

---

# HISTORY

---

## Historical Items

---

It is commonly accepted that Pennsylvania constables were founded in 1664 as England expanded its dominion in America. There's a census record of a constable in New Sweden (included South East Pennsylvania and North East Delaware) under the rule of Sweden as early as 1644; under the surrender of New Netherland in 1664 – all inferior Civil officers and Magistrates were allowed to remain in office until the next election if they so pleased. Below are some of the earliest proclamations.

**Charter for the Province of Pennsylvania 1681** – AND wee doe likewise give and grant unto the said William Penn, and his heires, and to his and their Deputies and Lieutenants, full power and authoritie to appoint and establish any Judges and Justices, Magistrates and **Officers** whatsoever... [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th\\_century/pa01.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/pa01.asp)

**Some Account by William Penn 1681** [pg212] – Full power to the said William Penn, etc., to appoint Judges Lieutenants Justices Magistrates and **Officers** for what causes so-ever <https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.narrativesofearl03myer/?sp=234>

**Letter from William Penn 1683** [pg239] – And for the well Government of the said Counties, Courts of Justice are **establisht in every County, with proper Officers, as** Justices, Sheriffs, Clerks, **Constables**, etc. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.narrativesofearl03myer/?sp=261>

**Proclamation of 1693 – By His Excellency. Benjamin Fletcher, Captain General and Governour in chief of the Province of Pennsylvania.** “And I do hereby Require all Justices of the Peace, Sheriffs, **Constables**, and other Officers...” <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.14000500/>

**Proclamation of 1729 – By the Honourable Patrick Gordon, Esq; Lieutenant Governour of the Province of Pennsylvania.** “I hereby strictly Charge and Require the Mayor, Recorder, Magistrates, and other Officers of the City of Philadelphia, all Justices, Sheriffs, **Constables** and other Officers...” <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.14001600/>

**Proclamation of 1780 – By His Excellency Joseph Reed, Esq; President, and the Supreme Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.** “To all Justices of the Peace, Sheriffs, **Constables** and other Civil Officers...” <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.14600100/>

---

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE PROVINCE OF  
PENNSILVANIA, BY WILLIAM PENN, 1681

*Some account of the province of Pennsylvania in America; Lately Granted under the Great Seal of England to William Penn, etc. 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.*

*London: Printed, and Sold by Benjamin Clark Bookseller in George-Yard, Lombard-street, 1681.*

SINCE (by the good providence of God) a Country in America is fallen to my lot, I thought it not less my Duty than my honest Interest to give some publick notice of it to the World, that those of our own, or other Nations, that are inclin'd to Transport themselves or Families beyond the Seas, may find another Country added to their choice, that if they shall happen to like the Place, Conditions and Constitutions, (so far as the present Infancy of things will allow us any prospect) they may, if they please, fix with me in the Province hereafter describ'd. But before I come to treat of my particular Concernment, I shall take leave to say something of the benefit of Plantations or Colonies in general, to obviate a common Objection.

Colonies then are the Seeds of Nations begun and nourished by the care of wise and populous Countries; as conceiving them best for the increase of Humane Stock, and beneficial for Commerce.

Some of the wisest men in History have justly taken their Fame from this Design and Service: We read of the Reputation given on this account to Moses, Joshua and Caleb in Scripture-Records; and what Renown the Greek story yields to Lycurgus, Theseus, and those Greeks that Planted many parts of Asia: Nor is the Roman account wanting of instances



to say from the beginning of the fortieth degree of North Latitude unto the forty third Degree of North Latitude whose Eastern bounds from twelve English Miles above New Castle (alias Delaware Town) runs all along upon the side of Delaware River.

II. Free and undisturb'd use and passage into and out of all Harbours Bays Waters Rivers Isles and Inlets belonging to or leading to the same Together with the Soyl Fields Woods Underwoods Mountains Hills Fenns Isles Lakes Rivers Waters Rivulets Bays and Inlets Scituate in or belonging unto the Limits and Bounds aforesaid Together with all sorts of Fish Mines Mettles, etc. To have and to hold to the only behoof of the said William Penn his Heirs and Assigns for ever To be holden of us as of our Castle of Windsor in free and common soccage paying only two Beaver Skins yearly.

III. And of our further Grace we have thought it fit to erect and we do hereby erect the aforesaid Countrey and Islands into a Province and Seigniory and do call it Pennsilvania and so from henceforth we will have it call'd.

