William Penn died two hundred and fifty years ago on July 30, 1718. His name is most notably perpetuated in the commonwealth he founded; his statue, looking toward the great river which links all three states with whose early fortunes he was so closely associated, towers over City Hall and the metropolis he planned as a green town. In Philadelphia, at 1300 Locust Street, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania cherishes, and, as circumstances permit, enlarges the greatest collection of Penn memorabilia.\(^1\) Within easy access to the Society are the excellent Quaker libraries of Haverford and Swarthmore, as well as the treasures of the Chester County Historical Society at West Chester. In London a very important repository is maintained at the Friends' Library in Euston Road. The Society of Friends everywhere remains a living monument to Penn's leadership in the early days of their convincement. Tolerance and brotherly love among nations and between persons, which his teaching sought to spread, have remained continuing ideals in the American experiment, and in the hearts of all men of good will.

\(^1\) Nicholas B. Wainwright, "The Penn Collection," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography (PMHB)*, LXXXVII (1963), 393-419, presents the best account of the Society's accumulation to that date.
Yet Penn is neglected; anniversaries pass with none of the fanfare of earlier days. More significantly still, his life and writings are un-studied, and, except for a few popular legends, elementary facts, and anecdotes known to every school child, largely ignored save by a handful of scholars and devout Quakers. In a century which has seen two periods of vigorous activity in the assembling and publication of the works of famous statesmen, no collected and annotated edition of Penn’s papers has been forthcoming. The last “Collected Works” were gathered in two folio volumes in 1726 by the combined efforts of two Quakers, the widow Sowle, carrying on the printing business of her late husband Andrew, and Joseph Besse (c. 1683-1751), and were re-issued in 1771, 1782, and 1825. Some of the better-known pieces by Penn have been reprinted singly or in small collections; various letters and series of letters have been reproduced in periodicals by no means available everywhere. Neither during the flurry of editorial enthusiasm at the beginning of this century, nor in our own time when the art and standards of the editor have been so greatly developed and improved, has the work of the greatest of colonial founding fathers successfully attracted the attention of modern scholarly enterprise.

A group of historians in the Philadelphia area have determined to take steps to fill this grave lacuna in the national archives. Using the Historical Society of Pennsylvania as headquarters, they plan to compile as full a check list as possible of Penn manuscripts, noting the location of all originals and obtaining reproductions and transcripts of them. They are beginning to compile a bibliography of tracts and treatises published by Penn and hope to establish a canon of authentic works. These two tasks when accomplished will enable a reasonably accurate estimate of the Penn project to be made. As the

2 James Smart, “The 250th Anniversary of William Penn’s Death,” “In Our Town,” Evening Bulletin, July 29, 1968, contrasts earlier celebrations—of which perhaps Remember William Penn 1644-1944 (Harrisburg, 1944) is a good example—with the lack of comment or interest now.

position becomes clearer, it will be necessary to take steps to raise funds, and it is hoped that through the interest of individuals, and of state and local institutions, adequate financial support for the publication of perhaps a dozen or more volumes will be forthcoming. This ambitious, but long overdue, undertaking should enlist the help and sympathy of all concerned with early American and Stuart political, social, and intellectual history, and lead to a fuller understanding of the role played in a seminal period by William Penn, "mystic, courtier and statesman."

Before enlarging a little on the nature of the project, and at the risk of retelling what to a few is a familiar narrative, the vicissitudes of the Penn Papers should be recorded. Early in this century, during the burst of editorial activity already noticed, Albert Cook Myers (1878–1960), a birthright Quaker, a graduate of Swarthmore College, and a student thereafter at Wisconsin, Harvard, and the University of Pennsylvania, made up his mind to collect and publish Penn's writings. Already the author of four books connected with Pennsylvania and Quaker history, Myers was enthusiastic and fluent. He obtained considerable financial and moral support from a distinguished group of English and American Friends, scholars, and societies. Established for years in an office at the Historical Society in Philadelphia, he made three visits abroad, during which times he occupied a room at the Friends Historical Library in London from where he traveled about exploring archives. From 1910 until 1921 he worked hard at assembling and, where the original was unobtainable or too expensive, copying Penn manuscripts and tracts. From 1923 to 1927 and from 1932 to 1936 he served on the Pennsylvania State Historical Commission and directed the Penn commemoration in 1932. Shortly after this he moved his notes and materials, amounting by then to thousands of items, and now occupying one hundred and ninety-six large volumes as well as other boxes, from the Historical Society to his home at Moylan. When he was obliged by increasing disability to retreat to a nursing home, the Penn collection and his notes were deposited at the Chester County Historical Society.4

