William Penn's Holy Experiment

As the New World toddled out of her infancy,
More dreams brought dreamers from across the sea.
A fresh start for the daring, a new hope, a clean slate,
With opportunity knocking -- no time to wait!

So a wealthy young Quaker, name of William Penn,
Sought out a home for his fellow women and men.
They were Protestants too, and did share in the grief
Of those persecuted for their religious belief.

Indeed, Quakers were a group most peaceful and fair,
But had troubles at home and were told to beware,
As they believed all to be equal in the eyes of God,
And gave to both lordly and low the same friendly nod!

The English nobles were peeved and began to stew
That this upstart religion should give them no due!
But Young Penn had a friend in King Charles the Second,
Who owed him a favor, and so William reckoned:

A claim in America would make a fine place
For a Society of Friends to have plenty of space.
To live by their lights, with a more tolerant bent,
Pennsylvania would be a "holy experiment".

And it showed in the way Penn treated the tribes,
Giving them payment and peace and justice besides, er, ...besides.
-- So strange how it works: natives responded in kind,
Letting this settlement prosper without a hard time!

And the ports of Philadelphia soon grew by bounds,
With Frenchmen and Scots and many others around.
Like the Germans who came with a bevy of skills,
Such as clock and gun making to help pay the bills.

(Though of German descent, there is confusion much:
For some reason they're called the Pennsylvania Dutch.)
And these folks of all races, of all creeds and stripes,
In Penn's Woods were welcome with no ranking of types.
**William Penn** was born in England in 1644 to a wealthy Protestant family. As a young man, Penn became friends with members of a religious group called the **Quakers**, also known as the **Society of Friends**. The Quakers suffered persecution for their beliefs. This persecution included laws that prevented them from meeting and promoting their beliefs.

Quakers believe all human beings are equal in the eyes of god. This idea, called **egalitarianism**, made the Quakers hated by the English nobility. **Nobility** are people who had title and rank in English society due to their birth. Quakers refused to bow or take off their hats to the nobles. They also refused to swear allegiance to the King of England since they believed the only oath they could make was to God. The Quakers were also **pacificists**, meaning they did not believe in using violence and participating in wars.

William Penn joined the Quakers and became a **dissenter** -- someone who speaks out for unpopular beliefs. He wrote essays or tracts in favor of Quaker beliefs. As a result, he was arrested many times and spent time in prison. Fortunately for Penn, King Charles the Second owed a debt to Penn's father. He agreed to give William a charter and a tract of land for a new colony in America. Penn became the proprietor or owner of a large colonial settlement that was eventually called Pennsylvania (meaning Penn's woods).

In keeping with Quaker beliefs, William Penn treated the local Lenape tribe with respect and fairness. He negotiated a peace treaty that helped the colony avoid conflict with Native Americans. The Quaker colony also welcomed people of all religious beliefs or creeds.

William Penn's colony became very successful. Its main city, **Philadelphia**, became an important trading outlet. Since most goods in the 17th century were transported by ship, the port at Philadelphia was constantly bustling with business and trade.

Penn's acceptance of people of all religions and origins, also made Pennsylvania very attractive to immigrants from many different countries. People from Scotland, Sweden and Germany soon arrived. Penn's Quaker colony had a **Charter of Liberties** that guaranteed all colonists freedom to practice their religion, trials by jury, and free elections of officials.

Penn thought of his colony as a "Holy Experiment" where society would be run democratically, with people resolving their problems in typical Quaker fashion: with a Meeting of citizens who would discuss their problems without fear of persecution.
Worksheet: William Penn and the Quakers

Use these words to complete the statements below.

-- Society of Friends       -- Dissenter       -- Philadelphia       -- Egalitarian       -- Pacifist
-- Persecution               -- Creed               -- Proprietor             -- Port               -- Lenape

1) Capital of Penn’s colony and its most thriving town: ____________________.
2) The Indian tribe who negotiated a peace treaty with William Penn: ________________.
3) Area near a body of water that is used for ships to load and unload people and goods: ______________.
4) Person who speaks out on behalf of beliefs that are not popular within a community: ____________.
5) Official name for the Quaker religion: ____________________.
6) Activities and laws that hurt and hinder an individual’s or group’s ability to live: ________________.
7) Term meaning the religious beliefs that a person follows: ________________.
8) Someone who believes all human beings are equal and should be treated equally: _____________.
9) Person who owns the right to possess a particular place: ________________.
10) A person, for example a Quaker, who does not believe in using violence against others: ____________.

Thought Question: How did William Penn’s Quaker colony differ from colonies started by the Pilgrims and Puritans?
Crossword Puzzle: Colonial Pennsylvania

Across
1) Person who believes all people are equal and should be treated as equal.
2) The largest City in the Colony of Pennsylvania.
4) Place to dock your boat (or plug in your flash drive).
5) Person who holds different beliefs than others and speaks them publicly.
6) What the Quaker people would hold to discuss problems and pass laws.
7) The buying and selling of goods.
8) Term for how William Penn treated the Native-American Tribes.

Down
1) Person who does not believe in ever using violence.
2) Common term for Native-American peoples.
3) Word meaning washing with water, usually done in a ritual like Baptism.
4) People living together in orderly fashion.
5) King Charles gave William Penn land in America because he owed this.
6) Word meaning a set of religious beliefs held by a person.
7) Word that can mean an area of land or a written essay.
Answer Keys:

Worksheet # (25)


Puzzle:


Down: 1) Pacifist, 2) Indians, 3) Ablution, 4) Society, 5) Debt, 6) Creed, 7) Tract

Find the listed words in the puzzle above. Words go forward, backward, up, down and diagonally.