

## *Pennsbury Manor: Reconstruction and Reality*

**E**VEN BEFORE THE RECONSTRUCTION of William Penn's Pennsbury Manor began in 1938, the form of its house and landscape sparked contention. The project earned a controversial and indeed pivotal status in preservation history. Charles Hosmer has pointed out that after Pennsbury the National Park Service dissociated itself from reconstructions of historical sites, common enough projects earlier, exemplified especially by the vast and vastly popular reconstruction program at Williamsburg, Virginia. Today, as William Woys Weaver and Nancy Kolb cogently argue, the Pennsbury reconstruction is usually and perhaps best appreciated as a marvelous example of the colonial revival and the tastes and attitudes of the architects and officials that brought it into being.<sup>1</sup>

Amid this discussion of the twentieth-century Pennsbury, Penn's original has largely been lost, resulting in a serious and unfortunate gap in the historical record of the colonial period. Fiske Kimball, writing in the 1920s, ignored Pennsbury almost entirely. Hugh Morrison's *Early American Architecture* (1952) has no mention of it at all; neither does William Pierson's 1970 *American Buildings and Their Architects*. The most recent survey of colonial architecture, by James D. Kornwolf, acknowledges Pennsbury's importance but concentrates more on the process of reconstruction than on the original house itself; its text and

Mark Reinberger's research on Pennsbury Manor began when he received the first Alice Hemenway Memorial Fellowship in 1997, named for Pennsbury's long-time site director. Elizabeth McLean became involved with the site while doing an interpretive plan in conjunction with Sandra Lloyd. The authors wish to thank the staff of Pennsbury Manor, especially Lara Murphy and Kim McCarty.

<sup>1</sup> Charles B. Hosmer Jr., *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926–1949* (Charlottesville, VA, 1981), 1:444–50; William W. Weaver and Nancy D. Kolb, "Okie Speaks for Pennsbury," *Pennsylvania Heritage* 8, no. 4; 9, no. 1 (1982–83): 22–26, 22–26. Other recent scholarship that has dissected colonial revival-era reconstructions, pointing out errors and the attitudes that led to them, include Carl R. Lounsbury, "Beaux-Arts Ideals and Colonial Reality: The Reconstruction of Williamsburg's Capitol, 1928–1934," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 49 (1990): 373–89; and, in a Philadelphia context, David R. Contosta, "Philadelphia's 'Miniature Williamsburg': The Colonial Revival and Germantown's Market Square," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 120 (1996): 283–320.

illustrations largely assume that the reconstruction is correct.<sup>2</sup>

The original Pennsbury is important in the history of American colonial architecture and landscape because it was the seat of Pennsylvania's founder, was one of the most substantial houses and planned landscapes of the early colonial period, and was the progenitor of a long and distinguished line of Philadelphia country houses. The absence of the original is an unfortunate but not fatal blow to this significance. While the original form of the house and landscape cannot be known with certainty, sufficient documents and visual evidence survive to allow us to make educated suppositions and to understand the character of the place. The surviving evidence provides us an opportunity to witness the creation in the North American colonies of a house and landscape by a seventeenth-century English gentleman. Few other seventeenth-century colonial houses have such documentation. Pennsbury's record makes it possible to reconstruct a more accurate past; Penn's own words have much to say about the language of architecture, building, and landscape at the time.

The events surrounding Pennsbury's original creation have never been fully published, nor have the documents about it been adequately interpreted with regard to the accuracy of the modern reconstruction. Some documents have come to light since the period of reconstruction. Others can be newly interpreted given recent research into American and English architecture and landscape of the seventeenth century. Perhaps the largest issue in any attempt to "reconstruct" Pennsbury is the question of whether Penn was "living in state" there. Those who reconstructed Pennsbury in the 1930s believed he was and were determined to make the house and landscape as grand as possible given the evidence at hand. This view remains Kornwolf's underlying assumption. The most recent author to write on Pennsbury, Kornwolf wants the place to reflect "the dramatic impact of the Italianate and Roman Catholic court of James II . . . [and] to honor the house of Stuart by [Penn] beginning his colony with a more classical architecture, [and] a planned garden."<sup>3</sup> This vision is very much at odds with the surviving evidence, which suggests that Penn's intentions

<sup>2</sup> Fiske Kimball, *Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic* (New York, 1922); Hugh Morrison, *Early American Architecture: From the First Colonial Settlements to the National Period* (New York, 1952); William H. Pierson Jr., *American Buildings and Their Architects: The Colonial and Neoclassical Styles* (Garden City, NY, 1970); James D. Kornwolf, *Architecture and Town Planning in Colonial North America* (Baltimore, 2002), 2:1217–19.

<sup>3</sup> Kornwolf, *Architecture and Town Planning*, 2:1219.

were more modest and the realities of early Pennsylvania vexing and stringent.

### *The Architecture and Landscape of Reconstruction*

The house now standing at Pennsbury Manor is a reconstruction built by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1938–40. It was one of many homes of “founders” that were reconstructed in this era, as Americans tried to inspire patriotic values with historic exemplars. Other notable examples include the reconstruction of Abraham Lincoln’s birthplace at New Salem, Illinois, in the 1920s and the reconstruction of the long-destroyed Wakefield in Virginia, the birthplace of George Washington, in 1930.<sup>4</sup> As so often with preservation efforts, the Pennsbury project suffered from divergent or unclear aims among its participants. As early as 1889 Pennsylvania Quakers began advocating for a memorial to William Penn at the site of the founder’s plantation. Finally, in 1929 the Pennsylvania legislature acceded to the acquisition, by gift, of the former Pennsbury property, for the purpose of creating such a memorial. At this time, reconstruction of the manor house was not openly contemplated, the vision being a garden-like park. However, the possibility of reconstruction was clearly in the minds of some of the major participants, most particularly Charles Henry Moon, a local Quaker and the prime mover behind the initial Pennsbury effort, and Dr. Albert Cook Myers, a historian and the chief authority on William Penn.<sup>5</sup>

Site mapping, archaeology, and documentary research occupied the early 1930s. Dr. Donald Cadzow, state archaeologist, carried out the archaeology, which later became a focal point of controversy over Pennsbury’s accuracy. The archaeology recovered substantial foundations from the former house and outbuildings, and Myers’s research seemed to promise a wealth of details (figure 1). Myers, in conjunction with state architect John G. Todd, took it upon himself to produce the first serious designs for the reconstruction. However, thinking himself snubbed as the project gained momentum, Myers (in only the most blatant of ego-driven actions in the reconstruction’s history) turned his back on the project, taking his research materials with him. He would become a major critic of the

<sup>4</sup> Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, 1:399.

<sup>5</sup> The best history of the reconstruction effort at Pennsbury is Clare Lise Cavicchi’s unpublished report, “The Recreated Pennsbury Manor” (research report, Pennsbury Society, Oct. 1989), copy at Pennsbury Archives.

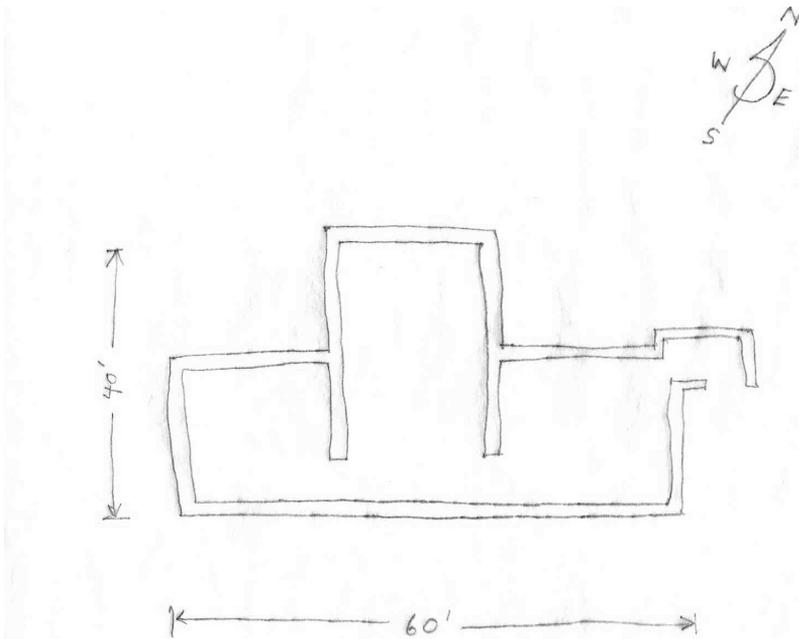


Fig. 1. Small-scale archaeological plan labeled “Donald Cadzow Excavations at Pennsbury 1934.” By Mark Reinberger after photocopy in Pennsbury Archives of missing original.

final product.

The Pennsbury reconstruction quite consciously emulated Williamsburg. As early as 1933 Cadzow wrote Williamsburg’s planners for advice in order to profit from their experience and do “authentic work.” Myers, too, solicited the advice of architectural experts at Williamsburg. Almost inevitably, the vision in people’s minds of the reconstructed Pennsbury resembled the Virginia Governor’s Palace. The project received a big boost in this direction after Frank Melvin, a former Philadelphia lawyer, took over as head of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission (PHC) in early 1936. Melvin, who greatly admired Williamsburg, wanted popular historical attractions and had the energy and deftness to push a large appropriation bill for an expensive reconstruction through the Pennsylvania legislature. In his account of the reconstruction, Melvin gave himself much of the credit for getting the project accomplished.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Frank W. Melvin, “The Romance of the Pennsbury Manor Restoration,” *Pennsylvania History* 7 (1940): 1432–52. See also Weaver and Kolb, “Okie Speaks for Pennsbury.”

Under Melvin, the commission hired Richardson Brognard Okie (1875–1945) to be the architect of the reconstruction. Okie, born in the Delaware Valley and educated at Haverford College and the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Architecture, was chosen because he knew colonial Philadelphia architecture better than anyone at the time. His loving and sensitive renovations of rural houses in the Delaware Valley were famous.<sup>7</sup> He had also proved his competence by completing, on time, the High Street, Philadelphia, reconstruction for the United States Sesquicentennial Exhibition of 1926. Okie threw himself into the Pennsbury project, reconstituting Myers’s research and asking for additional archaeology. He completed his plans by early 1938 and construction proceeded quickly, the manor house being declared finished by July 1939.

Along with the house rose voices of dissent (to some extent orchestrated by Myers), at first from the ranks of Philadelphia architects (including Carl C. Zeigler, a former partner of Okie, who called the project “stupid”), then from the American Institute of Architects (which censured the project in 1938), and finally from the National Park Service. The PHC and Okie adopted a defiant posture. Melvin claimed that the reconstruction was “95 percent” accurate (a figure which he later dropped to “85–90 percent”), and Okie wrote a justification of the design. By contrast, Edward Barnsley, a PHC commissioner from Bucks County, newly appointed in 1940, claimed that the design was only “5 percent” accurate. Adding to the controversy, Barnsley undertook an investigation of the process of reconstruction and quickly discovered the unsettling fact that, for reasons unknown, the Pennsylvania General Services Administration had destroyed most of the archaeological records and evidence.

In the 1930s, what we know today as “scientific restoration” was in its infancy. Often the goals of restoration and reconstruction were more about inspiration and association than accuracy. The reconstruction of Pennsbury is almost certainly not very accurate, in both details and overall form. In the absence of any clear visual evidence about what the original Pennsbury looked like, the reconstruction was inevitably going to be hypothetical to a large degree. Unfortunately, Okie’s manner of working contributed to the inaccuracy. In a potentially flawed application of the scientific method, Okie apparently visualized a particular form for the

<sup>7</sup> Sandra L. Tatman and Roger W. Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700–1930* (Boston, 1985), 583. For a primary source on such a renovation, see Joseph Hergesheimer, *From an Old House* (New York, 1926).

house and then looked for evidence that justified the hypothesis.<sup>8</sup> He began with the assumption (already present in the minds of many and reinforced by the Williamsburg Governor's Palace) that Pennsbury had a center-hall, double-pile plan. This contradicted the apparent evidence of archaeology, most of the records of which disappeared from the state archives. Okie himself acknowledged, at least privately, that the archaeological evidence did not fully support his reconstruction:

Pennsbury is to a certain extent disappointing. . . . Mr. Montgomery and my brother have gone over a great many of the Penn-Logan letters and from this correspondence it would seem possible, without too great a stretch of the imagination, to suggest a possible plan of the arrangement of the rooms on the ground floor of Pennsbury, but this suggestive plan is not entirely born out by what had been found to remain at the site of the house as far as old walls, foundations, &c. are concerned. In other words, there are certain discrepancies that we are so far unable to explain.<sup>9</sup>

Next, all written evidence about Pennsbury in Penn's papers (which, taken by themselves, give very little visual impression about the house) were then fitted onto a double-pile plan. For example, the documents suggest that the house at Pennsbury was part brick and part wood framed. In Okie's mind, the wooden part of the house became the rear (land side) and this conjecture explained a lack of foundations under the two rear corner rooms, a not impossible interpretation but one that does not explain why the central rear space had brick foundation walls when the equally important spaces to each side had none. In any event, the statements in the documents are quite obscure.

Finally, for details and features missing entirely from the record, Okie adopted a reverse logic of speculating that later Philadelphia houses such as Stenton (1720s), Hope Lodge (1740s but then thought to be even earlier than Stenton), and others quite naturally would have been influenced by Pennsbury, so that features from them could reasonably be reproduced at Pennsbury. He quite unabashedly used this logic in Pennsbury's stair design, which was copied from a nearby house:

<sup>8</sup> For an analogous misapplication of the scientific method in the restoration of a project contemporary with Pennsbury, see Barbara Burlison Mooney, "Lincoln's New Salem: Or, the Trigonometric Theorem of Vernacular Restoration," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture Journal* 11 (2004): 19–39.

