

# Penn's Settlement on the River of Susquehannagh

by A. Day Bradley

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Some nine years after the grant of Pennsylvania, William Penn published in London plans for the establishment of a settlement on the Susquehanna. A prospectus, *Some Proposals for a Second Settlement in the Province of Pennsylvania*, was printed by Andrew Sowle, at the Crooked-Billet in Holloway-Lane, Shoreditch, 1690. Penn's description of the area which was later to be Lancaster County was designed both to attract the farmer and to stress the importance of the proposed settlement as a center for trade.

To conclude, that which particularly recommends the settlement, is the known goodness of the soyll, and the scituation of the Land, which is high and not mountainous; also the Pleasantness, and Largeness of the River being clear and not rapid, and broader than the Thames at London Bridge, many miles above the Place intended for this settlement; and runs (as we are told by the Indians) quite through the Province, into which many fair rivers empty themselves. The sorts of timber that grow there are chiefly oak, chestnut, walnut, cedar and poplar. The native fruits are pawpaws, grapes, mulberrys, chestnuts, and several sorts of walnuts. There are likewise great quantities of Deer, and especially Elks, which are larger than our Red Deer, and use that River in Herds. And Fish there is of divers sorts, and very large and good, and in great plenty.

But that which recommends both this settlement in particular, and the Province in general, is a late patent obtained by divers Eminent Lords and Gentlemen for the land that lies north of Pennsylvania up to the 46th degree and a half, because their Traffic and Intercourse will be chiefly through Pennsylvania, which lies between that Province and the Sea.<sup>1</sup>

The *Proposals* mention that the fur trade could be channeled down the Susquehanna and thence to Philadelphia instead of to Albany by the Mohawk River. The possibility of a water connection between the city on the Susquehanna and Philadelphia is considered:

There is a design to lay out a Plan for the building of another City, in the most convenient place for communication with the former Plantation on the East; which by land is as good as done already, a way being laid out between the two rivers very exactly and conveniently, at least three years ago; and which will not be hard to do by water, by the benefit of the River Scoukill (Schuylkill); for a branch of that River lies near a branch that runs into the Susquehannagh River, and is the common course of the Indians with their Skins and Furrs into our Parts, and to the Provinces of East and West Jersey, and New

York, from the West and Northwest parts of the continent from whence they bring them.<sup>2</sup>

The suggestion of a water connection between the Susquehanna and the Schuylkill was not realized until the completion of the Union Canal in 1828. It may be questioned whether Penn actually contemplated the construction of canals as has been suggested.<sup>3</sup>

Colonists in Pennsylvania were subsequently to show great interest in the Susquehanna lands, but evidence is almost lacking about subscribers in England. The Penn Papers in Friends House, London, include an original grant from Penn dated the "eighth of third month, called May, 1694" granting to John Everoid, of Caton, County Suffolk, yeoman, three hundred acres along the Susquehanna. The land was clear of Indian encumbrances and the grant included "Islands, Mynes, Mineralls, Royal ones Excepted, Woods, Fishings, Hawkings, Huntings and Fowlings." Every acre was to be "computed according to the Statute of the thirty-third of King Edward the First." The purchase price was £ 10 for the three hundred acres and there was the usual annual quit rent of one shilling for every hundred acres.<sup>4</sup>

Two documents in the Pennsylvania Historical Society indicate that interest was high among the settlers of Pennsylvania. An original manuscript in the Norris papers dated 1st months 1st 1696 is a proposal by thirteen persons in Philadelphia County to purchase lands along the Susquehanna.<sup>5</sup> This document states that settlement can only be effected if Penn comes over to manage and to buy Indian rights. Payment is to be made in Indian corn, one half will be paid "in next first month called March after ye arrival of ye William Penn within his Province of Pennsylvania and Residue thereof in ye first month next following." Samuel Richardson, yeoman, and John Calow, wheelwright, both subscribed £ 20; James Dilworth, Joseph Phips, John Russell, Everard Bolton, John Fletcher, Richard Wall, Jonathan Livsey, Edward Evans, Edmond Orpwood, Elizabeth Knowles and Howell James each subscribed £ 5. A similar document in the Etting papers list some 315 subscribers. This document is a copy certified by Samuel Carpenter the 20th day of 3rd month, 1696; the original was dated 1st month first, 1696.<sup>6</sup> The conditions stated are the same as those in the first document, and the agreement was to be void if Penn did not arrive within two years after the date. There were 83 subscribers from Philadelphia; Germantown, 26; Marion (Merion), 38; Haverford and Radnor, 39; Chester County, 66; Bucks County, 15; Chester and Concord, 48. Samuel Carpenter subscribed £ 100, Edward Shippen, Robert Evans, Anthony Morris and Daniel Lloyd each £ 50, and Francis Daniel Pastorius £ 25. The list of subscribers is a virtual *Who's Who* of Pennsylvania for the period.

