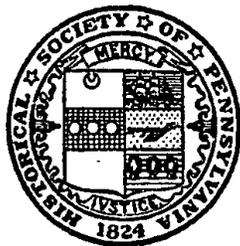


GUIDE TO THE
MICROFILM EDITION OF THE
THOMAS PENN PAPERS

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This pamphlet is intended to serve as a guide for the users of the microfilm of the Thomas Penn Papers as well as those desiring information on its contents prior to acquisition.

The accompanying microfilm meets standards established by the National Historical Publications Commission, General Services Administration, and was produced with the assistance, financial and advisory, of the Commission.

INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet and the accompanying rolls of microfilm which it describes are published by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania under the sponsorship of the National Historical Publications Commission.

The project was undertaken as being a modest one that would furnish valuable experience to be drawn upon in the production of future microfilm publications. This expectation has proved to be a true one; invaluable lessons, sometimes painful, have been learned. The number of rolls of film will give no reflection of the amount of time spent by the Society's staff in their preparation.

In spite of the attempts by any number of Project Directors working under the terms of grants from the National Historical Publications Commission, no adequate expressions of appreciation can be formulated for the interest of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes and Mr. Fred Shelley, whose patience and assistance have been equally boundless. The Director of this Society, Nicholas B. Wainwright, with an unparalleled knowledge of the Penn papers in its possession, has been both abettor and arbiter. Sharing our gratitude are all members of the Staff of the Society, particularly Frank W. Bobb, Librarian, Harry W. Givens, formerly Head, and Conrad Wilson, present Head of the Manuscript Department. Zvonon Zelikowsky, Camera Operator, has shown patience in the face of difficulty and a technical efficiency that have contributed much to the culmination of this project.

Finally, acknowledgment should be made to the providential apparition of Fate, whose timely intervention assured the preservation of the bulk of these papers when they had been consigned to the waste dealer. As all Librarians and Archivists are well acquainted with this lady's works, we can only hope for her continued interest in our affairs.

JOHN D. KILBOURNE
Project Director
Curator

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THOMAS PENN

Thomas Penn was born at Bristol on March 9, 1701/2, his mother being Hannah Callowhill, William Penn's second wife. During his early years the family was far from affluent and Thomas was apprenticed at the age of fourteen to a mercer in London. His business career lasted about fifteen years and proved an invaluable experience, for Penn was ever to display an aptitude for handling affairs both great and small.

He and his brothers John (1699/1700-1746) and Richard (1705/6-1771) inherited the proprietorship of Pennsylvania and were thereby vested with broad powers of government and enormous land holdings. John, the elder brother, was favored with a half interest in the proprietorship, with Thomas and Richard each owning one quarter.

Their prospects were clouded, as had been their father's, by the undetermined condition of the borders of the Lower Counties, Delaware, and of the southern limits of Pennsylvania. The Penns had been locked in controversy over these issues with the Lords Baltimore ever since 1681. But in May, 1732, the three Penn brothers and Charles Calvert, fifth Lord Baltimore, came to terms and signed an agreement specifying the boundaries. Shortly afterward, Thomas Penn sailed for America, arriving in Philadelphia in August, 1732, intent on seeing the terms of the agreement carried out. But in this he was disappointed, for Lord Baltimore had changed his mind. More than thirty vexatious years were to pass before Penn was able to force compliance with the Agreement of 1732, which eventuated in the surveys by Mason and Dixon.

Penn spent nine years in Philadelphia familiarizing himself with his Pennsylvania property and government interests. At hand to tutor him was the learned James Logan, who had been his father's secretary from 1699 to 1701 and thereafter the Penn family's right-hand man in the colony. Logan had done much to re-establish the family's fortune. Penn attended Indian treaties, including the conferences which led to the Walking Purchase. He built himself a small manor house and showed much interest in horticulture.

Upon his return to England in 1741 he gradually took over the conduct of his family's Pennsylvania business, and in 1746, on the death of his brother John, inherited John's half of the proprietorship,

thus becoming the principal proprietor. His younger brother Richard, though possessed of the remaining one-quarter share, exerted no influence in the conduct of Pennsylvania affairs. He was completely dominated by Thomas who for more than thirty years was in full control.

Thomas Penn was an intelligent, diligent, and methodical person, interested in every aspect of life in Pennsylvania, ever working hard in the interests of his colony and possibly a little harder in his own interests. He began to grow rich and to purchase impressive houses. On August 22, 1751, he married Lady Juliana Fermor, daughter of the Earl of Pomfret, and started to raise a family. The Penns had eight children, the first five of whom died young.