<sup>9</sup> R. Brognard Okie to Donald Cadzow, Sept. 25, 1936, Pennsbury Archives.

The stairway detail has been copied from a portion of an original stair that is still in place in the Biles House, which is up the river from Pennsbury, and was built in 1726. It is not unlikely that Biles who was a prominent man in the community and well-to-do, copied his stair way, when he built his house, from what he had seen in the house of his distinguished neighbor, William Penn.<sup>10</sup>

Okie borrowed other details from old Pennsylvania farmhouses, Ephrata Cloister, and even Solitude, the Federal-period villa of John Penn, the founder's grandson.<sup>11</sup> Okie copied many details from his own colonial revival design (although actual colonial precedents could probably be found). Examples included built-in cupboards and drawers under windows and downspouts that drop to wooden shoes (square conduits that lead the pipes into the ground).<sup>12</sup>

As with the house, the landscape of the restored Pennsbury owed more to the colonial revival than the colonial original. Okie's original contract with the PHC had included "landscape work and River front protection." The landscape work, however, had, at the last minute, been omitted from the final contract, but not before Okie had made plans and specifications covering landscape work and paid the Philadelphia landscape architect, Robert B. Cridland, for consultation.<sup>13</sup>

Okie's blueprints for the landscape design survive, and his design is less elaborate than that of Thomas Sears (1880–1960), which was implemented (figure 2). An allée of forty-four fastigiated poplars marched from a courtyard in front of the manor house, with its formal "flower gardens," down through formal "shrub gardens," and then between double allées of flowering dogwood to a pier at the river. The plantings on either side were a mix of native trees and shrubs, such as red oaks and hemlocks, as well as some plants known in contemporary English gardens, such as box and cornel (*Cornus mas*). However, there were a number of blatantly nineteenth-century oriental introductions, such as *Weigela*, *Kerria Japonica*, *Forsythia*, and Chinese *Wisteria*. As with architectural reconstruction, in that era knowledge of historically accurate horticulture was minimal.

<sup>10</sup> R. Brognard Okie, "The Re-Creation of Penn's Manor" (typescript, 1940), 10, Pennsbury Archives.

<sup>11</sup> Weaver and Kolb, "Okie Speaks for Pennsbury."

<sup>12</sup> Cavicchi, "Recreated Pennsbury Manor," 14.

<sup>13</sup> R. Brognard Okie to Donald Cadzow, Sept. 11, 1942, copy in Pennsbury Archives. Cridland was the author of *Practical Landscape Gardening* (New York, 1916), a well-respected reference.

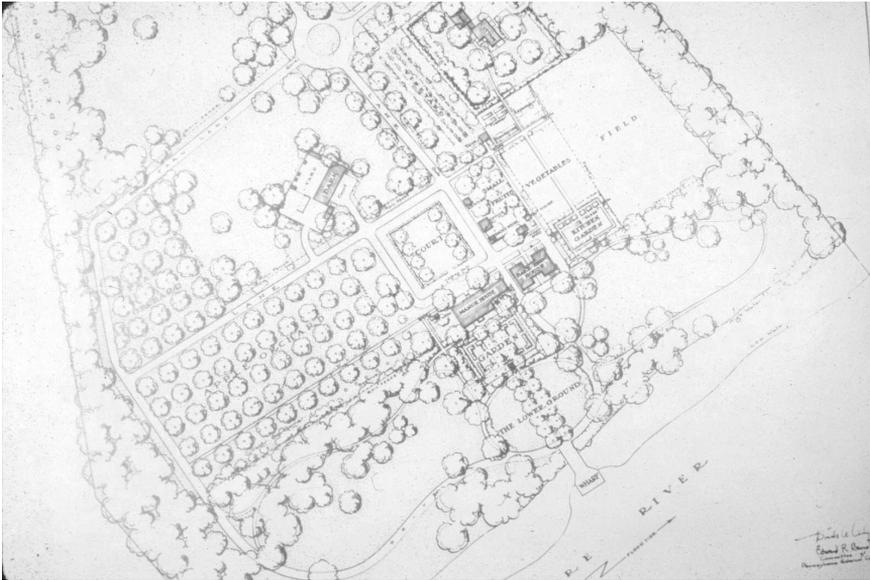


Fig. 2. Thomas Sears's landscape plan. Pennsbury Archives.

We do not know why the PHC decided not to use the Okie/Cridland design. It may have been because Okie, rather than the PHC's Pennsbury committee, had hired Cridland, although Okie and Thomas Sears were close and had worked together before.<sup>14</sup> Sears was selected as the landscape architect for Pennsbury after Ralph Griswold, another Philadelphia landscape architect, declined.<sup>15</sup> Better known than Cridland or Griswold, Sears had designed a number of gardens for prominent Philadelphians, as well as gardens at Reynolda in North Carolina for Katherine Reynolds.<sup>16</sup> Sears created a courtyard in front of the house at Pennsbury, supported by a retaining wall, the foundations of which had been found by archaeologists. At the rear of the house was a grass parterre, punctuated by shaped evergreens. Sears's courtyard garden owed more to Gertrude Jekyll and the English cottage garden style than to the seventeenth century. Old-fashioned flowers such as stock, columbine, snapdragons, and pinks were planted in drifts. Corners of beds were punctuated by the native holly (*Ilex opaca*). Sears also included native phlox (*Phlox divaricata*). However,

<sup>14</sup> See Hergesheimer, *From an Old House*, 157.

<sup>15</sup> Donald Cadzow to R. Brognard Okie, Sept. 25, 1942, Pennsbury Archives.

<sup>16</sup> The Philadelphia gardens included Appleford for Lewis Parsons, Chanticleer for Adolph Rosengarten, as well as Mount Cuba for the Lammond DuPont Copelands.

the pansies, although then thought of as old fashioned, were a nineteenth-century hybrid.<sup>17</sup> Sears's original design had the allée of tulip poplars starting in the courtyard; Okie complained that the allée should start below the steps, perhaps forgetting that his own design had the same failing.<sup>18</sup> The actual planting of the tulip poplars followed Okie's suggestion. Sears called for beds of periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) underneath the poplars below the steps. While periwinkle was known in Penn's time, groundcovers, as such, were not then used in landscaping.

Where Sears really put the stamp of the colonial revival on Pennsbury was by creating a separate herb garden, in the style of a seventeenth-century knot garden, complete with brick walks.<sup>19</sup> Penn had specified that his walks be "green or gravel," and a separate colonial herb garden, except for an apothecary, was an invention of the late nineteenth century. In the world of the colonial revival, every kitchen had a spinning wheel and every house a separate herb garden, although Sears omitted the typical sundial.

### *The Original Pennsbury*

#### Chronology

Penn landed in his colony in October 1682. His first orders of business were: laying out Philadelphia; visiting the leaders of neighboring colonies, New Jersey, New York, and Maryland; purchasing the Salem colony in New Jersey; and beginning a country seat at Pennsbury. The site for Pennsbury had already been selected by William Markham, Penn's first cousin who, with Surveyor General Thomas Holmes, had traveled to Pennsylvania before the proprietor to negotiate with resident settlers and reconnoiter the land. Markham picked a spot for Pennsbury at a pleasant bend in the Delaware River, just below the falls and just above Burlington on the New Jersey side. Penn could claim most of Pennsbury's 6,500 acres as proprietor of Pennsylvania, but the land along the river had already been settled by Thomas King, a troublesome character, from whom Penn

<sup>17</sup> The pansy is the result of crosses of various *viola* species. William Thompson, an English gardener, is credited with the discovery in 1839 of the cross that is the ancestor of the modern pansy (*Viola* × *Wittrockiana*).

<sup>18</sup> Donald Cadzow to R. Brognard Okie, Aug. 3, 1942, Pennsbury Archives.

<sup>19</sup> A simplified version of the design can be seen in Gervase Markham's *Certain Excellent and New Invented Knots and Mazes* (London, 1623).

had to buy it.<sup>20</sup> King had already made some improvements, to wit, a corn crib, fenced fields, a peach orchard, and a house. This last was perhaps the structure referred to in March 1683 as the “governor’s house,” although more likely this reference was to another, presumably simple, wood-framed building that had been quickly constructed and was being used for Quaker meetings. It might have formed a room or wing of the later, larger house. As late as 1684, King still had the key to his older dwelling. By July 1683, Penn himself was in residence at Pennsbury at least some of the time, presumably occupying this simple dwelling. The first reference to Pennsbury is Penn’s commission to Phineas Pemberton as clerk of the Court for Bucks County, dated July 21, 1683. A letter from Penn to Ralph Smyth, the gardener, of September 1683 accompanied candles for the staff at Pennsbury but cautioned that they be used sparingly. Construction probably began on Penn’s big house in the spring of 1683 because within a year at least a shell was up and the roof on.<sup>21</sup> Some structure was on the site in March 1684, when Penn presided over a Bucks County court session there.<sup>22</sup> Legal activities for this section of Bucks County continued to occur at Pennsbury at least until 1686, including weddings.<sup>23</sup> Penn had shipped some building supplies to the colonies, notably twenty-three thousand bricks and tiles (the latter possibly for Pennsbury’s roof) and window glass.<sup>24</sup>

Early on Penn charged his longtime confidant James Harrison, a Lancashire Quaker, with supervising Pennsbury. Penn’s letters to Harrison constitute some of our most important evidence about Pennsbury’s early house and landscape. They indicate his priorities and the specificity (and often lack thereof) of his directions. We have many letters from Penn to Harrison and only a few sent the other way, so that we cannot know how much of Penn’s directions Harrison carried out. Penn’s complaints (in this period and later) suggest that a majority of his requests went unfulfilled. Apparently the first thing Harrison did was

<sup>20</sup> In 1690 King accused Joan Searle of being a witch but was later tried and convicted of defaming her. He died in 1693. Richard S. Dunn et al., eds., *The Papers of William Penn*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia, 1981–87), 2:525 (hereafter *Penn Papers*).

<sup>21</sup> *Penn Papers*, 2:299–300; William J. Buck, *William Penn in America* (Philadelphia, 1888), 110–11; Terry A. McNealy, *A History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania* ([Fallsington, PA], 1970), 27, 40–45.

<sup>22</sup> *Penn Papers*, 2:524.

<sup>23</sup> McNealy, *History of Bucks County*, 43.

<sup>24</sup> Marion Balderston, “William Penn’s 23 Ships,” *Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine* 23 (1963): 35, 45.

plant “wheat clover, & other seeds,” work which King jeopardized by removing fencing. Harrison also produced “clap boards in the Rough” for building, which King pilfered, the only explicit reference to construction in this early period.<sup>25</sup> Penn’s accounts indicate that in 1684 and 1685 Harrison spent large sums on Pennsbury, including much for building hardware.<sup>26</sup>

Penn officially offered Harrison the stewardship of Pennsbury in 1684 in a letter that granted Harrison and his wife two chambers in the house along with a horse, board, and fifty pounds sterling per year. Harrison would be in charge of the estate generally, specifically its servants and construction. His wife was to be housekeeper, with charge over maids in the dairy, kitchen, and house, along with plate and linens.<sup>27</sup> This letter does not indicate that the house was finished, being a typical contract of stewardship and an indication of what Penn intended.

Penn’s letters to Harrison also give some indication of the status of his workmen and of his relationship with them. Most were indentured servants who worked for varying terms for their independence. Several mentioned in the letters were to work for 150 days (roughly half a year). Others had longer commitments but also more lucrative contracts:

know that I have sent a Gardiner by this ship or he soon follows, wth all requisits. a man of recommended great skill, lett him have wt help he can, not less than 2 or 3 at any time, he will cast things into a good posture. he has his passage paid, £30 at 3 years, end, 60 acres of land, & a month in a year to himselfe, not hindring my business; & he is to train up two, a man & boy in the Art, It were better they were blacks, for then a man has them while they live.<sup>28</sup>

This last comment is one of several that indicate that Penn owned black slaves and that they played a significant role in Pennsbury’s creation and maintenance. At least eight slaves are specifically identified in relation to Pennsbury and there were more left unnamed. Some helped as laborers with building; “Peter” was trained as a gardener; most seem to have been mainly agricultural workers and household servants, including

<sup>25</sup> James Harrison to William Penn, Feb. 23, 1684, *Penn Papers*, 2:524–26.

<sup>26</sup> *Papers of William Penn* (Philadelphia, 1975), microfilm ed., reel 4 (hereafter referred to as *Penn Papers Micro*).

<sup>27</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, July 1684, *Penn Papers*, 2:568–69.

<sup>28</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Oct. 25, 1685, *Penn Papers*, 3:65.

