

The Pennsylvania Quakers and William Penn

In the history of Pennsylvania from 1682 to 1709 one man stands out as the central antagonist to proprietary government: **David Lloyd**, the Welsh Quaker lawyer who penned one of the colony's most controversial documents during the period, the remonstrance of 1704 which venomously attacked William Penn. Yet Lloyd's diatribe against his celebrated Quaker counterpart, while particularly harsh, reflected the disillusionment of many Pennsylvania Quakers and also symbolized their often confrontational and inappropriate behavior. They were, after all, predominantly British Quaker immigrants, accustomed to a repressed and sharply circumscribed minority status in their native land but suddenly thrust into the political and economic spotlight within the colony. Many of those Quakers may have viewed their loyalty to Penn as conditional upon his residing with them in the colony. Without Penn present, Pennsylvania became virtually autonomous, whereby a number of strong personalities came to the fore, both Quaker and non-Quaker, particularly in opposition to Penn for his perceived inadequacies as a proprietor, including his lamentable choices of governors and his support of a legislature in which the Assembly played a strictly subordinate role in the legislative process. The leading antagonists to proprietary government among Friends were **David Lloyd, William Biles, Griffith Jones, Francis Rawle, Joseph Wilcox, and Robert Turner**, the last two ultimately leaving Friends in support of George Keith. Although concerned about Penn's tactics and the Act of Union with the Lower Counties, these men do not appear to have desired the overthrow of proprietary government; rather, they wanted Penn's financial and political support and his skill as a lobbyist with the English government, but with as little actual interference in the colony's government as possible. While other leading Quakers, including **Samuel Carpenter, Isaac Norris, Thomas Lloyd, Joseph Growdon, John Simcock, Caleb Pusey, Thomas Holme, Anthony Morris, Griffith Owen, Phineas Pemberton, and Edward Shippen**, generally supported the proprietor, they, too, were concerned about the Act of Union, and about Penn's failure to reside in the colony, his poor choices of governors, his constant demands for money, and his inconsistent land policies.

Virtually from the beginning, Penn's "Holy Experiment" was probably doomed to failure. The Act of Union, for example, while strategically sound from Penn's point of view, joined together the predominantly non-Quaker, more politically experienced, and migratory population of the Lower Counties with the politically naive and inexperienced Quakers of Pennsylvania, many of whom had suffered religious persecution at the hands of other Protestant groups in England, a mixture that would prove to be combustible.

Had Penn remained in the colony, the union might have survived without the bitter recriminations that developed, but even before leaving, Penn had encountered opposition from his Quaker brethren. Despite initial approval from **Samuel Carpenter**, the Provincial Council's attempt to enact an excise tax on liquor to raise revenue to assist Penn in his return to England and subsequent struggle with Lord Baltimore met resistance from Carpenter and other Philadelphia merchants involved in the liquor trade. Among these merchants were the Quakers **John Songhurst, Robert Turner, James Claypoole, James Harrison, Thomas Wynne, Griffith Jones, and William Frampton**. This impasse resulted in a compromise agreement whereby Penn would be presented with £500 in lieu of the excise; in fact, he never received any money from this proposal despite his repeated requests.¹ Moreover, in July 1684 Penn was presented with a remonstrance from an unnamed group of Philadelphia first purchasers, including many of his presumed allies. They complained that the proprietor had reneged on several promises to them by granting less land in the city; withholding hunting, fishing, and mineral rights; imposing a city-lot quitrent; and denying exclusive use of the river bank fronting their properties. They also accused him of granting some of the best lots to non-first purchasers. Penn responded bitterly, albeit somewhat inaccurately, in his defense, but the dispute "highlighted the problem of accomodating aggressive settlers with limited resources."²