As a Tory, a man anxious to hold on to the privileges conferred on him by inheritance through the Royal Charter to Pennsylvania granted to his father, as an administrator desirous of upholding the prerogatives of the Crown, Penn was bound to fall into controversies with his colonists. These controversies were aggravated by his insistence on personal property rights and particularly in the exemption of his private estates from taxation. All this brought him into conflict with the popular party which dominated the Assembly, a faction sometimes known as the Quaker Party. Ultimately, he also became embroiled with Benjamin Franklin.

The consequence was that Penn's image historically has been that portrayed by protagonists of the Quakers, of historians interested in the march of democracy, and in the words of Franklin and of Franklin's many biographers. Thus, he has come down through the generations as a narrow-minded, covetous individual interested only in himself. That this is not a fair picture may be indicated by the fact that Thomas Penn strongly opposed the Stamp Act, while Franklin, less perceptive than Penn on the issue, accepted it and helped appoint stamp agents.

Whether liked or disliked, Penn was a powerful force affecting the colonial history of Pennsylvania. He stands with his father and with James Logan and Franklin somewhat higher than those others who also made their mark in the founding and growth of what became the richest colony in America.

Following four years of illness, Penn died in London on March 21, 1775, and was buried in the church at Stoke Poges.

ORIGIN OF THE COLLECTION

Thomas Penn came into possession of the papers of his father and of his grandfather, Admiral Sir William Penn, as well as the bulk of the family papers relating to the conduct of Pennsylvania affairs, at about the time he assumed control of the proprietorship. Certain groups of documents, however, remained in the hands of lawyers or in the charge of agents in Philadelphia.

Penn was exceedingly particular about his papers, ever fearful that some would be lost, and ever vigilant to keep them in the nicest order. In 1755 he added "a strong room," presumably fireproof, to his London mansion "to keep the papers of my family in, which much concern the Province." Most of his business he conducted at his city residence, rather than at his countryseat, Stoke House at Stoke Poges. The Proprietor kept regular business hours, writing letters of interminable length to his Pennsylvania officials, which his secretary carefully copied into letter books.

Following Penn's death, his oldest son and heir, John Penn (1760-1834), built an enormous house, called Stoke Park, containing a library 130 feet long, and moved the family papers there. Having succeeded in impoverishing himself by reckless spending, John Penn was succeeded at Stoke Park, on his death, by his brother Granville, who died in 1844. Granville's heir, Granville John Penn, was soon forced to sell the place and the papers were deposited in a fireproof room in a London storage house. There they remained until after Granville John Penn's death in 1867. The only descendant of William Penn by the Penn name then remaining was Granville's brother, the Rev. Thomas Gordon Penn. This individual, long of unsound mind, died in 1869, and the papers passed to the heir at law, William Stuart, the son of Thomas Penn's daughter.

Before Stuart could do anything about the papers, a mysterious person, believed to be the disgruntled illegitimate nephew of Granville John Penn, obtained access to the storage room and endeavored to destroy them. It was too big a task. Accordingly, he sold the manuscripts at a few shillings a hundredweight to a wastepaper dealer, making him promise to take them to a pulp mill. Unfaithful to his word, the wastepaper man sold them to an antiquarian dealer, who, in turn, disposed of them to another dealer. Ultimately, they were

offered to the public in several catalogues and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1870 bought in nearly all of the many thousands of documents that had survived destruction.

Since the great acquisition of the Penn Papers, nearly a century ago, the Historical Society has by gift and purchase been constantly acquiring more. Many groups of manuscripts that it failed to obtain in 1870 have been added to the collection. The Penn Papers kept in Philadelphia, the large accumulations in the hands of their agents, Edmund Physick and the Cadwaladers, have also come to the Society, doubling the size of the purchase of 1870. In consequence, the Penn Papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania form one of its largest collections and are as nearly comprehensive as is possible.

DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

The Thomas Penn correspondence deals almost entirely with Pennsylvania. This is particularly noticeable in his letter books which contain only a few letters addressed to people in England, these being mainly to his lawyers, Ferdinando John Paris and Henry Wilmot.