By that time Dr. Charles Wendell David, then connected with the nearby Longwood Library, had become interested in the possibility of using the Myers Collection as the starting point for a revived Penn Papers project. Scholars had not had access to Myers' material and information about it was based largely on surmise. An ad hoc committee of neighbors was called together and was granted permission by the trustees of the Myers Collection to examine and appraise its contents. Mr. Irénée du Pont generously provided financial support. Under the direction of Professor Frederick B. Tolles of Swarthmore, Joseph E. Illick and Mary Maples (now Mrs. Richard S. Dunn) thoroughly scrutinized the materials and compiled "A Report of a Survey" of the Myers Collection. This was reproduced and circulated among the Trustees and the committee.

After this promising beginning, however, problems multiplied. Mr. du Pont died. Though several private sponsors continued their support, other expected sources of funds proved unproductive. An attempt to enlist the interest of a great newspaper failed. Illness further complicated and frustrated the plans so carefully made in 1960-1961. Unless new approaches could be devised it looked as if the Penn Papers project would once more be abandoned. At the suggestion of Professor Roy F. Nichols, the old ad hoc committee—with a few changes brought about by the passage of time—was reconvened.

6 Frederick B. Tolles is the author of half a dozen works on early American and Quaker history, of which an early one was *Meeting House and Counting House* (Chapel Hill, 1948), and a recent note "William Penn's Prayer for Philadelphia," *PMHB*, XC (1966), 517–519.


8 "A Report" contains an account of Myers' work, a discussion of the problems presented by publication, some recommendations (p. 25–26) representing the consensus of the committee in 1959, and four valuable appendixes containing lists of the contents of the Myers boxes, the repositories which he searched, originals in his collection, and the names of Penn's correspondents as derived from the Myers Collection.

9 Roy F. Nichols has been professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, Dean of the graduate school and Vice-Provost, President of the American Historical Association (1961), and has published extensively in the field of American history—one example, *Religion and American Democracy* (Baton Rouge, 1959).

10 Ad hoc committee: George Norman Highley, James C. Sorber, Frank L. Battan (legal representatives of Albert Cook Myers); Bart Anderson and Arthur B. James of the Chester County Historical Society; Nicholas B. Wainwright of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania;
and from it a smaller steering committee selected to explore possibilities under changed conditions. Mrs. D. Robert Yarnall, continuing the interest in William Penn she and her late husband shared, provided financial assistance. With this support the committee decided to consult scholars outside the Philadelphia area who had recently published in the appropriate area of history, or whose special skills might prove of value in resolving the committee’s problems. This decision resulted in a conference held on Friday, April 26, 1968, at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, one that continued informally after dinner at the University of Pennsylvania. Most of those who participated again assembled on Saturday morning, April 27, at the Chester County Historical Society and were shown the Myers Collection by the Director, Bart Anderson, and Joseph E. Illick. To these two meetings came not only those whose comments are noticed below, but all members of the ad hoc committee, Dr. S. K. Stevens of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Dr. Leon de Valinger, Jr., Archivist of Delaware, Dr. James H. Hutson of the Franklin Papers project at Yale, Dr. Hennig Cohen, Editor of *The American Quarterly*, and others connected with various historical enterprises in Philadelphia and its environs.

On Friday afternoon, with Caroline Robbins of Bryn Mawr College in the chair, the conference opened with five brief talks on problems connected with the Penn Papers, followed by general discussion. Nicholas B. Wainwright, Director of the Historical Society and Editor of its *Magazine*, began by urging those present to examine a special exhibit of Penn materials recently acquired by the Society from a hitherto untouched source in England. He had just

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Charles W. David, in 1959 Librarian of the Longwood Library; Roy F. Nichols, Richard S. Dunn of the University of Pennsylvania; Thomas E. Drake of Haverford (in 1967 replaced because of retirement by Edwin B. Bronner of Haverford); Frederick B. Tolles of Swarthmore; Henry J. Cadbury, Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard (emeritus); Richard P. Miller of the Race Street Meeting; Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., Librarian of the American Philosophical Society, added in 1968 (absent with the Franklin Papers at Yale in 1959); Caroline Robbins of Bryn Mawr College.

