William Penn (1644-1718), born in London, was the eldest son of Sir William Penn, an English Admiral, and Margaret Jasper. He was educated at The Free School, Chigwell and Christ Church, Oxford. Judged for his nonconformity, in 1661, his father sent him to Europe, from which he returned in 1664 a “modish person.” He entered Lincoln's Inn to study law in 1665, but soon after went to Ireland where he was convinced by Thomas Loe to Quakerism, and was shortly arrested at a Quaker Meeting in Cork. By 1668, he published The Sandy Foundation Shaken for which he was again arrested. He continued to publish works on Quaker doctrinal issues. In 1671, he travelled to Holland and Germany encouraging Quaker communities, preaching and writing against religious persecution. He used his family influence to help Quaker friends, including George Fox and Isaac Pennington. Penn married Gulielma Springett in 1672 and Hannah Callowhill in 1696.

In 1676, Penn became a trustee of the Quaker colony of West New Jersey and in 1681, in exchange for a large debt owed by Charles II to his father, he was granted the province of Pennsylvania. William Penn's aim was to create a colony with the greatest possible civil and religious liberty for all Christians. In 1682, Penn sailed to America, but returned to England in 1684. He spent most of the 1690s writing, preaching and trying to resolve the political, military, imperial and constitutional problems of his colony. Almost all his political writings addressed issues of liberty and conscience. The exception was his utopian idea for securing permanent peace in Europe (Essay Towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe). In 1699, he returned to America and then again to England in 1701. In 1707, he spent nine months in debtors' prison, and on his release, he mortgaged his American properties and tried to sell them back to the Crown. He suffered a paralytic stroke in 1712 from which he never recovered.
Penn's philosophy was a combination of religious idealism and political practicalities. His arguments for toleration are grounded in a secular and expansive version of interest theory. He believed that oppressed subjects were a threat to peace, stability and prosperity and that true religion was a matter for individual conscience, not legislation. There was never a question of tolerating non-Christians or atheists. He never advocated a separation of Church and State, nor for the secularization of civil affairs.


Scope and content
Outstanding among these papers are: William Penn's letter to Princess Palatine Elizabeth, 1677, autograph copy, 16pp.; seven letters addressed to Peter Hendricks and other Friends in the Netherlands, 1673?-1687; one of the letters, 1677, has a postscript initialed “G. Ff.” supposed to be the signature of George Fox; letter to Friends in America through Samuel Carpenter, 1697; memorandum of sale of lands to Theodore Skipman. John Streepers and Jacob Isaacs, n.d.; and a deed to Richard Haunds, 1681, in the handwriting of William Penn; five deeds, signed by Penn, as follows: to Morris Llewellyn, 1681; to James Boyden, 1681; to Charles Bathurst, 1681; to Edward Blondman, 1682; to Johan George Straub, 1682; and the commission of John Hoskins as High Sheriff of Chester County, 1701.

Another portion of papers, ca. 1925-1940, is comprised of biographical and historical material on the life of William Penn, copies of his letters, photographs, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and other items.


Arrangement
Arranged in order of appearance in the publication.

Collection inventory

-Letters and Deeds
  -Autograph - Wm. Penn
  -Deed, to Richard Haunds 1681, Oct. 12
  -Deed, to James Boydon 1681, Dec. 22
  -Deed, to George Straub 1682, Jan. 19
  -Deed, to William Wood 1684, May 31
  -Letter, to [Isaac Penington] 1668, 8mo. 17
  -Letter, to Isaac and Gertrude Jacobs 1673, ---
  -Letter, to George Fox 1675, 7mo. 9
  -Letter, to Elizabeth, Princess Palatine 1677, ---
  -Letter, to Peter Hendricks 1677, 9mo. 19

Box 1
-Letter, to Peter Hendricks and others 1677, 10mo. 10
-Letter, to Friends in Holland 1678, 6mo. 2
-Letter, to P. Hendricks and J. Claus 1679, 9mo. 27
-Letter, to the Indians 1681, 8mo. 18
-Letter, to Thomas Lloyd 1686, 7mo. 21
-Letter, to John Claus and Peter Hendricks 1687, 6mo. 11
-Letter, to Samuel Carpenter and others 1697, 10mo. 1
-Letter, to James Logan 1702, 5mo. 7
-Letter, to Col. John Evans 1704, 1mo. (March) 5

-Letter, to Friends in Netherlands n.d.
-Letter Book, (dismantled 1957)
-Memorandum, on sale of land to T. Skipman and others n.d.

-Busts and Portraits Box 2
-Wm. Penn bust by Silvanus Bevan
-Wm. Penn bust by Beatrice Fenton
-Wm. Penn busts in Hall of Fame
-Wm. Penn portraits -- miscellaneous/ silhouettes
-Wm. Penn Portrait in armour
-Wm. Penn portraits (Wm. and Hannah Penn) by Francis Place
-Wm. Penn portraits for advertising
-Wm. Penn and R. Wood, sketch by Jane Jones
-Wm. Penn: photo by K. P. Lutz of John Sartain engraving from original by H. Inman.; also 3 negs., post card and reproduction.
-Wm. Penn: photo by K. P. Lutz of Calder statue on City Holl

-Commemorations 1932, 1944 Box 3
-All Hallows-by-the-Tower, London
-Arrival in America, Commemoration of 250th Anniversary 1682 -- 1932
-England, commemoration in 1944
-“Excellent Priviledge”
-Wm. Penn magazine articles A-J
-Wm. Penn magazine articles L-Z
-Newspaper Clippings, 1944
-Official notices, 1944
-Pamphlets and circulars, 1944
-Pictures, 1944
-Posters, 1944
-Programs, 1944
-Reading Monthly Mtng. Memorial

-Pictures and Miscellaneous Items Box 4
-Miscellaneous
-Ancestry and descendants, chart of Anthony, J. Garner
- Charter of 1682 to People of Pa., facsimiles
- Commission, for John Hoskins 1701, 3mo. 30
- Conversion of Wm. Penn, History of
- Holme, Thomas, 1624-1695 (Wm. Penn's General Surveyor)
- Letitia Street House, Phila., Pa.
- Marriage of Wm. Penn and Hannah Callowhill, 1696
- Penn Country, England (in 1944)
- Pennsbury Manor House, Pennsbury, Pa.
- Portraiture of the City...(Photo)
- Prayer of Wm. Penn for Philadelphia, also photo of by
  K. P. Lutz, negative and copy
- “Salutation” 1929
- Sketches of House in Church Lane Meadow
- Slate Roof House, Phila.
- Stephens, Charles H., painting by C.S. showing Penn
  landing at Blue Anchor Inn, Phila. in 1682 (empty
- The Welcome (ship)
- Memorial statue to Treaty ground of William Penn and
  the Indian natives, Photo by K. P. Lutz