

William Penn and City Planning

WILLIAM PENN was not only a pioneer in the field of city planning, a subject which is today commanding the attention of statesmen and administrators in every country, but he was a pioneer with vision, courage and wisdom. More than a century before Washington, Jefferson and L'Enfant planned the nation's capital on the banks of the Potomac, Penn issued "Instructions" for laying out his city and the "Liberties" on the Delaware. In these he embodied most of the principles of good city and regional planning that are regarded as fundamental even in this day of scientific study. That the Founder consciously reasoned that city planning in general was necessary is not likely. Apparently he just planned. To his sensible mind the age-old habit of having cities grow in accordance with a philosophy of *laissez faire*, without plan or guidance, was illogical, if not incomprehensible.

What is more, he saw to it that his plans were carried out. He didn't stop with the blueprints. Through his Commissioners, and, more particularly, through his able Surveyor-General, Thomas Holme, his plans, with only slight modifications, were executed. How far these measure up to the concepts of present-day city planning can be appreciated only on the basis of an analysis of his "Instructions."

After obtaining his charter as Proprietor in March, 1681, Penn proceeded promptly to promote the colonization and government of his province. Within a month after the grant he published and circulated a striking pamphlet (see Frontispiece) entitled *Some Account of the Province of Pennsylvania in America*,¹ with a brief statement of the privileges and powers necessary to the well governing thereof, and a vigorous argument in favor of colonies as the "Seed of a Nation." At the same time he published what is now accepted as the first separate map² of Pennsylvania with a printed description "at

¹ London, 1681.

² For a scholarly discussion of this earliest map of Pennsylvania see *A Note on the William Penn Map of Pennsylvania* (London 1681) accompanying the facsimile issued by the John

the End of it." The pamphlet is a beautiful example of the art of printing, and its content and style suggest a genius for empire building unexcelled in its essentials even by that of Cecil Rhodes. It was at

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S O M E
A C C O U N T
O F T H E
P R O V I N C E o f
Pennsilvania
I N
A M E R I C A;
Lately Granted under the Great Seal of
E N G L A N D
T O
William Penn, &c.

Since (by the good providence of God) a Country in *America* is fallen to my lot, I thought it not less my Duty than my honest Interest to give some publick notice of it to the World, that those of our own, or other Nations, that are inclin'd to Transport themselves or

(Reduced from 11¼ by 7 inches)

Carter Brown Library, Providence, 1943. The existence of the map and its significance was first discovered by Worthington C. Ford and described by him with the text of its "Descriptions and Proposals" in the *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, LVII, 172-183. About the same time, December, 1923, Albert Cook Myers published the map owned by Colonel Henry D. Paxson and now in the possession of the Library of Haverford College. Other copies are owned by The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Rosenbach Company and the Library of Congress. Of these five copies, two have the description at the bottom but the other three do not.

once translated into German and Dutch, and published in Amsterdam in equally attractive form. As the earliest effective advertisement on the Continent of the opportunities of colonization in America, it merits a special place in the sources for the history of emigration to America, that great movement of population unequaled in the annals of civilization.

To insure the prompt establishment of his authority in his newly acquired province, and the setting up of an orderly government, Penn appointed his cousin, William Markham, deputy governor, and started him on his journey to America. During the early summer the terms on which prospective colonists, or "adventurers," could follow and take up land were worked out and signed by the Founder and the first adventurers. This agreement under which the "Great Experiment" was to proceed was entitled "Certain Conditions and Concessions agreed upon by William Penn Proprietary and Governor of ye province of Pennsylvania and those who are ye Adventurers and Purchasers in ye same province the 11th of July 1681."

The first article of the "Conditions and Concessions" provides for the laying out of a town or city, to wit:

That so soon as it pleaseth God that the above persons arrive there, a certain quantity of land or ground platt shall be laid out for a large town or city in ye most convenient place upon the River for health and Navigation, and every purchaser and Adventurer shall bylott have so much Land therein, as will answer to the proportion he hath bought or taken up upon Rent; but it is to be noted, that the Surveyors shall consider what Roades or highways will be necessary to ye cities, townes, or through ye lands. . . .³

These suggestions for the location of the city are also emphasized in Penn's formal "Instructions" to his Commissioners, William Crispin, John Bezar and Nathaniel Allen, appointed on October 10, 1681. The full title is "Instructions, &c. Instructions given by Mee William Penn Proprietor and Governo^r of Pennsylvania, To My

³ In searching for the original to check against the printed version I came upon a contemporary dog-eared manuscript copy with a mutilated signature of the Founder in an Auto-graph Letter Book in the possession of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. In the absence of the seal, attestation by witnesses and the signatures of the purchasers who subscribed to the agreement, the relation of the copy to the official document remains obscure. In collating the text of the manuscript with that given in Samuel Hazard's *Annals of Pennsylvania, from the Discovery of the Delaware River, 1609-1682* (Philadelphia, 1850), 516, numerous minor differences in capitalization and spelling appear. The quotation above follows the manuscript, while later selections here printed are quoted from Hazard.

