

WILLIAM PENN'S
"HOLY EXPERIMENT"

THE FOUNDING OF PENNSYLVANIA

1681-1701

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CHAPTER ONE
 THE BACKGROUND OF THE
 "HOLY EXPERIMENT"

FOR MY COUNTRY, I eyed the Lord, in obtaining it; and more was I drawn inward to look to him, and to owe it to his hand and power, *than to any other way; I have so obtained it, and desire to keep it;* that I may not be unworthy of his love; but do that, which may answer his kind Providence, and serve his truth and people: *that an example may be set up to the nations:* there may be room there, though not here, for such an *holy experiment.*¹

In this, William Penn stated in simple fashion his deepest feelings in regard to Pennsylvania. First, he believed that God had been instrumental in granting him the magnificent province in the New World. Secondly, and growing naturally out of his gratitude, he desired to use the gift from above to the glory of God. Finally, he hoped that the operation of his colony in accordance with the highest Christian ethic might serve as a model for mankind, to indicate by example what men may achieve on earth if they will but put themselves into the hands of God.

Thus to William Penn, the word "holy" was the more important word of the two. He expected the "experiment" to be permeated with the spirit of God. He was certain that if the province were filled with virtuous persons, who not only knew God's will, but who lived according to His Light, his "holy experiment" could not fail. Penn expected Pennsylvania to be largely peopled with such persons, his fellow religionists in the group called the Religious Society of Friends.

The Friends, or Quakers as they were nicknamed in derision, were a new sect which grew largely from the vision of George

Fox. Dissatisfied with conventional beliefs, and yearning for answers to all of his internal doubts and questions, Fox searched for a revelation of God's will for three years before it suddenly came to him in 1647: "When all my hopes in them and in all men was gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, O then I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition.' and when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy."² The faith in the inner voice of Christ, and the realization that no outward thing can help man achieve peace with God, are at the core of Quakerism. Fox began to preach the inward Christ, and gathered a great following, perhaps as many as 60,000 persons by 1682.

The followers of George Fox believed that the teachings of Christ were meant to be obeyed, not just discussed or agreed to in a passive manner. The Sermon on the Mount was not an ideal towards which a person might gaze, but an actuality to be achieved. Furthermore, Quakers were filled with the conviction that God still spoke to them and that they were to be constantly in communion with divine authority. These were people on fire with a divine spark. Is it any wonder that Penn believed his "holy experiment" would be a success?

The concrete manifestations of the spirit which motivated the "holy experiment," such as religious liberty, political freedom, or pacifism, were all founded in a deep spirituality. To William Penn this spiritual quality was fundamental to all else. He frequently implored his colonists to regain the spirit which had been the foundation stone of the "holy experiment." For example, in February, 1687, when he sent instructions regarding a change in the government from rule by the Council to rule by Commissioners of State, he closed his words of advice with this plea:³

Be most just, as in the sight of the *all-seeing, all-searching* God; and before you let your spirits into an affair, retire to him (who is not far away from every one of you; by whom Kings reign, and princes decree justice) that he may give you a good understanding, and government of your selves, in the management thereof; which is that which truly crowns public

actions, and dignifies those, that perform them . . . Love, forgive, help and serve one another; and let the people learn by your example, as well as by your power, the happy life of concord.

To William Penn the "holy experiment" was a community populated by virtuous people who were motivated by an all-pervasive love of God.

Once it has been agreed that all of life in the "holy experiment" will have a spiritual basis, it is not difficult to discover the proper pathway to follow. It is only necessary to ask of an idea, a practice, a theory, "is it in accordance with the Will of God?" If the answer is "no," it must be discarded, and if "yes," it must be adopted. This measure would be used in relation to such an important concept as religious liberty, and such a practical matter as people living in caves along the bank of the Delaware because they were too lazy to build houses. The Quakers believed that perfection was possible, and anything less than perfection was a failing.

William Penn had long been an advocate of religious liberty, although his efforts in that direction were not successful in England. Edward C. O. Beatty, in his excellent study, *William Penn as Social Philosopher*, stated that Penn considered religious liberty "the cornerstone of the ideal political edifice."⁴ The first law passed by the Assembly which met in Chester, Pennsylvania, in December, 1682, guaranteed religious toleration to anyone who "shall confess and acknowledge one Almighty God to be the Creator, Upholder and Ruler of the world." This concept continued to be a part of the fundamental law of Pennsylvania until Penn transferred it to the Charter of Privileges of 1701 with the proviso that it could never be amended. Thus, it was hoped that Pennsylvania would not be solely a retreat for Friends, but that it would also be a haven for the religiously oppressed everywhere. Advertising was carried out in the Rhine Valley and elsewhere in the Germanic states where persecution was rife.

