



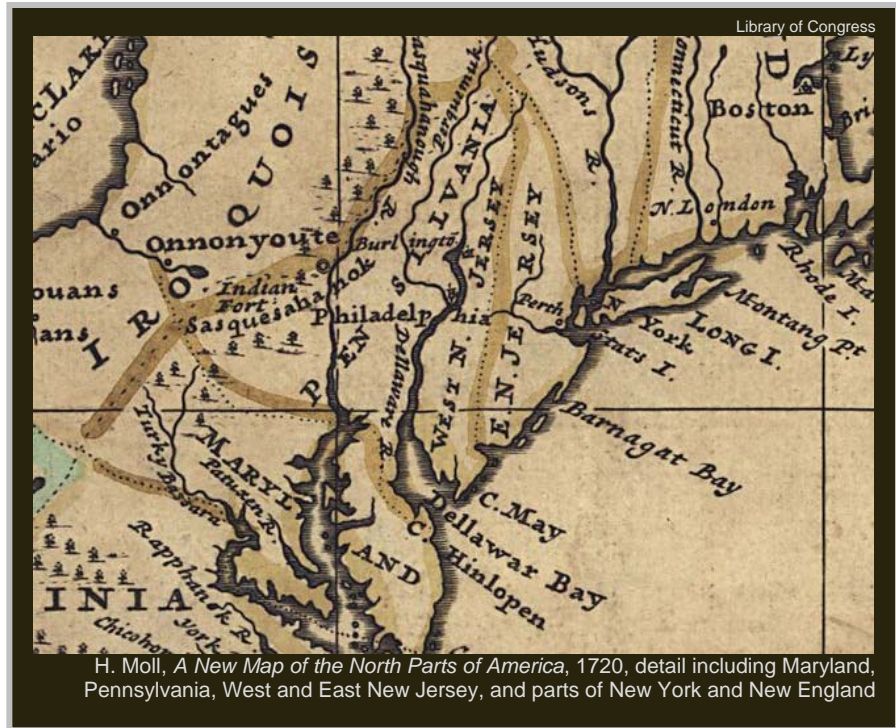
*“It is truly a matter  
 for amazement”*

Francis Daniel Pastorius’s  
**Description of  
 Pennsylvania**  
 of the 1690s

in *Circumstantial Geographical  
 Description of the Lately  
 Discovered Province of  
 Pennsylvania, Situated in the  
 Farthest Limits of America,  
 in the Western World, 1700*

**EXCERPTS**

Founder of the first German settle-  
 ment in Pennsylvania (German-  
 town, 1683), Francis Daniel Pas-  
 torius wrote several accounts of  
 the middle Atlantic colony to en-  
 courage his countrymen in Europe to emigrate to America. He surveys the history, resources, government, inhabitants (settlers and Indians), farming, and commerce of Pennsylvania, emphasizing its inevitable prosperity and progress. “It is truly a matter for amazement,” he exclaims, “how quickly, by the blessing of God, it advances, and from day to day grows perceptibly.” Included here are selections from nine of the seventeen chapters.



H. Moll, *A New Map of the North Parts of America, 1720*, detail including Maryland, Pennsylvania, West and East New Jersey, and parts of New York and New England

**TO THE GENTLE READER**

I herewith present to you the province of Pennsylvania, lately discovered by means of the expeditions sent out under Charles Stuart the First of England, and likewise its inhabitants, the Christians as well as the native savages, together with the laws, form of government, customs and habits of both of these, and also the towns which have already been settled, and the commerce which has been established . . .

And it is worthy of remark that this province, as early as the year 1684, contained four thousand Christian souls; therefore, at the present time, at the end of sixteen years, it must necessarily have a much greater population, both because of the yearly arrival of settlers, and because of the natural increase of the Christian colonists, and must also have attained to a state of greater prosperity in agriculture, in dwellings, and in trade. This is especially the result of the inestimable vigilance, admirable bearing, and prudent conduct of the above-mentioned governor, William Penn, to whom the English king, Charles Stuart the Second, gave this country in perpetuity . . .