Trusty and loving Friends, William Crispin, John Bezar and Nathaniel Allen, My Commissioners for the settling of the present Collony this year transported into y^e said Province.”⁴ The second paragraph reads,

. . . let the Rivers and Creeks be sounded on my side of Delaware River, especially Upland in order to settle a great Towne, and be sure to make your choice where it is most navigable, high, dry, and healthy. That is, where most ships may best ride, of deepest draught of water, if possible to Load, or unload at y^e Bank or Key side, without boating and Litering of it. It would do well if the River comeing into y^t Creek be navigable, at least for Boats up into y^e Country, and y^t the Scituation be high, at least dry and sound, and not swampy, w^{ch} is best knowne by diging up two or three Earths, and seeing y^e bottome.

Anticipating by two hundred and fifty years the importance of the health of the community, Penn repeatedly urged that the situation be high and dry, “not swampy.” How very different are the implications of these instructions for the location of his city from those of the arbitrary location of Russia’s new capital built at about the same time by Peter the Great in the depth of the unhealthy swamps of the Neva. To the Tsar the health of the inhabitants and the presence of a tributary territory was less important than a window to look out on Europe. Penn and Peter had met at Deptford, where Peter was working, but the subject of cities was apparently not under discussion, Peter being more concerned with Penn’s religious views and the value of the Quakers to the state if they refused to do military service. One can’t resist wondering whether Penn’s insistence on a healthful site did not contribute much to the relative immunity of his colonists from the fevers and sickness that decimated the early settlers at Jamestown, and even Plymouth, not to mention those of St. Petersburg.

In his “Instructions” concerning the site for his city, Penn also kept in mind several other conditions, which are always of great importance in city planning, namely, adequate room, good soil for farm lands as tributary territory to the city, and finally, communication. In the third article he says: “Such a place being found out, for Navigation, healthy Scituation and a good Soyle, for Provision, lay

⁴ The instructions are published in the *Memoirs of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (1827), II, 215–221 from a transcription presented to the Society by Joshua Francis Fisher in which “the orthography and corrections of the original are preserved.”

out ten Thousand Acres contiguous to it in the best manner you can as the bounds and extent of the Libertyes of the said Towne."

All in all, Penn's conditions for the site of a "great Towne" are as sound as can be found anywhere in the annals of city planning. The proposal for a city of ten thousand acres was later set aside against the Proprietor's wishes. At the urgent solicitation of the colonists, the area was reduced to a little more than twelve hundred acres, the section between the two rivers, extending from South Street north to Vine Street, that is two miles from east to west and one mile from north to south. The lands immediately adjoining were then surveyed as the "Libertyes," though outside the city proper.

To be sure, his idea of establishing a province of landed gentry with spacious town houses, "ten acres for each 500 acres purchased, if the place would allow it," was destined to failure from the start. More persons of moderate means, or without any means of support save their ability and industry, were attracted by the advertisements for colonists than of the well-to-do. As a consequence his Philadelphia soon became a city in which tradesmen, craftsmen, and laborers greatly outnumbered the gentry. To meet their demand for modest homes, not too far removed from the busy life of the city, the large blocks were divided, and what Holme called "backward streets" added to Penn's original plan. The degree to which this initial difference in the population manifested itself in the Revolution, and indeed throughout the entire period of the history of Philadelphia, is well known to historians. On the one hand, it doubtless has had much to do with the high percentage of owner-occupied houses for which the city is famous, and on the other for the beautiful and prosperous suburbs.

On the question of communications, highways and streets, the second article of the "Instructions" reiterates the order, that "Great roads from city to city not to contain less than forty feet in breadth, shall first be laid out and declared for highways, before the dividend of acres to be laid out for the purchaser, and like observation to be had for the streets in the towns and the cities . . ."

The proportion of land in the town was fixed in article four, at two per cent of the acreage taken up by the colonists outside. "Thus every share of five thousand acres, shall have a hundred acres out of the ten thousand . . ." Provision was also made for that rigid uni-

formity in the street system, and the alignment of houses so characteristic of Philadelphia. Article twelve says:

Be sure to Settle the figure of the Towne so as y^t the streets hereafter may be uniforme downe to the Water from the Country bounds, lett y^e place for the Store house be on the middle of the Key, w^{ch} will yet serve for Market and State houses too. This may be ordered when I come, only let the Houses built be in a line, or upon a Line, as much as may be.

The location of the houses in the middle of the lot is found in article fifteen:

Let every House be placed, if the Person pleases in y^e middle of its platt, as to the breadth way of it, that so there may be ground on each side for Gardens or Orchards, or feilds, y^t it may be a greene Country Towne, w^{ch} will never be burnt, and allwayes be wholesome.⁵

Other features of this geometrical arrangement of straight streets, intersecting at right angles, and running east and west from river to river, and north and south between boundaries to be determined upon, provided for two principal streets, High Street (now Market) from the Delaware to the Schuylkill, and Broad Street, the principal street running north and south, intersecting at Centre Square. The plan divided the city into four equal quarters. In the center of each quarter of the city there was to be an open space of eight acres to serve as parks or public walks. At the intersection of High and Broad Streets an open space of ten acres, Centre Square, was set aside as the main square of the city to be surrounded by public buildings.

Where Penn got the idea of the rectangular or checker board street system has been the subject of considerable discussion. Some suggest that he got it from ancient Babylon, others that he found it in Holy Writ. Was not the Holy City "four square"? Be that as it may, the system was, according to Professor Tout, also the prevailing one throughout even Roman and Medieval times. That the Founder gave serious consideration to historic prototypes for his system is not only doubtful but extremely improbable. The simplicity of the plan, devoid of that ostentation conspicuous in the *ronds-points*, so popular in Latin cities, would commend it to him.