William Penn was born in London in 1644, son of Captain William Penn, a naval officer, and Margaret Jasper van de Schuren. The nation was embroiled in a Civil War at the time

of his birth, and his father rose to the rank of admiral in the navy which Parliament pitted against the forces of Charles I. While Admiral Penn was given high honors and substantial gifts of property at one point during the Interregnum, he later incurred the disfavor of Oliver Cromwell and retired to live quietly on his Irish estates. After Cromwell's death, Penn participated in the intrigue to bring Charles II to the throne of England. The new monarch, son of Charles I who had been beheaded, knighted the Admiral, and Penn, now serving under the new Lord High Admiral, the King's brother the Duke of York, won more glory and honor.

Young William Penn, a member of a family which had risen to great prominence in one generation, was ready to enter Oxford at the age of sixteen. He became involved with a group of religious nonconformists, and was expelled from Christ Church during his second year. His father was deeply disturbed by this, for he wanted his son to become one of the gay, sophisticated courtiers of Restoration England. He sent young Penn to the continent, hoping to make him forget somber religious ideas. While Penn spent some of his time in France attending a Huguenot college at Saumur on the banks of the Loire, he also toured Europe with young aristocrats, was introduced at the court of Louis XIV, and returned home with the manners and appearance of a courtier.

Penn began to study law at Lincoln's Inn in 1665, but this training was cut short because of the plague which desolated London that year. Penn then went to Ireland to manage his father's estates, and served briefly in a military capacity. He fell under the influence of Irish Quakers, and to the despair of his father, remained faithful to this hated sect for the rest of his life. He spent many months traveling and preaching, both in England and on the continent, was jailed many times as a Quaker, and married Gulielma Springett, the step-daughter of an important Quaker leader, Isaac Penington. The doughty old Admiral threatened to disinherit his Quaker son, but was reconciled to him before his death in 1670, and left him the major share of his estate.

It is evident that Penn was a most unusual man. He had the background, wealth and station of the aristocracy, and the religious convictions of a member of a lowly nonconformist sect. His political loyalties were influenced more by his religious beliefs than by his station in life. He was a strong Whig despite his friendship for the royal family of England. During the political campaign of 1679, he wrote a broadside to advance the candidacy of Algernon Sydney, who was striving for a seat in the House of Commons. The title briefly was *England's Great Interest in the Choice of this New Parliament* in which he enunciated many of his political beliefs. He wrote that there are three fundamentals of government: property, legislation, and trial by jury. He stated: "the Power of *England* is a *Legal Power*, which truly merits the Name of *Government*: that which is not *Legal*, is a *Tyranny*, and not properly a *Government* . . . *No law can be made, no Money levied, nor not a Penny legally demanded (even to defray Charges of the Government) without your own Consent: . . . There is nothing more to your Interest, then for you to understand your Right in the Government, and to be constantly Jealous over it; for your Well-being depends upon its Preservation.*"⁵

William Penn intended to include these Whiggish beliefs in the "holy experiment." In 1687 he sent to Pennsylvania for publication, a small volume entitled *The Excellent Priviledge of Liberty and Property* which included many of the fine old cornerstones of the liberty of Englishmen, such as Magna Charta, Edward I's Confirmation of the Charters, and the statute, *De tallagio non concedendo*. Penn introduced the documents with a brief essay which reiterated his beliefs of 1679. He reminded the people of Pennsylvania of the inheritance that every free-born subject of England was heir to by birthright, "I mean that unparalell'd Priviledge of *Liberty and Property*," which could not be taken from him "but by the tryal and judgement of *Twelve* of his *Equals*, or *Law of the Land*, upon the penalty of the bitter Curses of the whole People."⁶

While William Penn was a Whig, and expected those in his colony to defend their freedom as Englishmen, his ideas about

the government in his "holy experiment" cannot be completely described by calling them the ideas of a Whig.

In the preface of the First Frame of the government, prepared in England before he came to Pennsylvania in 1682, Penn enunciated his ideas about government in the "holy experiment."⁷ He suggested that at the beginning of the world men did the will of God, and obeyed His laws without compulsion. However, man began to do evil, and laws and government were established to constrain him. He quoted the apostle who said: "The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."⁸ Penn continued: "This settles the divine right of government beyond exception, and that for two ends; first, to terrify evildoers; secondly, to cherish those that do well; which gives a government a life beyond corruption, and makes it as durable in the world, as good men shall be. So that government seems to me a part of religion itself, a thing sacred in its institution and end."

