



Image from:

[Pennsylvania in Philip's Encyclopedia](#)

Summary Article: **Penn, William, founder of Pennsylvania**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

1644–1718, English Quaker, founder of Pennsylvania, b. London, England; son of Sir William Penn.

Early Life

He was expelled (1662) from Oxford for his religious nonconformity and was then sent by his father to the Continent to overcome his leanings toward Puritanism. He continued his religious studies, however, and in Ireland, where he had been sent (1666) to oversee the family estates, he became a staunch member of the Society of Friends. He was imprisoned (1668) for writing a tract (*The Sandy Foundation Shaken*) against the doctrine of the Trinity, but, undaunted, he wrote *No Cross, No Crown* and *Innocency with Her Open Face* while in the Tower of London. After his release (1669), Penn continued his writing, his many tracts including *The Great Case of Liberty of Conscience* (1670), in which he argued for religious toleration. He also went on preaching missions through England, the Netherlands, and Germany.

In the American Colonies

Penn became involved in the affairs of the American colonies when in 1675 he was appointed a trustee for Edward Byllynge, one of the two Quaker proprietors of West Jersey. He helped draw up Concessions and Agreements, a liberal charter of government for the Quakers settling there. In 1681, Penn and 11 others purchased East Jersey (see New Jersey). In the same year, in payment of a debt owed his father, Penn obtained from King Charles II a charter for Pennsylvania (named by the king for Penn's father) for the establishment of his "holy experiment," a colony where religious and political freedom could flourish. Shortly afterward he received a grant of the Three Lower Counties-on-the-Delaware (present Delaware) from the duke of York (later James II).

In 1682, Penn went to his province, where the earliest settlers were already laying out the city of Philadelphia in accordance with his plans. He drew up a liberal Frame of Government for the colony. He also established the friendly relations with the Native Americans that were to distinguish the early history of Pennsylvania. Returning to England (1684), he asserted his boundary claims against Charles Calvert, 3d Lord Baltimore.

Penn's friendship with James II led to his being accused of treason after that king's deposition (1688), and his colony was briefly (1692–94) annexed to New York. Penn continued writing religious and political tracts and preached extensively. Difficulties in Pennsylvania caused his return there for a short time (1699–1701), and he issued a new constitution, the Charter of Privileges (1701), granting more power to the provincial assembly.

Penn's last years were troubled ones. His own steward swindled him to such an extent that he was imprisoned (1707–8) for debt, and the continued difficulties of his colony and troubles concerning his eldest son caused him much grief. A stroke in 1712 removed him from active life.

Bibliography

See M. M.; R. S. Dunn, ed., *The Papers of William Penn* (5 vol., 1981-87); biographies by W. I. Hull (1937) and M. M. Dunn (1967);

Pound, A. , *The Penns of Pennsylvania and England* (1932);
Beatty, E. C. O. , *William Penn as Social Philosopher* (1939, repr. 1974);
Buranelli, V. , *The King & the Quaker* (1962);
Endy, M. B. Jr., *William Penn and Early Quakerism* (1973).

APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

Penn, William, founder of Pennsylvania. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/penn_william_1644_1718



The Columbia Encyclopedia, © Columbia University Press 2018



The Columbia Encyclopedia, © Columbia University Press 2018

APA

Penn, William, founder of Pennsylvania. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/penn_william_1644_1718

Chicago

"Penn, William, founder of Pennsylvania." In *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, by Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University. 8th ed. Columbia University Press, 2018.

https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/penn_william_1644_1718

Harvard

Penn, William, founder of Pennsylvania. (2018). In P. Lagasse & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia*. (8th ed.). [Online]. New York: Columbia University Press. Available from: https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/penn_william_1644_1718 [Accessed 16 October 2019].

MLA

"Penn, William, founder of Pennsylvania." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University, Columbia University Press, 8th edition, 2018. *Credo Reference*, https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/penn_william_1644_1718. Accessed 16 Oct. 2019.