Penn's rather rigid provision that the houses be placed in line, while it may not appeal today, nevertheless implies community control of building as it appears in our time in the authority of Art

⁵ Hazard, *Annals of Pennsylvania*, 530-531.

Commissions. Commenting on different city plans which he brought from Europe, Jefferson, in a letter to Washington, commends Penn's rectangular system. He wrote: "They are none of them comparable to the old Babylon, revived in Philadelphia, and exemplified." On the other hand remarking on the Residence Act, he said:

I doubt much whether the obligation to build the houses at a given distance from the street contributes to its beauty. It produces a disgusting monotony; all persons make this complaint against Philadelphia. The contrary practice varies the appearance and is much more convenient to the inhabitants.⁶

Of course, Penn didn't have in mind the regimentation of houses in row upon row which later real estate interests have found so profitable. He planned large blocks or squares with ample lots, with the houses well back from the street, "in the middle of the plat, as to the Broadway of it, that so there may be ground on each side for gardens or orchards, or fields."

The modern problem of housing, or of the skyscraper, didn't present itself. Indeed it would have been incomprehensible to him, for he looked on cities to be laid out and planned for man and not for the interest of industry or business. On several occasions he enjoined his agents to preserve the trees, "one acre of forest for every five acres cleared." Deforestation had no place in Penn's city and province. The city was to be "a greene Country Towne w^{ch} will never be burnt, and allwayes be wholesome." London had been burned in the "Great Fire" sixteen years before. Today the lessons of the Blitz and of the destruction of cities by a defeated enemy now in desperate retreat to its own devastated cities are many.

On April 18, 1682, Penn commissioned "Captain Thomas Holme of the City of Waterford in the Kingdom of Ireland" as his Surveyor-General of the Province. Holme sailed from the Downs for Pennsylvania on the *Amity* on April 23, and he arrived in Philadelphia late in June with his two sons and two daughters. In his letter to the Indians, Penn wrote: "The man which delivers this unto you is my special friend, sober, wise, and loving, you may believe him." How wisely Penn chose his Surveyor is amply proven by Holme's very effective work, not only as Surveyor-General of the Province but

⁶ W. C. Ford, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, V, 252-253, and VIII, 165-166.

also in other phases of its government.⁷ His first job proved to be rather difficult. To find ten thousand acres, as a site to meet all the requirements laid down in the "Instructions," was a large assignment, even in the New World with its wide spaces. However, after investigating several possibilities, the Commissioners settled on the west bank of the Delaware with Dock Creek as a focal point. The surveying now proceeded rapidly. Holme employed good assistants, allocating particular areas to them and seeing to it that each did his work expeditiously and accurately.

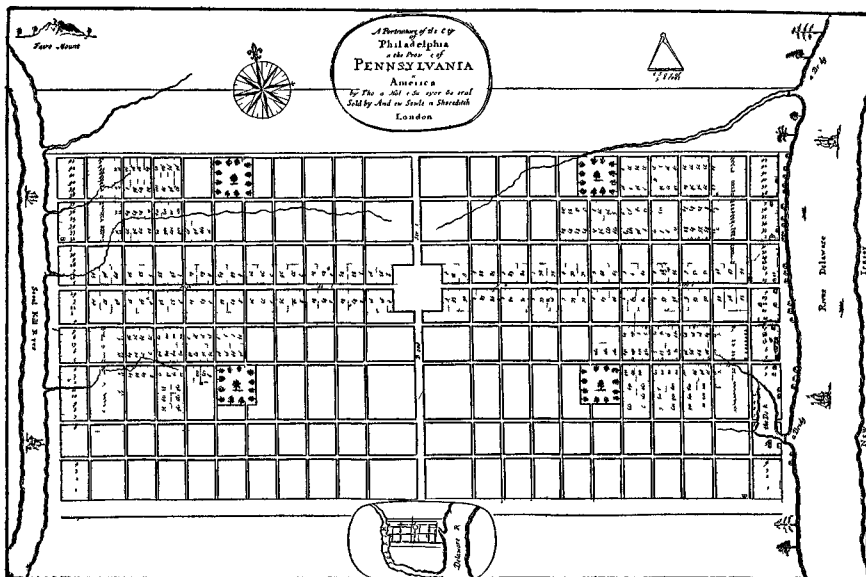
When Penn himself arrived in October, 1682, the ground work had been laid for his inspection and approval. As to the location, the Founder was evidently well satisfied. It met nearly all the conditions he had laid down. The streets too, had been surveyed and laid out in accordance with the prescribed width, in rectangular fashion, intersecting at right angles. Those running north and south were numbered, beginning with Front. Those running east and west were named after forest trees, a rule Penn insisted upon even to the extent of changing Holme Street to Mulberry and Pool to Walnut and the like. The provisions for open spaces and their location were also carried out except for Broad Street and Centre Square, which Holme had not located far enough to the west, midway between the two rivers. Penn ordered it moved to the high ground or ridge, thus putting Broad Street at Fourteenth Street where it intersected High Street and so determined the location of Centre Square.