He added that the government which crushes evil is "an emanation of the same Divine Power, that is both author and object of pure religion." Penn stated that government spent most of its time regulating the ordinary affairs of man, and only a fraction of its energy was taken with punishing evildoers.

However, Penn did not subscribe to the belief that government should be autocratic because it was ordained of God. After mentioning several types of government, he concluded: "Any government is free to the people under it (whatever be the frame) where the laws rule, and the people are a party to those laws, and more than this is tyranny, oligarchy, and confusion."

The proprietor reiterated the initial point made in this chapter, that the "holy experiment" rested on virtuous men who followed the Will of God. He wrote,

Governments, like clocks, go from the motion men give them, and as governments are made and moved by men, so by them they are ruined too. . . . Let men be good, and the government cannot be bad; if it be ill, they will cure it. That therefore, which makes a good constitution, must keep it, viz: men of wisdom and virtue.

He continued by emphasizing that the government must be supported by the people "in reverence," while the authority of the government should be limited "to secure the people from the abuse of power," and magistrates would be needed who would be honorable in administering justice. Thus the people would be made "free by their just obedience, . . . for liberty without obedience in confusion, and obedience without liberty is slavery." William Penn not only guaranteed freedom, but he also expressed his belief that good government carried with it certain responsibilities for the citizens. He expected the free men to share in the government, and to give their time, energy, and thought to make it work.

The early Friends did not feel that they were a chosen people set apart from mankind. They completely accepted the concept that all people are the children of God. They did not stop with the conventional Christian attitude, but added that there is "that of God in every man." They believed in a brotherhood, a spiritual kinship, of all mankind. From this enlightened concept of humanity many of the testimonies of Quakers grew in the centuries which followed, such as the attitudes toward slavery, Indians, prisoners, and the mentally ill.

The first outgrowth of this belief was an opposition to war. It began slowly during the troubled years preceding the Restoration in 1660, and was widely accepted among Friends in 1682. It was not just a negative attitude to war, but included a positive approach to problems of society. George Fox expressed the Quaker peace testimony when he said that he "lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars."⁹ Pacifism was unpopular in the seventeenth century and Friends had considerable difficulty with the government because of their peace testimony.

When the "holy experiment" was contemplated, William Penn hoped to establish in Pennsylvania a government which would not engage in warfare. He believed that with virtuous people and a virtuous government there should be no trouble with Indian or white neighbors, and that perhaps the colony would be an "example to the nations" of the way pacifism could be practiced.

The attitude of Penn and the other Quakers towards the Indians grew naturally out of their belief in the brotherhood of all men. There were some early attempts to Christianize the Indians, without much satisfaction to either side. More successful was the policy of recognizing the Indians as equals, not only in drawing up treaties, but also in the punishment of crimes perpetrated by members of one group against the members of the other.

In addition to these concrete manifestations of the spiritual quality of the "holy experiment," there were other expressions which are almost mystical in nature. The Friends expected to live in accordance with the teachings found in the Sermon on the Mount. It was hoped that they would live peaceably with one another, that they would be meek, merciful, pure in heart, and peaceful. This was no Bible Commonwealth, but the highest ethical teachings of the scriptures were known and held up as the yardstick against which life would be measured.

Quakers were not Calvinists in their theology, but they were strongly influenced by some of John Calvin's teachings, and were as puritanical as his staunchest followers. The stern moral code which they followed rejected all forms of amusement. They maintained a strict attitude in regard to sex morals, and lived a rigorous, plain life.

But, these are mere manifestations of something deeper and less tangible. The people of Pennsylvania were to be filled with the same spirit of love and Christian fellowship which motivated Christians in the days of the Apostolic Church. That William Penn considered Quakers to be in the tradition of the early Church is clearly indicated in the tract which he wrote in 1696, *Primitive Christianity Revived in the Faith and Practice of the People Called Quakers*. That spirit was the very substance of the "holy experiment."

THE BACKGROUND OF THE QUAKER COLONISTS

While the members of the Religious Society of Friends measured up to the expectations of William Penn in many respects, they possessed characteristics which did not aid the success of

the "holy experiment." As aspects of the background of this project are examined a gap is apparent between utopian dreams and the actual situation.

