

EXCERPT: From *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania, Volume One, 1682-1709*, pp. 666-669

For complete essay see *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania, Volume One, 1682-1709*, pp. 666-673

Edward Shippen

ASSEMBLY: Phila. Co. 1695, 1700b, 1705
Speaker, 1695

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: Phila. Co. 1696-1701

b. 6 March 1640, Methley Parish, West Riding of Yorks., Eng. arr. 1694, from Boston, Mass. bur. 3 Oct. 1712. Father: William Shippen (1600-1681). Mother: Mary Nunnes (Shippen) (1592-1672). m. (1) 1671 Elizabeth Lybrand (d. 1688); children: Frances, Edward (d. 1674), William (d. 1676), Elizabeth (d. 1688), Edward (b. 1678), Joseph, Mary, Anne. m. (2) 1689 Rebecca Howard (Richardson) (d. 1705); child: Elizabeth (b. 1691). m. (3) 1706 Esther Wilcox (Freeland) (James) (1673-1724), daughter of Barnabas Wilcox* and widow of William Freeland*; children: John, William. Brothers-in-Law: Joseph Wilcox,* Anthony Morris.* Offices: Pa.: Provincial Court judge, 1695, 1699, 1701-3; provincial councilor, 1701-12 (president and acting governor, 1701, 1703-4, 1712); commissioner of property, 1701-6, 1708-9, 1711-12; Phila. Co.: JP, 1695, 1697-1712 (president justice, 1699); tax assessor, 1702; city of Phila.: JP, 1701-12; mayor, 1701-3; alderman, 1703-12, treasurer, 1705-12.¹

Edward Shippen, a wealthy Quaker merchant, originally of Yorkshire, England, resided in Boston, Massachusetts, for about 25 years before settling in Philadelphia. Although elected to only 3 terms in the Assembly, Shippen served 17 years on the Provincial Council.

Born in 1640 to Anglican parents in Methley Parish, near Leeds, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, Shippen left home in 1668 for New England. He settled in Boston, where he became a dealer in small wares and used, second-hand items, such as clothing or furniture. He joined the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in 1669, leased a warehouse and wharf in 1671 on the east side of Bendall's Dock, and rented a house on the road leading to Roxbury. In 1678 he purchased a house and two acres of land, with orchards and gardens, on Sudbury Street. By 1684 he held six more properties in the city, along with access to another wharf.²

Shippen's mercantile success in Boston, augmented by money from his father's estate after 1681,³ was tempered by religious persecution, for in 1671 Shippen had married a Quaker, Elizabeth Lybrand. By 1677 Shippen had converted to her religion; that year he was fined 10 shillings for opening his shop on a public fast day and was also admonished for absenting himself from Sunday public worship. In 1678 he was again convicted of nonattendance at church and fined.⁴

Already under pressure for his religious beliefs, Shippen suffered another blow in 1688, when his wife and daughters Mary and Elizabeth died during an epidemic. Whether Shippen then considered leaving Boston for Quaker-dominated Pennsylvania is unclear, although he had granted a mortgage on a property between Front and Second and Walnut and Spruce streets in Philadelphia in July 1686, obtaining full title when the mortgagee failed to pay his debt. However, in the summer of 1690 the Commissioners of Property in Pennsylvania "Verbally promised" Shippen that if he would reside in their colony, they would sell him a tract of land of about 205 acres in Wicaco at the southern end of Philadelphia for £100. Shippen was given one year to consider, but in December he agreed to the offer, adding that he intended to remove to Pennsylvania "Shortly." Yet about 1691 he signed a petition with 33 other New Englanders to the king, indicating concern over the threat from the French, made greater by the revolution and by divisions in New York, and asking him to take New England into his "immediate Care and Protection." In May 1691, however, Shippen agreed to settle in Pennsylvania at some undetermined date within the following 18 months. Precisely why the commissioners made the initial offer to entice Shippen or why he hesitated is not known. Shippen's wealth and prominence within the Quaker community, combined with his harassment as a Friend and a personal desire for political power to match his financial status, may have influenced both parties to consider such a move; conceivably, the subsequent delay in following through resulted from Shippen's need for time to put his affairs in order in Boston. He may also have been influenced to migrate by his second wife, Rebecca Richardson, widow of New York merchant Francis Richardson, who bequeathed to his wife 400 acres in Cheltenham outside of Philadelphia, 1200 acres in Wrightstown, Bucks County, and another 300 acres in Bucks County along the Delaware River.⁵ Although some writers have claimed that Shippen was either banished in 1694 or was driven from Boston by renewed persecution of Quakers,⁶ there is no evidence to bolster those theories.⁷ Shippen had already purchased another property in Philadelphia along Second Street in April 1693 from Robert Turner.^{*8}