In chapters 1-3, Pastorius reviews this early history of Pennsylvania in the 1660s and 1670s,

**CH. IV. Concerning the Laws of the Province.**

William Penn established the first [of these] with the concurrence of the public assembly:

1. The members of the council, and then the whole community come together each year upon a certain appointed day and choose their presiding officers and other functionaries by lot, so that none may know who has voted for or against him. Thereby is prevented all improper use of money and

National Humanities Center, 2008: [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/). In *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, West New Jersey, and Delaware, 1630-1707*, ed. Albert Cook Myers (New York, Scribner's, 1912), pp. 360-448; in series *Original Narratives of Early American History*, gen. ed. J. Franklin Jameson. Punctuation modernized by NHC for clarity. Complete image credits at [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/imagecredits.htm](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/imagecredits.htm).

likewise the secret enmity of the defeated candidate. And if anyone has conducted himself improperly this year, a better man may be chosen next time.

2. No tax, excise, or other impost may be laid upon the public without the consent of two-thirds of the council.
3. In order to prevent litigation, law-suits, and quarrelling, a record will be kept wherein will be registered all estates, mortgages, obligations, and rents. Thus all advocates and attorneys who demand money for their services are discarded.
- 4 and 5. That no one sect may raise itself above the others, each shall enjoy freedom of conscience, and no one shall be forced to be present at any public services for the worship of God, and no one shall be disturbed in his belief or religion.
6. In order to guard against whatever could tempt the people to frivolity, wantonness, insolence, audacity, ungodliness, and scandalous living, all worldly plays, comedies, games of cards, maskings, all cursing, swearing, lying, bearing of false witness (since an oath is not allowed), scandal-mongering, adultery, lewdness, duelling, and stealing, are forbidden under pain of the severest punishment.
7. If it should be discovered that one of the trades-people has cheated his employer he shall be sentenced not only to make full restitution, but also to pay a third more, as a punishment for his deceitful dealings. Because of this, the Deputies of the Provincial Council shall take care that upon the death of every factor, whatever amount he may have had from his employer, which belonged to the employer, shall be assiduously delivered up to him again.

In chapters 5-6, describes the colony's rivers and the 1682 arrival of William Penn.

### ***CH. VII. Concerning the Laws given by William Penn.***

Firstly, no one shall be disturbed on account of his belief, but freedom of conscience shall be granted to all inhabitants of the province, so that every nation may build and conduct churches and schools according to their desires.

2. Sunday shall be consecrated to the public worship of God. The teaching of God shall be so zealously carried on that its purity can be recognized in each listener from the fruits which arise from it.
3. For the more convenient bringing up of the youth, the solitary farmers living in the province shall all remove to the market-towns, so that the neighbors may help one another in a Christlike manner and praise God together, and that they may accustom their children also to do the same.
4. The sessions of the court shall be held publicly, at appointed times, so that everyone may attend them.
5. Justices of the peace shall be appointed in the rising cities and market-towns to insure the observance of the laws.
6. Cursing, blasphemy, misuse of the name of God, quarrelling, cheating, drunkenness, shall be punished with the pillory.
7. All workmen shall be content with their definite stipulated wages.
8. Each child that is twelve years of age shall be put to some handicraft or other honorable trade.

### ***CH. VIII. Concerning the Rising Towns of the Province.***

The Governor William Penn laid out the city of Philadelphia between the two streams de la Ware and Scolkis, and gave it this name, as if its inhabitants should lead their lives therein in pure and simple brotherly love.

The river at the city is deep enough so that large ships can, without danger, sail up to the bank within a stone's throw of the city.

Another English Company has built the new city of Franckfurt [Frankford] at a distance of an hour and a half, wherein, in addition to trading, they have set on foot some mills, glass-works, and brick-kilns.