For example, a student of the economic motivation for the actions of men would discover such a stimulus in Pennsylvania. A desire for financial betterment was in the minds of many of the colonists, especially those who came with practically nothing, and this might interfere with the success of the "holy experiment." Certainly William Penn entered the enterprise with the hope that he would establish a substantial income for his old age, and an inheritance for his children. The desire for material comforts and security was eventually satisfied in the colony even though the first years were difficult. Many who were motivated by the desire for the riches of this world were undoubtedly gratified.

However, a desire for economic betterment was not the primary reason for settling Pennsylvania. Those who had money would have gone to a colony where the pecuniary possibilities were well known, such as an island in the West Indies, if dividends had been their chief aspiration. They might have settled in established colonies on the mainland, rather than face the hazardous life on the frontier along the shores of the Delaware and Schuylkill. If Penn's principal aim had been monetary gain, he would have accepted the offer of £6,000 for a monopoly of the Indian trade in the new province. Instead he wrote to Robert Turner: "I did refuse a great temptation last 2d day, which was 6000 pounds . . . I would not abuse his love, nor act unworthy of his providence, and so defile what came to me clean. No; lett the Lord guide me by his wisdom, and preserve me to honour his name and serve his truth and people."¹⁰

It could be argued with some justice that the founding of Pennsylvania was motivated by other things in addition to the desire to found a "holy experiment." But it would be impossible to discredit the tradition that William Penn and his friends were primarily interested in planting a utopian community, based on the beliefs of the Society of Friends. The search for a suitable site for a colony, planted according to Quaker princi-

ples, had been in progress for two decades, and Penn had shared that concern for many of those years.

We must go back to the beginning of the Quaker movement if we are to have a clear picture of what led to the establishment of the Quaker commonwealth in Pennsylvania in 1682. The founding of the Religious Society of Friends was part of a religious movement which was shaking all of England. Troublesome times vexed the country in the 1640s with Charles I nearing his end and the Interregnum about to begin. The land was full of new religious sects: Fifth Monarchy Men, Muggletonians, Ranters, Familists, Seekers, and others. The Anglican Church was split asunder with the Puritan movement rising against the authorities appointed by the king. Presbyterians were urgently pressing into England from Scotland, and the Independents, a religious-political-military movement, was taking form. The country was in the midst of a religious ferment.

It is axiomatic in history that religious minorities tend to become political minorities. In France, the Huguenots under the House of Navarre had been in opposition to the king. In England, the Catholics engaged in plots against Elizabeth. Charles V found his German Protestant subjects banded together against him.

The Quakers and other religious minorities were suspected by the party in power, which assumed that they had political aspirations. This was especially true after the uprising of Fifth Monarchy Men early in 1661, which resulted in the arrest of 4,230 Friends.¹¹ Even before the Restoration more than a thousand followers of Fox were imprisoned for such offenses as failure to pay tithes, failure to show proper respect for authorities, or refusal to take an oath.¹² From the beginning, the Quakers suffered severely for their faith.

Accurate figures for the imprisonments in the years 1661 to 1685, when large-scale persecution came to an end, are difficult to secure. William C. Braithwaite indicated in his studies that considerably more than 15,000 were imprisoned, and that at least 450 died as a result of their sufferings. Other estimates range as high as 60,000 incarcerations and 5,000 martyred dead

for all dissenters in the period, with the Friends a majority of that group.¹³

Friends were deprived of their liberty and of their worldly goods through fines. They were forced to pay fines in money, such as the £16,000 fine levied upon Quakers in Bristol in 1682 for violating the statutes against recusancy, or non-attendance at Anglican services, but they were also frequently deprived of their means of livelihood by the representatives of the law. In the four years before John Simcock came to Pennsylvania, he lost eight cows and eleven heifers, and other goods valued at £140. Others lost the implements of their trade, such as looms and tools.¹⁴

These savage attacks upon their personal liberty and property undoubtedly played a part in influencing Friends to look for a spot in the New World where they could control their own destinies. However, Frederick B. Tolles, in his book *Meeting House and Counting House*, suggested that there was considerable opposition to the colonization of Friends, where the sole reason was a desire to escape persecution.¹⁵ Friends were anxious, however, to find a spot where their children could be reared in a more favorable atmosphere.