Ironically, Penn's most significant contribution to Pennsylvania's colonial history proved to be his extended absence from the colony. When he sailed for England in August 1684, he was apparently determined to return as soon as he had settled the dispute with Lord Baltimore. That he would return in the near future was also a dominant theme among the leading Quakers who

remained behind, and may have influenced the postponement of many necessary decisions. Penn's absence, combined with erratic and delayed communication across the Atlantic, often left the two sides talking past one another, or reacting to events that had occurred long before. Penn became the classic absentee landlord, issuing orders and sending commissions that often demonstrated the depth of his ignorance about the true feelings of the colonists and the difficulties they faced in attempting to turn a wilderness into a prosperous home for themselves and their posterity. Penn himself clearly believed that he would soon return to the colony, but circumstances quickly dictated otherwise, particularly the accession in 1685 of James II to the English throne. Penn's rapport with this Catholic King convinced him to remain in England to assist his Quaker brethren there in countering religious persecution. Yet his close association with James II left Penn vulnerable after the Revolution of 1688 to charges of pro-Catholic and Jacobite sympathies, and consequently he spent several years in hiding. During his absence, the colony began to go its own way, ironically assisted by Penn's ability to protect it from the centralizing tendencies of the English government.

In the late 1680s Penn tried to influence developments in the colony, but was often unsuccessful. Thus in 1687, when **Thomas Lloyd's** term on the Provincial Council was scheduled to expire, and consequently his right to remain as president would terminate, Penn sent a new commission for five men to act as the collective president, with a quorum of three, partly to ensure that there would be a continuous presence in the colony of an executive, a reaction to Lloyd's constant traveling to New York, where his new wife continued to reside in preference to Philadelphia. The five men named were Lloyd, **Nicholas More**, **James Claypoole**, **Robert Turner**, and **John Eckley**, an impractical arrangement, for they were mutually incompatible. Nor did they like Penn's reserving to himself the right to approve or veto their actions.

In September 1687 **John Simcock** and **Arthur Cook** replaced Claypoole and More, both of whom had died. Although sent in February 1687, the commission was ignored by the colonists and was not implemented until February 1688, as Lloyd remained in his post of president until then.³ Nor was Penn's next choice to govern the colony any better--the

aggressive, outspoken soldier, John Blackwell, who ultimately antagonized even Penn's staunchest Quaker supporters. In addition, the colonists had consistently ignored Penn's request for a copy of Pennsylvania's laws; in November 1690 he complained that he had "long writt for a book of the Laws butt no body has yet been pleased to send me one throughout the divers forms of Government & administracion."⁴

Again in April 1691 the Provincial Council ignored Penn's preferred choice for deputy governor, by his commission of November 1690, in which he had named five men, with a quorum of three. The colonists wisely realized that the five appointees--Turner, Lloyd, **William Markham**, Samuel Jennings, and **John Cann**--represented another ill-conceived attempt by Penn to balance irreconcilable interests. Despite support by seven of the Lower Counties representatives for that commission or for the Provincial Council to act collectively as governor, the Quaker councilors chose **Thomas Lloyd** as deputy governor, with fellow Quakers **Arthur Cook** and **John Goodson** as assistants, precipitating a boycott by the Lower Counties.⁵

In 1692 the English government, concerned about French pretensions in North America, suspicious of Penn's relations with the exiled James Stuart, and alarmed by the reports of chronic tension between the Lower Counties and Pennsylvania, by the refusal of Pennsylvania Quakers to engage in defensive preparations, and by the bitter and divisive Keithian schism, finally replaced Penn as governor of his colony with New York governor Benjamin Fletcher. Although Penn angrily blamed **Thomas Lloyd** and those who supported him for exacerbating relations with both the Lower Counties and George Keith, he also called upon his allies in the colony to wage a campaign of quiet resistance to Fletcher, while he personally utilized Friends in England to lobby with the English authorities.⁶