11 Steering committee: Anderson, Bell, M. and R. Dunn, Robbins (Chairman), Tolles, Wainwright.

Caroline Robbins

returned from negotiating this purchase and his remarks served to illustrate the service of the Society to Penn studies and the continued need for search for further Penn manuscripts and mementos. From the floor Professor Douglas R. Lacey of St. John's, Annapolis, a scholar long interested in English nonconformity, later pointed out that even in well-known archives like those of the Portland family, calendared long ago by the Historical Manuscripts Commission, but only recently available in toto to scholars, much information about the Penn circle and possibly new documents could be discovered. A good many archives are now open that Myers had no knowledge of when he was in England fifty years ago.

Penn wrote something over three hundred tracts, not all of equal interest to be sure, but of which scarcely five per cent are presently current. Professor Mary Dunn spoke of the need for clarification of the Penn bibliography. Tracts attributed to him by generations of cataloguers, may, like a famous account of the Penn-Mead trial (London, 1670), have been disowned by Penn himself, or like the well-known Three Letters (London, 1688) have been advertised in the period by a publisher, Andrew Sowle, who knew both men, as the work of William Popple. Until detailed research is done, there remain many questions about the exact number of Penn's contributions to polemical literature. A good many scholars at the conference, including Professor Richard Schlatter, Provost of Rutgers University, and Professor Lacey, expressed interest in the political works and their scholarly republication.

Mrs. Dunn was followed by Professor Frederick B. Tolles, who spoke on the importance of the theological treatises. He himself had edited a small number of these, but not in a form which allowed of the scholarly apparatus he felt they deserved. Until more attention is given to these writings, neither Penn's own theological beliefs nor their relation to those of his contemporaries can be properly appreciated. Penn was, for example, often described as a Unitarian, but such a description rests on uncertain grounds. Careful editorial investigation and annotation of at least the more important works could yield, he declared, very fruitful results. Dr. Hugh Barbour of Earlham

13 The Portland MSS are now divided between the British Museum and the University of Nottingham—the calendar records but a fraction of the whole.
14 Richard Schlatter, Social Ideas of Religious Leaders (London, 1940), and other works.
College\textsuperscript{15} supported Dr. Tolles' argument and stated his own willingness to help and his interest in pursuing this part of the Penn project.

Of the approximately fifteen hundred Penn letters now known, less than forty-five per cent have been printed, and these in widely scattered volumes. Some letters to Penn are known and a few published, but Myers was evidently not interested in this aspect of Penn materials. Dr. Gary B. Nash\textsuperscript{16} discussed the importance and the difficulties in collecting and editing Penn correspondence. He urged judicious use of the Myers Collection, a more systematic search of British, foreign, and American libraries, and perhaps a division of labor among a group of editors. It seemed obvious at the meeting that several present were interested in this part of the project; Professor George R. Abernathy, Jr.,\textsuperscript{17} Ian K. Steele,\textsuperscript{18} and Alison G. Olsen\textsuperscript{19} have all worked in different periods of Penn's lifetime and found his correspondence useful. The variety of recipients of letters—"A Report" noticed more than one hundred and fifty representing a fair cross section of contemporary literate society—and the unevenness in the distribution of letters through Penn's seventy-four-year life were stressed by Dr. Nash. There was general agreement that the collecting, listing, and eventual publishing of four or five volumes of Penn letters was highly desirable. With letters to and from Penn there ought also to be included examples at least of the many other sorts of documents, commissions and grants, for instance, which afford such valuable information for the student of Pennsylvania history. Both Mrs. Hannah Benner Roach\textsuperscript{20} and Dr. Anthony N. B.

Garvan\textsuperscript{21} spoke to this point, suggesting that whatever editorial decision might be taken in the future as to other work, the printing of various types of documents and the listing of those similar to them would probably be the best as well as the most economical way of making such materials known.

The last of the informal talks was made by Professor Richard S. Dunn,\textsuperscript{22} who outlined some of the editorial decisions which must be made: the usefulness of the Myers Collection in the search, the extent and method of further search, the criteria to be established in the selection of material, the level of editorial activity, and, of course, the nature of the editorial setup when funds permitted something more than the present tentative discussions and preliminary surveys.