Parthenia who did the laundry.<sup>29</sup> Even more of Penn's construction craftsmen were white indentured servants. These tended to be Quakers and, where it is known, about twenty years old, just starting out in the world and not master craftsmen. Penn realized that their work habits and skills varied but was willing to at least try to make use of all. Servants apparently ate in the big house at Pennsbury and slept in its outbuildings, although Penn sometimes assigned them to buildings on other properties, in which case other arrangements had to be made. For example, "the carpenter and w<sup>m</sup> smyth [a farm laborer] may diet at w<sup>m</sup> woods on Bror Lowthers land."<sup>30</sup>

Biographers of Penn have made much of the fact that Pennsbury was legally conceived as a feudal manor, 6,500 acres where Penn would exercise the rights of absolute feudal lord ("true and absolute Proprietaries" with "free full and absolute power").<sup>31</sup> Colonists dissatisfied with Penn's policies often claimed that he lived like a lord.<sup>32</sup> But if Penn desired it (and it is not clear that he did), Pennsbury never actually achieved such an exalted position. The vast majority of Pennsbury's acreage remained undeveloped throughout Penn's lifetime, and neighbors felt free to squabble with Penn over land, squat on parcels of Pennsbury's land, and poach materials.<sup>33</sup> Penn consistently referred to the place simply as his plantation, rather than as a manor or even country seat. Pennsbury offered retirement and isolation from the capital city and it possessed all the facilities for a rural life, self-sufficient in food, drink, and fuel.<sup>34</sup> Within the first few years, forty acres were cleared, and Penn was raising cattle, sheep,

<sup>29</sup> On Penn and his slaves, see *Penn Papers*, 3:66–67, 256 and 4:113–14, 219–20; Hannah Penn to James Logan, n.d. [1701], *Correspondence between William Penn and James Logan, Secretary of the Province of Pennsylvania, and Others, 1700–1750*, 2 vols. (1870–72; repr., New York, 1972), 1:42 (hereafter *Penn-Logan Letters*); William Penn to James Harrison, Dec. 4 and 6, 1685, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5; also Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York, 1991), 9–14; and Harry Emerson Wildes, *William Penn* (New York, 1974), 322–27. The research and curatorial staff at Pennsbury Manor have compiled much information on Penn's slaves; Pennsbury Archives.

<sup>30</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Apr. 24, 1686, *Penn Papers*, 3:89–93.

<sup>31</sup> These words refer to all land in Pennsylvania and come from Charles II's charter to William Penn. *Penn Papers*, 2:65. See also Wildes, *William Penn*, 128.

<sup>32</sup> Wildes, *William Penn*, 197–98.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Turner to William Penn, June 26, 1697, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 7.

<sup>34</sup> On Penn's ideal of the "country life," see Mark Reinberger and Elizabeth McLean, "Isaac Norris's Fairhill: Architecture, Landscape, and Quaker Ideals in a Philadelphia Colonial Country Seat," *Winterthur Portfolio* 32 (1997): 243–74. McNealy, *History of Bucks County*, 40–41, notes that the full legal implications of Penn's manors were never emphasized and that Penn did not want Pennsbury to be extravagant or ostentatious.

and hogs. He was also growing some wheat. Fruit was growing in a paled orchard, and there were peaches in the “Indian fields.” The terms “Indian fields” or “Indian old fields” were conventionalized ones in the colonies for land that the natives had cleared by fire for agriculture and hunting.<sup>35</sup>

By the summer of 1684 when he returned to England to fight Lord Baltimore’s challenge to his patent, Penn had definitely laid out the house and site, and the house was a shell under a roof and had its interior partitions constructed, although nothing was finished inside and the exterior doors and windows were not completed.<sup>36</sup> What drawings Penn may have had are unknown. Five years later, when he contemplated building a house in Philadelphia, Penn sent over from England a “Modell” for a house (that is, one or more drawings).<sup>37</sup> As Penn apparently had no experience with drawing or architecture, we can assume that someone else made these drawings. Evidence discussed below indicates that Pennsbury was built in a rather ad hoc manner, suggesting that there may not have been an expertly done design for it. The only person in the colony at that time known to have skills in drawing was Thomas Holme, so perhaps he had a share in the design.<sup>38</sup> Penn could have brought plans from England, but there is no reference to them in Penn’s many letters to Harrison.

After his return to England, Penn also asked (repeatedly though in vain) for a drawing of Pennsbury: “I should be glad to see a draught of Pennsbury wch an Artist would quickly take, with the land scip of the hous, out housen, their proportion & distance one from an other, the river, gardens & orchards.”<sup>39</sup> What “artist” he had in mind is unclear. For the most part, Penn (and Quakers in general) had little use for artists.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Jan. 28, 1687, *Penn Papers*, 3:138; Warren R. Hofstra, *The Planting of New Virginia: Settlement and Landscape in the Shenandoah Valley* (Baltimore, 2004), 22, 51, 121.

<sup>36</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Jan. 28, 1687, *Penn Papers*, 3:134–35.

<sup>37</sup> William Penn to Commissioners of Propriety, Apr. 14, 1689, *Penn Papers*, 3:241.

<sup>38</sup> Besides the many maps and plats from Holme’s hand, William Markham to William Penn, July 21, 1688, *Penn Papers*, 3:201, notes a design and drawing by Holme for a dock in Philadelphia.

<sup>39</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, ca. Feb. 1687, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5.

<sup>40</sup> Dianne C. Johnson, “Living in the Light: Quakerism and Colonial Portraiture,” in *Quaker Aesthetics: Reflections on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption*, ed. Emma Jones Lapsansky and Anne A. Verplanck (Philadelphia, 2003), 122. Penn had a portrait painted of himself at age twenty-two (before his conversion to Quakerism). Thereafter, the only known depiction of him is a pencil sketch of his head by the artist Francis Place, done probably in the 1680s, in the collections of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

In the mid-1680s, Penn was keen to return to Pennsylvania and seems to have expected it at any time. However, by 1689 he was in deep political trouble as his supporter, James II, had been overthrown and a hostile William III crowned with a promise to suppress dissenters and Catholics. Penn ordered most construction at Pennsbury stopped and even desired his officials to shut down the plantation as it was a financial drain. Its contents were moved to Penn's rental house in Philadelphia.<sup>41</sup> He offered Pennsbury to Governor John Blackwell as that unhappy man was leaving office, although it is not clear that Blackwell ever lived there for more than a few days (during which time he was entertained by the gardener, such was the level of gentility and hospitality in rural Pennsylvania). Penn emphasized: "I will have nothing more to do with farming, so that he [Blackwell] may use some of the land to his own behoof & keep my servants for the labour, which is to accommodate him with a better plantation than his own."<sup>42</sup> In instructions sent to Blackwell, Penn ordered that his servant staff at Pennsbury be reduced, and that farming be diminished to only what was needful to maintain the servants.<sup>43</sup>

Penn did want active work continued on Pennsbury's garden. Farming could be started up year by year, and work on the house could be started and stopped at will, but a garden demanded a long-term commitment. His gardener, James Reid, had left Pennsbury, and Penn sent a new one.<sup>44</sup> In 1690 Penn sent John Philly to be Pennsbury's new foreman, to "look after my house and gardens &c., to see that things be kept in some degree of orders."<sup>45</sup> However, the Quaker husbandman, maltster, and schoolmaster had little success and soon returned to England. By 1695 Penn noted with the hyperbolic bitterness that increasingly characterized his communications to Pennsylvania, "& all run to rack at Pennsbury." A year later he wrote to Robert Turner, "my Plantation expencive & yet ruinous, a lovely place & good beginning; but every one mindeing their

<sup>41</sup> John Blackwell to William Penn, May 15, 1690, *Penn Papers*, 3:279.

<sup>42</sup> John Blackwell to William Penn, Jan. 25, 1689; William Penn to Commissioners of Propriety, Apr. 14 1689; William Penn to Robert Turner, Oct. 4, 1689, *Penn Papers*, 3:218, 240, 263.

<sup>43</sup> William Penn to John Blackwell, Sept. 25, 1689, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 6.

<sup>44</sup> *Penn Papers*, 3:259n7, citing notebooks of Albert Cook Myers, says that Penn dismissed Reid. However, no primary evidence supports this supposition, and it may simply be that Reid's indenture was up. See Charles Thomford, "William Penn's Estate at Pennsbury and the Plants of Its Kitchen Garden" (MA thesis, University of Delaware, 1986), 25.

<sup>45</sup> William Penn to Commissioners of Propriety, Dec. 4, 1690, published in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 33 (1909): 316–17, as quoted in McNealy, *History of Bucks County*, 43.

own things.”<sup>46</sup> Penn’s finances were increasingly in disarray; the colony was returning virtually no income from rents or land sales.<sup>47</sup>

What Penn had hoped would be a short trip to England lasted sixteen years. Besides the hostility of William III to dissenters, the new king’s wars against the French made sea travel dangerous. Moreover, Penn’s first wife, Gulielma, died in 1694. By 1696, however, Penn’s affairs had turned around. He married Hannah Callowhill, daughter of a wealthy Bristol Quaker. Political factors also tilted in Penn’s favor, and the end of war in 1697 opened an opportunity for Penn to return to his colony. In 1699 he, a pregnant Hannah, and daughter (by Gulielma) Letitia sailed for America. He was enthusiastic about returning to his “Holy Experiment.”

For a short while things went well for the proprietor in Pennsylvania, which at that point was enjoying a spurt of growth and prosperity. Philadelphia had two thousand houses and five thousand inhabitants and bustled with commerce. The Penn family at first lived in the “Great House” that Edward Shippen had just built in Philadelphia and adorned with gardens. In this house Hannah bore a son, John the American. In April 1700 the Penns moved to Pennsbury from whence Penn himself would commute often to the city. By summer, however, squabbles between factions of colonists frustrated Penn, who, laid up with gout, retired completely to Pennsbury and told Logan to keep “all business from comeing heither.”<sup>48</sup> At Pennsbury a second period of building had commenced, with finish work on the house resuming with vigor, both inside and in the landscape. Penn placed orders for bricks, boards, painting materials, and hearth tiles, and also hardware, instructing Logan to “Send up the parlor bell, three or four stock-locks, three or four pounds of nails, from four to ten penny.” Penn also ordered Logan to send up rum, “haveing not a qtr of a pinte in the house, among so many workmen.” Earlier shoddy work also had to be repaired, as a plumber was ordered with speed to fix the “leads,” that is, the lead gutters and downspouts.<sup>49</sup> Thus the dates of Pennsbury

<sup>46</sup> William Penn to Commissioners of Propriety, Dec. 4, 1690; William Penn to Robert Turner and Thomas Holme, June 20, 1695; William Penn to Robert Turner, Dec. 25, 1696, *Penn Papers*, 3:290–91, 408, 471.

<sup>47</sup> On Penn’s finances in general, see Richard S. Dunn, “Penny Wise and Pound Foolish: Penn as Businessman,” in *The World of William Penn*, ed. Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn (Philadelphia, 1986), 37–52.

<sup>48</sup> William Penn to James Logan, Aug. 22, 1700, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 8.

<sup>49</sup> William Penn to James Logan, Aug. 7, 1700, *Penn-Logan Letters*, 1:7, though with date Sept. 6 (6th 7mo); William Penn to James Logan, Aug. 19, 1700, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 8; William Penn to James Logan, June 30, 1701, *Penn-Logan Letters*, 1:43; William Penn to James Logan, Sept. 4,

should most accurately be given as: shell, 1683–1686; finish, 1700–1703.

### The Original House

So what did the original Pennsbury look like? Most importantly, it was not as large as the reconstruction, nor so grand, and it probably had a T-plan, perhaps symmetrical, perhaps not. Much evidence supports these contentions. Firstly, a T-plan was the shape of the cellar remains excavated in 1933. Okie claimed that there was evidence of a pier found at the northwest corner of his double-pile reconstruction and at least tentative evidence of “toothing” in the masonry at the adjacent corners of the brick walls. However, neither appears in the detailed archaeological plans that survive. In these plans the only indication of a double-pile form is a later, hand-drawn dotted line that clearly indicates a hypothesis (it is sketched and not drawn with a straightedge).<sup>50</sup> If we do not wish to make Okie an outright fabricator, we could suggest that there was some evidence of a pier at about this location but that it represented an outbuilding or other landscape feature. It seems unlikely that it was a corner of Penn’s great house.<sup>51</sup> By contrast, after initial archaeology, an early unknown drafts-

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1700, *Penn Papers*, 3:616–17; William Penn to James Logan, Aug. 31, 1700, and Sept. 3, 1700, in *Penn-Logan Letters*, 1:11, 14; William Penn to James Logan, Jan. 4, 1700/1, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 8.

<sup>50</sup> The drawing on which the west rear corner room is sketched is a small, drafted site plan, dated 1934. No indications of rear corner rooms are found on Donald Cadzow’s small sketch plan, dated 1934, nor on the larger, carefully drafted archaeological plans by Charles H. Hazard, dated October 21, 1933. Various drafts of reports by Donald Cadzow on the archaeology also did not mention any piers or other features in these rear corners. There seems never to have been a final and complete report on the archaeology. The November 1934 “Studies for Reconstruction of Pennsbury House” by John G. Todd show dotted lines with question marks in these rear corners. All documents in Pennsbury Archives.

<sup>51</sup> Firstly, if there were no foundation walls or intermediate piers under the rear two corners of the building, it would mean that Penn had adopted earthfast construction for these rooms. They clearly would not have been framed with braced timber construction on heavy sills because, due to the long spans, there would have had to have been lines of piers for support under both walls. It is difficult to believe that Penn would use earthfast construction for two major rooms of his primary dwelling. A shortage of brick could be hypothesized, but for the west and south foundation walls he used local rubble stone, enough of which would have been available to complete the rectangle. The digging required for footing trenches under these corner walls would not have deterred Penn, as the footings for the whole house were fairly shallow. William Penn to James Harrison, Apr. 24, 1686, *Penn Papers*, 3:90, speaks very casually of digging a cellar for another house that would have been about the size of each of these corner rooms. Moreover, if using earthfast construction, why have a single brick corner pier?