The majority of the Thomas Penn letters which have been preserved, letters written by Penn and the replies he received, consists of his correspondence with his representatives in the colony. These men, the leaders of the proprietary party, were headed, nominally at least, by the deputy governors named by the Penns with the approval of the Crown. During a period of more than thirty years, following Thomas Penn's return to England, the correspondence contains his interchange with six of these executives: the able George Thomas, governor from 1738 to 1747 (died 1775); the native-born and highly respected James Hamilton (1710-1783), twice in office; the tactless and ineffective Robert Hunter Morris (1713-1764); the disastrous and dishonest William Denny (1709-1765); and Penn's nephews, John Penn (1729-1795) and Richard Penn (1735-1811), both of whom married Philadelphia belles and who shared the governorship from 1763 until the outbreak of the Revolution. Aside from the governors, Penn's advisors were men who held other offices at

his disposal. The reluctant Lynford Lardner (1715-1774) and the gossipy and ineffective Richard Hockley both served as receiver general. William Parsons (1710-1757) was surveyor general. William Peters (1702-1789), and his successor James Tilghman (1716-1793), were secretaries of the land office. William Allen (1704-1780), one of the most powerful of Penn's adherents, held many posts of note, including that of chief justice. Another Penn agent, Benjamin Chew (1722-1810), was also chief justice, having previously served many years as attorney general. On his death in 1804, Edmund Physick had labored half a century for the Penns, collecting their revenues and tending to their personal interests. Of all Thomas Penn's followers none were as close to him as was the subtle and persuasive Rev. Richard Peters (1704-1776), the provincial secretary. No one else had Penn's ear and confidence to such a degree as this cleric who, with the retirement of James Logan (1674-1751) from public life, was looked to by Penn for confidential information.

Because Penn was interested in virtually every aspect of life in Pennsylvania his papers represent a source of information that should not be overlooked by anyone doing research in its colonial history during the long era of his ascendancy. His papers contain vital data on governmental affairs and political conflicts and on the characters of those concerned. The French and Indian wars hold an important place with many letters dealing with the defense of the frontiers and with military expeditions. How to handle the Indians and how to acquire more land from them takes up much space in a correspondence which went on for years on such topics. Gifts to the Indians to keep them friendly, strategy aimed at defeating Quaker efforts to intervene in Indian problems, efforts to prevent squatters from occupying Indian lands, the fur trade, all are subjects which are discussed at length. In general, as the records disclose, Penn's views on the natives were supported by Sir William Johnson, the Indian Superintendent, and by his deputy for Pennsylvania and the West, George Croghan. One of the most difficult Indian problems was that of boundaries between white settlement and Indian hunting country, and this problem was complicated by Virginia's claim to western lands which included the Pittsburgh area. And then, too, there was that seemingly never ending boundary controversy with Maryland. Even Connecticut attempted to seize part of Penn's domains. Much

light is shed on these harassing and complicated matters in the Proprietor's letters.

Cultural, educational, and religious topics find their places in his correspondence. Penn was intensely interested in obtaining copies of maps, views, pamphlets, and printings of all sorts that dealt with his colony, and the story of many of these rarities is to be found only in his papers. He criticized the bad perspective of the picture of the State House on Scull and Heap's 1752 *Map of Philadelphia and Parts Adjacent*, but, proud of their monumental 1754 view, *The East Prospect of the City of Philadelphia*, he gave a copy of it to George II. His theories on education are clearly set forth and may be found in his correspondence with his political ally the Rev. William Smith, Provost of the College of Philadelphia. The history of certain significant institutions stem in part from his philanthropy, among them the Pennsylvania Hospital, which still stands on the land he and his brother Richard donated. St. Peter's Church was similarly favored.

These and many other subjects are covered in the microfilm publication of the papers of Thomas Penn, papers which comprise the bulk of his manuscripts at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Not included are the many legal instruments, such as warrants, patents, and other land papers, bearing his signature as Proprietor. Many receipts have not been filmed, although representative specimens have frequently been included, especially when of an unusual or potentially historical nature. Extremely large parchment documents have not been filmed, but substitute copies of them have been used when available, such as copies of Penn's marriage settlement and of his will. Although the Society possesses multiple copies of many of his letters—he habitually sent duplicate and triplicate copies by different ships in order to insure delivery—only one copy has been filmed as a rule, and that has been the best copy, not necessarily the original.

The papers appearing on the film are drawn from many collections at the Historical Society other than its cornerstone collection of the Penn Papers, but no materials owned by other depositories have been used. Many relevant manuscripts are to be found in the Society's Cadwalader, Logan, Norris, Pemberton, Peters, William Smith, and Jonah Thompson Collections, as well as in others of smaller size. Notable Penn manuscripts are also contained in the Society's major autograph collections, such as the Dreer, Etting, and Gratz, all of

which are described in the Second Edition of the *Guide to the Manuscript Collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1949).

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For assistance with the general historical background and personalities of the period, the reader is urged to consult Norman B. Wilkinson, comp., *Bibliography of Pennsylvania History* (Harrisburg, 1957).