George Fox was early interested in the New World, and extensive missionary efforts were carried on in Barbados, New England, and on to the south among the English colonies. There was also interest in preaching to the Indians and converting them to Christianity. As early as 1660 Josiah Coale worked among the Indians and at the same time unsuccessfully attempted to purchase land from them along the Susquehanna.¹⁶

Quakers were welcome in Rhode Island and missionaries soon found many converts in the colony founded by Roger Williams. Eventually the Friends became prominent in the life of the colony, not only religiously, but politically and economically. However, just to the north, the commonwealth of Massachusetts persecuted the Quakers, imprisoned many, and took the lives of four Friends, including a woman, Mary Dyer.¹⁷

The year 1671 saw a large missionary movement to the New World, headed by George Fox himself. The Friends first went

to Barbados, then to Jamaica, recently taken from the Spanish by Admiral William Penn, and on to Maryland. Fox moved overland to New England, through New Jersey and New York, and traveled in the Chesapeake Bay area and as far south as Albemarle Sound in North Carolina, before returning to England.¹⁸ When he landed at Bristol in June, 1673, William Penn and his bride Gulielma were there to greet him, and entertained Fox and his wife Margaret, several days.¹⁹

In the early years Friends were positive that they had a message which would sweep across the colonies in the New World and carry all before it. They were convinced that they had but to spread the Word among the dissenters, the Puritans, and even members of the Church of England where they were far away from the home influence, and a great change would be wrought. It is true that the Friends of New England, New York, Maryland, and North Carolina were largely converts among those who had already colonized, and not Quakers who came over from England. Quakerism grew in these places at the same time that it developed in England, and the first Yearly Meeting which came into existence was that of New England, not the venerable London Yearly Meeting.

While Friends had considerable influence in these colonies, and became numerous, they were always set apart from the others in the community. The Quakers in England felt a continued desire to have a colony for themselves, or at least one which would be in their hands. The opportunity came in the year 1674. The land now called New Jersey was taken from the Dutch in the Second Dutch War, and shortly thereafter was given to John, Lord Berkeley, and Sir George Carteret. In 1674 the territory had been divided between them into East Jersey, in the hands of Carteret, and West Jersey, which Berkeley controlled. Berkeley was an old man who grew tired of dealing with the colony, and sold it to John Fenwick, a yeoman from Buckinghamshire, and Edward Byllynge, a London merchant, for £1,000. These men were both Quakers, and James Bowden wrote in 1850: "There is good reason to believe that the property was acquired by them for the advantage of the Society at

large."²⁰ Whether Bowden was correct or not, Fenwick and Byllynge soon fell to quarreling about the new colony. Friends believed that differences should be settled among themselves, rather than taken to court, and William Penn was chosen as an arbitrator between them. A settlement was accepted, in which Fenwick received a sizable sum of money and one-tenth of the land, and Byllynge received the other nine-tenths. Fenwick eventually assigned his land to cover a sum of money which he had borrowed, and then came to New Jersey and settled on the land anyhow, which created more difficulties.²¹

Byllynge also was embarrassed in his circumstances, and assigned his right to the land to three trustees to protect his creditors and Friends' interest in the project. William Penn, Gawen Lawrie, and Nicholas Lucas were the trustees, and they soon found themselves involved in selling land to pay the indebtedness, in sending settlers to populate the area, and in establishing a government. Penn not only shared in the direction of West Jersey, but in April, 1681, joined with eleven other Friends to purchase East Jersey from the estate of Carteret, who had just died. Thus in the very months when Penn was drawing up plans for Pennsylvania, he was forced to give some attention to East and West Jersey. Penn also had the advantage of experience in such an enterprise, upon which he drew in establishing his own province. The West Jersey venture was successful, and encouraged him to enter into the great project on which his fame lies. Obviously, the fact that several hundred Quakers were living across the Delaware from his new province was an encouragement to Friends who were thinking of colonizing in the vast American forests.

It is evident that there was a good deal of interest in the New World, both as an area to evangelize and as a place to practice Quaker beliefs.

Perhaps it will be easier to understand why Quakers behaved as they did in Pennsylvania, if the Quaker philosophy of government is understood. Actually there was no philosophy of government for all Friends, but the beliefs of some leading Quakers can be examined, and perhaps the opinions of some of the authorities on the history of the society will prove useful.