Neu-Castle lies forty English miles from the sea, on the de la Ware River, and has a good harbor. The city of Upland lies twenty English miles from Castle, up the river, and is chiefly inhabited by Swedes.

On October 24, 1685 [misprint for 1683], I, Francis Daniel Pastorius, with the good will of the governor, laid out another new city of the name of German-ton, or Germanopolis, at a distance of two hours' walk from Philadelphia, where there are a good black fertile soil, and many fresh wholesome springs of water, many oak, walnut, and chestnut trees, and also good pasturage for cattle. The first settlement consisted of only twelve families of forty-one persons, the greater part High German mechanics and wavers, because I had ascertained that linen cloth would be indispensable.

I made the main street of this city sixty feet wide and the side streets forty; the space, or ground-plot, for each house and garden was as much as three acres of land, but for my own dwelling twice as much. Before this, I had also built a little house in Philadelphia, thirty feet long and fifteen wide. Because of the scarcity of glass the windows were of oiled paper. Over the house-door I had written:

*Parva Domus, sed amica Bonis, procul este profane,*

[A little house, but a friend to the good; remain at a distance, ye profane.]

Whereat our Governor, when he visited me, burst into laughter, and encouraged me to keep on building.

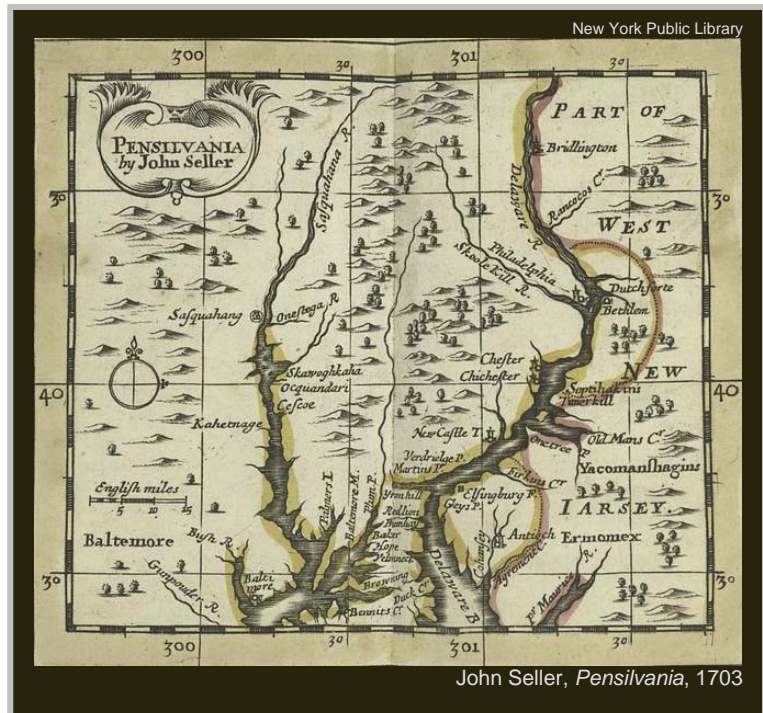
I have also acquired for my High-German Company fifteen thousand acres of land in one piece upon the condition that, within a year, they shall actually place thirty households thereon; and for this reason, that we High-Germans may maintain a separate little province and thus feel more secure from all oppression.

It would, therefore, be a very good thing if the European associates should at once send more persons over here for the common advantage of the Company; for only the day before yesterday the Governor said to me that the zeal of the High-Germans in building pleased him very much, and that he preferred them to the English and would grant them special privileges.

### CH. IX. *Concerning the Fruitfulness of this Province.*

As this province is situated like Mompellier<sup>1</sup> and Naples in respect to latitude, but is furnished with many more rivers and springs than either of the two, so it is not difficult to comprehend that such a country is well-adapted for many fine crops. The air is clear and pleasant, the summer longer and warmer than in Germany, and we have already in these parts satisfactory supply of all sorts of crops, and our work of cultivation is well rewarded.