IV. That reposing special confidence in the wisdom and justice of the said William Penn we do grant to him and his Heirs and their Deputies for the good and happy Government thereof to ordain and enact and under his and their Seals to publish any Laws whatever for the publick uses of the said Province by and with the Advice and Approbation of the Freeholders of the said Countrey or their delegates so as they be not repugnant to the Law of this Realm and to the Faith and Allegiance due unto us by the legal Government thereof.

V. Full power to the said William Penn, etc., to appoint Judges Leiutenants Justices Magistrates and Officers for what causes so-ever and with what Power and in such Form as to him seems convenient Also to be able to Pardon and Abolish Crimes and Offences and to do all and every other thing that to the compleat Establishment of Justice unto Courts and Tribunals forms of Judicature and manner of proceedings do belong And our pleasure is and so we enjoyn and require that such Laws and Proceedings shall be most absolute and available in Law and that all the Leige People of us Heirs and Successors inviolably keep the same in those parts saving to us final appeals.



LETTER FROM WILLIAM PENN TO THE  
COMMITTEE OF THE FREE SOCIETY OF  
TRADERS, 1683

*A Letter from William Penn, Proprietary and Governour of Pennsylvania in America, to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders of that Province, residing in London.*

*Containing a General Description of the said Province, its Soil, Air, Water, Seasons and Produce, both Natural and Artificial, and the good Encrease thereof, of the Natives or Aborigines, their Language, Customs and Manners, Diet, Houses or Wigwams, Liberality, easie way of Living, Physick, Burial, Religion, Sacrifices and Cantico, Festivals, Government, and their order in Council upon Treaties for Land, etc., their Justice upon Evil Doers, of the first Planters, the Dutch, etc., and the present Condition and Settlement of the said Province, and Courts of Justice, etc.*

*To which is added, An Account of the City of Philadelphia, newly laid out, its Scituation between two Navigable Rivers, Delaware and Skulkill, with a Portraiture or Plat-form thereof, wherein the Purchasers Lots are distinguished by certain Numbers inserted, directing to a Catalogue of the said Purchasers Names, and the Prosperous and Advantageous Settlements of the Society aforesaid, within the said City and Country, etc.*

*Printed and Sold by Andrew Sowle,<sup>1</sup> at the Crooked-Billet in Holloway-Lane in Shoreditch, and at several Stationers in London, 1683.*

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Sowle (1628-1695) was the Quaker printer and bookseller in London for the Friends of England. He had just removed in this year, 1683, to the above location from his old shop in Devonshire New Building, without Bishopsgate. Upon his retirement in 1691 his daughter, Tacie Sowle, carried on the business. Another daughter, Elizabeth, married her father's apprentice, William Bradford (1663-1752), who brought his wife over to Pennsylvania, and in 1685 established his printing-press in Philadelphia, the first in America south of New England and north of Mexico.



containing about Four Thousand Souls. Two General Assemblies have been held, and with such Concord and Dispatch, that they sate but three Weeks, and at least seventy Laws were past without one Dissent in any material thing. But of this more hereafter, being yet Raw and New in our Geer: However, I cannot forget their singular Respect to me in this Infancy of things, who by their own private Expences so early consider'd Mine for the Publick, as to present me with an Impost upon certain Goods Imported and Exported: Which after my Acknowledgements of their Affection, I did as freely Remit to the Province and the Traders to it. And for the well Government of the said Counties, Courts of Justice are establish't in every County, with proper Officers, as Justices, Sheriffs, Clerks, Constables, etc., which Courts are held every two Moneths: But to prevent Law-Suits, there are three Peace-makers chosen by every County-Court, in the nature of common Arbitrators, to hear and end Differences betwixt man and man; and Spring and Fall there is an Orphan's Court in each County, to inspect, and regulate the Affairs of Orphans and Widdows.

