

William Penn: A Life By Andrew R. Murphy His project of establishing Pennsylvania (named in honour of his father not himself) was an unfathomably huge undertaking and the book does much to illuminate the process and development through Penn's correspondence and transactions. Despite this (I am indifferent towards the wig) it shows him in truth as a flawed member of the gentry and a product of his age rather than an impossible specification he never was. Andrew Murphy shows how these achievements were.

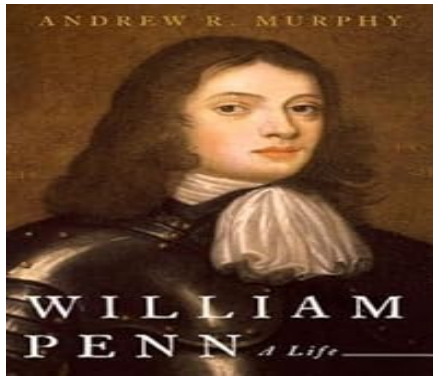
Penn's included: border disputes with Lord Baltimore's claims for what is now Maryland; the need to negotiate with the native tribes; the need to get some kind of clearance from the territorial governors and continuous dealings with a Board of Trade that could regulate or tax him out of business. Here are a few take-aways in lieu of a review: • Murphy quotes from Penn's documents from the late 1600's that presage the foundations of Bill of Rights some 100 years later: that government should not only tolerate different religions but should guarantee the right of individuals to hold their own beliefs. And like other academic works I've read there were too many instances of repeated information (sometimes a few pages apart) that suggest a lack of an editor who read it straight through. The author demonstrates a commendable mastery of his material both original and secondary and illuminates many aspects of Penn's career that were previously unknown (or forgotten) by this reader: the fact that he was famous throughout Europe as a leader of and prolific apologist for the Society of Friends; that he spent little time in his colony; that he had several stints in prison; and so on. Much light is shed on the controversies that swirled in early Pennsylvania and the tensions between the founding Quakers and the influx of Anglicans (reflecting a tension and opposition in England that in fact helped spark the founding of Pennsylvania in the first place). He was constantly playing catchup behind the development of public opinion in his own colony and appointing administrators (one a Puritan another an Anglican) who were out of sync with the Quaker mentality. But no! He was something of a con man consigning lots of land to friends who then engaged in decades of disputes with the Pennsylvania colonial government claiming title to what Penn had promised but never put in writing. Although Penn never thought of himself as an American—no such conception existed yet—he seems one of us in the very contentiousness and ambition of his goals wishing sincerely to establish a land where freedom of worship prevailed if not exactly on the democratic terms that have become part of this country's governing ethos. He expected colonists to bow to his demands and never could have supposed that their recalcitrance marked the beginnings of a new people and a new identity that would not be bound by old world principles. A brisk summary of Penn's troubles cutting out the back-and-forth of decades would have made Murphy's biography a more engaging read but also less true to what it felt like for Penn and his friends and adversaries. This is the dilemma of any biographer who wants to be thorough true to the evidence and willing to sacrifice story values for meticulous attention to the factual documentary record. Without forsaking his belief in freedom of conscience which he wrote about extensively even when it put him in dire political trouble and then in prison Penn worked well with the powerful and influential—perhaps because he grew up in the confidence of his father an Admiral who had established the family's importance in public affairs. Yet somehow (we don't have the evidence to know exactly how) Penn never quite lost the affection of his father and never went so far as to alienate himself completely from the political and Church of England establishment. Pennsylvania was not exactly a pyramid scheme but let's just say that no administrator Penn appointed could ever quite sort out all the deals Penn had made with Pennsylvanians who claimed more land than any written document could verify. Murphy's Penn is for scholars which is all to the good in so far as that kind of biography goes but Penn is also a study in personality full of magnificent contradictoriness and contentiousness. To be sure Penn sometimes seemed to lose heart and submit to self-pity but he was forever rebounding overcoming setbacks deserving of a narrative that would make of his life something of a picaresque novel. Arrested for preaching religious tolerance plagued by debt and litigation hounded by Friends dissenters in England and Pennsylvania and cursed with the loss of one wife and five children Penn fought for his colony and Quakerism through his death in 1718.