Secondly, it could be objected that the archaeologists simply missed evidence of piers or foundation trenches. Cadzow was a specialist in Native American sites, not historic buildings. The question of his competency to handle a historical and architectural site was raised several times, most pointedly

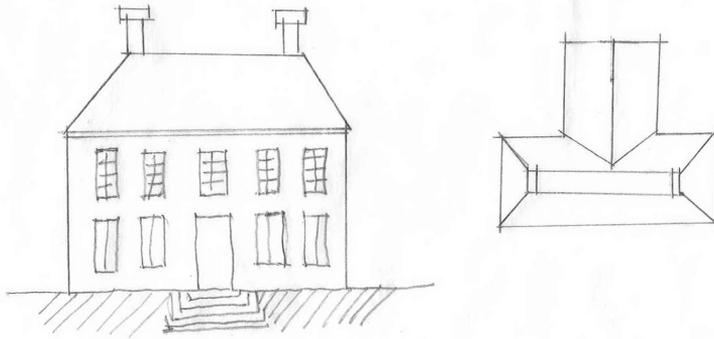


Fig. 3. Elevation and plan for a T-plan reconstruction, drawn in the 1930s by an unknown draftsman. By Mark Reinberger after a photocopy in Pennsbury Archives of missing original.

man (possibly John G. Todd) was so convinced that the evidence pointed to a T-plan, that he developed reconstructions of this form (figure 3).<sup>52</sup>

Images of the Pennsbury house from old surveys also suggest that a T-plan is probable. An image from a survey of 1736 shows a straight, five-bay facade with pyramidal steps and end chimneys (the view on which the current Pennsbury is largely based); this view could be the water front (figure 4).<sup>53</sup> Another view (unknown at the time of the reconstruction) shows a central pavilion or projection with a gable roof; this could well represent the land front (figure 5).<sup>54</sup> The stair tower could have been built of wood (its foundation walls are thinner) thus accounting for comments

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in an interview by Charles Hosmer with S. K. Stevens, done between 1970 and 1975 ("Pennsbury Reconstruction Controversy," Pennsbury Archives). But if anything, prehistoric evidence is more ephemeral and illusory than historic ruins. However, it is difficult to believe that archaeologists could have missed all evidence of walls, piers, foundation trenches (inevitably with artifacts), or even of the post holes that would remain from earthfast construction. Especially is this true when they were actually looking for evidence of a double-pile structure.

<sup>52</sup> Unsigned and undated drawing in Pennsbury Archives.

<sup>53</sup> "Draught of the Mannor of Pennsbury in the County of Bucks . . . Surveyed in the Year 1736," Streper Papers Bucks County, p. 149, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; reproduced in *Penn Papers*, 4:133.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Holme, *A Map of ye Improved Part of Pensilvania in America . . .*, ca. 1690, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. This map contains the oldest view of Pennsbury.



Fig. 4. Enlargement of Pennsbury house on 1736 survey, "Draught of the Mannor of Pennsbury in the County of Bucks . . . Surveyed in the Year 1736," Streper Papers Bucks County, p. 149, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

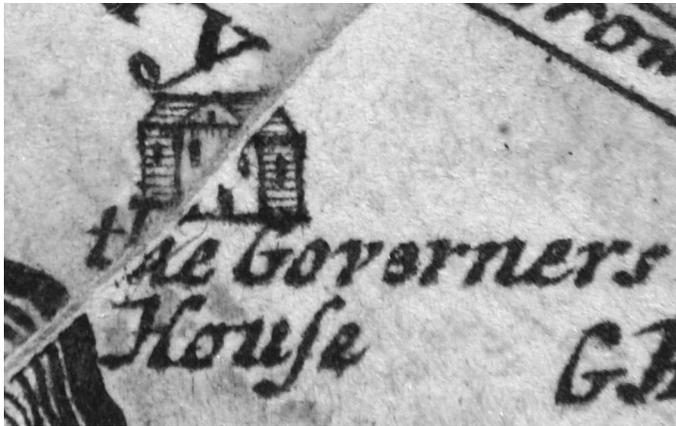


Fig. 5. Enlargement of Pennsbury house on Thomas Holme, *A Map of ye Improved Part of Pensilvania in America . . .*, ca. 1690, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

on the “wooden side” of the house.<sup>55</sup>

Another piece of evidence pointing to a T-plan for Pennsbury is the calculation of the size of the house from the number of roof shingles. In 1688 (only five years after it was begun) the great house at Pennsbury was reroofed with five thousand wood shingles:

Pennsbury is very well Shingled, and by the Judgment of the Carpenters that did it, the Roofe would not have Stood a Year longer, they had much to doe in bringing the Rafters with handscrews into their places againe and Furring out where they were bent, and now wee are about The Finishing the out houseing.<sup>56</sup>

Using the most generous assumptions, this quantity of shingles will cover at most 2,043 square feet of building area, assuming small overhangs all around.<sup>57</sup> The area of the double-pile house (with overhangs) reconstructed at Pennsbury is over 2,600 square feet. The area of the T-plan brick walls discovered in the archaeology (assuming symmetry around the rear projection, plus overhangs) is approximately 1,800 square feet. Thus, five thousand shingles comes much closer to covering a T-plan house than a double-pile one.

<sup>55</sup> These images must be approached with caution, because they may well have simply represented “large house” to the map maker. Moreover, they are completely contradicted by another image (on a March 1700 survey) that shows an entirely different structure, apparently with double front gable roofs and side chimneys, a common enough form in England at the time and one not unknown in the colonies. Thomas Fairman’s house in Shackamaxon had two gabled front projections. Many seventeenth-century houses in New England have two, or even three, front gables. Examples (taken from Kimball, *Domestic Architecture*, 14–19) include the Henry Bridgham House in Boston (1670) and the John Ward House in Salem, Massachusetts (1684). It is unclear how such a form could fit the discovered foundations, but perhaps there were originally more of the foundations to the east (where the Crozier House destroyed them), so that the original Pennsbury was longer than sixty feet but still only one room deep with at least one projection to the rear. The house depicted also apparently had half-timbered walls, unless the many vertical lines represent windows or bay windows. Again, this image may be merely a generic representation of a house.

Two other early images of the house are too small and indistinct to be of much help. One occurs in a plat in Bucks County Deed Book 23–50; the other on the George Heathcote survey of 1692, in Land Records Office, Book D-68, p. 238, Pennsylvania State Archives. These images could represent almost any large house form.

<sup>56</sup> William Markham to William Penn, July 21, 1688, *Penn Papers*, 3:195.

<sup>57</sup> Five thousand shingles, assuming thirty-six-by-five-inch shingles (probably the largest possible) at only double coverage (i.e. seventeen-inch exposure—the greatest possible), gives 2,656 square feet of roof. Triple coverage is far safer and became normative by the late eighteenth century but was not always adhered to in the earlier colonial period. Assuming a ten-in-twelve roof pitch (probably the least—there were habitable garrets, and roof pitches tended to be steep in houses of this era), and 10 percent waste, gives a horizontal coverage area of 2,043 square feet including overhangs. Thanks to Peter Copp of Martin Rosenblum and Associates, architects of Philadelphia, for help in these calculations.

The wood shingles installed at Pennsbury in 1688 probably replaced terra cotta tiles, and we might hypothesize that the failure of Pennsbury's roof framing was due to the excessive weight of these, a load the first carpenters had not properly allowed for. A fragment of a terra cotta tile survives in the evidence of the Pennsbury archaeological dig.<sup>58</sup>

Inventories taken of Pennsbury in 1687 (when James Harrison died) and 1701 (when Penn returned to England for the last time) played a large role in the reconstruction of the house, but ultimately point to a T-rather than a double-pile plan, or at least to a house significantly smaller than the reconstruction. (They have, however, been useful in furnishing and interpreting the reconstructed house to the public.) At the time of the 1687 inventory, the house was clearly unfinished. Tools and building materials cluttered many of the rooms, especially on the ground floor. Only the parlor (and possibly the passage room) on the ground floor and the parlor chamber and governor's parlor chamber on the second floor were in use (as suggested by furniture), probably in line with Penn's agreement with Harrison that he be allowed three rooms. Because of this unfinished state, it is difficult to ascertain how many fireplaces the house had. The 1701 inventory is much more complete and seems to represent the house finished and more or less fully furnished. At the time this inventory was taken, Penn was leaving (in a hurry) for England and intended to return soon. Thus he would presumably have left much of his furnishings.

Okie claimed that the inventories supported his reconstruction, although he admitted that he had to assume that Penn had taken a great deal of furniture with him back to England. However, it is hard to see how Okie's claim is true. Both inventories list four or five major spaces on the lower floor and five or six spaces on the upper. A potential line up follows.

<sup>58</sup> Gabriel Thomas mentioned that Penn covered Pennsbury with what he called "tile-stone," produced in Pennsylvania; Gabriel Thomas, "An Historical and Geographical Account of Pensilvania and of West-New-Jersey," London, 1698, in *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, West New Jersey and Delaware 1630-1707*, ed. Albert Cook Myers (New York, 1912), 320.

A legend about Pennsbury's roof deserves comment: the fishpond on the roof. John F. Watson reported this (he called it a reservoir against fire), but its source was Edmund Morris, an antiquarian of Bucks County, who wrote to Watson in 1826: "I have ascertained beyond a doubt that there was a large fish pond on the top of it: and that when [Penn] returned to England, the building being neglected, and the pond taking to leaking, the house soon fell to ruin." The source of this legend was probably the letter from Penn asking for a plumber to fix the "leads." Edmund Morris to John F. Watson, June 22, 1826, John F. Watson Correspondence, 1823-1828, p.151, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

TABLE 1

1687	1701
<b>LOWER FLOOR: with potential alignment of spaces</b>	
<p><i>Governor's Parlor</i> No fireplace equipment Little furniture; many tools</p> <p><i>Parlor</i> Fireplace equipment Much furniture</p> <p><i>Passage Room</i> Fireplace equipment Some furniture</p> <p><i>Hall</i> No fireplace equipment Some furniture</p> <p><i>Joyner's Room</i> Maybe fireplace equipment No furniture; many tools</p> <p><i>Governor's Closet</i> Only books</p> <p><i>Closet</i> Storage only</p> <p>At this point the inventory takers went to the cellar—which had three spaces: <i>common</i>, <i>kitchen</i> and <i>next the garden</i>. These could well be the three cellar spaces found during archaeology—one under the west wing of the T; one under the center (front and back); and one (divided by a wooden partition) under the east wing (mostly built over by the Crozier House).</p>	<p><i>Best Parlor</i> Fireplace equipment Much furniture</p> <p><i>Other Parlor</i> Maybe fireplace equipment Little furniture</p> <p><i>Little Hall</i> No fireplace equipment Little furniture</p> <p><i>Great Hall</i> No fireplace equipment Much furniture</p> <p>???</p> <p><i>Mrs.'s Closet</i> No fireplace equipment Little furniture</p> <p><i>Little Closet</i> No fireplace equipment Only furniture = storage</p>
<b>UPPER FLOOR: No actual location is intended by these matches but simply correspondence of number of rooms</b>	
<p><i>Governor's Parlor Chamber</i> No fireplace equipment Some furniture</p> <p><i>Parlor Chamber</i> Fireplace equipment Much furniture</p> <p><i>Joyner's Room Chamber</i> No fireplace equipment Some furniture</p> <p><i>Room over Passage</i> No fireplace equipment Tools and materials</p> <p><i>Room over Hall</i> Nothing</p> <p>1688 inventory then goes to outbuildings.</p>	<p><i>Best Chamber</i> Fireplace equipment Much furniture</p> <p><i>Next Chamber</i> Fireplace equipment Much furniture</p> <p><i>Next Chamber</i> No fireplace equipment Fairly much furniture</p> <p><i>Nursery</i> Fireplace equipment Fairly much furniture</p> <p><i>Next Chamber</i> No fireplace equipment Fairly much furniture</p> <p>???</p> <p>No fireplace equipment Only furniture = storage</p>

A double-pile house such as Pennsbury's reconstruction would have had at least six (very large) rooms per floor. Okie filled the sixth space with the "Great Room," mentioned by Penn ("the great Room the servants used to eat in"). Okie also identified one of his spaces as the "withdrawing room," another Penn appellation.<sup>59</sup> Penn linked the "best parler" and the "Great room" as one pair and the "withdrawing room" and the "other parler" as another. However, the fact that the 1701 inventory uses the term "Great Hall" for what the 1687 inventory calls the "Hall" suggests strongly that Penn's "Great Room" was, in fact, the hall. Identifying the "withdrawing room" is more difficult. It is perhaps the 1687 inventory's "joyner's room," indicating a temporary use while construction proceeded.

Taken together, the two inventories indicate that Pennsbury had only three major rooms on the lower floor: the Hall (or Great Hall); Governor's (best) Parlor; and Parlor. The other spaces—two closets and the passage room (or little hall)—were smaller. Moreover, the inventories note three fireplaces on the upper floor and only two below (although we might assume an equal number on both floors). This would make a total of six hearths for the entire house, well above average for houses in general at the time, but relatively low by gentry standards, indeed exactly the average for "mere" gentlemen, the lowest rank of the English gentry.<sup>60</sup> The reconstructed house has a total of eleven hearths (including one in the attached kitchen), double what is proven by the documents.