THE MICROFILM

The manuscripts filmed in this publication fall into two categories. Rolls 1, 2, and 3 contain the twelve volumes known at the Society as the Thomas Penn Letter Books in which are transcribed copies of his outgoing correspondence. At the beginning of volumes 2 through 10

are indexes to their contents. Letter Books 1-11 cover the years 1729 to 1775. Letter Book 12 contains copies of the correspondence of Thomas Penn's son John Penn for 1809 to 1832. Many of these letters relate to John Penn's Pennsylvania property.

While the letter books contain copies of most of the official letters written by Thomas Penn, for one reason or another numerous of his letters do not appear in them. Most frequently these unentered letters are of a social or informal nature and were probably considered by Penn to be too unimportant to record. These letters have been filmed in their proper chronological order in the second category of the microfilm, soon to be described, rolls 4 through 10.

The user will find that not all of the letters entered in the letter books were written by Thomas Penn, nor are they all outgoing letters. Apparently, important letters received were sometimes copied into the early letter books as a safeguard. Otherwise, their contents are arranged in an almost perfect chronological order.

Rolls 4 through 10 contain Penn's incoming correspondence culled from many collections at the Society. Each letter is preceded by its index card from the Society's card catalogue of manuscripts, and each page is given a frame number for reference use. The frame number appears in the upper right-hand corner whenever possible. In some cases it has been necessary to place it at another location for technical reasons.

Letters dated only by month and year are filmed at the end of the more completely dated letters for that month; those dated only by year appear at the end of that year. The few manuscripts which could not be dated appear on the last roll. Address leaves and covers have always been filmed after the letter they accompany. In many instances they are the only identification of the addressee and his whereabouts.

The user must bear in mind that the change from the Julian ("Old Style") to the Gregorian ("New Style") calendar occurred during the period covered by these letters. This change, in Great Britain and its colonies, officially took place on December 2, 1752. It is important to bear it in mind because of the frequent use made by Penn and his correspondents of the double-dating utilized for the first three months. Prior to the change, March was considered as the first month of the year; thus, a letter dated "1mo. 1749" must be

interpreted to mean March and not January. However, neither Penn nor his correspondents were consistent in usage, and this has led to confusion as to dates in some instances. Every attempt has been made to constitute a proper chronology, but there will be some instances where we have not been successful. The user is therefore urged to consult the letters for the previous or subsequent year if the existence of a letter of suspicious date cannot be substantiated in its proper chronological place.

ROLL LIST

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| <i>Roll Number 1</i> | Vol. I—January 19, 1729—August, 1742 |
| <i>Letter books</i> | Vol. II—September 6, 1742—July 2, 1750 |
| | Vol. III—July 3, 1750—August 15, 1754 |
| | Vol. IV—August 15, 1754—September 12, 1756 |
| <i>Roll Number 2</i> | Vol. V—September 12, 1756—September 3, 1758 |
| <i>Letter books</i> | Vol. VI—October 20, 1758—January 31, 1761 |
| | Vol. VII—March 12, 1761—October 8, 1763 |
| | Vol. VIII—October 8, 1763—April 2, 1766 |
| <i>Roll Number 3</i> | Vol. IX—April 5, 1766—May 12, 1769 |
| <i>Letter books</i> | Vol. X—May 12, 1769—July 30, 1775 |
| | Vol. XI—July 11, 1757—November 29, 1775 |
| | Vol. XII—June 8, 1809—July 26, 1832 |
| <i>Roll Number 4</i> | |
| <i>Letters</i> | February 12, 1714/15—December 17, 1734 |
| <i>Roll Number 5</i> | |
| <i>Letters</i> | January 10, 1735—December 22, 1744 |
| <i>Roll Number 6</i> | |
| <i>Letters</i> | January 11, 1745—December 28, 1750 |
| <i>Roll Number 7</i> | |
| <i>Letters</i> | February 2, 1751/2—December 28, 1753 |
| <i>Roll Number 8</i> | |
| <i>Letters</i> | January 5, 1754—December 30, 1760 |
| <i>Roll Number 9</i> | |
| <i>Letters</i> | January 9, 1761—December 20, 1770 |
| <i>Roll Number 10</i> | |
| <i>Letters</i> | January 18, 1771—December 18, 1775
with addenda, undated letters and fragments.
Alphabetical index for rolls 4-10. |

AVAILABILITY OF THE MICROFILM

The microfilm edition of the Papers of Thomas Penn may be used at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania or purchased at ten dollars a roll, \$100 for the complete film of ten rolls. A copy of the pamphlet *Guide* is included in the purchase price of a complete set and is otherwise available at one dollar.

Please address all inquiries and orders to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19107.