Although the Pennsylvania Quakers embarked on a campaign designed to overthrow Fletcher, they did not insist on Penn's restoration. The biased narrative of Fletcher's first months in the province, compiled by **Samuel Carpenter**, **James Fox**, and **David Lloyd**, was sent not to Penn but to his steward, Philip Ford, to use according to his discretion, in consultation with English Quakers. In a petition to William III against annexation of Pennsylvania to New York,

the Quakers stressed their role in lawmaking in the colony, which laws had enabled the colony to grow from "an uncultivated wilderness to a well frequented & improved Country with towns and villages & Plantations," which had sent "many vessells yearly" to the king's colonies with "bread, flour, beef, pork, beer & other Provisions." They stressed the negative impact on them personally and on Pennsylvania if annexation occurred, and they promised that if left under their own laws they would endeavor to support the government financially to the best of their abilities. The Quaker leaders also drafted a series of proposals, one of which indicated their willingness to treat with Penn to adjust the method of government in order to prevent future disputes between the proprietor and people, after which they would support efforts to restore the government to him. Alternatively, they would ask Penn for his help in having the government granted to a person "who may reside among us and be gratefull to us," but if Penn refused, then English Friends would be asked for help. If those efforts failed, the crown would be asked to commit the civil government to magistrates chosen by the colonists, with the military command to be granted to Maryland, on the proviso that Pennsylvania would annually "rayse a Supply For the King & Queen's occasions." A final option would be to ask the crown to join Pennsylvania to Maryland rather than New York. Friends nominated **David Lloyd, Phineas Pemberton, John Bristow**, and the sympathetic non-Quaker **John White** to sail to England to carry on the negotiations, but neither they nor any other Quakers are known to have gone.⁷

While the colony's Quakers increasingly viewed themselves as independent from Penn, the English authorities believed that he could influence the colonists to fall in line with imperial policies. Thus he was restored to power, provided that Pennsylvania would actively assist New York's defensive preparations.⁸ Yet Penn's restoration had little impact on the behavior of the Quakers, particularly in the legislature, as the issue of constitutional reform divided them into rival camps, with many of the more prominent Friends, namely **Samuel Carpenter, John Simcock, Samuel Richardson, Phineas Pemberton, and David Lloyd**, supporting a new constitution, while **John Goodson, Arthur Cook**, and the Keithian **Robert Turner** favored a return to the 1683 Frame. Two commissions issued by Penn that might have clarified the

situation had been hidden by unnamed Quakers from Markham for well over a year. The new constitution, the 1696 Frame of Government, was enacted without Penn's approval, and furthered the divisions within the colony when an alternative election was attempted in Philadelphia County. A subsequent remonstrance was sent to Penn, signed by 116 Philadelphians, who demanded that he reject the new Frame, enacted, in part, by an unrepresentative appointed Council and a restricted Assembly. From Penn's viewpoint, the signers of consequence were **Robert Turner, Francis Rawle, Arthur Cook, Griffith Jones, Joseph Wilcox, and John Hart.**⁹

The Quaker supporters of the 1696 Frame countered in letters to Penn attacking the opposition but also pleading with him to come to Pennsylvania.¹⁰ By the time Penn was ready to return to the colony, however, he was in an untenable position, for the crown, irritated by the chronic turmoil in Pennsylvania, the obstruction practiced against royal officials, and the lack of a defensive posture, placed severe constraints on the proprietor. Consequently, Penn further alienated his Quaker allies after his arrival with his dismissal of **David Lloyd** and **Anthony Morris**, as well as **William Markham**, and with his insistence that the alleged abuses in trade and harboring of pirates and the harassment of royal officials be stopped.¹¹

Yet the most significant indications that Penn and his Quaker brethren were at cross purposes involved the issues of constitutional and property reform. On 1 April 1700 Penn gave a speech to his new Provincial Council that showed his lack of awareness of political developments in the colony, for he insisted that the Provincial Council had "much to doe" to establish a constitution and courts of law. "There are in it some Laws obsolete, others hurtfull, others imperfect, that will need improvem[en]t, & it will be requisit to make some new ones." He added that the ablest men had always been chosen councilors in order to prepare laws for the Assembly to approve. "Wee are two bodies yet but One power, the one prepares, the other consents." In effect, Penn totally ignored the enormous strides made by the Pennsylvania Assembly in the promulgation and enactment of legislation. He further stressed that the councilors should do away with all parties and view themselves as a "bodie politick, first as

und[e]r the king & Crown of England, & next as und[e]r me." Penn was naively upset that at the last election at Philadelphia some individuals made government "a matter of religion," that is, Quaker self-interest, but in fact, he added, the end of government was "humane & moral relating to trade, traffique & publick good, consisting in virtue & justice."¹²

