

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Idealism of Wm Penn in Pottstown

One of the aspects I love best about Pottstown is its heritage. Our history is all around us. Across the street from my house is Zion's United Church of Christ, built on land donated by John Potts in 1794. Townsfolk took time off to attend a memorial service at the church for George Washington when he died in 1799.

North of the Industrial Highway, an enormous assembly works straddles South Keim Street, where the locks of the Panama Canal and bridges like the George Washington and the Golden Gate were fabricated in the early 1900s.

Pottstown also enjoys a heritage of enlightenment that few other places on earth can match.

Back in the 1600s, William Penn was one of civilization's great humanists. Thanks to a grant of 45,000 square miles in the New World from King Charles II in 1681, which the King called "Pennsylvania," Penn had a chance to put his ideas into action. He conceived of a "Holy Experiment" of democracy, tolerance and religious freedom to be carried out in real life with real people.

Penn believed it was possible for people of all classes and religions to live in peace and harmony and gov-

ern themselves according to the Quaker ideals of virtue and love.

Pennsylvania would be the one place on the planet where people could pursue happiness in accordance with those ideals..

Penn encouraged Europeans of all religious beliefs, many of whom were persecuted at home, to emigrate to Pennsylvania.

He treated Native Americans as equals and earned their respect and trust.

Penn's 1682 Frame of Government, with subsequent amendments, was a major influence 100 years later when Jefferson and

Madison and Hamilton came to Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, to create modern democracy.

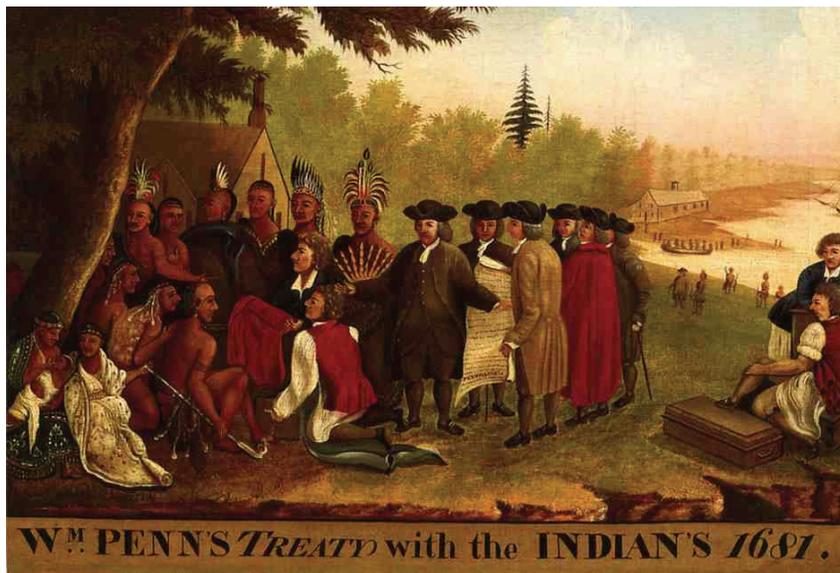
In recent years, we've been bombarded with hate, violence, fear, and cynicism.

But the heritage of tolerance as conceived by William Penn still lives on in Pottstown. We have residents of all ages, races, and incomes living in neighborhoods of closely spaced houses and apartments, intermingling along our sidewalks, in parks, schools, the downtown, and other public places.

You see a lot of yard signs: "Hate has no home here." In Pottstown, it really is true.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton



Painting by Edward Hicks, 1847, State Museum of Pennsylvania.