

Penn's City on the Susquehanna

The paper about to be presented to your notice is supplementary to one read before the Society on September 3, 1897, by Mr. Frank RiedDiffenderffer, based upon a lately discovered document, granting "Certain Concessions" by William Penn to persons who had subscribed "for Lands to be Layd out upon ye river Susquehanna."

Doubtless there are many more such documents of local interest still in existence, which have been lost sight of in the lapse of years, either by accident or carelessness of the custodian, papers of the greatest historical interest, which are now stowed away in some out-of-the-way corners and forgotten. Even printed matter is occasionally lost sight of by virtue of the extreme scarcity of the original. Then, again, there are cases where such documents have been reprinted, either in very small editions or in some serial, which is either poorly indexed or not at all, and they thereby escape the notice of the average reader, and in some cases even the trained eye of the historian.

It is my purpose to bring to your notice several examples of this kind, one of which will bear upon the statement that William Penn's original plan was to place his Capital city on the banks of the Susquehanna, and not on the Delaware. The evidence presented will prove absolutely that the founding of a large city on the Susquehanna was a fond hope to which Penn clung tenaciously for a number of years after the settlement of the Province. The paper read before you in September last, which I shall hereafter designate as the "Parmyter"

paper, will prove an important link in my chain of evidence.

My attention was first called to the fact that the Susquehanna was seriously considered by William Penn as the site for his chief city when compiling my sketch of Benjamin Furly, who was the first promoter of German emigration to America. Not having any immediate or particular interest in the subject at that time I took but little note of the facts or authority. The reading of the Parmyter document, however, recalled the matter to my mind, and, in compliance with a request of your President, I now bring such of the facts before you as I can conveniently reach at this time. The most interesting paper, the one which gave me the first positive information regarding Penn's intentions as to his Capital city, I have been unable to locate for my present purpose. I think that it is among the mass of unindexed Penn papers at the Pennsylvania Historical Society. The absence of this document, however, will prove of but little moment, in view of the official evidence, which will be presented.

The first printed document relating to the Province as a colony of Penn is the proclamation of Charles II., issued April 2, 1681. It was addressed, "To the Inhabitants and Planters of the Province of Pennsylvania." This proclamation, a broadside, is exceedingly scarce. I have seen or heard of but one copy, of which I here show you a fac-simile, and which I have the honor to present to the Lancaster County Historical Society.

This interesting document sets forth that:

CHARLES R.

Whereas, His Majesty, in consideration of the great Merit and Faithful Services of Sir William Penn, deceased, and for divers other good Causes Him thereunto moving, hath been Gra-



ciously pleased by Letters Patents bearing Date the Fourth day of March last past, to Give and Grant unto William Penn Esquire, Son and Heir of the said Sir William Penn, all that Tract of Land in America, called by the Name of Pennsylvania, as the same is Bounded on the East by Delaware River, from Twelve Miles distance Northwards of Newcastle Town, unto the Three and fortieth Degree of Northern Latitude, if the said River doth extend so far Northwards, and if the said River shall not extend so far Northward, then by the said River so far as it doth extend: And from the Head of the said River, the Eastern Bounds to be determined by a Meridian Line to be Drawn from the Head of the said River, unto the said Three and fortieth Degree, the said Province to extend Westward Five Degrees in Longitude, to be Computed from the said Eastern Bounds, and to be Bounded on the North, by the Beginning of the Three and fortieth Degree of Northern Latitude, and on the South by a Circle Drawn at Twelve Miles distance from Newcastle Northwards, and Westwards unto the Beginning of the Fourtieth Degree of Northern Latitude,

and then by a straight Line Westwards to the limit of Longitude above mentioned, together with all Powers, Pre-eminencies and Jurisdictions necessary for the Government of the said Province, as by the said Letters Patents, Reference being thereunto had, doth more at large appear.

His Majesty doth therefore hereby Publish and Declare His Royal Will and Pleasure, That all Persons Settled or Inhabiting within the Limits of the said Province, do yield all Due Obedience to the said William Penn, His Heirs and Assigns, as absolute Proprietaries and Governours thereof, as also to the Deputy or Deputies, Agents or Lieutenants, Lawfully Commissionated by him or them, according to the Powers and Authorities Granted by the said Letters Patents; Wherewith His Majesty Expects and Requires a ready Compliance from all Persons whom it may concern, as they tender His Majesties Displeasure.

Given at the Court at Whitehall the Second day of April 1681. In the Three and thirtieth year of Our Reign.