One of the early writers was Edward Burrough, who, in his tract, *To the Present Distracted and Broken Nation of England*, written in 1659, said: "For what is a King, and what is a Parliament, what is a Protector, and what is a Council, while the presence of the Lord is not with them? And we are not for names, nor men, nor titles of Government, but we are for justice, and mercy and truth and peace, and true freedom, that these may be exalted in our nation, and that goodness, righteousness, meekness, temperance, peace, and unity with God and with one another, that these things may abound." He called for the day "when tyranny and oppression shall be clean removed, strife and contention and self-seeking utterly abandoned." Braithwaite made the following comment: "This fine passage admirably expresses the political standpoint of the early Friends alike in their intense interest in righteous government, their peaceable submission to the existing authorities, their want of sympathy with any of the influential parties, and their somewhat exaggerated claim to know the Divine mind."²²

In another part of his study, Braithwaite wrote that Quakers "were at this period indifferent to the form of government. Their point of view was theocratic rather than democratic on the one hand, or royalist on the other."²³ He added later that Friends did not believe in the conventional theocratic state of the seventeenth century, where chosen people enforced their views on others, but rather in a freedom of choice. They stressed that each person in the government, and under it, should be full of the same power of God, and theocratic in that sense.²⁴ The belief in the Inner Light, the Spirit of God within the life of all, which made all men equal before God, was fundamental in Quakerism. This faith in their ability to know the will of God enabled them to withstand all earthly pressures against their consciences.

Philip S. Belasco, in writing about Quaker political beliefs, said: "The first great attack on behalf of the individual against The Sovereign State came from the Quakers in the seventeenth century." They believed in the sovereignty of God, and in the realization of His sovereignty through the Inner Light. Thus, "The highest judgement of men could be pitted against the

sovereign will of the state." He wrote further: "The sovereignty of God therefore involved a continuous evaluation of the acts of the legislator; no morality inhered in legislation by the mere enunciation." He quoted William Smith, who wrote in 1668: "No temporal power of law, can maintain your proceedings against the law of the spirit of Jesus Christ, for it is He alone that hath power and authority to rule and govern the conscience."²⁵

Most of the Quakers who arrived in Pennsylvania in the early years had had no experience in government because of regulations at home. Those who qualified voted, but they were not eligible to hold office because of their testimony against taking oaths. They had participated in a negative way by challenging the laws in court, and Arnold Lloyd suggested that they spent rather large sums of money in that manner.²⁶ Friends did some campaigning in the parliamentary elections of 1679 and 1680, only to see their candidates defeated and the winners begin persecution anew. After Penn began his quest for Pennsylvania, Quaker leaders advocated keeping out of English politics to prevent hurting his chances of obtaining the charter.²⁷

The Quakers in Ireland held office, and George Fox wrote to them in 1687 urging "that they keep to truth." He reminded them to refrain from taking or giving oaths, from wearing fancy clothing such as officials donned, and from attending feasts and banquets. He continued: "In their places they should do justice to all men, and be a terror to them that do evil and a praise to them that do well; and preserve every man both in his natural rights and properties as in his Divine rights and liberty, according to the righteous law of God."²⁸

To sum up these comments: Friends generally arrived in Pennsylvania with no previous political experience. They were somewhat skeptical of governments, and had no fear of opposing a state which they believed was in the wrong. As it turned out, they soon learned to act as political creatures, and it was not long before Penn was calling on them not to be so "governmentish."²⁹

CHAPTER TWO

PRELIMINARIES OF COLONIZING

ON THE NORTH AMERICAN continent, only one uninhabited area remained in the English territory. The entire coastline was occupied from Maine to Carolina, but in the middle, behind East and West New Jersey, below New York, above Maryland and beyond the Delaware Bay and River, lay an area which was scarcely touched.

This Delaware Valley had been the site of a long struggle between the Dutch and the Swedes, who wrested it from one another during the first half of the seventeenth century. Such names as John Printz, Peter Minuit, and Peter Stuyvesant would never be forgotten in the area. However, during the Dutch Wars, James, Duke of York, seized all of the territory between Maryland and Connecticut formerly held by the House of Orange, and made it securely English. Despite the early settlements which could be traced back to 1619, there were probably less than 2,000 white persons in 1681 living in what now are Delaware and Pennsylvania, and three-fourths of them were in Delaware.

The fact that this area was relatively unoccupied made it a likely place for Quakers to settle, if they could gain control over the region. This was the area which Josiah Coale had attempted to purchase for Friends in 1660, and the Quakers may have retained some interest in the intervening years. Furthermore, William Penn, one of the leading figures in the Quaker community, was a close friend of James, Duke of York. This friendship has always puzzled historians. It is true that Admiral Penn and the Duke of York had been closely associated for many years. However, that is not enough to explain why a man