XXXII. Philadelphia, the Expectation of those that are concern'd in this Province, is at last laid out to the great Content of those here, that are any wayes Interested therein; The Scituation is a Neck of Land, and lieth between two Navigable Rivers, Delaware and Skulkill, whereby it hath two Fronts upon the Water, each a Mile, and two from River to River. Delaware is a glorious River, but the Skulkill being an hundred Miles Boatable above the Falls, and its Course North-East toward the Fountain of Susquahannah (that tends to the Heart of the Province, and both sides our own) it is like to be a great part of the Settlement of this Age. I say little of the Town it self, because a *Plat-form*<sup>1</sup> will be shewn you by my Agent, in which those who are Purchasers of me, will find their Names and Interests: But this I will say for the good Providence of God, that of all the many Places I have seen in the World, I remember not one better seated; so that it seems to me to have been appointed for a Town, whether we regard the Rivers, or the conveniency of the Coves, Docks, Springs, the

<sup>1</sup> The map or plan of Philadelphia made by the surveyor general Thomas Holme, in 1683, and first published the same year at the end of this pamphlet, as *A Portraiture of the City of Philadelphia*. See it, opposite p. 242.



By His Excellency

Benjamin Fletcher, *Captain General and Governour in Chief of the Province of New-York, Province of Pennsylvania, Country of New-Castle and Territories and Tracts of Land depending thereon, in America, and Vice-Admiral of the same.*

## A PROCLAMATION

WHereas our Sovereign Lord and Lady *William and Mary*, by the Grace of God of *England, Scotland, France and Ireland*, King and Queen, Defenders of the Faith, &c. have thought fit to take Their Province of *Pennsylvania*, and Country of *New-Castle*, &c. into Their Immediate Care and Government, and by Their Letters Patents under the Great Seal of *England*, Commissionated and Appointed Me Their Captain General and Governour in Chief in and over the said Province and Country, By Virtue of the Powers and Authorities thereby to me given, and in pursuance of their Majesties gracious Commands, for the Encouragement of Virtue and good Living, and Discouragement of Vice, In *Their Majesties Name* I do hereby strictly prohibit the *Breaking of the LORDS DAY*, all *Prophane Swearing, Cursing, Drunkenness, Idleness and unlawful Gaming*, and all manner of *Prophaneness whatsoever*. And I do hereby Require all *Justices of the Peace, Sheriffs, Constables*, and other Officers throughout the said Province and Country, That they take effectual Care that such Laws and Ordinanees as are provided against *Breaking of the Lords Day, prophane Swearing, Cursing, Drunkenness, Idleness and unlawful Gaming*, and all other *Prophaneness whatsoever*, be duely executed against Offenders in that behalf. Given under my Hand at *Philadelphia* the 29th day of *April*, 1693. in the Fifth Year of Their Majesties Reign.

Ben. Fletcher.

God Save King William & Queen Mary.





389

BY THE

# Honourable PATRICK GORDON Esq;

Lieutenant Governour of the Province of *Pennsylvania*, and Counties of *New-Castle*,  
*Kent*, and *Sussex* upon *Delaware*.

A

# PROCLAMATION



HEREAS several dissolute and disorderly Persons, press'd by their necessitous Circumstances, do daily crowd into this Province, as well from Parts beyond the Sea, as from our neighbouring Colonies, and bringing with them Dispositions incompatible with that good Order, Peace and Unanimity, which are acknowledg'd by all rational Men to be the Foundation, as well as Glory, of all Civil Societies, and fomented by some restless Persons amongst our selves, disaffected to the Peace and Prosperity of this Government, endeavour to raise Heats and Animosities amongst the Inhabitants, instead of that mutual Love and Benevolence, which has hitherto under the Divine Providence been their Protection, and for which this Province has, till of late Years, been remarkably conspicuous, since its first Settlement under our late Honourable Proprietor, from whom under His Majesty, we derive all those Liberties and Privileges, which have rais'd the Reputation of this Province, and endeav'd to us the Memory of our Honourable Founder: Those Persons actuated by such Principles, and encouraged by such Incendiaries, setting at nought the just Powers of Government, and the Obedience due thereto, have had the Assurance even to menace some Members of the Representative Body, now met in Assembly at *Philadelphia*, as well as private Persons, to the Disturbance of the Peace, and Delay of the Publick Service, as has been fully represented to me by an Address from that House, declaring their Abhorrence of such Practices, and praying that the Laws now in Force in *England* against Riots may, pursuant to a Law of this Province, be vigorously put in Execution. THEREFORE being firmly resolv'd to proceed with all due Severity against such Offenders, their Aiders and Abettors, I have thought fit, by and with the Advice of the Council, to Charge, and I do hereby strictly Charge and Command all Persons whatsoever within this Province, and particularly within the City of *Philadelphia*, that they carefully keep His Majesty's Peace within the same: And for that End I hereby strictly Charge and Require the Mayor, Recorder, Magistrates, and other Officers of the City of *Philadelphia*, all Justices, Sheriffs, **Constables**, and other Officers, within the Province of *Pennsylvania*, to whom the Conservation of the Publick Peace doth more immediately belong, to be vigilant and careful in the Discharge of their respective Duties, and that in case of any Riot, Tumult, or other Disorder, they immediately put in Execution, against all such Riotors, their Aiders and Abettors, the Statute made in the first Year of the Reign of our late Sovereign Lord *KING GEORGE* of Blessed Memory, Entitled *An Act for preventing Tumults, and Riotous Assemblies, and for the more speedy and effectual punishing the Rioters*. Hereby Enjoying the Justices of His Majesties Peace, to cause the said Act to be published, at the respective Courts of Quarter-Sessions for each County of this Province, and the Mayor and Recorder of *Philadelphia*, to do the same, at the Court of Quarter-Sessions for the said City. AND I do moreover strictly Charge and Command the respective Sheriffs in this Province, to hold themselves and their Officers in a Readiness, upon Occasion given, to raise the *Posse Comitatus* as the Laws of *Britain* in such Cases direct, to quell and reduce by Force all Tumults, Riots, and Disorders, which may happen within their respective Bailiwicks, and the Offenders to seize and apprehend, in Order to be committed to Prison, and proceeded against according to the Direction of the said Statute.