It appears that Shippen had moved to Philadelphia by May 1694, when he requested and received from the Commissioners of Property the entire block between Seventh and Eighth and Spruce and Walnut streets; that same month he purchased another substantial lot between Second and Third streets. Four months later he acquired an additional 50 acres in Wicaco for £100, receiving a patent for this tract along with his original 210 acres.⁹ In June 1694, however, he attended New England Yearly Meeting, where he agreed to oversee the building of a new meetinghouse on land he had offered to the meeting.¹⁰

Although arriving late to the colony, Shippen, through his considerable resources, was able to purchase numerous substantial properties in the southern end of Philadelphia near the waterfront. He added the landing place across from the Blue Anchor Tavern,¹¹ two wharfs, and at least nine lots, also exchanging his square between Seventh and Eighth streets for four and one-half acres between Third and Fourth and Walnut and Spruce streets, a better location situated closer to his mansion on the west side of Second Street north of Spruce. In November 1711 Shippen acquired the right to another 2000 acres in Pennsylvania, and in March 1712 he purchased 160 acres with houses, barns, and stables at Frankford near Tacony Creek, in Philadelphia County. He was also a shareholder with such prominent colonists as Samuel Carpenter,* Joshua Carpenter,* Joseph Wilcox,* Griffith Jones,* Samuel

Richardson,* Joseph Growdon,* and Robert Turner* in the 5358-acre tract formerly owned by Charles Pickering* near present-day Phoenixville. In purchasing his various properties in Boston and in Pennsylvania, Shippen expended approximately £3200 sterling. Shippen also obtained judgments in the Suffolk County, Massachusetts, court for about £300 sterling, and he granted mortgages in Philadelphia for payment of about £1250 sterling. Shippen sold his Boston lands but retained virtually all of his Pennsylvania properties until his death. In the 1696 tax assessment for the front part of Philadelphia, Shippen was rated more than double any other resident, while in 1709 he was rated the highest in the city for the poor tax. His wealth prompted William Penn, when responding to charges by Edward Randolph in 1697 that Pennsylvania's judges were not legally qualified, to insist that one such judge, no doubt Shippen, was worth "50 times the estate" of Randolph himself.¹²

Shippen's prominence resulted in his appointment to a variety of judicial and political posts, including Provincial Court judge, justice of the peace, commissioner of property, provincial councilor, and mayor of Philadelphia. He was also elected three times to the Assembly and four times to the Provincial Council. Shippen was first elected to the short-lived Assembly of 1695, where all of the provincial representatives were Quakers. He was named to the significant 12-member committee appointed to discuss Queen Mary's command to support colonial defensive measures against the French and also to discuss the request of Governor Fletcher of New York for men or money to support the defense of his colony.¹³ A dispute over a proposed new constitution ended the session without passage of legislation. Perhaps sensing that Shippen would be of greater value in the Council, Governor William Markham* appointed him to that body in 1696, the year the new Frame of Government was enacted. Shippen was subsequently reelected to one-year terms in the Council in 1697, 1698, and 1699 and to a two-year term in 1700.