A T-plan, with four spaces across the front (for which there would be plenty of room in a sixty-foot-long facade) works better with the inventories than Okie's double pile (figure 6). It must also be noted that the inventories are very unclear about the location of Pennsbury's kitchen, which Okie decided to integrate with the main block of the house, based on a reported lightning strike in June 1687. In that month, Phineas Pemberton took refuge at Pennsbury from a thunderstorm. He and his father and mother were shown to the front parlor next to the kitchen and a lightning bolt hit the stack of chimneys there; some of the stones reportedly rolled into the parlor, and some even to the hall door.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, May 19, 1685, *Penn Papers*, 3:56.

<sup>60</sup> Linda Hall, "Yeoman or Gentleman? Problems in Defining Social Status in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Gloucestershire," *Vernacular Architecture* 22 (1991): 5, 8; Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry, 1480–1680* (New Haven, CT, 1999), 6; John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* (Baltimore, 2001), 56–58.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted without citation in "Letters Written by Penn to James Harrison . . ." (typescript, 1939), Pennsbury Archives.

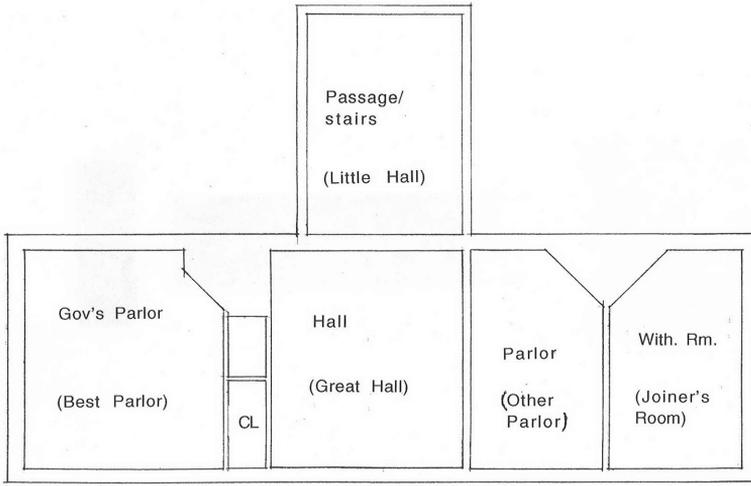


Fig. 6. Hypothetical reconstruction of T-plan Pennsbury, showing rooms mentioned in inventories. By Mark Reinberger.

Moreover, some disturbed foundations discovered under the early nineteenth-century Crozier House, constructed on the original Pennsbury site, also suggested to Okie an attached kitchen wing. The comment on the lightning strike might merely refer to the side of the house nearest the kitchen, which could imply either an attached or a detached kitchen. Penn called for a kitchen outbuilding (uncommon but not unknown in England but already normative in nearby Tidewater Maryland and Virginia). The 1687 inventory refers, apparently, to a detached structure as the “ould kitchen” and its chamber, possibly the earlier Thomas King house. Based on its contents in this inventory, the parlor on the lower floor probably served as the chief living space at this time when the house was very incomplete, including cooking functions. This could explain why the space below the parlor could have been called the “kitchen cellar.” The 1701 inventory nowhere mentions a kitchen. By that time, cooking was probably done entirely by slaves in an outbuilding.

The room names mentioned in the inventories and other documents are what would be expected for the period.<sup>62</sup> Upstairs rooms are consistently called “chambers” and are sometimes identified by the room below

<sup>62</sup> The English literature on room names and their evolution in this period is most accessible in Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, 273–322.

(for example, “parlor chamber”). A “nursery” (a term usually associated with large houses of the gentry) also appeared in the 1701 inventory, probably because it was the room where Hannah Penn kept John who was born the year before. Downstairs rooms fell into three categories: halls, great or little, the latter probably also referred to as a passage; parlors, distinguished in one way or another; and closets, apparently used mostly for storage but very possibly also for retirement, study, and prayer. Penn engaged daily in these activities, and the more up-to-date terms of “study” or “library” do not appear in the Pennsbury documents. According to the 1687 inventory, books were kept in the “Governor’s Closet.” At this time, there were eight books (all on gardening, husbandry, and forestry) plus a collection of “Dutch draughts” (drawings of Dutch gardens?), presumably left in Pennsylvania for James Harrison and Penn’s gardeners. At Harrison’s death the books were turned over to James Reid, then Pennsbury’s gardener. Penn probably took his other books back to England with him. One of Penn’s letters referred to “a kind of dark closet” between two rooms resulting from wainscoting a chimney; this reference clearly suggests a closet in the modern sense, that is, for storage, a meaning then only emerging, as revealed by Penn’s hesitance in what to call the space. Penn clearly used the term to indicate small storage spaces when he later referred to “closetts by the chimneys” in giving directions for the house of a friend.<sup>63</sup> Significantly, Penn did not name the spaces in that house; he referred to them only as “rooms.” It was not until spaces were furnished, inhabited, and used that they received labels. The fashionable English terms “dining room” or “dining parlor” do not appear in the Pennsbury documents, again suggesting that Penn did not know or did not care to embrace the most current ideas of house design.

Penn once referred to “the great room the servants used to eat in,” probably referring to the hall.<sup>64</sup> Although in medieval days family and servants commonly ate together in the hall, by this time the family would probably have eaten in one of the parlors. That the practice of the servants eating in one of the principal rooms at Pennsbury was noted in the past tense suggests that it was a temporary expedient during the period when the house was under construction. People of the period sometimes used the term “servants hall” (Thomas Penn later had one of these in his

<sup>63</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Robert Turner, and Thomas Holmes, ca. early Apr. 1686, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5.

<sup>64</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, May 19, 1685, *Penn Papers*, 3:55.

Philadelphia house), but usually such rooms were in a basement or out-building.<sup>65</sup> Penn also talked of a withdrawing room, which usually indicated a fairly small space, perhaps even a closet.

Architectural context provides at least circumstantial evidence against a double-pile form for the original Pennsbury. The double-pile house form of the reconstructed Pennsbury was uncommon even in England at the time for midsized houses. Only three examples are known in the colonies—the Peter Sergeant House in Boston, Massachusetts (1676–1679), St. Peters in St. Mary's City, Maryland (1679), and Arlington in Northampton County, Virginia (1670–1676). By and large, symmetrical double-pile forms were restricted in England at the time of Pennsbury to architect-designed houses much grander than Pennsbury could possibly have been, both in size and architectural splendor (pediments, pilasters, carving, stonework, etc.). Only after 1700 did midsize (roughly 2,000–2,500 square feet per floor), symmetrical, double-pile, center-hall houses become common.<sup>66</sup> Larger double-pile houses of the seventeenth century embodied an important functional and social distinction from Pennsbury: either there were major chamber suites (bedrooms) on the entrance floor (as at Coleshill and Belton House); or there were major suites of public rooms on the second floor (as at Tyttenhanger House). Neither was true at Pennsbury, to judge by the inventories of 1687 and 1701.<sup>67</sup>

By contrast, Penn and his workmen would have had ample precedent for building a single-pile house. With various appendages, a single-pile form was normative in England until 1700 and in the colonies until the 1720s for gentry houses of Pennsbury's scale. The English historian of vernacular architecture R. W. Brunskill notes that T-plan houses (his broader term is "compact house with projecting wings") are now relatively scarce (except in Wales), but that the plan was common for gentry houses

<sup>65</sup> Thomas Penn to Richard Hockley, Mar. 24, 1752, in *The Thomas Penn Papers at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1728–1832*, ed. John D. Kilbourne (Philadelphia, 1968), microfilm ed., reel 1 (hereafter *Thomas Penn Papers*). For room names as they were used in early America, see Carl Lounsbury, ed., *An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape* (New York, 1994).

<sup>66</sup> Daniel D. Reiff, *Small Georgian Houses in England and Virginia: Origins and Development through the 1750s* ([Newark, DE], 1986), 18.

<sup>67</sup> Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, 242, 303; Roger North, *Of Building: Roger North's Writings on Architecture*, ed. Howard Colvin and John Newman (Oxford, 1981), 124, 130–31; Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (1978; repr., New York, 1980), 151.

in the mid-seventeenth century. He notes that the form represented a transition between medieval forms (single-pile and with many wings thrown out rather haphazardly) and symmetrical Renaissance forms coming into vogue in the mid to late 1600s. One variant he describes (but does not illustrate) might well fit the rooms known to have been at Pennsbury: "Another, larger, version had two principal and two service rooms on the ground floor, chambers above, and . . . a front porch and rear staircase turret."<sup>68</sup> Brunskill's examples usually have the stairs near the crossing of the T, with a separate room in the rear wing, something entirely possible at Pennsbury.<sup>69</sup>

Seventeenth-century T- or cross-plan houses are (or were) well represented in the colonies. The Spencer-Pierce-Little House in Newbury, Massachusetts (ca.1675–1700) is a T-shaped stone structure with an attached brick porch tower on the front.<sup>70</sup> There were many in Virginia that belonged to this type. Greenspring (begun near Jamestown in 1642 as the governor's residence of Virginia) consisted of a long string of four rooms, to which was attached a wing containing the kitchen, forming an ell. Bacon's Castle in Surry County (1665) has a one-room-deep main block with projecting porch and stair wings. Criss-Cross, New Kent County (late seventeenth century) also had an attached T porch and chamber above. Fairfield in Gloucester County (1692) was probably also T-shaped.

It is unlikely that Penn and the workmen available to him would have been up to the creation of what would have been a sophisticated house even in England. Clearly, some of the work done during the first phase of construction was faulty and in some cases crude. After he returned to England, Penn wrote often of elements of the house that he had come to think deficient. For example,

I would have the back door a two leave door, & the front made from top to bottom for it is most ugly & low, out of all proportion thos may serve some other place but other things are in more hast. I would have a

<sup>68</sup> R. W. Brunskill, *Houses* (London, 1982), 51–53.

<sup>69</sup> See also the discussion of house plan types in the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *An Inventory of Historical Monuments: The Town of Stamford* (London, 1977), I–II.

<sup>70</sup> It is conceivable that Pennsbury had such a front porch. The large scale archaeological plans show that there was very little left of the wall at what would have been the center of the river front and a great amount of disturbance along the outside face at this point, perhaps suggesting that another structure once existed at this point. Of course, such a structure could also have been the foundation of a set of steps to the front door.

rale & banasters before both fronts. thee pale will serve round, tho they are sad ones.<sup>71</sup>

He also stated the desire to upgrade some of Pennsbury's windows from casement to sash windows, a type then becoming fashionable in England. Lead comes (the strips of metal that held old glass in place, still used in stained glass) from the original casements were found in the archaeology.<sup>72</sup> If his directions were carried out, Pennsbury would probably have been the first house in the colonies to have sash windows. Certainly Penn's reference to this new fashion of windows is the earliest known with regard to a colonial building.<sup>73</sup> He wanted to change his "middle story" (that is, second floor) windows to these and reuse the older casement ones elsewhere or have them sold. Sash windows presumably provided better air and privacy for the chambers, considerations not so important in the public rooms below (which often had solid paneled shutters in colonial Pennsylvania houses). Note that only the windows on one story were to be changed, leaving a mixture of windows that would probably have seemed odd to a classically trained architect.

Judging by Penn's comments on the original front and back doors, his carpenters were clearly not of the most sophisticated sort. Likewise, the structural failure and required reframing of the roof suggests less than top-notch builders. The records indicate that Pennsbury was built mostly by a succession of young (and thus inexperienced) indentured servants brought or sent over by Penn. No workman seems to have stayed on the site very long, and there is no record of a long-term supervisor, especially one with architectural or construction experience. Penn himself, who is not known to have had any training in architecture, apparently supervised construction during its first phase, and James Harrison, who supervised later, was originally a shoemaker and shopkeeper.

Penn's own country seat in England, Warminghurst Place, furnishes little help in understanding Penn's skill or taste in architecture. It was a rambling affair, undoubtedly built in many pieces, apparently in late medieval times and the sixteenth century. A 1707 sketch shows it as a

<sup>71</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Mar. 18, 1685, *Penn Papers*, 3:38.

<sup>72</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Robert Turner, and Thomas Holmes, Apr. 24 1686, *Penn Papers*, 3:89–93.

<sup>73</sup> Kornwolf, *Architecture and Town Planning*, 1219, discusses Pennsbury's sash windows. For the introduction of sash windows in the colonies, see *Old-Time New England* 14 (Apr. 1924): 193–94; Lounsbury, ed., *Illustrated Glossary*, 316.

single-pile house with various asymmetrical projections. Penn called it “a pleasant place, but more by nature than Art. The house is very large, but ugly.”<sup>74</sup> This letter has been used to support the theory that Penn embraced the advanced residential architecture of the postrestoration period: classical, symmetrical, and (presumably) double pile.<sup>75</sup> However, this letter was written very late (1696), after Penn had struggled with the design and construction of Pennsbury and returned to England.

Did Penn see Warminghurst as “ugly” in 1680, when he bought it? If so, one wonders why he bought it, unless he really was not terribly concerned about the house as architecture.<sup>76</sup> He apparently did not have such a clear notion of architectural aesthetics when first in Pennsylvania. It was only after returning to England (now more fully aware of architecture) that Penn realized the doorway’s aesthetic deficiency and possibly its old-fashioned character.<sup>77</sup> In the letters to Harrison after his return, Penn sent workmen that he proclaimed of unusual skill: a gardener who is “commended by the best about town . . . [as] an artist”; a carpenter who is “an old Master workman, [who] has built many houses”; another gardener “of recommended great skill [who will] cast things into good posture”; three carpenters who are “pretty fellows,” one of them “a rare Joyner.”<sup>78</sup> Penn realized the deficiencies of his first campaign on Pennsbury and did what he could to make the house and gardens a little more up to date. But he could not change the plan of the house, and we are left with the probability that we should not look for Pennsbury’s original form to be particularly sophisticated.