The progress in carrying out the "Instructions," and the development of the town during the next two years is told in an interesting letter by Penn to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders. It was published in London in 1683, and the section describing the city reads:

Philadelphia, The Expectation of those that are concern'd in this Province is at last laid out to the great Content of those here, that are any wayes Interested therein; The Scituation is a Neck of Land, and lieth between two Navigable Rivers, Delaware and Skulkill, whereby it hath two Fronts upon the Water, each a Mile, and two from River to River. Delaware is a glorious River, but the Skulkill being an hundred Miles Boatable above the Falls, and its Course North-East toward the

⁷ The ship in which the first commissioners sailed had been driven by adverse winds to the West Indies where William Crispin died, and the others returned to England without getting to America. Their "Instructions," however, were to all intents and purposes those under which Captain Holme operated.

Fountain of Susquahannah (that tends to the Heart of the Province, and both sides our own) it is like to be a great part of the Settlement of this Age. I say little of the Town it self, because a Plat-form⁸ will be shewn you by my Agent, in which those who are Purchasers of me, will find their Names and Interests: But this I will say for the good Providence of God, that of all the many Places I have seen in the World, I remember not one better seated; so that it seems to me to have been



Holme's Map of Philadelphia, 1683

appointed for a Town, whether we regard the Rivers, or the conveniency of the Coves, Docks, Springs, the loftiness and soundness of the Land and the Air, held by the People of these parts to be very good. It is advanced within less than a Year to about four Score Houses and Cottages, such as they are, where Merchants and Handicrafts, are following their Vocations as fast as they can, while the Countrymen are close at their Farms.⁹

Attached to the letter is "A Short Advertisement upon the Scituation and Extent of the City of Philadelphia and the Ensuing Plat-

⁸ This "model" or "plat-form," is the first map of Philadelphia and appeared under the title, "A Portraiture of the City of Philadelphia in the Province of Pennsylvania in America. By Thomas Holme Surveyor General. Sold by Andrew Sowle in Shoreditch, London." The copper plate of the engraving is one of the treasured possessions of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁹ An original draft of this remarkable description is in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, with the map and surveyor's description.

form thereof, by the Surveyor General." The following excerpt is a straightforward statement by Surveyor Holme on the progress of plotting and laying out the city at the time:

The City of *Philadelphia*, now extends in *Length*, from River to River, two Miles, and in *Breadth* near a Mile; and the Governour, as a further manifestation of his Kindness to the Purchasers, hath freely given them their respective Lots in the City, without defalcation of any their Quantities of purchased Lands; and as it is now placed and modelled between two Navigable Rivers upon a Neck of Land, and that Ships may ride in good Anchorage, in six or eight Fathom Water in both Rivers, close to the City, and the Land of the City level, dry and wholsom: such a Scituation is scarce to be parrallel'd. . . .

The City is so ordered now, by the Governour's Care and Prudence, that it hath a Front to each River, one half at Delaware, the other at Skulkill; and though all this cannot make way for small Purchasers to be in the Fronts, yet they are placed in the next streets, contiguous to each Front, viz. all Purchasers of One Thousand Acres, and upwards, have the Fronts (and the Highstreet), and to every five Thousand Acres Purchase, in the Front about an Acre, and the smaller Purchasers about half an Acre in the backward Streets; by which means the least hath room enough for House, Garden and small Orchard, to the great Content and Satisfaction of all here concerned.

The City (as the Model shews) consists of a large Front-street to each River, and a High-street (near the middle) from Front (or River) to Front, of one hundred Foot broad, and a Broad-street in the middle of the City, from side to side, of the like breadth. In the Center of the City is a Square of ten Acres; at each Angle are to be Houses for publick Affairs, as a Meeting-House, Assembly or State-House, Market-House, School-House, and several other Buildings for Publick Concerns. There are also in each Quarter of the City a Square of eight Acres, to be for the like Uses, as the Moore-fields in London; and eight Streets (besides the High-street), that run from Front to Front, and twenty Streets (besides the Broad-street), that run cross the City from side to side; all these streets are of fifty foot breadth.¹⁰

Four years later, in 1687, Holme published "a map of the improved part of the province of Pennsylvania in America" under the title "Map of the Province of Pennsylvania containing the three countyes of Chester Philadelphia and Bucks as far as yet surveyed and laid out the divisions or distinctions made by the different couller respects the settlements by way of townships. By Tho. Holme, Survey Gen.; Sold by Rob Greene . . . and John Thornton, . . . in London [1687]."¹¹ An excellent example of early American cartography, it furnishes much historical data on the realization of Penn's plans in the five years following the issuance of his "Instructions," especially

¹⁰ *A Letter from William Penn . . . to the Free Society of Traders . . .* (London, 1683).

¹¹ An original copy of this map in color is in the Library of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

the allotment of lands in the country round about. A significant instance of the departure from his original plan in regard to the outlying areas appears in Penn's concessions to the Germantown settlers. In a letter of 1701 Pastorius wrote as follows to Penn:

Honorable Governour.

May it please thee to remember that these 17 years ago this Township, by thy good advice and convincing Reasons towards the first beginners thereof was commenced to be laid out, not in Plantations, as the most part of this Province is, but in Lots and more compacted Settlements; which method being after followed by our Countrymen who from time to time arrived here, it fell so out that there are now upon the 5700 acres of Land, this our said township consist in, threescore families, besides several single persons, and some dwelling so close, and near one to the other, that they have not half as much timber as will fence there small spots of ground, . . .

Germantown the 17th of xiith mo: 1701.

By Order of the General Court held at the said Place and Time . . .