<sup>1</sup> Montpelier, France, which is in about the latitude of Lake Ontario, is too far north for Pennsylvania. [Myers note]



We have also a large number of cattle, although, just now, all run free in the pasture together, until we shall have made better needful arrangements for them.

We get sugar and syrup from Barbados, and he who has no money exchanges goods for goods, as he comes to an agreement.

The trade between the savages and the Christians is in fish, birds, deer-skins, and all sorts of peltry such as beaver, otter, fox, etc. Sometimes they barter for drink, sometimes they sell for their native money, which is only oblong corals, ground out of sea-mussels, sometimes white and sometimes light brown, and fastened on strings.

They know how to string this coral-money in a very artistic way, and they wear it in the place of gold chains. Their king wears a crown or hood of it.

Twelve of the brown are worth as much as twenty-four of the white pieces, which are equal to a silver penny of Franckfurt [Germany]. They take their own money far more readily than silver coin because they have often been cheated with the latter.

Besides this, the silver money which we use here consists of Spanish pieces of eight and English shillings. We have no precious stones found in these parts, nor do we desire them, and we cannot ascribe great praise to that man who first brought forth gold and precious stones out of the dark and hidden places of the earth, for these noble creatures of God, although good in themselves, are nevertheless terribly abused by their misuse, and, against their will, are made to subserve the uses of vanity.

### ***CH. X. Concerning the Vegetation of this Province.***

Although this far-distant portion of the world consisted of nothing but wildernesses, and it only within a short time has begun to be made ready for the use of Christian men, it is truly matter for amazement how quickly, by the blessing of God, it advances and from day to day grows perceptibly. For although in the beginning we were obliged to have our victuals [food products] brought from Jersey and to pay somewhat dearly for them with money, yet we are now able, praise be to God! to serve other neighboring communities.

We are supplied with the principal and most necessary handicraftsmen; the daily wage is regulated on a tolerable basis, and we have what is necessary in the way of mills and brick-kilns.

We sell our superabundance of grain and cattle in Barbados for brandy, syrup, sugar, and salt, but we send the fine peltries [animal skins] over to England.

We are especially desirous to advance the cultivation of the vine and the weaving of cloth in these parts, in order to keep the money in the province, and on this account we have already established yearly fairs, not for the sake of mere profit and gain, but that anything which one man or another has, over and above his needs, may be made purchasable for the others, so that they need not, on this account, journey to the neighboring islands and carry their money thither.

### ***CH. XI. Concerning the Inhabitants of this Province.***

Of these, three sorts may be found:

1. The natives, the so-called savages.
2. The Christians who have come here from Europe, the so-called Old Settlers.
3. The newly-arrived Associations and Companies.

So far as concerns the first, the savages, they are, in general, strong, agile, and supple people, with blackish bodies; they went about naked at first and wore only a cloth about the loins. Now they are beginning to wear shirts. They have, usually, coal-black hair, shave the head, smear the same with grease, and allow a long lock to grow on the right side. They also besmear the children with grease and let them creep about in the heat of the sun, so that they become the color of a nut, although they were at first white enough by Nature.

They strive after a sincere honesty, hold strictly to their promises, cheat and injure no one. They willingly give shelter to others and are both useful and loyal to their guests.

Their huts are made of young trees, twined or bent together, which they know how to roof over with bark. They use neither table nor bench, nor any other household stuff, unless perchance a single pot in which they boil their food.

I once saw four of them take a meal together in hearty contentment and eat a pumpkin cooked in clear water without butter and spice. Their table and bench was the bare earth, their spoons were mussel-shells, with which they dipped up the warm water, their plates were the leaves of the nearest tree, which they do not need to wash with painstaking after the meal, nor to keep with care of future use. I thought to myself, these savages have never in their lives heard the teaching of Jesus concerning temperance and contentment, yet they far excel the Christians in carrying it out.