About Pennsbury’s construction we know much and little, but it must be said that in the materials used, the reconstruction was accurate. Part of

<sup>74</sup> William Penn to Hannah Callowhill, Feb. 9, 1696, *Penn Papers*, 3:431.

<sup>75</sup> Clare Lise Cavicchi, “Pennsbury Manor Furnishing Plan” (research report, The Pennsbury Society, 1988), 4, quoting Alice Kent Schooler.

<sup>76</sup> Penn’s lack of astuteness about architecture may be seen by contrasting his statements (and the lack of them) with his nearly exact contemporary, Roger North, a gentleman and amateur architect. See North, *Of Building*.

<sup>77</sup> Presumably, too, the surviving fragment of a pilaster capital from the Pennsbury front door would date from the rebuilding rather than the original construction. John Fanning Watson to [Roberts Vaux?], Aug. 26, 1826, John F. Watson Correspondence, 1823–1828, p. 151. John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, in the Olden Time* (1844; Philadelphia, 1881), 2:102 mentions this fragment of the door. Cavicchi, “Pennsbury Manor Furnishing Plan,” 4 also discusses this. The provenance of this capital is obscure. Watson presumably obtained it in the neighborhood of Pennsbury in 1826, long after the house had been torn down.

<sup>78</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Mar. 18, 1685, Oct. 25, 1685, and Apr. 24, 1686, *Penn Papers*, 3:38, 66, 90.

the house was framed and sided with clapboard, and part was brick laid with oyster shell lime mortar that was not terribly strong. Some bricks were made from Pennsbury clay, although Penn at times talked about getting bricks from Burlington, New Jersey, and from I. Redman in Philadelphia.<sup>79</sup> The roof had lead gutters and/or downspouts, which gave much trouble and threatened its foundations.

Purely by accident we know some of the dimensions of Pennsbury's windows and doors. The second-floor windows were seven feet tall; the height of the first-floor windows is in doubt: Okie read a letter of Penn to be five-and-one-half feet, but recent transcribers concluded that the number was illegible. The entry door was three-and-one-half feet wide and eight feet tall; interior doors two feet, ten inches wide and seven feet high. These dimensions were not unusual for the period. The windows had shutters (Penn called them "shutts"), perhaps on the first floor only, which was common in colonial times.<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, a few interior details are recorded. The rooms had wainscoting with simple paneling (no bolection moldings), but (if Penn's requests were followed) only on the exterior walls (presumably for warmth and as security from the damp, about which the Penn family was anxious): "lett ye wainscote only be on the out walls & that as plain as may be, the bords Joyned & battened in the joynts only. tis well enough for us." Other walls and ceilings were plastered and whitewashed. At least some of the fireplaces had glazed tiles around the openings (evidence for two types was found in the archaeology) and square clay hearth tiles. At the time of the second trip, Penn installed a bell pull in the parlor, perhaps because he was laid up with gout and had trouble moving around.<sup>81</sup> Finally, there may have been some furniture made on site:

Carpenter & Joyner both come by this, that works 150 days & then pays £5 country for mony he had here. he is fitt for wainscoat which lett

<sup>79</sup> Hannah Penn to James Logan, Aug. 2, 1700, *Penn-Logan Letters*, 1:5-7.

<sup>80</sup> Okie, "The Re-creation of Penn's Manor"; William Penn to James Harrison, Robert Turner, and Thomas Holmes, ca. early Apr. 1686, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5; William Penn to James Harrison, Robert Turner, and Thomas Holmes, Apr. 24, 1686, *Penn Papers*, 2:89-93; William Penn to James Harrison, Nov. 7, 1685, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5.

<sup>81</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, July 11 and 30, and Aug. 3, 1685, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5; James Harrison to William Penn, Nov. 29, 1686, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 8; William Penn to James Logan, Aug. 7, 1700, *Penn-Logan Letters*, 1:7, though with date Sept. 6 [6th 7mo.]; William Penn to James Logan, Aug. 19, 1700, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 8; William Penn to James Logan, June 30, 1701, *Penn-Logan Letters*, 1:43.

be plain; get window shutts & two or three eating tables to flap down . . . some wooden chaires of walnut with long backs & seats moderat, 4 inches shorter than the old ones, because of cushions.<sup>82</sup>

### The Landscape of Ornament and Agriculture

As with the house, documents can clarify much about the original landscape. Indeed, as is typical for Penn, we know as much or more about the outbuildings and gardens as we do about the house. Penn was clear in the list of outbuildings he wanted, of which there were at least five: “a kitchen, two larders, a wash house & room to Iron in; a brewhouse & in it an oven for bakeing & a Stable for twelve horses.” The larders might well have been two separate freestanding structures.<sup>83</sup> He envisioned them grouped together and in alignment with each other and with the house (“in a uniformity & not ascu from ye house”), although he did not specify their exact position and clearly he had left no site plan. The present row of structures, set behind the house and at a right angle to the front (based evidently on archaeological findings), is probably a correct position and similar to other plantations in colonial America. Penn also mentioned a pump between the house and outbuildings. Other documents mention a barn, porch, and shed, perhaps constructed before Penn left for England in 1685 so that he did not have to specify their construction.<sup>84</sup>

It is difficult to know just what got constructed of those structures Penn ordered. Among outbuildings, the 1687 inventory mentions only the old kitchen, a smith’s shop, and possibly a carpenter’s shop, all with chambers above them (as Penn requested). An immense combined brew- and bakehouse was reconstructed in 1940, supposedly with good archaeological evidence and a nineteenth-century drawing of the building, which had been turned into a tenant house. So was a subterranean ice house, clearly present archaeologically but nowhere even hinted at in the documents and not a usual feature for country seats until the end of the eighteenth century.

Much of our understanding of Pennsbury’s original landscape must remain conjectural; we know what he had and what he grew, but not the

<sup>82</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Nov. 7, 1685, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5.

<sup>83</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Mar. 18, 1685, *Penn Papers*, 3:38; Lounsbury, ed., *Illustrated Glossary*, 207.

<sup>84</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Nov. 17, 1686, transcript in Pennsbury Archives; William Penn to James Harrison, July 11 and 30, and Aug. 3, 1685, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5; James Harrison to William Penn, Oct. 3, 1686, in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 4 (1880): 451.

design. We know what books he had available and left for the gardener's use when returning to England in 1684. Compared to an English gentleman's estate of the period, Penn's wants were simple. The sole bit of formal landscaping seems to have been the entry sequence from the river to the house, decorous and even a bit ceremonious as befitted the proprietor. The design of the rest was treated more casually, although Penn had definite ideas on the plants (and animals) that would find a home at Pennsbury.

Penn was clearly knowledgeable about gardening and farming, from both practical experience in England and Ireland and from books. His library on the subject was extensive. The books he left at Pennsbury for his gardener (listed in the 1687 inventory) include all the most significant works of the period. Above all, John Worlidge's *Systema Agriculturae* (London, 1669) constituted a summa for the gentleman farmer on "improved" agriculture, covering everything needed to run a profitable estate. Similarly, Leonard Meager, *The English Gardener* (London, 1670) dealt with orchards, vegetables, and ornamental courtyards. John Evelyn's *Kalendarium Hortense* (London, 1666) listed jobs to be done in a garden by the month. Books on specific plants and produce were Moses Cook's *The Manner of Raising, Ordering, and Improving Forrest-Trees* (London, 1676); Sir Hugh Plat's *The Garden of Eden, or, An Accurate Description of all Flowers and Fruits Now Growing in England* (London, 1653); William Hughes's, *The Flower Garden* (London, 1671); Charles Cotton's *The Planters Manual: Being Instructions for the Raising, Planting, and Cultivating All Sorts of Fruit-Trees* (London, 1676); and Nicholas de Bonnefons's *The French Gardiner; Instructing How to Cultivate All Sorts of Fruit-Trees, and Herbs for the Garden, Translated into English by J[ohn] E[velyn]* (London, 1672), devoted to growing and preserving vegetables and fruits.

The entry sequence was the only aspect of the landscape that Penn "designed" with any precision. At the river's edge, the entry walk climbed several stone steps and progressed forward on a gravel walk approximately 120 feet long and 20 feet wide, planted on each side with poplars:

If Ralph this fall, could gett twenty young poplars, about 18 inches round, beheaded, to twenty foot, to plant in a walk below the steps to the water It were not amiss. perhaps to 15 foot long for a Round head, may do as well. plant them in the 8mo is well.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, May 19, 1685, *Penn Papers*, 3:55.

This allée terminated at a higher set of steps that climbed through a brick retaining wall (found during archaeology in the 1930s and reconstructed) into the upper court in front of the house. Here another walk, either of gravel or smooth stone, led to “handsom playn steps” and a landing into the house. Thus the ground in front of the house was terraced, a traditional way of dealing with a sloping surface, such as led from the house to the river. For the walks Penn specifically called for a gravel found at Philadelphia “that is red and binds.” A properly laid gravel walk would drain well and be dry underfoot. Two of Penn’s English sources (Worlidge and Cook) recommended the native English white poplar (*Populus alba*) as doing well in moist ground and being suitable for pollarding. In the reconstructed Pennsbury landscape, Thomas Sears planted the native tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), which is eminently unsuitable for “beheading.” Penn would have preferred another allée to lead from the back door of the house to a bridge, but assigned this project lower priority.<sup>86</sup>

Atop the brick retaining wall, a fence enclosed a courtyard. Other courts occupied the ground on each side of the house and behind it. Such enclosed courts were typical of English houses of this period. The courtyards were to be “paled” and connected by “gates like Philadelphia,” presumably not too elaborate. The courts were to be carefully leveled, so that a step or two was sometimes needed from one to another. The courts of both the river and land fronts of the house were to have a fence of “rale & banasters,” but the side courts and the garden needed only a palisade fence if that was more economical. The courts were to be planted with hay, imported from Long Island.<sup>87</sup>

The resultant landscape composition around the house at Pennsbury probably came close to that recorded in the mid-eighteenth century at Fairhill, the country seat that Penn’s good friend Isaac Norris laid out in the 1710s. One arrived at Fairhill from the Germantown Road, through an informal allée of trees, to the house, which was fronted by a grassed parterre. This parterre was enclosed by a brick wall in front, with a wooden gate and side fencing. The stable, brewhouse, well, and kitchen garden

<sup>86</sup> William Penn gardening directions to Ralph Smyth, ca. Aug. 1684; William Penn to James Harrison, Mar. 18, 1685, May 19, 1685, Oct. 25, 1685, *Penn Papers*, 2:584–85, 3:38–41, 55–58, 65–68; William Penn to James Harrison, Nov. 17 and Nov. 20, 1686, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5.

<sup>87</sup> William Penn gardening directions to Ralph Smyth, ca. Aug. 1684; William Penn to James Harrison, May 19, 1685, *Penn Papers*, 2: 584–85, 3:55–58; William Penn to James Harrison, July 11, 1685, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5.

were nearby.<sup>88</sup> The effect of the Fairhill landscape is formal, but simple—appropriate to the Quaker sense of aesthetics: plain and handsome.

Another piece of ornamental landscape that Penn wanted were walks up and down the river: up to the falls and downriver to a point below the house. He wanted these paths “cleared so as two may walk a foot,” and he told James Harrison to cut timber for firewood from these routes, one of which may have been an old Indian trail. In addition he wanted the trees cut down along the river in both directions “to open a prospect upwards as well as down wards” from the house.<sup>89</sup> Penn also had visions of creating a deer park at Pennsbury, probably in the bend of the river southeast of the house. He noted, “tis pitty a pale [a fence] did not cross the neck half way towards the south point, for a beginning of a Park.”<sup>90</sup>

Penn also gave much instruction with regard to plants. He wanted hedges planted to bound various areas; fences around the orchard were to be planted (and thus replaced eventually) with “quick setts,” defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “live slips or cuttings of plants, set in the ground to grow, esp. those of the whitethorn or other shrubs of which hedges are made.” Whitethorn is the common English hawthorn (*Crateagus oxycantha*). Hedges could provide shady areas, essential in the Delaware Valley’s brutal summer heat. Colonists’ attempts to replace fences with hedging, however, almost never worked. Hawthorn tends to get fire blight, and no other hedging was dense enough to keep out, or in, animals.<sup>91</sup> Finally, although Penn sent over from England most of the vegetable and crop plants and seeds to be planted, one of his few comments about flowers concerned having Nicholas “save as many Roots of flowrs next spring by transplanting them out of the woods.”<sup>92</sup> Nicholas, whose last name is unknown, was sent by Penn in March 1685, “commended by the best about town yt recommended him, good natur’d, apt to talk, but an artist.”<sup>93</sup>

Far more important was the food that Pennsbury could produce. A kitchen garden was a traditional part of a British estate, and Penn could write in 1683 that he wanted the gardeners to “plant sweet herbs,

<sup>88</sup> Reinberger and McLean, “Isaac Norris’s Fairhill.”

<sup>89</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Oct. 25, 1685, *Penn Papers*, 3:65; William Penn to James Harrison, Nov. 7, 1685, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5.

<sup>90</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Apr. 9, 1687, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5.