Nor was Penn happy with the obvious desire of Pennsylvania Quaker assemblymen and councilors to terminate the Act of Union, or with the effort of the Assembly to procure a Charter of Property, a volatile subject involving overplus lands, issuance and recording of patents, quitrents, proprietary rights, and the role of the commissioners of property, subjects which Penn sharply warned "could not Concern them as a House of Representatives conven'd on affairs of Gov[ern]m[en]t."¹³ Penn's personal magnetism had little impact on the question of defensive assistance for New York, for both the Pennsylvania and the Lower Counties representatives rejected his efforts to obtain £350 towards fortifications intended on the frontiers of New York. The Pennsylvania delegation refused the request because of the "infancie of this Colony and the great charge and cost the inhabitants have hitherto been at in the Settlement ther'of" and also because of recent heavy taxes, the need to pay arrears of quitrents, and the failure of adjacent provinces to act in the matter. The Lower Counties representatives also refused, but on a different tack, complaining that before they could assist New York they desired to have their own fortifications.¹⁴

Although Penn accepted a new constitution, the Charter of Privileges, immediately before he left for England in October 1701, he clearly did so grudgingly;¹⁵ nor did he pass the Charter of Property. When he left Pennsylvania for the final time in 1701, he must have realized that he had little control over events there and that his support among Pennsylvania's Quakers was tenuous at best. With his provincial secretary James Logan keeping him regularly informed, Penn was probably not surprised by the disunion of Pennsylvania and the Lower Counties nor by the bitter 1704 remonstrance from **David Lloyd**.

The penchant for the colony's Quakers to engage in often petty and acrimonious disputes among themselves and with others was aptly summed up by a frustrated Logan when he

lamented the end of the Act of Union, believing that while Pennsylvania and the Lower Counties "scarce ever agree together ... asunder they will never do anything, and therefore should be joined on equal privileges, and all Charters destroyed, for our friends are unfit for Government by themselves and not much better with others. We are generally in these parts too full of ourselves and empty of sense to manage affairs of importance & therefore require the greatest Authority to bend us."¹⁶ Penn himself commented in 1705, in a pithy observation about colonial authorities, applicable to Pennsylvania Friends: "There is an Excess of Vanity, that is Apt to Creep in upon the people in power in America, who having got out of the Crowd, in w[hi]ch they were lost here, upon every little Eminency there, think nothing taller than themselves, but the Trees."¹⁷

Although he had already begun negotiations to surrender his right to govern the colony, Penn wrote an angry and bitter letter to Friends in Pennsylvania in February 1705 condemning their "Ingratitude and treatment So Sordid and base, as hardly Ever fell to the Share of any person under my Circumstances, to my Greife, the Scandall of worthy minds, & Triumph of our Enemies as well as to the Shame of our profession." He begged them to "moderate all Extreames to Satisfye and Quiet the people." He was particularly upset that the Assembly was quarreling with Governor John Evans over paying him a decent salary unless he would permit the House the right to prorogue and dissolve itself. Penn vented his spleen to Evans that the assemblymen "should basely Huxter about a Maintenance, unless thou woulds betray thy trust ... and violate the very Constitution of the English Governm[en]t, making themselves the whole Legislative."¹⁸