Details of his early life are scant but he was ill at ease with what was expected of him for Penn debt stress imprisonment and disappointment (“grief” “trouble” and “poverty” in Penn’s own words p. Reasons he could not collect his rents from either Ireland or Pennsylvania may have been poor management but the maneuvers by his enemies in England regarding his charter the various ownership disputes (which parcel was sold to which individual) and the poverty of the colonists were surely factors. • Murphy doesn’t draw a clear line but it is implied that the Quaker “meeting” can be a derivative of how the Quakers met the legal requirement that preaching could only take place in a Church of England. Pennsylvania was to be in its founder's words a bold Holy Experiment in religious freedom and toleration a haven for those fleeing persecution in an increasingly intolerant England and across Europe. In his early twenties Penn became a Quaker--an act of religious as well as political rebellion that put an end to his father's dream that young William would one day join the English elite,

Dropping out of both Oxford and the Inns of Court and becoming a “convinced” Quaker. He supported and was supported by English plantations in Ireland and had no qualms about African slave labour. He became embroiled in frequent squabbles and disagreements and made repeated rash misjudgements rather than being a restrained and calm figure. He was from a privileged family and could pull strings most others could only dream of, He was also vain and wore a wig to hide his probable baldness: Neither does this diminish what we did accomplish as he renounced what would have been an incredibly cushy life for his faith and ended up bankrupt. His constant campaigning for religious and civil freedoms put him on trial and in prison frequently: He made a tenable agreement with native Lenape tribes which ensured peace where otherwise bloodshed was common. The Frame of Government is arguably at the beginning of constitutional rights in American history and set up the route to the the liberties enshrined after independence, His “holy experiment” was a vision of a Christian utopia but the scope of his ambitions were ultimately too great: 488 William Penn laid the foundation for a religion that continues to have world-wide influence and for what is now the 5th most populous state in the US, Adding to this were problems of internal dissent such as the disputes between Anglican colonists and Quakers and issues associated with the ownership of the parcels: The above only begins to define the environment in which Penn attempted to lead the Quakers and his colony through 4 different monarchs and uncountable local changes: • Penn had some bottom lines that cost him dearly: He continued to support the Quaker principles of not taking up arms or swearing oaths (i. of loyalty).

It conveys much about the difficulty of settling a large area like Pennsylvania (Penn's Woods) prior to the American Revolution. Penn being a prominent convert to Quakerism provided an interesting background for the story of immigration to the colony. There is interesting details on the various monarchs Penn interacted with as well as the negotiations between political entities on both sides of the Atlantic. He called his colony the holy experiment to allow religious freedom, Perhaps a future author can find more personal stories to brighten it up, 488 On March 4.

A solid account of William Penn's life that mostly strikes a balance between readable/enjoyable and dense/academic, 488 A Holy Experiment 488 An academic text so not exactly casual reader friendly, Somewhat surprised to find it on the shelf of the local branch library after noticing it on the table at an academic bookstore a week or two earlier. Anyway I might have rated this 4 stars but well I fell asleep a couple times while reading it: 488 An interesting biography about the famous Quaker and Founder of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: William Penns -- Gulielma Springett and Hannah Callowhill -- are intriguing; Murphy lays to rest the myth that Penn married first for love then for money. Murphy is fairly unconvinced about the mythic relations between William Penn and the Lenape, I found the author's style confusing at times as he repeats things and doesn't seem to follow a strict chronology at times which left me a bit at sea: But I learned a great deal and have a deeper appreciation for the complexity of the man William Penn: 488



By the time William Penn (1644-1718) received his charter in 1681 from King Charles II for a new American colony he was already behind the times. New York New Jersey and Maryland already well established regarded Penn as encroaching on their territory. Boundary disputes abounded and even worse almost immediately Penn as proprietor of his own colony found himself out of sync with the new settlers, Penn expected a sizable income from Pennsylvania which never materialized. Most of his life he remained in debt shifting between creditors without ever paying off what he owed and ending up more than once in debtor's prison in England. Hold on! He was also incarcerated because the established church distrusted Penn and other Quakers who would not swear oaths to the Crown but only "affirm" their allegiance: Even when he found an ally James II he picked the wrong protector a Stuart monarch suspect because of his Catholicism and eventually forced to flee to France, Penn was never that popular in his own colony and in fact spent little time there although he was always announcing his return: At various points the whole business of colony proprietorship became such a hassle he thought of selling it all back to the Crown, This William Penn whose story I think demands exclamation marks is what I have gathered from Andrew R, One virtue of plodding is that it shows just how dogged Penn was in asserting his rights and just how resistant the colonists were to simply acceding to his authority. Over and over again we learn that Pennsylvanians were not behaving as their proprietor instructed. Another problem Murphy cannot overcome is how little we know about Penn's feelings—other than that he was stubborn courageous and a loving husband, We know that his son was a big disappointment—reckless and demanding but without it seems much in the way of administrative skills or loyalty to his father's Quaker principles. That there was more to Penn the man and the thinker is apparent from his friendships and alliances with those in power: At the same time though a disappointed father urged his son to relinquish Quaker principles which stood in the way of his son's advancement in the English establishment. Penn was a curious mixture of opportunism and principle befitting the founder of new colony. He believed somewhat naively that as soon as he primed their expectations their business would profit his own. Enough is known about Penn to describe him as a character not just as a transactional entity involved in various political economic and social controversies. But Murphy never really assesses Penn's character perhaps thinking a description of Penn's actions is enough so that the reader can do the rest of the work, Part of the problem is Murphy's dull prose his employment of overused expressions like "that said" and perhaps his sensibility, He does not see what a comic figure Penn is in certain respects for all the seriousness of his occupations and principles, Penn had a penchant for getting into predicaments that a biographer with a Dickensian sensibility might well appreciate. We need the wit of Lytton Strachey to bring to life Penn's quirkiness that combined with an insatiable idealism and hopefulness: Turgid prose and unceasing descriptions of local visits Quaker figures and meetings make this a tough read: He visited his colony only twice for a total of four years but made his mark: 488 This evidence based biography does much to sift fact from fiction of one of the most famous figures of the 17th century, A lot of legend has attached itself to William Penn and the paper trail shows him not as the Quaker "saint" he has sometime been heralded as. The character of Penn is lost in the flood of information but you do glimpse his remarkable ability to persevere through incredible setbacks. Having a charter for a colony from a king (in this case both Charles II and James II) did not guarantee a colony. This made him a social outcast in England and made life difficult