In March 1697 a faction opposed to the new Frame held an alternative election in Philadelphia County. Shippen, chosen in the legal election, joined 19 others in writing to William Penn denouncing that faction, whom they called hypocrites attempting to destroy the colony's reputation in order to overthrow the proprietor. In May of that year, Shippen and 11 other legislators wrote to Penn defending Friends against charges that they refused to permit non-Quakers to attain power and again condemning the "factious" element. That same month Shippen joined his Quaker legislative colleagues in refusing to sign the Association passed by Parliament to protect William III and to exact revenge should he meet with an untimely or violent death. Instead those Quakers signed a simple declaration of loyalty and fidelity to the the king and his government.¹⁴

By 1698 another threat to the colony had appeared when royal officials Edward Randolph and Robert Quarry reported to the Board of Trade that Pennsylvania was heavily involved in illegal trade and harboring of pirates. On the defensive, Governor Markham in May 1698 called upon the Assembly and Provincial Council to pursue diligently the laws of trade and navigation, and he named Shippen, with Joseph Growdon,* David Lloyd,* William Clark,* and Richard Halliwell,* to join a committee of the Assembly to consider his speech and to propose a bill for regulating trade. The resultant bill, which permitted trials in the province before juries and not before the judge of the vice-admiralty court, aroused serious protests from the English government. Shippen's appointment to that committee was ironical, since he was accused by Randolph that same month of having shipped tobacco to Newfoundland without paying duty or giving security. Shippen had also been implicated by fellow justice

Robert Sneed in 1697 for failing to arrest Adam Birch, a suspected pirate, with whom Shippen had converse after a warrant had been issued against him. In addition, Shippen had been one of the presiding justices in 1695 at the trial over the seizure by Randolph of the brigantine Dolphin of Boston; a jury brought in a verdict for the vessel's master. Subsequently, the master sued Randolph for damages and had him arrested. Shippen joined his fellow legislators on 30 May 1698 in signing a lengthy address to William III vindicating the colony against the charges of illegal trading and consorting with pirates and sharply criticizing Randolph, while in July Shippen, Samuel Carpenter, and David Lloyd complained strongly to Penn about Quarry's activities. Not surprisingly, in September 1698 Shippen and fellow justices Samuel Richardson, James Fox,* and Anthony Morris* were summoned by Markham to respond to a complaint that they had uttered "great reflections ... upon Coll. Quarrie's person and his Comission" at the previous county court.¹⁵

During the 1698 Assembly session, Shippen had chaired a joint legislative committee that included Lloyd, William Biles,* and John Hill,* called to examine, adjust, and account for the debts of the government. The committee reported the debts owed,¹⁶ but subsequent efforts to pass a bill to satisfy those debts failed.¹⁷

The focus of attention remained on both piracy and illegal trade even after the return to the colony of William Penn in 1699. In that year, Shippen, as a provincial councilor, signed an address with 21 other legislators to William III detailing what they viewed as the illegal proceedings of Robert Quarry and John Moore, the judge and advocate, respectively, of the vice-admiralty court. In January 1700 Penn appointed Shippen and four others to join a committee of Assembly to prepare the bill against pirates, and in February he also named Shippen to add a clause to the bill against illegal trade.¹⁸

After passage of those two bills and the dispatching of a lengthy address to Penn signed by 24 legislators, including Shippen, that defended themselves once more against accusations of assisting pirates and engaging in forbidden trade, the Assembly and Council, in a new legislature elected in the spring of 1700, shifted their focus towards a constitutional settlement. Penn, supported by the Council, wished to retain legislative initiative. Consequently, he sent Shippen, Growdon, Samuel Carpenter, and Jasper Yeates* to the Assembly with his refusal to countenance the House's desire to initiate legislation. Despite disagreements over the charter, the legislature enacted another eight significant bills. Nonetheless, the lack of a charter effectively voided the spring 1700 elections to the Provincial Council, prompting Penn on 25 June 1700 to appoint a new Council, which included Shippen. However, in October Shippen was also elected to serve in the Assembly; Penn agreed to permit him to attend the session on condition that he would return to the Council when it was over.¹⁹