Penn's letters and Lloyd's remonstrance temporarily aroused some of the more prominent Quakers to rally to the proprietor's support in the 1705 Assembly elections. Among those elected were **Joseph Growdon, Isaac Norris, Richard Hill, Samuel Carpenter, John Goodson,** and **Edward Shippen**. Numerous bills were enacted to support proprietary government. Yet that support was soon dissipated by the foolish actions of John Evans, particularly his false alarm, his firing of a cannon at Richard Hill's sloop, and his imprisonment of **William Biles**, and also by the long drawn out legal dispute between Penn and the family of

his late steward, Philip Ford, that potentially placed all of the colony's property rights in question. Consequently, the elections to the Assembly from 1706 through 1709 resulted in a series of assemblies hostile to Penn, his governors, and his provincial secretary. Each Assembly elected **David Lloyd** as speaker. Only two laws were enacted during that period, and the political scene degenerated into a series of nasty encounters between the House and the proprietary government, as Penn himself stepped up his negotiations for surrender. Consistent pressure from the House and its prominent Quaker agents in London, and also from many Pennsylvania Quakers, induced Penn to dismiss Evans, only to replace him with Charles Gookin, a soldier in the mold of John Blackwell.

By 1710 Penn still retained his right to govern and his proprietorship, although the colony was mortgaged to Quaker trustees in England until he repaid £6600 he had borrowed from a consortium of English Quakers.¹⁹ Once again, however, his Quaker allies rallied to his side in the October elections of that year. Prior to the election, James Logan, despised by many of the colonists, had sailed for England to meet with Penn, prompting the usually reticent **Isaac Norris** to come to the fore. In a significant letter to Penn written the day before Logan left, Norris succinctly and accurately portrayed the contentious, Quaker-dominated assemblies since 1706:

A strange unaccountable humour (almost become a Custom now) of Straining & resenting Everything, of Creating monsters ... then Combating them, I think too much prevails. When Such a collective body w[i]th whom buissness ought to be done (that should look at solids & substantials) sett up for witts and Criticks upon Everything that is said or done, and grow Voluminous, always remonstrating, and vallying the last word highly, I See no room to Expect much effectuall buissness. The Air of Grandure & sacred care for the honour & Dignity of the house that runns thro Everything is too Vissible & the secrett pride thereof too plainly appears Even in the great pretensions to & professions of mean & Despicable thoughts of themselves.²⁰

Frustrated and angry, and perhaps encouraged by Logan, Penn wrote a bitter, insightful letter to the Quakers in Pennsylvania on 29 June 1710. The letter did not reach the colony until well after the 1710 elections, but it clearly summed up the growing bitterness between Penn and many of the Quakers in Pennsylvania. Penn lamented that what should have been his grandest pleasure--the founding of a flourishing colony--had turned into his greatest nightmare. He asked

all of the colonists to consider "what you are or have been doing, why matters must be carry'd on w[i]th those divisions and Contentions." While approving of the Assembly sitting on its own adjournments, Penn did not believe it had the right "to strain this expression to a Power to meet at all times during the Year without the Gov[ern]rs concurrence," for that would be "to distort Govern[en]t, to break the due proportion of the parts of it, to establish Confusion in the place of Necessary order & to make the Legislative the Executive part of the Govern[en]t." Penn feared that the House was endeavoring to take over all the functions of government, and he was particularly annoyed at the attacks on his reputation and the sending of complaints to those in England "who cou'd not be expected to make the most discreet & charitable use of them." He complained that his proprietary manors had been invaded, that overplus lands rightfully his had been claimed by others, and that his resources were dwindling in an effort to keep the colony functioning. Nor did he like the "Violence" against Logan. Penn could not understand what the House meant by grievances or oppressions, for he viewed them as "matters so inconsiderable." Penn ended by asking for a "fair election," so that he could ascertain more clearly what the colonists truly wanted.²¹

Finally, in one of the more significant developments in the colony's early history, **Isaac Norris** published, under the aegis of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, his *Friendly Advice to the Inhabitants of Pensilvania*. Norris castigated the four previous assemblies and their unwillingness to support the government or truly to act on behalf of the country. The House had tended to "shew the Parts and Clerkship of some members, their abilities to play with Words, to combat every thing, tho never so well design'd, start unnecessary Questions and Disputes about Powers and Dignities, create Quarrels, and then remonstrate finely." He also criticized the "Sort of Half-Agents in London," and he called upon the electorate to choose representatives who would both support the government and uphold the rights of the people.