By His Majesties Command,
To the Inhabitants
and Planters of **CONWAY.**
the Province of
Pennsilvania.

LONDON,

Printed by the Assigns of John Bill,
Thomas Newcomb, and Henry
Hills, Printers to the
Kings most Excellent
Majesty. 1681.

After the grant to William Penn was consummated he not only sought earnestly and widely for assistance in drafting the fundamental laws of his Province, as shown by the Furly correspondence among the Penn papers, but he also took advice as to the best

means of developing its commercial and natural resources. For this purpose he published two tracts, both of which are of the greatest rarity. The first was entitled:

"Certain Conditions or Concessions Agreed upon by William Penn, Proprietary and Governor of the Province of Pennsylvania, and those who are the Adventurers and Purchasers in the same Province, dated the Eleventh of July, One Thousand Six Hundred and Eighty-one." No pamphlet copy of this tract is known.

The other one was: "Some account of the Province of Pennsylvania in America; Lately Granted under the Great Seal of England to William Penn, etc., London; Printed and sold by Benjamin Clark, Bookseller, in George Yard, Lombard Street, 1681."

This tract was made up from the best information he then had or could obtain. The next important step taken by Penn was to organize the company known as "The Free Society of Traders in Pennsylvania," for the better improvement and government of trade in that province.

Among the plans proposed by William Penn was one to lay out a "great" city upon either the Susquehanna or the Delaware, wherever the commissioners appointed by him could find a suitable location. There can be but little doubt that both Penn and his associates of the Free Society of Traders seriously considered the former site as the most advantageous. This will be apparent when we take into consideration the situation on the South or Delaware river. The shores of this stream had been settled for almost half a century, and the Indian with his peltries had gradually been forced inland. We find that for a decade or more before the Grant to Penn, both Swedish and English traders were already obliged to go westward if they

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ENGLAND
TO

William Penn, &c.

Together with Priviledges and Powers necessary to the well-governing thereof.

Made publick for the Information of such as are or may be disposed to Transport themselves or Servants into those Parts.

wished to effect any satisfactory barter.

Then there were already two towns, settlements on the west bank of the Delaware, one of which, New Castle, had become the trade centre of the Delaware valley, and was the official port of entry.

The capes of Virginia were also better known to mariners than the capes of the Delaware, which were avoided on account of the shoals. It will be recollected that we have accounts, even so late as the first decade of the eighteenth century, where vessels for Philadelphia would sail up the Chesapeake to Bohemia Landing, and there discharge both cargo and passengers, to be taken overland to New Castle, and thence by sloop to their destination.

It is but little wonder, considering the great distance between the promoters of the new colony and their possessions, and the lack of any knowledge but what was based upon imperfect information, that both Penn and the Free Society of Traders were forced to leave some of the vital details of the settlement of the Province to the discretion of some subaltern whom they sent out for the purpose. There is a strong basis for the assumption that in the early days of the movement, some, if not all, of the principals favored the Susquehanna as the best site for the commercial and political capital of Pennsylvania.

If we refer to the Articles of Agreement of the Free Society of Traders, adopted May 29, 1682, we find:

“Article XXI. That the Society may set up two or more General Factories in Pennsylvania, one upon the Chesapeake Bay, and the other upon Delaware River, or where else the Committee shall see necessary for the more speedy conveyance of goods in the country and Maryland; but that the Government of the whole be in the Capital City of Pennsylvania.”

It will be noticed that there is no mention of the chief city being located on the Delaware.

For the purpose of developing his grant William Penn, in 1681, sent out a commission consisting of William Crispin, John Bezar, Nathaniel Allen and William Haigue, who were to act together with Governor William Markham in all matters relating to the settlement of the Province. Their original instructions are now in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. William Crispin, the first named of these commissioners, was to be surveyor-general, but he unfortunately died before reaching the Province.

In the next year, 1682, Penn appointed in his place Captain Thomas Holme, both as commissioner and surveyor-general. Among Penn's instructions to Holme was one to select a suitable site for a great capital city, to contain not less than ten thousand acres. The first duty was to choose a spot where navigation was best, and large ships might lie close to the bank, the land being at the same time dry, high and healthy, and to lay out there ten thousand acres for the site of a great city. This proved to be a very difficult task; no place answering the requirements could be found which would bear a city of such size.