Shippen's political importance was again underscored when the fall Assembly of 1700 appointed him to a committee to draw up a bill of property. He was also named to a committee to peruse and examine the bill to regulate the courts of the colony and to compare it with the law then in force and provide amendments where appropriate. Although Shippen's anomalous position as assemblyman and councilor apparently precluded his being appointed to work on a new Frame of Government, his close association with Penn caused the Assembly to send him to the proprietor numerous times, particularly with bills for his perusal or signature. Indicative of the growing tension between the province and the Lower Counties, Shippen was also sent, with Yeates, Halliwell, and Isaac Norris,* to query Penn

whether the Act of Union was still in force and, if so, by what law. Penn assured them that it was in force and that he would send them the law in question. About three weeks later, Shippen was again sent, with Yeates, Norris, and John Hill,* to explain to Penn that disagreement had arisen between the province and the Lower Counties over the appropriate proportions for raising money to support the government.²⁰ Although that issue was ultimately resolved, the continuation of the legislative union joined the necessity of a new Frame as the two most pressing political concerns for the legislature.

With the election of a new Assembly in September 1701, Shippen returned to the Council. He was extraordinarily active during the short period prior to Penn's return to England at the end of October. Accompanied by either Judge John Guest,* Caleb Pusey,* or Samuel Carpenter, Shippen was often sent by Penn to the Assembly with proposed legislation or amendments. Shippen may have been one of the signers of a significant petition from several magistrates and officers of Philadelphia (Shippen was a justice of the peace) requesting a bill to confirm the laws enacted at New Castle in 1700 on the grounds that legislation passed outside of the province lacked sufficient status to encourage provincial residents to obey them, an argument that infuriated the representatives from the Lower Counties and furthered the move towards separation of the Lower Counties from the province. Shippen also prepared, with Guest, the final version of the charter of Philadelphia, in which Shippen was appointed the city's first mayor. Shippen, characterized by James Logan several years later as a "miser," did not back Samuel Carpenter's proposal to substitute a subscription to support the government in place of the impost enacted in 1700. When Carpenter, sent with Shippen to the Assembly on 24 October 1701, suddenly suggested that he would willingly subscribe £25, his compatriot was silent.²¹

On 28 October 1701, as Penn was about to leave for England, he commissioned two Anglicans and eight Quakers, including Shippen, to be his Council of State. Shippen had been extremely conscientious in his service on the Provincial Council, attending 94 percent of the meetings from 1696 to 1701, including 97 percent (87 out of 90) of the legislative sessions. But while Shippen had been quite active politically during his own relatively short residence in the colony, he diminished his significance by serving primarily in the Council rather than in the Assembly, where the most important political decisions were occurring, particularly after passage of the Frame of 1696. Perhaps out of loyalty to Penn, Shippen continued to serve on the Provincial Council, and for one year, beginning in February 1703, he served as president of the Council, acting in effect as the deputy governor of the colony between the death of Andrew Hamilton and the arrival of John Evans.²²

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¹RPCHM, 13, 31, 80n, 122; PMMR; Klein, Portrait, 9, 12; Balch, Shippen, 48-49; Hinshaw, 2:419, 649; PMHB, 6:280, 26:198, 113:431; LP, 1:62; PWP, 4:111, 116, 130-31, 550; PHMM, 28 June, 30 Aug. 1706; LABk. E3, 5:6; DQR, Bristol & Som.; PATBk. A, 2:23, 27, 65; MPC, 2:61-531 passim, 2:10-11, 48, 66; PLGL. E, fol. 28, bundle A:13, E, bundle B:41; PA, 2d ser., 19:185-515 passim; SOMISC, box 5, 7a; MCC, 6-78 passim; Votes, 1 (pt. 2):84; PHCR2, 13, 17, 30, 36, 51; Perry, 2:4, 10.

