

*“Their happy lot cast in a fruitful ground”*

## PENNSYLVANIA: Three Poems, 1700s

Pennsylvania was the fastest growing colony of the 1700s — and the most expansively diverse, commercially successful, perhaps best governed, and, as often lauded by its poets, the most confident of its future. "The generation of young poets that emerged during the 1720s and 1730s presumed this success," writes literary scholar David Shields, "concerning themselves with discovering those qualities of mind and character capable of projecting the 'great' Pennsylvania that came to be."

Presented here are three poems, two by accomplished poets Thomas Makin and George Webb, and a third by a young college student, Jacob Duché, writing in more troubled times during the French and Indian War of 1754-1763. Compare Duché's distress with Makin's and Webb's laudatory optimism.

### Thomas Makin, “A Discription of Pennsylvania,” 1728<sup>1</sup>

This Province Pennsylvania takes its name  
From Wm. Penn, Proprietor of the same.  
A barbarous nation first the land did own,  
Who by degrees more civilized are grown.  
Who with the English are confederate,  
Careful to keep their trust inviolate.  
'Twixt heat and cold the air is temperate;  
Warm Southern winds then cold does mitigate.  
The Northwest wind the rains & clouds does clear,  
Bringing fair weather & a wholesome air.  
Here we in safety live without annoy;  
Each one his right securely does enjoy.  
Whilst sad New England hence not very far  
Have greatly suffered by their Indian war.  
This is the place where many men have found  
Their happy lot cast in a fruitful ground.  
Here the well cultivated farmer's field  
A plent'ous crop does in due season yield.

National Humanities Center, 2009: [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds). Some spelling and punctuation modernized by NHC for clarity. Complete image credits at [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/imagecredits.htm](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/imagecredits.htm).

<sup>1</sup> *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 37 (1913), pp. 371-374.

With fishes of all sorts the rivers are  
 Replenished, and the woods with nimble Deer.  
 The trees with loads of fruit do seem to groan,  
 Wherewith the limbs are often broken down.  
 Of singing birds here's one does far excel  
 For various notes the European Philomel.  
 Another smallest bird, of finest plumes,  
 Still hovering sucks her food from flow'ry blooms;  
 From whence, when once she takes her hasty flight,  
 Swift as a fly she's soon gone out of sight.  
 In Summer time, by night as well as day,  
 The Sturgeons in the river leap and play,  
 And leap so high, the[y] oft fall in a Boat  
 By chance the sails with oars, or lies a float.  
 Here's sundry useful metal lately found,  
 And Marble too by Miners in the ground.  
 Here odoriferous herbs and flowers grow  
 Useful to those who do their virtues know.  
 But the chief merchandise the country yields,  
 Is the rich product of the well-tilled fields,  
 All sorts of corn, whereof good flour and bread,  
 And Malt for beer is plentifully made.  
 Upon the country's well deserv'd report  
 Many from foreign parts do here resort.  
 English, Welsh, Irish, Germans many more  
 For sake of this have left their native shore.  
 By the laborious toil of many hands  
 Great Deserts are become most fruitful lands.  
 In winter time the land & water too  
 Lie covered, this with ice, and that with snow.  
 The Ship then lies without an anchor fast,  
 Till warmer weather melt the ice at last.  
 But though no Boat with oars stir from the shore,  
 There's on the ice a frequent passing o're [over].

The winter here so long & sharp has been,  
 That loaden carts drawn on the ice I've seen.  
 On Delaware does Philadelphia stand,<sup>2</sup>  
 And does her stately buildings far extend.  
 The Streets laid out directly by a Line,  
 And house to house contiguously does join.  
 The Governor here keeps his residence,  
 One grave in years and long experience.  
 Four sacred houses in this city are,  
 And one not distant from the city far.  
 To this long known & well frequented port  
 From sundry places many ships resort.  
 In merchandising most men are here employ'd:  
 All useful artists too are occupied.  
 The frugal farmer, like the careful Ant,  
 In Summer 'gainst cold Winter provident,  
 His barn, well cover'd to keep out the rain  
 Fills with good hay & diverse sorts of grain.  
 Neglecting costly clothes & dainty food,  
 His own unbought provisions sweet & d good.  
 Weary with labor take his ease and rest:  
 His homespun clothing pleasing him the best.  
 O that such were my happy lot at last,  
 Then all my trouble past would be forgot.

