



Haverford Township Historical Society



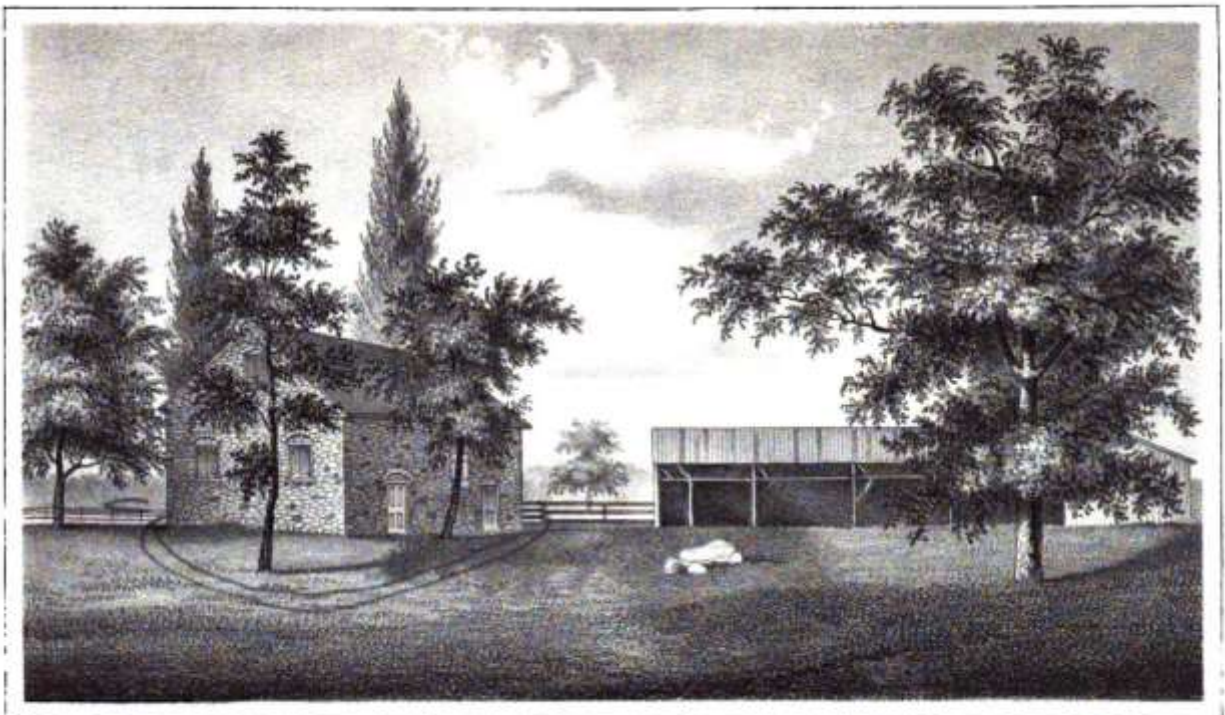
WILLIAM PENN'S VISITS TO HAVERFORD TOWNSHIP

By Richard D. Kerr

In his *Memoirs of the Private and Public Life of William Penn*, published in London in 1813, William Clarkson records two visits by William Penn, as the royally-appointed "Proprietary" of the colony of Pennsylvania, to Haverford Township. George Smith recounts these in his 1862 *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania*. The first visit was to a general meeting of the Haverford Quakers in 1699. Smith's account is as follows:

"Clarkson records the attendance of Penn at a general meeting of the Welsh Quakers of Haverford – doubtless in their newly erected meeting-house. If tradition is to be relied upon, a goodly number of our Welsh ancestors were so little acquainted with the English language, that they were unable to understand the sermon preached by the Proprietary."

It should be noted that Clarkson's own, briefer entry about this event uses the name "Haverfordwest" for Penn's destination. That is the name of a location in Wales that is regarded as the source of Haverford Township's name.



Drawn by J. H. Smith.

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, HAVERFORD, BUILT 1700, REBUILT 1800.

Bowen & Co. Lith. Philada.

A second recorded visit by William Penn to Haverford Township in 1700 offers us a glimpse of his kindness and humility (as well as how far people would walk back then, even a barefoot little girl). Clarkson relates it as follows:

“While at Pennsbury he undertook a journey through the Province and Territories as a minister of the Gospel. Among the places he visited in this capacity was Haverford. An anecdote is recorded of him while going there, which is worth relating. A little girl, of the name Rebecca Wood, was walking from Darby, where she resided, to the same place, and also to attend the meeting there. It happened that William Penn, who was on horseback, overtook her. ‘On coming up with her,’ says Sutcliff, ‘he inquired where she was going? and, on informing him, he with his usual good nature desired her to get up behind him, and bringing his horse to a convenient place, she mounted, and so rode away upon the bare back. Being without shoes and stockings, her bare legs and feet hung dangling by the side of the Governor’s horse. Although William Penn was at this time both Governor and Proprietary, he did not think it beneath him thus to help along a poor bare-footed girl on her way to meeting.’”

Explore for More... William Penn’s Visits to Haverford

See George Smith’s write-up of Penn’s visits in his 1862 *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania* book on the [delawarecountyhistory.com](http://www.delawarecountyhistory.com) website(jump to PDF file page 240, which is printed page 201):
<http://www.delawarecountyhistory.com/documents/delco.pdf>

Also see Clarkson’s entry on Penn and Rebecca Ross in his 1813 book (click on the cogwheel icon in the upper right and choose “Download PDF,” then jump to PDF file page 236, which is printed page 229):
<http://www.google.com/books?id=tR06AAAACAAJ>

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