²Roberts, Military, 1:213; SUFD, 9:448-50, 10:241-43, 11:73-74, 195-96, 297-98, 12:78-79, 123, 187-88, 13:95-96, 135-36, 155-56; Balch, Pennsylvania, xv-xvi.

³Part of Shippen's inheritance was a small estate in Hillam, Yorks., which yielded about £10-£15 sterling per annum (PMHB, 28:386-87).

⁴Klein, Portrait, 10; Roberts, Military, 1:213; CMHS, 4th ser., 8:372; PCSM, 30:867-68, 917.

⁵CMHS, 4th ser., 8:372; PATBk. A, 2:194, 206; PA, 2d ser., 19:56, 68-69, 274; W&S, 6:105; PPS/AT, 6-9; Klein, Portrait, 14-15; LABk. E3, 5:290. The Wicaco land was surveyed as 210 acres; see PA, 2d ser., 19:56; Misc. Deed Box; PATBk. A, 1:305, 2:215; W&S, 1:897, 3:185.

⁶Roberts, Military, 1:213; T. Balch, Pennsylvania, xvi; E. Balch, Shippen, 47.

⁷Klein, Portrait, 14, agrees with this assessment, adding the possibility that Shippen may have been influenced as well by the marriage of his wife's sister to Anthony Morris, a prominent Philadelphia Quaker.

⁸PHDBk. E2, 5:270; BRPM.

⁹W&S, 1:891-93, 926, 3:282; OR. D, 78:168, 177; PA, 2d ser., 19:256; EXBk. 8:108; PATBk. A, 2:215.

¹⁰NEYM, 8 June 1694. Apparently, the land was not his own, but that of William Mumford. See Selleck.

¹¹L&RBk. B, 2:319. Shippen apparently purchased this property to secure it for the city as a free and common landing place (PMHB, 10:76-77).

¹²L&RBk. B, 2:27, 29, 379, 3:58, 156; PMHB, 4:49, 80:183-85, 99:5, 17; PATBk. A, 2:25-27, 29, 208, 214-15, 298, 470, 707, 3:146, 230; LABk. E3, 5:46, 162-63, 243, 283, 290; PHDBk. E2, 5:133, E3, 6:11, 49, E7, 8:173, 183, I, 4:302; BRPM, 1681-1701; W&S, 1:891, 894-96; OR. B, 22:98, D, 70:178-79, 78:168-69; PA, 2d ser., 19:256, 360, 469; Myers, Narratives, 332; PCSM, 29:415, 30:569, 607-8, 673, 820-21; CDBk. B, 123; PHWBk. C, #241; MPPC, 1:24-1/2; PWP, 3:486.

¹³Votes, 1 (pt. 1):90.

¹⁴PWP, 3:502-6, 514-15; PEMP, 2:143.

¹⁵MPC, 1:545, 549; CSPC, 1697-1698, 397; PLGL. 4:114, E, fol. 28, bundle A:13; PLAD, 3:288; Prop. C, fol. 215, bundle B:18; PWP, 3:552-55.

¹⁶MPC, 1:551-52; Votes, 1 (pt. 1):104.

¹⁷For reaction to such a bill from some of the opposition in Philadelphia, see PLAD, 362.

¹⁸PRP, box 2, #8; Votes, 1 (pt. 1):113; MPC, 1:591-92.

¹⁹PWP, 3:584-87; Votes, 1 (pt. 1):118; MPC, 1:580, 614.

²⁰Votes, 1 (pt. 1):124, 127-30, 132, 134, 136-38; MPC, 1:620, 622.

²¹MPC, 2:45, 47, 53-54; Votes, 1 (pt. 1):152-53, 155, 161-63; LP, 1:62.

²²MPC, 2:61, 86-115 passim.