They are, furthermore, serious and of few words, and are amazed when they perceive so much unnecessary chatter, as well as other foolish behavior, on the part of the Christians.

Each man has his own wife, and they detest harlotry, kissing, and lying. They know of no idols, but they worship a single all-powerful and merciful God who limits the power of the Devil. They also believe in the immortality of the soul, which, after the course of life is finished, has a suitable recompense from the all-powerful hand of God awaiting it.

They accompany their own worship of God with songs, during which they make strange gestures and motions with the hands and feet, and when they recall the death of their parents and friends, they begin to wail and weep most pitifully.

They listen very willingly, and not without perceptible emotion, to discourse concerning the Creator of Heaven and earth and His divine Light, which enlightens all men who have come into the world and who are yet to be born, and concerning the wisdom and love of God, because of which he gave his only-begotten and most dearly-beloved Son to die for us. It is only to be regretted that we can not yet speak their language readily and therefore cannot set forth to them the thoughts and intent of our own hearts, namely, how great a power and salvation lies concealed in Christ Jesus. They are very quiet and thoughtful in our gatherings, so that I fully believe that in the future, at the great day of judgment, they will come forth with those of Tyre and Sidon and put to shame many thousands of false nominal and canting Christians.

As for their economy and housekeeping, the men attend to their hunting and fishing. The women bring up their children honestly, under careful oversight and dissuade them from sin. They plant Indian corn and beans round about their huts, but they take no thought for any more extensive farming and cattle-raising; they are rather astonished that we Christians take so much trouble and thought concerning eating and drinking and also for comfortable clothing and dwellings, as if we doubted that God were able to care for and nourish us.

Their native language is very dignified, and in its pronunciation much resembles the Italian, although the words are entirely different and strange. They are accustomed to paint their faces with colors; both men and women use tobacco with pleasure; they divert themselves with fifes, or trumpets, in unbroken idleness.

*The second sort of inhabitants in the province are the old Christians, who came here from Europe.*

These have never had the upright intention to give these needy native creatures instruction in the true living Christianity, but instead they have sought only their own worldly interests, and have cheated the simple inhabitants in trade and intercourse, so that at length those savages who dealt with these Christians, proved themselves to be also for the most part, crafty, lying, and deceitful, so that I can not say much that is creditable of either. These misguided people are wont to exchange the skins and peltry which they obtain for strong drink, and to drink so much that they can neither walk nor stand; also they are wont to commit all sorts of thievery as the occasion may arise.

Owing to this, their kings and rulers have frequently complained of the sins of falsehood, deceit, thieving, and drunkenness introduced here by the Christians, and which were formerly entirely unknown in these parts.

If one of these savages allows himself to be persuaded by a Christian to work, he does it with complaining, shame, and fear, as an unaccustomed act; he looks about him all the while on all sides, lest any of his people may find him working, just as if work were a disgrace, and idleness were an especial inborn privilege of the nobility, which should not be soiled by the sweat of toil.

*The third sort of inhabitants of this province are the Christian Societies.*

We, the latest arrivals, being Christians included in honorable associations and companies, after obtaining royal permission from England in the year 1681, bought certain portions of the country for ourselves from the governor, William Penn, with the intention to erect new cities and colonies, and not only to gain thereby our own temporal advantage and support, but also to make the savages gentle and docile, and to instruct them in the true knowledge of God, insomuch that I live in the hope of being able to announce more good news of their conversion to Christianity within a short time.

