme, grow from a tiny village to a thriving port town of more than 350 houses and perhaps 2,500 inhabitants. He sat at many council fires with the Indians and bought thousands of acres of land from them. He also learned their language, unlike some of our current and recent diplomats in foreign countries. He made trips to New York and Maryland to establish relations with his colonial neighbors. He saw Quaker meetings set up in many parts of Pennsylvania and attended the sessions of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, where it was proposed—perhaps by Penn himself—that a General Meeting be established for all American Friends from New England to the Carolinas.

By midsummer of 1684, he could well believe that his “holy experiment” was hopefully under way as an example to the world of how a government could be run on Christian principles by a people living together in love. Already, however, a serious threat to it had appeared—not from within but from outside the colony. Charles Calvert, third Lord Baltimore, had made it clear that he was going to press his claim to the three Lower Counties that are now Delaware and furthermore that he would argue that the fortieth parallel of latitude, his northern boundary, lay north of Philadelphia. In fact, word had come that he had sailed for England to lay his claims

before the Lords of Trade and Plantations in London. So Penn decided that he too must return to counter those claims and save his colony.

Before leaving, he appointed three Commissioners to be guardians of his government—Thomas Lloyd, the President of the Council, James Harrison, the steward of Pennsbury, and John Simcock. Then, on August 12, 1684, from the ketch *Endeavor* which would take him back to England, he wrote a letter to these three men and to Christopher Taylor, a schoolmaster, and James Claypoole, a prominent merchant, asking them to communicate it to all the Friends in Pennsylvania.

The letter is a plea to the people of Pennsylvania to keep on in the spirit of Christian love in which he had conceived the colony, and to remember that the eyes of the world were upon them. Towards the end came his beautiful prayer for Philadelphia. This letter was presented to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania by the Philadelphia Electric Company at a ceremony held in the Society's Assembly Hall on March 4, 1966.

*Friends Historical Library  
of Swarthmore College*

FREDERICK B. TOLLES

Dear freinds & People

My love & my life is to you & with you, & no waters can quench it nor distance were it out or bring it to an end. I have been wth you, cared over you & served you with unfeined love & you are beloved of me & neer to me beyond utterance. I bless you in the name & powr of the Lord & my god bless you wth his righteousness, peace & Plenty all the Land over. O that you would eye him in all through all & above all the works of yr hands, & lett it be yr first care, how you may glorefy god in yr undertakeings, for to a blessed end are you brought heither & if you see & keep but in ye sense of yt providence, yr comeing, staying & improveing will be sanctefyed. but if any forgett god & call not upon his name in truth, he will pour out his plagues upon you & they shall know who it is yt Judged ye Children of men. & now you are come to a quiet land, provoke not ye Lord to

trouble it. & now liberty & authority are with you, & in yr hands lett the govermt. be on his shoulders, in all yr spirits, yt you may Rule for him, to whom the Princes of this world will one day esteem it their honour to Govern under & serve in their places. I can not but say, when thes things come weightely into my mind as ye apostle did of old, what manner of Persons ought we to be in all godly conversation. Truly the name & glory of the Lord are deeply concerned in you as to ye discharge of yourselves in yr present stations, many eyes being upon you remember, yt as we have been belyed about disowning ye true religion, so of all govermt. & yt to behold us exemplary & christian in ye use of yt will not only stop our enemys, but minister conviction to many on yt account prejudiced. O yt you may see & know yt service & do it for ye lord in this yr day.

And thou Philadelphia, the virgin settlemt. of this province, named before thou wert born, wt. love wt. care, wt. service, & wt. travil have there been to bring thee forth & preserve thee from such as would abuse & defile thee. O that thou may be kept from the evil yt would overwhelm thee, yt faithfull to the god of thy mercys in ye life of righteousness thou mayst be preserved to the end. my soul prays to god for thee yt thou mayst stand in thy day of triall, that thy children may be blest of the lord & thy people be saved by his powr, my love to thee has been great & the remembrance of thee affects myn heart & mine eye. the God of eternall strength keep & preserve thee to his glory & thy peace

so dear freinds, my love again salutes you all, wishing yt grace, mercy & peace with all temporall blessings may abound richly among you. So says so prays

your Freind &  
 Lover in the truth  
 Wm Penn

from on board the Ketch  
 Endeavour ye 12 6 mo 1684

For Tho: Lloyd J. claypole, J. Simcock ch: Tayler & Ja: Harrison,  
 to be communicated in meetings in Pennsylvania etc among Freinds.  
 [Endorsed "Govrs. Lr to Frds."]