

## QUAKERS



—From the book.

William Penn—"... not a plaster saint or a baffling bundle of contrarities."

## Our Greatest Colonial Father

*"William Penn," by Catherine Owens Peare (Lippincott, 448 pp. \$6), is a new biography of one of the least understood of America's Founding Fathers. Frederick B. Tolles, professor of Quaker history at Swarthmore College, reviews it here.*

By Frederick B. Tolles

**P**ERCHED uncomfortably atop Philadelphia's pseudo-Renaissance City Hall stands a colossal bronze figure supposed to represent William Penn. His head sometimes lost in the low-lying clouds, his twenty-six-ton body clothed in un-Quakerly court dress, his feet, as it were, spurning the skulduggery that has too often gone on directly below him, he seems somehow unreal, unworldly, irrelevant. Of all our Founding Fathers, Penn is the least known to us. And yet, take him all in all, was he not the greatest of our colonial founders, the one who spoke and acted most forthrightly for the values we cherish—the values of fraternal equality, of political, civil, and religious liberty?

It is not hard to understand why he seems so indistinct, so remote, so unrelated to American life. He spent less than four years on this side of the Atlantic. And Pennsylvania, for some reason, has been less successful, or less interested, than, say, Massachusetts or Virginia in projecting her Founding-Father image on the national consciousness. Moreover, the

legend-makers have confused us by presenting too many incompatible Penns—Voltaire's wise law-giving Lycurgus, Parson Weem's pious Puritan moralist (the diligent Parson turned his mythopoeic hand to Penn shortly after he had enriched our folklore with Washington's immortal cherry tree), Macaulay's corrupt and shifty courtier, the benevolent White Father of Benjamin West's famous painting of "Penn's Treaty with the Indians," the harassed and petulant feudal proprietor found in the pages of recent historians. It is the achievement of Catherine Peare's new biography to have given us not a plaster saint or a baffling bundle of contrarities but a recognizable, understandable man—a human Penn at last.

**H**ER book is based, one would say, on wider (though not necessarily deeper) research than any of the twenty or more biographies that have preceded it. From her wealth of documentation she materializes a man who seems alive and credible at every point of his multifarious and fascinating career—the young son of Admiral Penn who almost breaks his father's heart by being sent down from Oxford for non-conformity and then compounds the offense by turning Quaker; the willing martyr who gladly accepts repeated imprisonment for conscience' sake; the resourceful controversialist ready to defend Quakerism and the liberty of the freeborn Englishman against all comers; the tireless itinerant preacher

"publishing Truth" throughout England and the Rhine Valley; the practical politician electioneering for his friend Algernon Sidney; the colonial proprietor, real-estate promoter, and governor coping with the problems of a frontier province in America; the Quaker courtier playing his ambiguous role at James II's Catholic court. She is at her happiest perhaps when she is writing of the domestic Penn—the young lover and husband with his Gulielma; the middle-aged suitor importuning Hannah Callowhill to become his second wife; the father of two broods of children, destined to see half of them die in childhood and his eldest surviving son become a tavern-haunting wastrel. (Somehow it helps to know from his letters to Hannah that he wore calico drawers, that he grew self-conscious at fifty about his "middle-aged spread.") It is a sympathetic portrait that Miss Peare limns for us; only occasionally does she lay on an unflattering stroke, as when she cites Gilbert Burnet's impression that Penn was "a talking vain man" with "a tedious luscious way" in conversation. But if human sympathy is a failing in a biographer, it is an amiable failing.

She is less successful when she comes to Penn as a religious leader, a statesman, a writer and man of ideas. Penn the Quaker will still have to be weighed and measured by someone thoroughly conversant with seventeenth-century religious thought. She slides rather casually over some bothersome problems in Penn's political career: his support, for instance, of James II's Declaration of Indulgence, whose blatant unconstitutionality she passes over with the comment that "it was not a law properly processed through Parliament," or his relationship to the Pennsylvania Charter of Privileges, the radical new constitution that was more or less forced on him in 1701. She is perhaps least satisfactory in dealing with Penn's intellectual and literary achievements. She conscientiously catalogues his voluminous writings and observes that he was "a tremendous scholar," but there is little exploration of his writings, little attempt to identify and describe the extraordinary qualities of mind that made him the intellectual peer of John Locke and Sir William Petty, to analyze and appreciate the literary skill that produced "Some Fruits of Solitude."

Still, Catherine Peare has succeeded at precisely the point where all her predecessors have failed. She has toppled the oversize bronze statue from its perch and given us in its place a man of flesh and blood.