The clause in Penn's instructions to his commissioners, which refers to the location of a site for this great city, reads :

"That having taken Wt care you can for the Peoples good in the respects aboves'd let the Rivers and Creeks be sounded on my side of the Delaware River, especially Upland in order to settle a great Towne and to be sure to make your choice where it is most Navigable, high, dry and healthy. That is where Ships may best ride of deepest draught of water if possible to Load, or unload at Ye Bank, or Key-side with-

out boating or litering of it. It would do well if the River coming into Yt Creek be Navigable, at least for Boats up into Ye Country, and Yt the Situation be high, at least dry and sound, and not swampy, Wch is best knowne by digging up two or three Earths, and seeing Ye bottom."

As another matter of curious interest, I will state that the question has been frequently broached, since the finding of Penn's Instructions to his Commissioners, what were his ideas or purpose for projecting a city so large as to cover 10,000 acres? The answer to this query was given by Dean Prideaux, when he stated that the plan followed by Penn in laying out his projected city was based on that of ancient Babylon. Note—The Old and New Testament Connected, ed. 1729, vol. I., p. 135.)

Notwithstanding the difficulties of the task the Commissioners started to explore the country, while Holme made a survey of the west bank of the Delaware. Holme proposed, as the most favorable spot, the west bank of the Delaware River between Pennepack and the Poquessing, and there started to lay out the great city. As his base line he ran a broad highway due east and west. This he called Susquehanna street, which was to be continued to that river, thus connecting the Susquehanna and the Delaware. This tract Holme afterwards located as part of his own land, and called it the township of Dublin.

Markham and the other commissioners favored the location now known as Pensbury.

It was not until William Penn arrived in the following October that he learned that his Commissioners had selected the Delaware as the most suitable site for the great city. When he came up the river from Upland and landed at the Blue Anchor Tavern, he

was so well pleased with the high bold shore, covered with lofty pines, which then extended along the Delaware, that he changed his ideas as embodied in his instructions, reduced the size from ten thousand to twelve hundred and eighty acres, or two square miles, and gave his consent to locate a town there which we now know as Philadelphia. Still, William Penn continued his interest in the Susquehanna, so after Holme had finished laying out the city, Penn ordered him to turn his attention to the country and make a map of the Province. This was done, and the map was published between the end of the year 1686 and the beginning of the year 1689. It was evidently some time in 1687-8, and it will be seen what bearings it had upon Penn's future plans.

William Penn, during his first visit to America, took every means to inform himself, from personal inspection, about the topography, resources and possibilities of his Province; and when he returned to England he was more than ever impressed with the importance of raising a large city, if not the great capital, on the banks of the Susquehanna. So convinced was he of this necessity that, as soon as Holme's map of the Province was ready for distribution, he issued printed proposals for a settlement of such a city upon the banks of the Susquehanna; and, as is shown by the Parmyter document, it was to be located where the Conestoga flows into it.

How closely Penn adhered to this project is further shown by the fact that, during his second visit to America, he again made a personal survey of the site, and the possibilities of water communication with Philadelphia.

The document I am about to quote further gives a proof of Penn's great foresight and enlarged views, when it tells us that he suggested at that early

period (prior to 1690) the practicability of forming a water communication between the Susquehanna and Schuylkill rivers by means of some of their branches, which communication, however, (as stated by Hazard) was not effected until about 138 years afterwards. Just why these plans of William Penn failed to materialize, or why they were relinquished, are questions which are still open to the historians of the day.

The interesting document I will now present to your notice is a broadside, entitled :

"Some proposals for a second settlement in the Province of Pennsylvania. Printed and sold by Andrew Sowle, at the Crooked Billet in Halloway Lane, Shore Ditch, 1690."

The only known copy of this broadside was, in 1848, in the collection of the late Peter Force, of Washington, D. C. It bore the marks of age and dilapidation, but was otherwise in a perfect condition. It was copied and reprinted in the fall of the latter year in the North American and United States Gazette of October 25. It is also quoted in Part I of my work on "Pennsylvania; The German Influence on its Settlement and Development."

Some proposals for a second settlement in the Province of Pennsylvania.

Whereas, I did about nine years past, propound the selling of several parts or shares of land, upon that side of the Province of Pennsylvania, next Delaware river, and setting out a place upon it for the building of a city, by the name of Philadelphia; and that divers persons closed with these proposals, who, by their ingenuity, industry and charge, have advanced that city from a wood to a good forwardness of building (there being above one thousand houses finished in it) and that the several plantations and towns begun upon the land, bought by those first under-

takers, are also in a prosperous way of improvement and enlargement (inso-much as last year ten sail of ships were freighted there with the growth of the Province for Barbados, Jamaica, &c. besides what came directly from this kingdom). It is now my purpose to make another settlement, upon the river of Susquehannagh, that runs into the Bay of Chesapeake, and bears about fifty miles west from the river Delaware, as appears by the Common Maps of the English Dominion in America. There I design to lay out a plan for the building of another city, in the most convenient place for communication with the former plantations 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; 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 Furs 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.