Francis Daniel Pastorius, Clerk¹²

While the physical aspects of the town's planning were proceeding very largely according to the Founder's ideas, the government of the province, and of the city, had also received Penn's careful consideration. But it was not till 1691, that Philadelphia received its first Charter and plan of government as a city.¹³ Nothing need be said of it here, save that Penn's city planning extended into the political organization and government of his town, and that this phase of his planning was likewise in accord with good ideals of local self-government.

A realistic picture of the city at the turn of the eighteenth century, just before Penn's second visit, is furnished by a young Quaker, Gabriel Thomas, in his *Account of the Country of Pensilvania* (1698). After referring to the early Dutch and Swedish settlers, he says:

But it remained with very little improvement till the year 1681, in which William Penn, Esq., had the country given to him by King Charles the Second, in lieu of money, that was due (and signal service done by) his father, Sir William Penn, and from him bore the name Pennsylvania.

¹² Penn Letters and Ancient Documents relating to Pennsylvania and New Jersey, II, No. 426 (copy) in the American Philosophical Society. Among the other Penn material in this Society's Library pertinent to this study are the famous Charter of 1701, and "William Penn, Proprietor and Governour, . . . Cash Book, Commencing ye 7th of the 10th Moth, Anno Domini, 1699." The latter, apparently in James Logan's hand, opens with a "Catalogue of Goods Left at Pensbury the 3d if ye Tenth month 1701," and the cash entries continue to 11.3.1703.

¹³ The Charter is dated "third month, 20, 1691" which is May 30, 1691, new style.

Since that time the industrious inhabitants have built a noble and beautiful city, and called it Philadelphia, which contains above two thousand houses, all inhabited; and mostly stately, and of brick generally three stories high. . . . There are many lanes and alleys. . . . All these alleys and lanes extend from Front Street to Second Street. . . .

Commenting on the climate, crops, flora, fauna, and the different elements of the population, he pays his respects to two professions which subsequently brought much distinction to the city, as follows:

Of Lawyers and Physicians, I shall say nothing, because this country is very peaceable and Healthy; long may it so continue and never have occasion for the Tongue of the one nor the pen of the other, both equally destructive of Men's Estates and Lives; . . .¹⁴

Among the other of the early maps closely related to the execution of Penn's plans is John Reed's *Map of the City and Liberties of Philadelphia*, published in 1774.¹⁵ Almost a century later than those by Holme, it pictures the Philadelphia of the Declaration of Independence and of the Revolution. More widely used than any other early map, it shows the degree to which the Founder's plans had prevailed, or been modified in the Philadelphia known to Washington, Franklin and Jefferson, and as it appeared during the decade when it was not only the capital of the nation, but second only to London among English-speaking communities.

The nineteenth century brought the Industrial Revolution, the opening of the coal mines, the building of the canals and railroads, industries, and factories, and the expansion of the population into and across the "Liberties." By 1854, after prolonged and tangled negotiations, most of these outlying districts, twenty-eight in number, which Penn had originally proposed to include in the city, were finally incorporated with it by action of the state legislature.

Penn's plan for his city is the more remarkable because his was still an agricultural age. The Industrial Revolution, as we have just

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, 32.

¹⁵ John Reed, *Map of the City and Liberties of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1774). This map was used as the basis for the architectural survey of OLD PHILADELPHIA made by the Committee of Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects on the Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of the city. It was published under the title of *A Map Of Old Philadelphia on which are indicated Buildings of Architectural Interest that were built during the 18th and early 19th centuries and are still standing A.D. 1932, Two hundred and fifty years after the Founding of the City of William Penn, Proprietor.*

seen, was not due for another century. Cities were few and relatively quite small. According to Sir Walter Besant even metropolitan London had only about 320,000 inhabitants. Today cities have become the most important organism of our civilization. All of Western Europe, the United States, and in recent years, even Russia, have moved with ever increasing speed toward urbanization. During the fifty years from 1882 to 1932 the urban population of the United States increased from twenty-nine to fifty-six per cent, our cities adding almost 55,000,000 to their populations while the rural population increased only 18,000,000. In 1932 New York, Chicago and Philadelphia metropolitan areas embraced more than sixteen per cent of the population of the country, or 20,000,000 persons concentrated in less than one per cent of the country's territory. A similar trend in Soviet Russia became increasingly evident in the thirties.

That Penn saw the significance of the role of the city in history is doubtful. On the other hand, like Washington, he had a clear sense of the importance of his city as a great port of entry for large territories of the interior. In Penn's case it was based on his first-hand contact with London and other commercial ports at the entrance of the great river basins, while to Washington it came through his personal experiences as surveyor of Virginia. Up to the present the expectations of Penn in this regard for his city have been more nearly realized than have those of Washington for his city on the Potomac. What the new means of transportation and airways will bring, remains to be seen. That Philadelphia's location has certain geographical advantages is clear. But whatever the place of Penn's city in the future, its preeminent role in the early history of the nation, like its place as a foremost exponent and custodian of the cultural heritage of the people, is established.

Furthermore cities appear throughout history as dominant factors in the life of nations. Empires may decline, fall and disappear, but cities remain. Athens continues, even though its great political and cultural empire succumbed long ago to that of Rome. Rome, "The Eternal City," likewise witnessed the rise and fall of empires and of kingdoms, but it is today not only the custodian of the monuments and symbols of a glorious past but it is also a modern city, with all of the manifold problems of an urban population. Further examples would be superfluous. It would be laboring the obvious to show,

that, despite the unprecedented savagery of the attack on cities and civilian populations in this war, the cities will survive. New Covenants will arise from the ashes and ruins of the old, planned and designed in accordance with the most up-to-date principles of city planning.