# Penn's Right-Hand Man

***"James Logan and the Culture of Provincial America," by Frederick B. Tolles*** (Little, Brown. 228 pp. \$3.50), is a biography of William Penn's chief assistant. Our reviewer, Elizabeth Gray Vining, has written a number of books on the colonial period.

By Elizabeth Gray Vining

**T**HE story of James Logan is one of America's earliest success stories. Coming to Philadelphia in 1699 at the age of twenty-five as a mere secretary to William Penn, he was by the time of his death fifty-two years later one of the "three or four most considerable men in colonial America," rich, learned, powerful, and respected, if not universally loved. It is also the history of Philadelphia, which grew during the same period, and in some measure as a result of Logan's untiring activities, from a neat, bustling town of a thousand houses to the political and intellectual capital of an independent nation. Frederick B. Tolles has told this story in "James Logan and the Culture of Provincial America," the first substantial biography ever published of this curiously neglected figure.

To distinguished scholarship Mr. Tolles adds the understanding of Quakerism which comes from membership in the Society of Friends and years of work with its history. He brings also to the work a gift of cool and penetrating appraisal and a clear, vivid style lightened by occasional quiet humor.

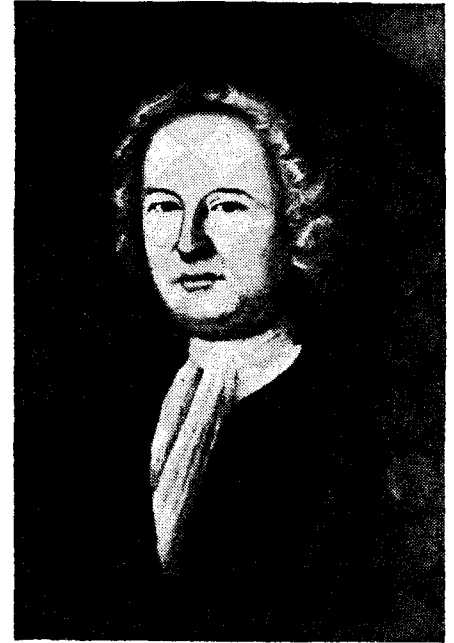
James Logan was not a consistent Friend, though he was to the end of his life a member of the meeting. He

was more than once disciplined by it: for evicting a squatter by force and for his part in a contest over a girl, the details of which were discreetly expunged from the meeting's records. He was frequently in conflict with Friends—and this not to his discredit—through his loyalty to Penn and his sons.

As agent of the proprietors, clerk of the council, and commissioner of property, he was caught in the cross-fire between royal officials intent on tightening their control, Penn's own deputy governors seeking independent power, and the free men of the province demanding more freedom and more land.

Devoted as he was to Penn, he was never fired by his vision of the Holy Experiment, a government based on freedom and peace and total unilateral disarmament. He was moreover caught in the acute practical difficulties posed by threat of foreign aggression—in two wars hostile fleets were in American waters—and the demands of the Crown and other colonies that Pennsylvania defend itself, but the compromise he worked out sufficed until the Quakers, facing the issue squarely in 1756, withdrew from participation in government and the Holy Experiment came to an end.

**I**T was in his contacts with the Indians, as the manager of Pennsylvania's Indian relations, that he followed most closely, and with marked success, the ideals and methods of Penn: patience, respect, and friendly negotiation. His farsightedness and his statesmanlike vision made him aware of the threat to all the colonies posed by Indians at their back who were inflamed by the French and Spanish. He managed



—From the book.

James Logan—"... early success story."

over a period of nearly fifty years to keep peace between the Pennsylvania Indians and the steadily encroaching settlers. The only blot on his record was the part he took in the notorious Walking Purchase, in which he helped Penn's son Thomas to swindle some Indians out of thousands of acres of land.

In his later years Logan retired to Stenton, the handsome brick mansion five miles from Philadelphia which he liked to call his "Sabine Farm," and there devoted himself to his family, his studies, the acquisition of one of the four or five great colonial libraries and the only one still intact, his experiments on the fertilization of corn, which made him known to scientists throughout Europe, his encouragement of young scientists, and his interest in such institutions as the Library Company and the College of Philadelphia, later to become the University of Pennsylvania.

This book lives up to the goal of the Library of American Biography of which it is a part: in a short space (a little over two hundred pages) it presents a comprehensive account of the interaction between a man almost unknown to the average reader and a period of Philadelphia history in some measure understandable only through the problems and struggles of this man.

Where so much is given it is perhaps ungrateful to ask for more, but one would like the man to be a little more nearly complete. One would like to know more about his personal life and especially about his relationship with his son William, who *was* a consistent Friend and who remained loyal to the Holy Experiment.