GIVEN under my Hand, and the Great Seal of the said Province, at *Philadelphia* the Thirty first Day of *March*, in the Second Year of the Reign of Our Sovereign Lord *GEORGE* the Second, by the Grace of God King of *Great-Britain, France* and *Ireland*, Defender of the Faith, &c. *Annog, Domini 1729*.

P. Gordon.

God save the King.





By His Excellency JOSEPH REED, Esq; President, and the Supreme Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,

## A PROCLAMATION.

To all Justices of the Peace, Sheriffs, Constables and other Civil Officers, and to all Officers of the Militia of this State, and all other faithful Inhabitants thereof.

WHEREAS the Hon. Congress of the United States, and His Excellency General Washington, Commander in Chief of the Army, have required of us Supplies of Flour, Forage, and a considerable Number of Teams and Horses, for the Use of the said Army, and to enable it effectually to co operate with the Fleet and Army of our good and great Ally the King of France (actually arrived at Newport, in the State of Rhode-Island) against the common Enemy, and, with the Blessing of Heaven, to drive them entirely out of these United States, and thereby put an End to the cruel and distressing War which has been waged against us for five Years past: AND WHEREAS, in Compliance with the said Requisition, and to manifest our Zeal in the common Cause, and Determination most effectually to give the Aid and Assistance of this State, We have, pursuant to the Powers and Authorities vested in us for that Purpose, divided the said Requisition into just and equitable Proportions on the Counties within the State, and have heretofore appointed Commissioners for the Purchase of Flour and Forage, and lately directed our Waggon-Masters, by Law appointed, to procure Waggon and Horses by voluntary Purchase, so far as the same can be done without Delay, and in case of Delay or Refusal, to impress the several Articles, distinguishing between those whose Disaffection to the Liberty and Independence of America, and of this State, has been shewn by their Neglect or Refusal to take the Oaths or Affirmations of Allegiance thereto, and those of a contrary Character. Now, therefore, We do require the said Commissioners of Purchase and Waggon-Masters, and every of them, to execute the several Duties and Trusts reposed in them with Firmness, Vigour and Activity; and do most earnestly request and direct all Officers, Civil and Military, and all other the faithful Inhabitants of this State, to give them all Manner of Aid and Assistance----reflecting how much their own Ease, Happiness and Safety, and the Honour and Credit of this State, depend on improving this Opportunity fully and finally to crush the Hopes and Expectations of our cruel Enemies, and oblige them speedily to close the War on safe and honourable Terms to America.

GIVEN, by Order of the Council, under the Hand of His Excellency JOSEPH REED, Esquire, President, and the Seal of the State, at Philadelphia, this Twenty-fifth Day of July, in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty.

JOSEPH REED, President.

Attest. L. MATLACK, Secretary.

GOD Save the PEOPLE.