among non-Quaker residents of his colony who feared violence from the French Spanish and native Americans, In a time when marriage was initiated on behalf of daughters by a patriarch a Quaker committee approved marriages and it seemed the women's meetings had a big say in this. He had full confidence in his wife Hannah whom he named as executrix of his estate and permitted her to serve with power of attorney after his stroke, • Penn made only two trips to the colony that aggregated to a total of 4 years. He owned slaves and upon leaving for England despite his need for cash he freed them and did not sell them, It's too bad all the others he relied upon were not so loyal honest and hard working. At the end Penn surrendered the colony to the crown(?) but kept its government. It is hard to know what this means since his heirs are cited as performing ownership responsibilities of the colony until the Revolution: In reading this it appears that Penn has not been given the attention he deserves as a trailblazer in the thinking that wended its way into the ideas that made the US, Not only did he think big and new thoughts he acted upon them, He made great sacrifices for the both his colony of tolerance and his Quaker beliefs: The five stars for this book are for the tremendous research and scope the writer brings to this biography. Due to its detail the book is only recommended for those who want an in depth report on William Penn, However 1681 King Charles II granted William Penn a charter for a new American colony, An activist political theorist and the proprietor of his own colony Penn would become a household name in the New World despite spending just four years on American soil, Though Penn is an iconic figure in both American and British history controversy swirled around him during his lifetime: Yet Penn went on to a prominent public career as a Quaker spokesman political agitator and royal courtier. At the height of his influence Penn was one of the best-known Dissenters in England and walked the halls of power as a close ally of King James II, At his lowest point he found himself jailed on suspicion of treason and later served time in debtor's prison. Despite his importance William Penn has remained an elusive character--many people know his name but few know much more than that, Murphy offers the first major biography of Penn in more than forty years and the first to make full use of Penn's private papers. The result is a complex portrait of a man whose legacy we are still grappling with today. At a time when religious freedom is hotly debated in the United States and around the world William Penn's Holy Experiment serves as both a beacon and a challenge: Murphy is Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University New Brunswick, from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and his M. He has taught at Villanova University the University of Chicago and Valparaiso University: His research focuses on the interconnections between religious and political thought and practice most particularly in England and America. The hard facts reveal less savoury elements of his life. He was also a critical thinker on issues facing Europe.e. Difficult to do business without sailing back and forth. No wonder Penn was constantly in debt. It was also called the seed of a nation. I did not find Penn's biography an uplifting story. The contrasts and comparisons between the two Mrs. -- On the whole the book is most worthwhile. 488 Really enjoying reading this book. Lots of parallels to this time. But wait! It was worse than that. You think that would be enough trouble for Penn. Penn lived in a world of deference and condescension. Murphy's authoritative if plodding narrative. In fact they did not seem to want to be instructed. He genuinely promoted the prosperity of others. We need more than summaries of his arguments and conflicts. 488 Andrew Murphy's life of William Penn is a slog. But Penn's intrepid and argumentative nature come through. 346). While I cannot recount all the problems etc.). • Penn was plagued with money problems throughout. • Quakerism gave women a firm place. Penn consults women including King James' daughter in exile. • His administrator James Logan seems ideal.- Ownership and government issues were never clear. perhaps to the participants as well as me. 488 A difficult book to read much like an encyclopedia. Andrew R. William Penn: A Life Andrew R. He received his B.A.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin Madison..