William Penn & the Founding of Pennsylvania

Where did the ideals in the U.S. Constitution come from? Some of them can be traced back to William Penn and the founding of Pennsylvania, a true turning point in the relationship between government and its people. To William Penn, a Quaker who suffered persecution for his beliefs, Pennsylvania meant a place where people of diverse backgrounds and beliefs could live together peacefully. With the creation of the Frame of Government of Pennsylvania, Penn created a colony with freedom of religion for anyone who believed in God, with fair trials, with elected representatives and with a separation of powers. All of these ideals later informed the U.S. Constitution. The principles that drove Pennsylvania’s government were truly cutting edge and proved to be a turning point in governance.

The founding of Pennsylvania cannot be discussed without also mentioning the creation of Philadelphia, a city that played an important role in the first years of American history and that was meant to embody Penn’s ideals. Explore the story of William Penn, the founding of Pennsylvania and the creation of Philadelphia, the “cradle of liberty,” in depth at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. For more information on Philadelphia’s role in the founding of the country, see the Constitution and Declaration of Independence resource guides.

**Search Terms:** James Hamilton; William Penn; James Logan; John Cadwalader; Thomas Cadwalader; George Croghan

**Recommended Collections:**

Deed for the Susquehanna, 1700  Society Misc. Collection, Box 11C folder 2

Manuscript, At a Conference held at Fort Augusta the 19th July 1763 with Telonemet a Six Nation Waypawanay...1763, Gratz Collection, case 14, box 10

Indian Affairs. Letters 1759-1765, Joseph Reynell
Receipt, Receipts for goods traded with Native Americans, 1759, Society Miscellaneous Collection, Box 11-C folder 3

Treaty of Fort Stanwix, Penn Family Papers, Collection # 0485A and 0485B, NV-126

Of 549 1737e Walking Purchase map

_Penn family papers (1592-1960)_
Collection # 0485A

_Penn-Forbes family papers (1644-1744)_
Collection# 0485C

_James Hamilton collection (1733-1789)_
Collection #1612

_Logan family papers (1731-1838)_
Collection #2023

*Additional information about William Penn, James Logan, the Cadwaladers and George Croghan can be found in the PC1 card catalog.*

**Other Sources of Information:**

American Philosophical Society – 105 S. 5th St., Philadelphia –
www.amphilsoc.org

City Archives digital collection – _Philadelphia City Charter, 1701_ –
www.phila.gov

Library Company of Philadelphia – 1314 Locust St., Philadelphia –
www.librarycompany.org
Pennsbury Manor – 400 Pennsbury Memorial Rd, Morrisville, PA – www.pennsburymansion.org