Many suggestions and topics were raised from the floor, but in spite of its ultimate importance, the question of financial support was not considered in any detail. A cordial note was read by Dr. Cohen from the Provost of the University of Pennsylvania, expressing hopes for eventual publication by the University Press. Other neighboring institutions agreed to assist in various ways such as the release of time if staff were employed on the project. Several of their representatives, among them Edwin Wolf 2nd of the Library Company of Philadelphia,\textsuperscript{23} stressed the importance, should experts now outside the area be brought in, of arranging favorable academic terms for them. The chairman thought fund raising on a large scale was something to be launched after firm decisions had been made about the scope and editorial arrangements of the project.

There was exploration of the possibility of other forms of compilation and circulation than actual publication, which was never, it was noted more than once, financially profitable even with the most popular of founding fathers' works. Several were interested in some such alternate solution. On the whole, the sense of the meeting taken by vote was overwhelmingly for a letterpress edition on the lines already suggested in "A Report," this to follow the putting together of check list and transcripts, of bibliographical work, and the raising


\textsuperscript{22} Richard S. Dunn, \textit{Puritans and Yankees, the Winthrop Dynasty, 1630-1717} (Princeton, 1962.)

of money. The Penn project thus received encouragement, advice, and a good many offers of help when the edition got under way. If planned along the lines, for example, of the Adams or Burk papers—that is a co-operative venture under the direction of a board or editor in chief—there would obviously be no insuperable difficulty in finding qualified editors for volumes or parts of volumes.24

Subsequently, in meeting to discuss the conference, the steering committee in mid-May took steps to get preliminary work under way. Mr. Wainwright promised space at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for the compilation and storage of material for the check list and the cards for the bibliography. He and Dr. Whitfield J. Bell, Jr.,25 agreed to look for funds for secretarial assistance and to design an appropriate letterhead for communications to other repositories asking for information and help with the check list. Miss Robbins said she would enlist some part-time searchers abroad to prepare the way for further investigations of papers there, and would seek the advice of both Edwin B. Bronner,26 of Haverford but then in London, and of Edward H. Milligan of the Friends Library in Euston Road. A list of individuals who had concerned themselves in one way or another with Penn's bibliography was obtained and these have now contributed advice, information, and help which should greatly assist future investigation into the authorship of doubtful Penn writings. Myers did little or nothing about certain continental areas, and did not continue his searches even in American libraries after 1935. The committee, therefore, hopes to add to the known list of manuscripts, as well as to establish a reliable canon of tracts and treatises, another task Myers did not attempt. In 1969 there should be progress on the project. A searcher should be found, the project should become known, and further decisions must be made as information accumulates. Many of those present at the conference in April have since sent helpful advice to Caroline Robbins at Bryn Mawr College and to Nicholas B. Wainwright at the Historical Society. To either of them further suggestions or queries should be addressed.

24 It is impossible to do justice here to all who took part. A careful list has been made of willing editors and assistants with various types of Penn papers.
25 Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., author of *Doctor Morgan* (Philadelphia, 1965) and co-editor of *Mr. Franklin. A selection from his personal letters* (New Haven, 1956).
Penn's stature in history is obvious. The neglect noticed is due not so much to failure to recognize his importance as to the real difficulty of using the source material. Biographies valuable in the discussion of his personality do not provide an adequate or appropriate vehicle for the provision of data on which students may investigate further the origins of Pennsylvania or New Jersey or Delaware, the famous association of Penn and James II, the colonial policies of English officials, the on-the-spot problems facing proprietors and colonists, or the nature of developing society. Moreover, properly edited tracts and treatises may well stimulate theologian and political scientist to fuller investigation and understanding of the climate of opinion in which Penn worked. The end of the seventeenth century suffered what has been called a crisis of conscience scarcely less important on both sides of the Atlantic than the more widely studied dilemmas of sixteenth-century Europe. Penn's role in this process of soul searching may be examined to illuminate that kind of religious and political experience which so drastically affected the age of Newton. The Quaker repudiation of oaths, of Scripture as the rule of faith, the so-called Socinian examination of subscription and creed, the renewed protestant emphasis on works as well as faith initiated by Archbishops Ussher and Tillotson, the abortive ecumenical efforts of Jean Turrettini and Archbishop William Wake were part of very important intellectual development in which to some extent all Christians were involved. To make available the writings of a man who combined in himself so much that was "learned, good and great" is surely an important undertaking.

"I had rather," a talented and near contemporary of Penn's wrote, "read the authentic records of any country, that is a collection of their laws and letters . . . than the most eloquent and judicious narrative that can be made." Without the Penn Papers, students perforce must continue to rely on secondary accounts of a very great man when his own papers might prove far more rewarding.