<sup>91</sup> William Penn gardening directions to Ralph Smyth, ca. Aug. 1684, *Penn Papers*, 2:584–85.

<sup>92</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Oct. 25, 1685, *Penn Papers*, 3:65–68.

<sup>93</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Mar. 18, 1685, *Penn Papers*, 3:38.

Sparragrass, carrets, parsnups, harteckokes, Salatin, & all flowers & Kitchin herbs there.”<sup>94</sup> This quote sets the tone for Penn’s garden—essentially practical, with vegetables, herbs, and flowers all growing together. Sweet herbs could have included rosemary (tender in Philadelphia, but they had to learn that) and lavender. Kitchen herbs, or potherbs, might have included pot marigold (*Calendula officinalis*), not to be confused with African or French marigold (*Tagetes*).

Penn’s most abiding interest in Pennsbury was agricultural; above all, he wanted the place self-sufficient in food, instructing Logan to “let Pennsbury be put in inhabitable order, with the gardens, that we may subsist in good measure upon it, for a spare food and living suit me and mine.”<sup>95</sup> Penn’s emphasis and detailed instructions are about the practical aspects of Pennsbury’s landscape. His letters indicate that he was a knowledgeable and skillful gentleman farmer, able to give precise instructions on farming, in line with the latest agricultural treatises. The detail bespeaks a good knowledge of farming practices. He knew where “hay dust” was to be found, just how he wanted his board fences planed, and how far apart his fruit trees were to be planted:

I recommend to thee for the gardens and improvement of the lands, the ashes, & soot rather beyond them, are excellent for yr ground, grass or corn. Soot may be gotten at Philadelphia for fetching I suppose. it should be sowed, pretty thick for corn, in Spring not so thick. its best for Low lands, & such as are moist. Lett me desire thee to lay down as much as thou canst wth English grass, & plow up new Indian feilds, & after a crop or two, they must be layd down so too, for that feeds sheep, & that feeds the ground as well as they feed & cloth us, & fitts it, for grass corn & wine. we have here a runing fence like a slight penfold, only a foot each rale from the other or neer 8 {inches}, such an one moveable would serve long, the rales or barrs should be as thin as pales & about 7 or 8 foot Long, & five high, fastned into slight round little posts, or rather, naled on them, one of the ends of the posts to be in the ground & the other fasten’d from one to another.<sup>96</sup>

Pennsbury’s orchard was a very important part of the estate. Apples had priority, more for cider than for eating. One of Penn’s instructions

<sup>94</sup> William Penn gardening directions to Ralph Smyth, ca. Aug. 1684, *Penn Papers*, 2:584–85.

<sup>95</sup> William Penn to James Logan, June 26, 1709, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 13.

<sup>96</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Jan. 28, 1687, *Penn Papers*, 3:138.

was to “remember to make both cider and vinegar.” However, Penn was interested in a great deal more than apples. Upon his return to England in 1684, he sent approximately four thousand plants to Pennsbury, the majority apparently fruit trees. The majority of the trees evidently came over as saplings, whereas the apple and some of the pear trees were slips grafted onto local stock. Penn must have drawn on his own experience in Ireland, for he instructed that a peach be planted between every apple tree, knowing that the peach trees grew faster and would shelter the apples, but also that “the peach would be done by yt time the other Spread.”<sup>97</sup> Penn also sent nuts for planting to grow trees, particularly walnuts, haws, and hazelnuts.<sup>98</sup> One of our few letters from Harrison to Penn gives the following description of the orchard:

The Gardiner is brisk at Work. The Peach Trees [in the Indian Fields] are much broken down with the weight of fruit this Year. All or most of the plants that came from England grow, (being about four Thousand.) Cherries are sprung four and five Foot. Pears, Codlings and Plumbs three or four Foot. Pears and Apple Grafts, in Contry Stocks, and in Thorns, are sprung three and four Foot. Rasberries, Gooseberries, Currans, Quinces, Roses, Walnuts and Figs grow well. Apricocks from the stone fourteen or sixteen Inches sprung, since the Month called April.<sup>99</sup>

Even allowing for a certain amount of exaggeration to the absentee owner, it is an impressive list.

Besides the produce from trees, Pennsbury’s main crops were grain (wheat) and hay, mostly for livestock. Once Penn also mentioned peas and beans, though these were probably only sown in garden-sized crops.<sup>100</sup> Penn followed the latest “improving” advice when he told Harrison to overseed with “nonosuch” (*Medicago lupulina*) and to use clover as a forage crop. By 1687, they were growing wheat (at least twenty acres of it), barley, rye, oats, and summer wheat.<sup>101</sup> As to livestock, Penn’s letters mention horses (“I hope care is had of my mares, my bay & two white

<sup>97</sup> William Penn gardening directions to Ralph Smyth, ca. Aug. 1684, *Penn Papers*, 2:584; William Penn to James Harrison, n.d. [ca. Feb. 1687], *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5.

<sup>98</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Oct. 4, 1685, transcript in Pennsbury Archives.

<sup>99</sup> James Harrison to William, Oct. 3, 1686, in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 4 (1880): 451.

<sup>100</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, Oct. 10, 1686, transcript in Pennsbury Archives.

<sup>101</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, n.d. [ca. Sept., Oct. 1686], transcript in Pennsbury Archives.

ones & their Colts. I intend 2 or 3 mares & a fine hors when I come”), hogs, cattle, sheep, and poultry.<sup>102</sup> Penn kept inquiring as to the numbers of livestock at Pennsbury, though without ever receiving satisfactory answers.<sup>103</sup>

### *Conclusion: Penn's Living in State?*

The scale and sophistication of Pennsbury's landscape and house go to the heart of the claim of Penn's "living in state," the point of view of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars and the departure point for the reconstruction. During this period historians tended to exaggerate the gentility of our colonial forbears. Of no one was this more true than William Penn, to whom this characterization would have seemed extremely ironic given his devout Quakerism.<sup>104</sup> The prevailing attitude was best summarized by Thompson Westcott when he stated, "at Pennsbury the proprietary led very much the life of a lord of the manor . . . with great state and profuse hospitality."<sup>105</sup> In Penn's case, the process of embellishing his supposed lifestyle began at least as early as John Fanning Watson, who, in the mid-nineteenth century, purveyed several myths about Pennsbury that raised its status. He noted, "the place was constructed in 1682–3, at great expense for that day, having cost £7000, and having considerable of the most finished or ornamental materials brought from England."<sup>106</sup> In fact, the figure of £7,000 was Penn's exaggerated guess of the total cost of land, agricultural improvements, building, and servants, of which the house was only one item (and not the greatest). There is no evidence that Penn brought materials for the house from England, except

<sup>102</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, July 11, 1685, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5.

<sup>103</sup> William Penn to James Harrison, n.d. [ca. Feb. 1687], *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5.

<sup>104</sup> On Penn's and Quaker ideas of plainness in living, see Reinberger and McLean, "Isaac Norris's Fairhill." On Quaker negotiation of worldly wealth and calls to be plain, see J. William Frost, "From Plainness to Simplicity: Changing Quaker Ideals for Material Culture," in *Quaker Aesthetics*, ed. Lapsansky and Verplanck, 16–40. In this same volume, Bernard Herman, "Eighteenth-Century Quaker Houses in the Delaware Valley and the Aesthetics of Practice," 206, notes that while the houses of wealthy yeoman Quakers were well above average in size and appointment for the region, and that their furnishings demonstrated "behaviors of polite sociability and gentility," they were also "far from luxurious" by the standards of the day.

<sup>105</sup> J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609–1884* (Philadelphia, 1884), 1:162–63. More recent historians have tempered the claims of Penn's stately lifestyle, though as recently as 1956 Catherine Peare spoke of his need to live in "stately elaborateness," and at least somewhat overemphasized Pennsbury as a center of hospitality; Catherine Owens Peare, *William Penn: A Biography* (Philadelphia, 1956), 368, 372.

<sup>106</sup> Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia*, 2:101.

some bricks and window glass. Watson also reported that there was a chamber “hung with fine tapestry,” an element of luxury that appears nowhere in the primary documents.

Watson also disseminated a legend that Penn held council with Indians from a throne on a dais in Pennsbury’s hall: “Penn in his great Hall there had his seat elevated, by a rising floor & there he held meetings & worship & business. There he solemnized marriages, & held his Indian councils.”<sup>107</sup> The original source for this story was the diary of Thomas Cope, who got it, as Watson did so much of his information, from local stories that circulated in the Pennsbury neighborhood and were undoubtedly told and retold to the many pilgrims that came to visit the “shrine.”<sup>108</sup> Again, no primary sources confirm such events. Although Penn did meet Indians at Pennsbury, there is no evidence that he lorded it over them; quite the contrary, Quaker missionary John Richardson spoke of the cordiality, evenness, and what he called “calmness of temper” between Penn and the Indians in the council, which he witnessed at Pennsbury in 1701. The Indians saw Penn as a fair-minded equal. Richardson, a strict Quaker who stayed at Pennsbury several days, made no mention of unwonted extravagance at the place.<sup>109</sup> As far as “worship” goes, the very essence of Quaker meetings was to face each other equally around a room and not be directed towards a raised chancel.<sup>110</sup>

Surviving inventories and accounts for Pennsbury also do not suggest extravagance by either Penn or his household. Prominent items in accounts are: agricultural items; powder and shot for hunting; such food items as pork, molasses (probably for beer), sugar, and rum; and construction materials—lime, lumber, and nails. Few individual items cost more than a few pounds. The inventory of 1687 indicates that Penn had (or at least that he left) only a few rooms of furniture at Pennsbury, although it does list many tools, linens and other cloth stuff, and kitchen and agricultural implements. The 1701 inventory represents a more completely furnished

<sup>107</sup> John Fanning Watson to [Roberts Vaux?], Aug. 26, 1826, John F. Watson Correspondence, 1823–1828, p.151. This and other letters suggest that Watson and others traveled to Pennsbury and spoke with local people about their memories of the place. Perhaps the legends reflect local lore, exaggerated with retelling.

<sup>108</sup> Weaver and Kolb, in “Okie Speaks for Pennsbury,” deal well with the long-standing shrine-like nature of the Pennsbury site.

<sup>109</sup> John Richardson, *An Account of the Life of that Ancient Servant of Jesus Christ, John Richardson* (Philadelphia, 1783), 133–38.

<sup>110</sup> *Silent Witness: Quaker Meetinghouses in the Delaware Valley, 1695 to the Present* ([Philadelphia, 2002]).

house. To give a flavor of the level of comfort and wealth it represents, the following items might be noted. The second floor had four beds and a pallet, two mirrors, sixteen cane-bottom chairs, and a smattering of other furniture, none of it described as anything out of the ordinary. If Penn's instructions were followed, much of the furniture may have been made on site by indentured carpenters, probably not of the finest kind and not imported from the fashionable shops of London or Bristol. The first floor had a few chairs described as "great," along with several upholstered chairs, but only one couch and one sideboard. There was also a fair amount of cloth and a number of dishes, some of it of high quality but most common or coarse. Beyond a few maps, apparently nothing hung on the walls.<sup>111</sup>

Attacks on Penn for being extravagant began during his lifetime. Non-Quaker adversaries often attacked him as hypocritical, proclaiming a plain style while wallowing in wealth.<sup>112</sup> Being wealthy and having lived the first third of his life in an unconvinced state, Penn often came under attack from strict Quakers about his extravagance. Wigs, for example, were a bone of contention. In his youth Penn had worn a periwig, a symbol of pride and worldliness to Quakers. After his conviction, he switched to a smaller wig (Quaker leader, George Fox called it a "short civil thing") to keep his head warm. He had lost most of his hair to smallpox when young and suffered from heat and cold on his bare head. Fox defended him, saying "he wares them to keep his head & ears warm & not for pride; which is manifest in that his perriwigs Cost him many Pounds a piece formerly, when of the world, & now his Border, but a few shillings."<sup>113</sup>

The barge that Penn had built to commute to and from Pennsbury was exploited by antagonist contemporaries and by later historians to prove Penn's extravagance. However, it cost only fifteen pounds, hardly a princely sum for a craft capable of carrying a family and a substantial amount of cargo. It would surely have fit Penn's general stricture that things be well built and serviceable but plain as to outward show.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>111</sup> In addition to the inventories cited above, see Samuel Carpenter accounts, July 1684–1709, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 4; "William Penn's Account with Samuel Jennings, Receiver General, 1690–1693," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 35 (1911): 199–210; William Penn cash book, 1699–1700, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 8, original at American Philosophical Society.

<sup>112</sup> Dunn, "Penny Wise and Pound Foolish," 39.

<sup>113</sup> George Fox to Henry Sidon, May 25, 1677, *Penn Papers*, 1:376–77.

<sup>114</sup> See Wildes, *William Penn*, 315, for an attempt to make the barge into something like a luxury yacht.