The importance of city planning is therefore evident, though the term may call for some elucidation. City planning has had and still has very different connotations, depending on the particular interest of those using it. To many it has meant engineering and architectural projects as in the case of Paris under Napoleon III and Baron Haussmann, providing for new streets, boulevards, open spaces, monuments and vistas. To others with a more social outlook, especially in Britain, Germany and Scandinavia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it had a much wider meaning. With them it included not only the features just mentioned, especially housing, but all the many problems associated with city growth and expansion. Instead of applying so largely to the laying out of streets, it came to embody the study and planning of all those diversified functions, which are today regarded as a part of the daily needs of the community in modern city life—good housing, zoning with due respect for the proper location of industry, business, schools, museums, parks and recreational opportunities; care for the health of the citizen, providing pure water and scientific sewage disposal; and adequate terminal and parking facilities for different types of transportation within the city. Good city planning calls for the solution of these problems, in accordance with approved engineering and architectural standards, the demands of social justice and the highest attainable degree of economic security.

Fortunately, town and city planning was attracting the attention of city, state and national authorities as a subject of paramount importance even before the ravages of war and the destruction of European cities led to an intense revival of interest in it. This naturally reflected itself in a corresponding increase in the literature on the subject. Along with official reports by city, state, and federal commissions, technical and semi-technical journals and annuals like *The American City*, and *The American Planning and Civic Annual*, devoted exclusively to city planning, literally scores of articles and books are

appearing every year.¹⁶ Of especial significance in the planning for Penn's city is *The Regional Plan of the Philadelphia Tri-State District* published in 1932.¹⁷

In England "town and country" planning has become one of the most widely studied questions in public and private discussion. Despite destruction that staggers the imagination—on September 15, Lord Woolton disclosed that, in London alone, 1,211,000 houses had been destroyed or damaged—the British attacked the problem with great vigor. In 1942 a special Ministry, that of Town and Country Planning, was established by the government following the reports of the Barlow, Scott and Uthwatt Committees. Speaking on the problems in July, 1943, the Minister, Mr. W. D. Morrison, said:

Large-scale organization requires large-scale planning . . . before you build you should be satisfied that you are building in the right place . . . planning offers a form of protection by "zoning" and "reservation." A planning scheme protects building values against depreciation caused by mixing different uses of land without regard for amenity. A house is less of a home when it is cut off by dangerous traffic routes, . . . There must be a pattern of land-use to which all developers should conform in the public interest. . . .¹⁸

To stimulate intelligent public interest national and local officials issue frequent reports and promote exhibitions on city planning like "Living in Cities," "The Englishman Builds" and "Living in Houses," which attract large crowds. Talks on the national radio network by the BBC keep the "city of to-morrow" before the public. But the movement is not confined to England. A great deal in the way of scientific city planning was done on the continent in the decades before the war and more recently Soviet Russia interjected

¹⁶ The following general works afford an excellent approach to the intensive study of particular cities or towns: Thomas D. Adams, *Outline of Town and City Planning* (New York, 1935); Edward M. Bassett, *The Master Plan* (New York, 1938); Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York, 1939); José Luis Sert, *Can Our Cities Survive?* (Cambridge, 1942), based on the proposals formulated by the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne; and E. L. Thorndike, *Your City* (New York, 1939).

¹⁷ This excellent volume was compiled and published under the direction of the Tri-State Planning Federation. It is illustrated with photographs, charts, diagrams, relief and aerial maps, and gives a comprehensive survey of rail, port, and air facilities, parks and parkways, water supply, sanitation, and population trends.

¹⁸ British Information Service, *Britain Looks Ahead, British Official Statement* (1943), III, No. 132. For a summary of the British plans and organization see *British Government Machinery for Reconstruction* (1944).



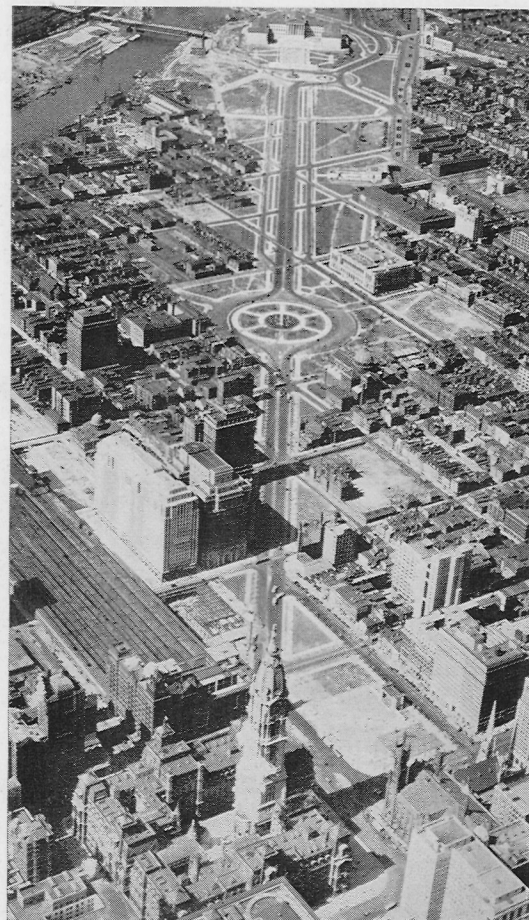
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PENN'S GREENE COUNTRIE TOWNE TODAY

Skyscrapers almost eclipse William Penn's statue on the tower of City Hall. On the right of the picture is the famous Parkway which brings Fairmount Park into the heart of the city.



