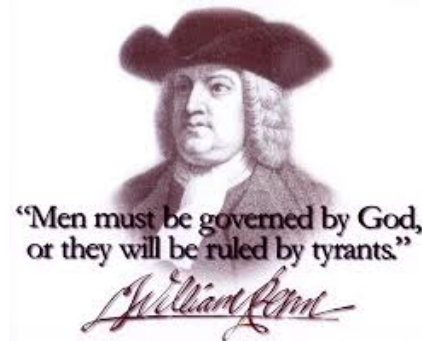


William Penn

By: Sarah Day



William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, man of God, missionary, Quaker, journalist, was born on October 14, 1644 in London, England. He was the Son of Admiral Sir William Penn, who had been knighted by Charles II. His mother was Margaret Jasper Vanderschuren, who was the daughter of a merchant. ¹ They were landowners and wealthy. He was baptized at All Hallows Church in London when only a few days old. Not much is said about his childhood other than he went to Chigwell School in Essex, but when he was 16 years old he entered Christ Church College at Oxford University.

A year into his schooling at Christ Church College, he became disillusioned with the Church of England and not only publicly criticized them, but started to have his own services in his room instead of the church chapel. William stated: *"True religion does not draw men out of the world but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavors to mend it."* ² He no longer believed the Church of England was the true religion. William Penn was very religious, he just didn't want to be joined with the Church of England anymore. For this he was expelled from Oxford and beaten by his father. ³

After his expulsion, his father sent William to France where he studied theology. During this time his religious beliefs and ideals became even more solid. Penn states: "All men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences." ⁴ In 1664, he returned to England to study and practice law.

His life changed forever though in 1668, when while in Ireland, he met a Quaker preacher and was soon converted to the Quaker faith. He immediately began to write and publish pieces defending this misunderstood and sometimes persecuted religion. That same year he published the

pamphlet "The Sandy Foundation Shaken," which highly criticized the Protestant church. For this, he was not only shunned by his father, but arrested and sent to the Tower of London (jail) and is held there without a trial. ⁵ During his imprisonment, he continued to write at least three more pamphlets about religion and government.

He was released eight months later after writing an "apology" article and shortly thereafter started dating a Quaker woman named Gulielma Maria Springett. They were married in 1672, had a very loving marriage and had three children.

William Penn became a very prominent Quaker leader in England and in the American colonies. While still in England, he was asked to solve a land dispute between two Quaker landowners in the colony West New Jersey. The King liked this and because the Penns are owed 16,000 pounds by the English government, in 1681 when Penn asked for land in America as payment for this debt, he was quickly granted that request. He names the colony he now owns after his father (which is ironic since they have the same name), Pennsylvania, which means Penn's Woods.

From the beginning of the settling of Pennsylvania, William Penn wanted his colony to run differently. He wanted friendly relations with the Indians. He stated this about relations with them: "*Be tender of offending the Indians...To soften them to me, and the people, let them know you are come to sit down lovingly with them...Be grave, they like not to be smiled on.*" ⁶ He also said this: "*There can be no friendship where there is no freedom. Friendship loves a free air, and will not be penned up in streight [sic] and narrow enclosures.*" ⁷

All of these events transpired while William Penn still lived in England. He finally sailed to Pennsylvania on August 30, 1682. Many people flocked to Pennsylvania for religious freedom. William Penn continued to set out upon his "holy experiment" to establish a constitution that was based on religious freedom, peace to the Indians, and land to settlers. ⁸

He returned home to England, came back to Pennsylvania, then returned again to England in 1701, where he spent the rest of his life. He died on July 30, 1718 in Ruscombe, England.

Citations:

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