And I do also intend that every one who shall be a Purchaser in this proposed settlement shall have a proportionable Lot in the said City to build a house or Houses upon; which Town-Ground and the Shares of Land that shall be bought of me, shall be delivered clear of all Indian Pretensions; for it has been my way from the first to purchase their title from them, and to settle with their consent.

The Shares I dispose of contain each Three Thousand Acres for £100, and for greater or lesser quantities after that rate: The Acre of that Province is according to the Statute of the 33th of Edw. 1. And no acknowledgment or Quit Rent shall be paid by the Pur-

chasers till five years after a settlement be made upon their Lands, and that only according to the quantity of Acres so taken up and seated, and not otherwise; and only then to pay one shilling for every hundred acres for ever. And further I do promise to agree with every Purchaser that shall be willing to treat with me between this and next spring, upon all such reasonable conditions as shall be thought necessary for their accommodation, intending, if God please, to return with what speed I can, and my family with me, in order to our future residence.

To conclude, that which particularly recommends this settlement is the known goodness of the soyl and the scituation of the Land, which is high and not mountainous; also the Pleasantness, and the 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 chiefly there are chiefly oak, ash, chestnut, walnut, cedar and poplar. The native Fruits are pawpaws, grapes, mulberry's, chestnuts and several sorts of walnuts. There are likewise great quantities of Deer, and especially Elks, which are much bigger than our Red Deer, and use that river in Herds. And the 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 that Land that lies north of Pennsylvania up to the 46th Degree and a half, because their Traffick and Intercourse will be chiefly through Pennsylvania, which lies between that Province and the Sea. We

have also the comfort of being the Center of all the English colonies upon the Continent of America, as they lie from the North East Parts of New England to the most Southerly parts of Carolina, being above 1,000 miles upon the Coast.

If any Persons please to apply themselves to me by letter in relation to this affair, they may direct them to Robert Ness Scrivener, in Lumber street in London for Philip Ford, and suitable answers will be returned by the first opportunity. There are also Instructions printed for information of such as intend to go, or send servants, or families thither, which way they may proceed with most ease and advantage, both here and there, in reference to Passage, Goods, Utensils, Building, Husbandry, Stock, Subsistence, Traffick, &c., being the effect of their expence and experiance that have seen the Fruit of their Labours.

WM. PENN.

Now the question arises: What would have been the effect upon the future of the Province had William Penn's plan for a great city on the Susquehanna materialized, either in the first instance, or in pursuance of his "Proposals for a second settlement?" This is a question I leave for the political economist.

How tenaciously Penn adhered to his plan for settlement on the Susquehanna and the development of the interior is further manifest from the Parmyter document, which informs us just where the tract and city were to be located. It was at the confluence of the Susquehanna and Conestoga. The only vital point lacking is the name selected by Penn.

The proposals just read to you and the Parmyter document supplement one another. The latter furnishes additional proof how earnestly Penn labored during the last decade of the seventeenth century to materialize his

plans for a settlement on the Susquehanna, even to the extent of a personal inspection of the locality during his second visit to the Province.

From the broadside brought before you, it will be seen that it never was Penn's intention to erect here merely another county, with a scattering farming population, but to raise up another great city, which was to equal, if not surpass, the one on the Delaware.

It was not until the year 1717 that he finally realized that his plans for such a settlement were doomed to failure. His final action in the premises, by reason of his inability to interest a sufficient number of persons to make the scheme a success, has been told by the former speaker. It was an order to the Surveyor General, Jacob Taylor, "to survey without delay the land between the Susquehanna and Conestoga for the proper use and behoof of William Penn, Proprietor and Governor."

Thus ended William Penn's grand scheme for the internal development of his Province.

Author: Sachse, Julius Friedrich, 1842-1919.

Title: Penn's city on the Susquehanna / by Julius F. Sachse, Esq.

Primary Material: Book

Subject(s): Penn, William, 1644-1718.
Susquehanna River.
Pennsylvania--History--Colonial period, ca. 1600-1775.

Publisher: Lancaster, Pa. : Lancaster County Historical Society,
1897-98

Description: [223]-237 p. : ill. ; 23 cm.

Series: Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society ; v. 2,
no. 8

Call Number: 974.9 L245 v.2

Location: LCHSJL -- Journal Article (reading room)

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