Philip B. Wallace



Aero Service Corp.

The vision of Philadelphia's civic, architectural and engineering leadership is clearly brought out by these two views taken before and after the Parkway was built. Combining beauty and utility, the Parkway should serve as an earnest of the long range planning for the Philadelphia of the future.

novel and quite revolutionary ideas into the building of cities and towns which merit careful consideration.

In much of this planning, sufficient emphasis is not given to the conservation of cultural resources. It is a phase of the life of our cities thrown into especial prominence by the Blitz. To appreciate its significance one need only read the story of the anxious search and care for what is left of historic monuments, buildings, shrines, altars, stained glass windows, ancient charters, and documents, by the citizens of cities emerging from not only the bombings, but from the holocaust of destruction as the enemy is being driven back in the occupied countries toward its own territory. The fact that our government and private organizations are spending millions in an organized campaign abroad to salvage these material symbols of the cultural achievements of the past, is an additional indication of their value. Every city planning commission should have a separate section on historic buildings, sites and areas of especial historic interest. The opportunities, like the obligations, in the case of Penn's city of Philadelphia, are clear. We are today, despite shameful neglect of these things, the custodians of the richest cultural heritage of the nation. Philadelphia does not have to spend large sums to rebuild and reconstruct its colonial past as has been done so admirably in Williamsburg. In addition to the Independence Hall group there are many remarkable buildings, streets, and alleys in Old Philadelphia, rich in historic associations, which call for appreciation and care. No other city in these United States is so rich in this respect. What is more, a carefully developed program would stimulate civic pride, and bring added prestige to the city.

From his statue on City Hall Tower, the Founder has been observing and studying Philadelphia—now grown from “fourscore houses” to a population of two million in the city proper and three and one half million in the metropolitan or regional area. To his orderly mind, the haphazard growth and planless development of the last century appears as wasteful, dangerous and altogether bad. On the other hand, the vision and enterprise of the men who bought and consolidated the lands he deeded to his fellow “adventurers” along the Schuylkill and the Wissahickon into a great park system with the River Drives, Parkway, and Museum of Art doubtless arouses his

admiration and pride. He sees the Parkway not only as a worthy civic center but also as a major artery of traffic. However, as he watches the flow of traffic day after day, he wonders why it channels into a narrow bottleneck at his feet, to join other traffic streams from Broad and Market Streets. Had he not provided for a large open space of ten acres (Centre Square) at just this intersection? Why was City Hall planted in the middle instead of on the side with other public buildings, as he and his Surveyor-General had arranged it more than two hundred and fifty years ago? Similarly, why were the country roads he created, those natural radial highways, which today afford ingress to and egress from the city, not integrated with the streets of the inner city by up-to-date traffic centers at intersections. The many traffic jams at rush hours seem to him costly and inexcusable. From another direction, on sultry summer evenings, malodorous breezes reaching even to his elevated height, make him painfully conscious that all is not right with his rivers. Could it be that they are no longer clean and fresh as they had once been?

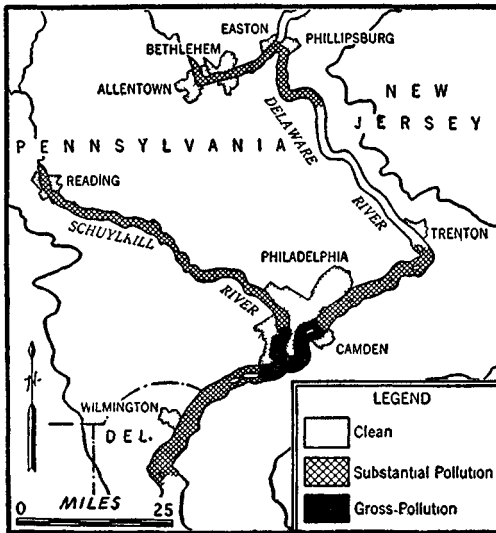
Troubled by these and other problems, which obviously demand vigorous civic action on the basis of constructive planning, the Founder ventures to issue "Instructions" dealing with the condition of his city in 1944. Like those of 1682 they are direct and simple, for he was always practical. Hence his proposals, on the occasion of the three hundredth anniversary of his birth, give precedence to those every-day needs of the inhabitants too frequently neglected. "The City beautiful," like other aesthetic interests, is put in second place among the half-dozen proposals selected for notice here:

First. Be sure to secure a clean, pure and sufficient water supply for the years to come.

Second. Establish, with all possible speed, sewer disposal plants and "sewer farms" for the economical disposal of the city's sewage without pollution of the streams and rivers.

Third. Clean up the rivers and at once prohibit the pollution of the waters by towns and manufacturers up stream. Reports of the findings of a body with the curious name "Incodel," have come to my notice in which the officers say that my city and Camden must do this quickly. If they do not, after this war is over there is danger that they may become "ghost" ports.

Build embankments and boulevards on the Schuylkill and the Delaware, for the latter utilizing the fund of half a million dollars left by one Stephen Girard to improve Water Street. Keep the docks clean and in repair, preparing the port for the great commercial future that awaits it in the revolutionary development of transport and shipping of the years ahead.