Interest in the Susquehanna settlement must have been revived during Penn's second and last period in Pennsylvania as is shown by an agreement between Penn and representatives of the purchasers. This document, *Certain Concessions granted by William Penn,*

*Absolute Proprietor and Governor of the Province of Pennsylvania*  
... unto several of those persons who in the year 1696 did subscribe  
for Lands to be Layd Out upon ye River Susquehannagh, as also to  
such other Purchasers as have or shall subscribe in order thereto in  
this Year 1701, was signed by William Penn and Edward Shippen  
Caleb Pusey, John Guest, David Lloyd, Samuel Carpenter, Griffith  
Owen, Thomas Story, Robert Asshelon and Paromlus Parmy-  
ter at New Castle the 30th of eighth month, 1701, shortly  
before Penn sailed for England. This document was the sub-  
ject of an extensive article by F. R. Diffenderfer, who had  
access to the original, in 1897.<sup>7</sup> This describes in detail the  
provisions for laying out the settlement and erecting a coun-  
ty. The tract was to be laid out along the east bank of the  
Susquehanna and to extend north as much as twelve miles from the  
mouth of the Conestoga Creek. If the land purchases exceeded 100,  
000 acres the river frontage was to be increased. A chief town was  
to be laid out by the purchasers within the tract in such form and  
manner as they thought fit. Townships were not to exceed 6000  
acres. A purchaser was not to have more than 500 acres in one  
place, however the Propriety might have 1000 acres. "All was to be  
laid out by Lott provided that everyone shall have his proportion in  
Lands and Lotts according to their Lands within the said Tract", i.e.  
the location of the individual plots was to be determined by lot and  
the purchaser was to have a lot in the proposed city. An extra allow-  
ance was made because of the possibility of including unproductive  
land. The Propriety allowed lands for roads, and whatsoever changes  
may be necessary for ye encouragement of Inns on ye said Roads, it  
shall be defrayed by ye Propriety and ye said Purchasers Proportion-  
ally." The purchasers were to appoint a committee "in order that ye  
surveying, allotment, bounding and regulating of ye said Lands,  
Towns, and Lotts, the Laying and Marking and Clearing the Roads,  
making Bridges and what else is necessary for carrying on ye said  
Design, "was satisfactorily carried out. The Propriety was to have  
his "ten votes of an hundred on this and like Occasions." As noted  
by Diffenderfer this agreement was recorded "in ye Rolls Office at  
Phila. in Book C, No. 2, Vol. 3, page 171 to 175 ye 25th of 10th  
month 1701 by me Tho. Story", and is still a matter of record at City  
Hall, Philadelphia.

Diffenderfer has noted that all of the nine signers of the agree-  
ment with Penn were prominent and well known men in colonial  
Pennsylvania, except Parolmus Parmyter. The Pennsylvania Histori-  
cal Society has the original of Parmyter's commission as naval offi-  
cer, granted by Penn, "the first day of November in ye thirteenth of  
ye reign of William the Third and the twenty-first of my govt., 1701."  
His duties were to "observe and put into execution ye Several Laws  
and Statues", for the regulation of trade and navigation of the Eng-  
lish colonies.<sup>8</sup> Parmyter was also attorney-general for the "Province  
and Territories, 1701-1705."<sup>9</sup>

Penn's plans for development of the Susquehanna region were

doomed to failure for a number of reasons; the colonial counterparts of the wars between England and France in 1689-1697 and 1702-1713; the conflicting claims of New York and Pennsylvania for the Susquehanna valley; Penn's absence from Pennsylvania and his difficulties in England.<sup>10</sup> The area for the proposed settlement was not surveyed until 1717 when it was included in the Manor of Conestoga.<sup>11</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Penn's *Prospectus* was printed in *Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania*, Vol. 1 (June 1828), 400, and in *Historical Papers and Addresses of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, Vol. 2 (1892), 224 by Julius F. Sachse. It was reproduced in facsimile as the frontispiece to the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 28 (1904).
- <sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the fur trade see: Francis Jennings, *The Indian Trade of the Susquehanna*, Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 110 (1966), 406-424, and Gary B. Nash, *The Quest for the Susquehanna Valley and the 17th Century Fur Trade*, New York History, Vol. 48 (1967), 3-27.
- <sup>3</sup> *Canalization, as an Early Means of Transportation conceived by Penn*, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dept. of Internal Affairs, Vol. 3 (1937) No. 5, 2-8.
- <sup>4</sup> The original grant to Everoid is No. 133 in the *Penn Manuscripts*, Friends House, London. There is a photostat in the Quaker Collection at Haverford College. An abstract of the agreement is on exhibit at Jordans Meeting House.
- <sup>5</sup> Norris Papers, Family Letters, Vol. 1, 105. The date in the body of the document is 1st mo. 1st, 1696, the double date being omitted. There is a notation on the back, "Susquehanna Subscribers, 1st mo. 1st, 1696/7."
- <sup>6</sup> Etting Papers, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Vol. 1, 26. The double date is omitted on 1st mo. 1st, 1696.
- <sup>7</sup> F. R. Diffenderfer, *Early Local History as Revealed in an Old Document*, Historical Papers and Addresses of the Lancaster County Historical Society, Vol. 2 (1897-98), 3-27.
- <sup>8</sup> Logan Papers, Documents of the Original Council, 5.
- <sup>9</sup> Pennsylvania Archives, Vol. IX, Second Series, 601.
- <sup>10</sup> Gary B. Nash, *op. cit.*
- <sup>11</sup> John Taylor's Account of Lands in Chester County, 7. In *Penn Manuscripts Warrants and Surveys*, 37. Pennsylvania Historical Society.