The election of 1710 swept out the entire membership of the previous Assembly. Once again, the Quakers rallied to Penn's support. But the relationship between the proprietary government and the Quakers and among the Quakers themselves would continue to be unsettled.

While the period from 1703 to 1710 witnessed assemblies that could be characterized as pro-proprietary or anti-proprietary, such labels can be misleading. To some extent, the dividing line between the often shifting Quaker members of the two groups was one of degree. Penn was still for many Friends a figure of admiration and esteem for his contributions to their religion and their lives. In a colony that was virtually a theocracy, Penn stood for more than proprietary privilege. He was a spiritual and psychological leader whose lengthy absence from the colony was strongly felt by many Quakers, whose constant pleas to him to reside in Pennsylvania were genuine. But even those Quakers regarded by Penn as his allies were appalled by his choice of governors, by the behavior of his son, William, when in the colony, by the snide sarcasm and supercilious attitude of James Logan, by Penn's lawsuit with the Ford family, by his constant demands for money, by his attempt to surrender the government, but above all, by his unwillingness to understand that Pennsylvania was as much their creation as his and that local considerations, not imperial policy, often dictated their behavior. But while many of those Friends agreed with the complaints of **David Lloyd**, they resented Lloyd's nasty, mean-spirited, and confrontational attacks on the proprietor and refused to back him, at least openly. Lloyd was able, however, to muster support from numerous disaffected colonists whose relationship with Penn and with the early Quaker settlers was tenuous. Many of those who reacted against Penn were disillusioned at his seeming lack of concern for Pennsylvania Friends, while others were motivated by personal, religious, political, and economic concerns. But Lloyd also capitalized on the apathy and discouragement of Penn's allies, who, while sympathizing with his needs and preferring that he remain their proprietor, were often unwilling to put their time and energies into serving in the Assembly on his behalf, except in times of crisis such as 1705 and 1710, thereby leaving the field to Lloyd and other men less sympathetic to Penn and his interests.

¹*PWP*, 2:558-59.

²*PWP*, 2:569-78.

³*PWP*, 3:170.

⁴*PWP*, 3:286.

⁵*PWP*, 3:295-302; PRP, Box 2, #4; PPTLC, 67.

⁶*PWP*, 3:356-57.

⁷ETPPC, 1:18; NOF, 1:120, 122.

⁸CO5/1114/88; *PWP*, 3:395-400.

⁹*Votes*, 1 (pt. 1):93-94; ETPEQPF, 7; *PWP*, 3:499-502.

¹⁰*PWP*, 3:502-4, 514-15.

¹¹Prop., fol. 9, bundle C:27; *PWP*, 3:577; Prop., fol. 271, bundle F:24; Prop., fol. 315, bundle F:40; Prop., Pennsylvania, fol. 223, bundle F:5; *PWP*, 3:587-89.

¹²*MPC*, 1:596-97.

¹³*MPC*, 2:39.

¹⁴*Votes*, 1 (pt. 1):140, 142; MPTLC, 87; *MPC*, 2:30-31; *PWP*, 4:62; CO5/1261/66.

¹⁵Penn clearly regarded the Charter of Privileges as a temporary measure in case the crown took over the colony; see, for example, *PWP*, 4:325, 335.

¹⁶*PWP*, 4:309-10.

¹⁷*PWP*, 4:336.

¹⁸*PWP*, 4:342; see also 4:348, 350.

¹⁹For the Ford affair and its final resolution, see *PWP*, 4:399-508, 769-73.

²⁰*PWP*, 4:665.

²¹*PWP*, 4:675-80.