AREAS OF RIVER POLLUTION

This map, based on facts contained in a recent pamphlet issued by the Interstate Commission on the Delaware River Basin, shows the relative degrees of pollution of the Schuylkill, Delaware and Lehigh Rivers in the Philadelphia area. The legend is explanatory.

By courtesy of the Philadelphia Inquirer

Fourth. Develop the highways radiating from the city through the metropolitan area, integrating them closely with inner and outer belt lines, and more especially with the inner city by widening the approaches and providing for up-to-date intersections and grade separations to facilitate the free flow of traffic.

Fifth. Complete the Locust Street subway to West Philadelphia bringing it to the surface as a high speed elevated at Forty-third Street thereby doing away with the chronic traffic congestion in

the bottlenecks from the west, bringing into use the expensive tunnel under the Schuylkill and the Concourse from Thirtieth to Thirty-second Streets on Market.

Sixth. Consult the Engineers and Architects as to Broad Street Station and City Hall. Centre Square was ordered an open space with "Houses for Publick Affairs" on the corners and sides. Besides being a green breathing space, it should serve as a sort of hub for the traffic systems of the city, receiving and distributing the flow of traffic as it comes and goes from the Parkway, Broad and Market Streets. Today traffic is slowed up and repeatedly tangled in the circuit around City Hall, not only because this is too narrow, but because it is being used for terminal purposes by scores of motor busses during the day and night.

Seventh. Limit the height of skyscrapers and insist on receding fronts as the height increases. Piling thousands of people on a fraction of an acre by going skyward, although novel and profitable to real estate interests, creates a type of modern slum with serious traffic, fire and health hazards. Unless checked this trend will create congestion in rush hours far beyond the capacity of the streets to handle it. More and more the streets become veritable gorges, and serious study should be given to the possibilities of *dispersion* lest some of our cities "Die of Greatness."

Eighth. As a part of the post-war reconstruction, build a boulevard or avenue from Independence Square north to Race Street and the Delaware River Plaza embracing all of Fifth and Sixth Streets and the properties between. This will do away with the fire hazard to Independence Hall, get rid of the delapidated approach to this great national shrine from the north, and afford an opportunity for locating and reconstructing a number of historic buildings of great significance, but now almost forgotten. Place them so that they will contribute not only to the landscaping but to the effective screening of Independence Hall from the approach down the Avenue, and above all design them for actual service and use. The area involved, like that eastward from Fifth Street to the Delaware was once the pride of the city. In recent years it has steadily deteriorated. From 1932 to 1942 the assessed value of the properties in the squares that should be

demolished has depreciated over twenty-eight per cent more than twice the depreciation for city properties in general. Few of the buildings meet the carrying charges. Business is moving out, leaving more and more buildings vacant every year. The proposed Avenue, if continued South beyond Independence Square to Passyunk boulevard, linking South Philadelphia with the Delaware River Drive would contribute greatly to the rehabilitation of the oldest and most historic part of the city. Even today, despite losses from demolition and neglect, the area contains more important historical buildings and sites than are to be found in any other city of the land.

Ninth. Conserve and restore the charm of the country side, especially the Old Roads, giving attention to safeguard all historic sites, buildings, and other remains.

Tenth. Restore the home and library of the city's foremost citizen, Benjamin Franklin, or at least place a marker to indicate the place where it once stood. Indeed, it would perhaps not be improper that a modest marker might also be placed at the site of the home I occupied for a time on Letitia Street.

Eleventh. Read and support the plans.

In his pioneering in city planning, Penn set an example for the logical approach to one of the most difficult problems of society throughout history. It would be very fitting therefore, at a time when the problems of our cities have become so overwhelming, that the Founder's own city, should assume an initiative and leadership in progressive city planning. American cities like those of Europe will be largely rebuilt after the war, rebuilt in response to new social and economic concepts, as well as in accord with new engineering, architectural and artistic ideas. We do not have to wait to be bombed. The process is already well started, and large scale planning must be undertaken and carried through. It is the only alternative to disaster. Of course, the mobility of labor and goods may bring distribution of the population, industry, and business over a much larger area, but dispersion, too, must be carefully planned, lest the mistakes of the *laissez faire* years be again repeated.

Meanwhile Penn's city presents many encouraging, and also many very discouraging conditions. Among the former are the Parkway,

the River Drives, Fairmount Park, the Art Museum and the Independence Hall Group; among the latter, the polluted rivers, numerous city slums, inadequate highways not properly integrated with the center of the city and the belt lines, and the persistent erection of skyscrapers where there is no essential need for them.

A release by the American Swedish News Exchange, Inc., under date of June 14 of this year, reported the following wireless from Stockholm: "An extensive Exhibition covering American architecture from the earliest days to the latest daydreams of city planners is now ready for its first public showing tomorrow. It is called, *America Builds*." The Exhibition was widely publicized by the press, the Crown Prince and several members of the Royal Family attending the first day. One cannot resist the wish that Philadelphia, the first American city plotted according to plan, might figure adequately in such exhibitions both at home and abroad.

The Founder, and the men who came after him, especially those of the Revolutionary era, and the early national period—Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, and later Girard—left to Philadelphia a heritage few cities of the land can equal. Hence too, no other city can demonstrate so well the vital significance of up-to-date planning—building, demolition, and conservation.

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