Nor did Penn live extravagantly in England. He ran a large establishment at his estate at Warminghurst, but there is no evidence that he lived lavishly, as was sometimes charged. He seems not to have had the quantity of possessions that his father's house at Wanstead had, with its 180 tablecloths and three hundred pounds of pewter. The younger Penn owned a fair amount of silver, as was usual in the seventeenth century for use, investment, and as family heirlooms. Much of this came from his grandfather, father, and Penn's in-laws, although he bought some. The list of plate at Warminghurst is not excessive, and Penn took only about a sixth of it (worth £30) to Pennsylvania in 1682. By contrast, Sir Thomas Lynch, the governor of Jamaica, had £361 worth of plate in his Jamaica house in the same period.<sup>115</sup>

Penn's comments on renting a house in England later in life also suggest a distinct lack of pretension, grandeur, or extravagance. The Penns were looking for a small house near London, one that they could rent for twenty pounds per year, well above average for all houses but by no means exorbitant.<sup>116</sup> In a letter to Hannah, Penn revealed what he considered important about a house, and as usual focused more on the grounds and situation than the building itself, commenting on one house, "But the goeing in is rather up than down into the house, has a good Pump & half as much Garden as t'other had, & Brickwalled too, with some fruit."<sup>117</sup>

Penn's vision for Pennsbury's house and landscape seems neither to have been grandiose nor particularly ornamental. Aside from a terraced walk lined with poplar trees from the house to the river, Pennsbury contained no landscaping that was purely ornamental, a great difference from English country estates at the time. Earlier writers about Pennsbury mention items such as "shrubberies," a "lawn," and a "broad pebble walk." Documents dealing with the site indicate nothing about shrubbery, the lawn was a hay field, and the walk was a path of river gravel collected on the site. In function it was predominantly agricultural and in form it perpetuated a much simpler and traditional geometric mode.<sup>118</sup>

Penn was a wealthy man and when young was inclined to the consumption considered appropriate to his landed gentry status. However,

<sup>115</sup> Wildes, *William Penn*, 64; *Penn Papers*, 2:287–90.

<sup>116</sup> Wildes, *William Penn*, 376.

<sup>117</sup> William Penn to Hannah Penn, Jan. 11, 1710, *Penn Papers*, 4:671–72.

<sup>118</sup> On the survival of this traditional mode, see Tom Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore, 1995), 35.

due mostly to poor business practices and attention to matters of Quakerism, Penn's actual wealth declined over his adult life. Moreover, he was never an extravagant person, and in particular, he was not extravagant about Pennsbury.<sup>119</sup> His directions show this: build with wood instead of brick, if necessary; use five foot long clapboards that we can reuse; reuse the front door after it has been altered; wainscot only one wall per room; use only the simplest of joints in the wainscot; the estate must support itself as I cannot afford to keep supporting it. Penn saw Pennsbury much more as a self-sufficient farm than a luxurious country seat. It was his retreat and retirement, rather than a place to live in state and hold court.

The ultimate fate of the original Pennsbury was also far from grand. When he returned to England for the last time in November 1701, Penn hired a German-born shoemaker, John Sacher (usually spelled Sotcher), to be the overseer at Pennsbury. Sacher soon married the maid, Mary Lofty, that the Penns had brought over. The Sachers would run Pennsbury almost until Penn's death. Except for the Sachers and a new gardener, Hugh Sharp, most of the rest of Pennsbury's agricultural workforce consisted of African American slaves, whom Penn found more dependable than white indentured servants. Although Penn planned to manumit his slaves and make them tenant farmers on his estate, events and his family prevented this during his lifetime.<sup>120</sup>

Penn and his family were deeply conflicted with regard to staying in Pennsylvania. Hannah referred to Pennsylvania as "this desolate land" though she admitted that her health had been much better there than in England. Daughter Letitia disliked the isolation of Pennsbury.<sup>121</sup> In a letter to the Duke of Hamilton, William Penn wrote, "Tho this should be a retired part of the world, I cannot come at retirement yet; but would quickly leave it, if I had not reason to hope for it after a while."<sup>122</sup>

As after his first trip to Pennsylvania, for a few years Penn spoke again of returning soon to Pennsylvania and remained keenly interested in Pennsbury. He sent carpenters and husbandmen, called for the outbuildings

<sup>119</sup> Dunn, "Penny Wise and Pound Foolish," describes Penn's naive business practices and inattention to his situation. Dunn (39–41) uses somewhat different terms to describe Penn's spending: he describes it as "extravagant" but that Penn was never a "voluptuary." He also explains that much of what Penn spent was in promotion of Quaker causes and lobbying.

<sup>120</sup> Wildes, *William Penn*, 319, 324–26.

<sup>121</sup> Hannah Penn to Elizabeth Taylor, Mar. 6, 1701, *Penn Papers*, 4:35; Wildes, *William Penn*, 331.

<sup>122</sup> William Penn to the Duke of Hamilton, July 5, 1700, *Penn Papers*, 3:606.

to be finished, and desired that a barn and animal shed be built. He left James Logan in charge, but found supervisory visits difficult because of other commitments and illness. The staff at Pennsbury was racked by “distemper” in the summer of 1702, and at least one slave died of it.<sup>123</sup> In 1704 Penn sent his son William Jr. to Pennsylvania as his surrogate. At first William Jr. liked the colony, especially Pennsbury, where he wanted to keep horses and hounds in the style of an English gentleman. But he found it hard to make friends, felt in an awkward position, and drifted off into drinking, training with the militia (a very un-Quakerly thing to do), and eventually fighting with the Philadelphia town watch in a tavern brawl. A typical letter tells the story of William Jr.’s priorities:

If thee wouldst allow me a Good Gardiner I could make it [Pennsbury] one of the pleasantest places in the world. . . . I begg I may have some more hounds sent over for they will do mighty well here. That Stalion two [sic] that I Spoke off My Bror Abereys [William Aubrey, brother-in-law] freind Puseley has, thee promest to Gett for me, he is a fine horse & well worth Sending, & would be of Great value here, wherefore I begg he may be sent.<sup>124</sup>

Note that he says a “good gardiner,” as there was already a gardener there. Note also that he says “more hounds,” implying that he already had some. Later evidence suggests that Pennsbury had at least a small deer herd for hunting. William Jr. spent time at Pennsbury but also went back and forth to Philadelphia.<sup>125</sup> It is known that William Jr. entertained Lord and Lady Cornbury, governor of New York and his wife, at Pennsbury.<sup>126</sup>

After the tavern brawl, William Jr. (facing charges) quickly returned to England, having been at Pennsbury less than a year. William Penn himself also planned to return to his colony in 1704, but as William Jr. was at Pennsbury, he wondered about procuring a house closer to

<sup>123</sup> James Logan to William Penn, Oct. 2, 1702, and James Logan to William Penn, Dec. 1, 1702, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 10; William Penn to James Logan, Apr. 1, 1703, *Penn Papers*, 4:219; *Penn-Logan Letters*, 1:181ff.

<sup>124</sup> *Penn Papers*, 4:257–58; William Penn Jr. to William, Feb. 15, 1704, *Penn Papers*, 4:261; Wildes, *William Penn*, 293, 340–41.

<sup>125</sup> James Logan to William Penn, July 20, 1704, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 11.

<sup>126</sup> Charles P. Keith, *Chronicles of Pennsylvania, from the English Revolution to the Peace of Aix-la-Chappelle, 1688–1748* (Philadelphia, 1917), 1:440; Patricia U. Bonomi, *The Lord Cornbury Scandal: The Politics of Reputation in British America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), 94.

Philadelphia.<sup>127</sup> Penn was favorably impressed by the many country seats that had sprung up nearer the city than Pennsbury, which, he may have come to feel, was too far from Philadelphia, especially for his family. In 1703 he wrote:

See if the Town would be so kinde to build me a pretty Box, like Ed. Ship. [Edward Shippen's] upon any of my Lots in town or Liberty-land, or purchass Grif. owens, or T. fairmans, or any neer healthy Spott, as wicoco, or the like; for Pennsbury will hardly accommodate my sons family & myn.<sup>128</sup>

A “box” was a small suburban or country house, often for temporary or seasonal use. Penn’s employment of the term is precocious, five years before the earliest such use noted in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.<sup>129</sup>

During the last years of Penn’s life, Pennsbury rapidly deteriorated. William Jr. and a succession of colonial officials used it intermittently, but none contributed to its upkeep. As early as 1704, Penn called for an end to improvements. He also complained that the Sachers did not keep the place up: “I doubt your care and good husbandry, and good housewifery, to make that place profitable to me, after the hundreds, yea thousands, that have been sunk there from the beginning. . . . I think I have spent too much there already.”<sup>130</sup> Logan defended the Sachers, but noted that they did not really want to stay unless Penn returned. He admitted that the garden was uncultivated and the pear trees had all died.<sup>131</sup> By 1707 Logan noted that “it [Pennsbury] must soon go to decay.”<sup>132</sup> Colonel Robert Quarry, formerly an admiralty agent who had taken a position in Penn’s government, agreed to rent Pennsbury, with conditions that reflect poorly on the quality of construction of house and grounds:

<sup>127</sup> Penn in fact deeded Pennsbury to William Jr. in 1703, although the legal status of this indenture is in doubt. See Indenture between William Penn and William Penn Jr., May 4, 1703, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 10.

<sup>128</sup> William Penn to James Logan, Apr. 1, 1703, *Penn Papers*, 4:219; *Penn-Logan Letters*, 1:181ff.

<sup>129</sup> Indeed, Penn had used “box” even earlier to indicate a small wood-framed house, a nuance of meaning not appearing in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. William Penn to James Harrison, Robert Turner, and Thomas Holmes, ca. early Apr. 1686, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 5.

<sup>130</sup> William Penn to John and Mary Sotcher, Oct. 12, 1705, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 12.

<sup>131</sup> James Logan to William Penn, Apr. 5, 1705, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 12.

<sup>132</sup> James Logan to William Penn, Mar. 2, 1707, *Penn Papers Micro*, reel 13.

he [Col Quarry] is to stand to all repairs, after the first, which upon the house itself is but light; to repair the windows and make one new door to the lower chamber at the foot of the stairs [probably at the second story], and to lay the upper floor of the outhouse, and run one partition; to repair the garden fences, and to build up the wall before the front at the descending steps; all which was absolutely to be done if any of the family come into it, for the old wall in that place being quite gone, the rains washed away the upper ground, which has cost so much to raise. Other repairs he is to do at his own expense.<sup>133</sup>

That the brick retaining wall facing the river had collapsed after only twenty years is more evidence of Pennsbury's initial shoddy construction. Penn's own last surviving statement about the place was simply, "Let not poor Pensberry be forgotten."<sup>134</sup> Despite repeated threats to leave, the Sachers stayed at least until 1713. Thereafter, the place was kept by slaves, loosely supervised by Logan and other colonial officials. Thomas Penn, one of William's sons by Hannah, wrote of it in 1736:

When I came here I found the house at Pennsbury was very near falling, the roof open, as well as windows, and the wood work almost rotten. I got it covered, and the windows mended to keep out the rain, and painted the outside to preserve the woodwork, which you can't but think was very proper and necessary expense; about the inside I was at no charge except for white washing. The kitchen house was very open, so that the servants [slaves] who look after the plantation could not live warm and dry, which made me think it absolutely necessary to be at some small charge to mend their house. No person had lived in the big house for near twenty years so that you must conceive it is much weather beaten and the half which is brick built with oyster shell lime is in many places cracked.<sup>135</sup>

In 1743, Richard Hockley, the Penn family's receiver general, noted that there were still deer at Pennsbury (probably survivals of a herd established by William Jr.).

Exactly what happened to the house is in doubt. John Fanning Watson stated that it was torn down by the Penn family just before the Revolution. Similarly, Deborah Logan reported about 1814 that the

<sup>133</sup> James Logan to William Penn, June 28, 1707, *Penn-Logan Letters*, 2:231.

<sup>134</sup> William Penn to James Logan, Sept. 29, 1708, *Penn Papers*, 4:622. See also William Penn to James Logan, Oct. 14, 1709, *Penn Papers*, 4:660.

<sup>135</sup> Thomas Penn to William Penn, Nov. 25, 1736, *Thomas Penn Papers*, reel 5.

house was gone long before she ever had the chance to see it. Curiously, as late as 1809, Thomas Cope reported that he visited Pennsbury and that “the old mansion is still standing & in tolerable preservation.” It is not clear what house Cope visited. Sometime before about 1820 a farmhouse (known as the Crozier House) was built over part of the original Pennsbury foundations. The Crozier House still stands (moved) on the site.<sup>136</sup>

Pennsbury represents well what David Lowenthal defined as “heritage,” the mythical past evolved by each generation to construct a posterity that meets its problems and allays its anxieties. It is a marvelous place to explore and celebrate that heritage and to honor and teach about William Penn. Heritage for Lowenthal is opposed to “history,” the more or less objective record of what happened in the past. Both are necessary and even correct within their spheres, but they need to be distinguished and appropriately commemorated.<sup>137</sup> The problem with reconstructions is that they blur the boundaries. In the case of Pennsbury, the lack of distinction was expressed in an official pronouncement: “[Pennsbury] is an illusion not otherwise possible in most restorations. One sees what Penn saw!”<sup>138</sup> Lowenthal’s point was expressed pithily about the Pennsbury reconstruction itself by Leicester Holland of the Library of Congress:

We spend [too much] in setting up artificialities, as shrines for dedication ceremonies and pilgrimages so that the public can picture our ancestors sitting in brand-new rooms. We like to shatter history to bits and then rebuild it nearer our heart’s desire.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia*, 2:101; Deborah Logan, in *Penn-Logan Letters*, 1:4; *The Diary of Thomas P. Cope 1800–1851*, ed. Eliza Cope Harrison (South Bend, IN, 1978), 241.

<sup>137</sup> David Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (New York, 1996).

<sup>138</sup> Pennsbury Manor Furnishing Committee, “Penn and Pennsbury: A Report to the Pennsylvania Historical Commission” (1949), 3, in Pennsbury Archives.

<sup>139</sup> Quoted in Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, 447.