BOOK REVIEWS


William Penn is famous, but even during the tercentenary of the Charter of March 4, 1681, granting him Pennsylvania, his personal life and varied career are far from familiar in the commonwealth bearing his father's name. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's publication is thus both timely and useful. The booklet is concise, remarkably comprehensive, well illustrated, and inexpensive, admirably portraying the founder, the fighter for religious liberty, the cosmopolitan colonizer, the courtier, and financially incompetent gentleman.

John B. B. Trussell writes well. An introduction summarizes the American achievement and goes on to provide an excellent background for family and upbringing. The influence of such as Thomas Loe, John Owen, and Moise Amyraut on the way to conviction as a Quaker is duly noted. Penn's arguments for an abandonment of religious pomp and ceremony and "in favor of genuine conviction and virtuous simplicity" (p. 18) are briefly rehearsed. During the section on "Years of Travail" (pp. 17-28) the convert worked devotedly and endured persecution. Unsuccessful in obtaining gentler treatment for fellow dissidents, he petitioned in 1680 for a refuge overseas.

The Charter granted, difficulties for "The New Colony" (pp. 28-39) were caused, not by the royal Stuart brothers who favored the Penns, but by ill-defined boundaries and the somewhat disappointing attitude of settlers during the first visit. Penn indeed achieved friendship with the Indians, a widespread reputation for his proposed laws, and by wise economic policies, a developing rural and urban prosperity.

Some fifteen years absence (pp. 39-53) brought deterioration of feelings between proprietor and Pennsylvanians. Penn's passionate belief in the guidance of conscience led not infrequently to political and religious relations with those whose guidance differed from his that "were seldom harmonious and sometimes openly hostile" (p.
71). He was too often a poor judge of character. Increased influence with James II, succeeding in 1685, brought considerable harassment and temporary loss of his province after the Revolution of 1688 drove that king into exile and placed his acquaintance under suspicion of disloyalty to the new regime. Penn's private life was saddened by family loss, and his carelessness in signing papers drawn up by his steward Philip Ford brought financial exigency. The colonists were loath to help him, to undertake expected responsibility for defense, or to obey navigation laws as Westminster demanded. The long-postponed visit of 1699 was marred by controversy; on his departure in 1701 Penn felt obliged to sign a new Charter abrogating most of the innovations earlier planned, though retaining those proprietary privileges which continued to alienate the province until 1776. In his final years he failed to sell Pennsylvania to the government, and incurred debts from whose worst consequences only the generosity of Quaker and high-born friends rescued him. Increasing ill health rendered Penn's last six years inactive.

Trussell is judicious and has produced a valuable study that should be widely distributed and read. Perhaps, in reprinting, the last recommendation for further reading (p. 72) should be omitted because of its frequent inaccuracy.

Rosemont, Pennsylvania

CAROLINE ROBBINS


Local histories are always welcome with history buffs and are usually of some interest to serious history students as well. This little book should be no exception. As the title implies, the book deals with the establishment of Fort Burd at present-day Brownsville, on the Monongahela River. Richard Sells deals with Colonel James Burd's expedition in 1759 to Redstone, the construction of a fort overlooking the easternmost bend in the Monongahela, its tenure as a frontier outpost and trading post, and the role it played in the tensions between the local Indians and white squatters who had illegally crossed the Proclamation Line of 1763. Also included are a discussion of possible locations of the fort, which had disappeared by 1800, and a description of the structure.