## **CH. XII. Concerning the Magistrates [Rulers] of this Province.**

The native savages have their own little kings. We Christians acknowledge William Penn as our ruler of the country, to whom this land was granted and ceded for his own by King Charles II, and the Christian inhabitants were instructed to give him personal allegiance. But this wise and God-fearing ruler did not, upon his arrival, wish to accept this inheritance of the heathen thus for nothing, but he gave presents to the native inhabitants and their appointed kings and compensated them, and thus bought from them one piece of land after another, so that they withdrew ever further into the wilderness. Penn, however, had bought all the land which he occupied by just right of purchase and from him I bought at the start, in London, thirty thousand acres for my German Company.

And notwithstanding the aforesaid, William Penn belongs to the sect of the Tremblers, or Quakers, yet he constrains no one to any religion, but leaves to each nation freedom of belief.

## **CH. XIII. Concerning the Religions of this Province.**

The native naked inhabitants have no written articles of belief, since no traces can be found that any Christian teachers have ever come among them. They only know their native language by means of which the parents instruct their children through tradition, and teach them that which they have heard of and learned from their parents.

2. The English and Dutch are for the most part adherents of the Calvinist religion.
3. The Quakers are known in Philadelphia, through William Penn.
4. The Swedes and High-Germans are Evangelical. They have their own church, whose minister is named Fabricius, of whom I must declare with sorrow that he is much addicted to drink and is well-nigh blind in the inner man.

Here in Germanton, in the year 1686, we built a little church for the community, but did not have as our aim an outwardly great stone edifice, but rather that the temple of God which we believers constitute, should be built up, and that we ourselves should be, all together, holy and unspotted.

The Evangelical ministers could have had a fine opportunity here to carry out the command of Christ: Go forth through the world and preach the Gospel, if they had preferred to be followers of Christ rather than servants of their bodies, and if they had been devoted to their inner theology rather than to verbal discourse.

In chapters 14-15, Pastorius describes his own transatlantic journey, and the leadership of the "High-German" Company, a group of Mennonites and Quakers in Frankfurt, Germany, that hired Pastorius to lead the German settlement in America.

## CH. XVII. *Concerning the Vocation of Our Germans in this Place.*

Besides the fact that the High-German Company has established a commerce in this place in woolen and linen cloth and all conceivable wares, and has entrusted to me the superintendence thereof, it is still further to be remarked that we have also purchased thirty thousand acres of land in order to establish a High German colony. Meanwhile, in my newly laid-out city of Germanton, sixty-four households are already in a flourishing condition. In order to support these present inhabitants, as well as others who are arriving, the fields must be cultivated and the lands cleared. Let one turn, however, in whichever direction he will, it is always true that: *Itur in antiquam sylvam*,<sup>2</sup> and all is overgrown with forest, so that I often wished for a few dozen stout Tyrolese<sup>3</sup> who would have felled the thick ash trees, which we have been obliged to do, little by little, for ourselves; whereat I pictured to myself that the very penance with which God punished the disobedience of Adam, namely that he should eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, was also, in this land, meted out and given to us his descendants, for here it may be said: *Hic opus, hic labor est*,<sup>4</sup> and it is not enough to bring money, but we must also bring an inclination to work, and take into consideration the motto of the Emperor Septimius Severus, which is: *Laboremus. Absque labor nihil. Quo major, hoc labriosior*.<sup>5</sup> For that man is best off whom the devil does not find idle.

In the meantime, we use the savages for work, hiring them by the day; we are gradually learning their language and little by little instruct them in the teaching of Christ, invite them to attend our worship of God, and hope soon to be able to announce with joy that the compassion of the Most High God has permitted the light of His Holy Gospel to rise also over these lands and to shine forth to the honor of His great name, to Whom alone be praise, honor, thanks, and glory without end.



<sup>2</sup> Latin: "One finds himself in the primitive forest." [Myers note]

<sup>3</sup> Residents of the mountainous northeast region of present-day Italy. [NHC note]

<sup>4</sup> Latin: "This is the work, this the labor." Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 129. [Myers note]

<sup>5</sup> Latin: "Let us labor. Without labor there is nothing. The greater one is, the more laborious he is." [Myers note]