Honoured Friend [Israel Pemberton],

Having already sent thee a description  
 of Pennsylvania writ in Latin verse,  
 especially for the use of thy Son, now  
 considering thyself may not understand the  
 same, therefore now present thee with the  
 same in English, for which, being in want, I  
 humbly pray some small reward, for which  
 I shall be thy thankful friend.

5<sup>th</sup> month 10<sup>th</sup> 1728      Tho: Makin



Library of Congress

Heap & Scull, *An East Prospect of the City of Philadelphia*, engraving, 1768, detail

*“On Delaware does Philadelphia stand”*

<sup>2</sup> Delaware River.



And Wit shines forth, but check'd with Modesty;  
Decently Grave, which shows a sober Sense,  
And Cheerful too, a Sign of Innocence.

But what. O Pennsylvania does declare  
Thy Bliss, speaks thee profusely happy; here  
Sweet Liberty her gentle Influence sheds,  
And Peace her downy Wings about us spreads:  
While War and Desolation widely reigns,  
And Captive Nations groan beneath their Chains.

While half the World implicitly obey,  
Some lawless Tyrant's most imperious Sway  
No fore[ ]tning Trumpet warns us from afar  
Of hastening Miseries or approaching War;  
Fearless the Hind pursues his wonted Toil,  
And eats the Product of his grateful Soil.

No unjust Sentence we have Cause to fear  
No arbitrary Monarch rules us here.  
Our Lives, our Properties, and all that's ours,  
Our happy Constitution here secures.  
What Praise and Thanks, O Penn! Are due to thee!  
For this first perfect Scheme of Liberty!

How shall the Muse thy just Applauses sing?  
Or in what Strains due Acclamations bring?  
Who can thy Charter read, but with Surprise  
Must straight proclaim thee Generous, Just and Wise?  
Thro' every Page, thro' every careful Line,  
Now does the Friend, the Nursing Father shine!

What Toils, what Perils didst thou undergo,  
Thro' scorching Heats, thro' endless Tracks of Snow?  
How scorning Ease didst tempt the raging Floods?  
How hew thy Passage thro' untrodden Woods?  
Thine was the Danger, Thine was all the Toil;  
While We, ungrateful We, divide the Spoil.

O cou'd my Verse a Monument but raise,  
Some Part, some little Sketch of thy due Praise,  
When Time, the Tomb, or Statue shall destroy,  
Or Philadelphia's Self in Dust shall lie,  
Ages to come should read thy Favourite Name,  
Fresh and immortal in the Book of Fame.

Early American Imprints

X Mo. D E C E M B E R hath xxxi Days

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1	☾ ☽ ☽	Wind or ☽	28	Sun	Sun Rise 7 24
2	☽	Snow.	6	R. & S.	sets at 4 36
3	☽ 19 ☽		6h 27	7 24 5	A Serious
4	☽ ☽ ☽	More ☽ no.	7	☽	7 24 5 Friend dead.
5	☽	if not Rain.	8	☽	7 25 5 First Q. 5 d.
6	☽		9	☽	7 25 5 Sun in ☽ 10th
7	☽	7 Stars sou.	9 48	10 22	7 25 5 day 35 m. past
8	☽	The Contention	10	☽	7 25 5 7 at Night.
9	☽	among the vulgar	11	☽	7 26 5 Then Winter
10	☽	is the Cause of a	12	☽	7 26 5 Q. begins, and
11	☽	Disturbance in the	1	☽	7 26 5 makes shortest
12	☽	Government.	2	☽	7 26 5 day ☽ ho. 9 m.
13	☽	High Tides.	2h 25	☽	7 26 5 Full ☽ 13th d.
14	☽	☽ ☽ ☽ Cloudy &	3	☽	7 26 5 at 4 in the M.
15	☽	Snow or Rain.	4	☽	7 25 5 It's strange News
16	☽		5	☽	7 25 5 to some Body,
17	☽		6	☽	7 25 5 And good for
18	☽	☽ ☽ ☽ Cloudy &	6h 24	☽	7 25 5 nothing, dont
19	☽	☽ ☽ ☽ Wind or	7	☽	7 25 5 mind it.
20	☽	☽ ☽ ☽ Rain.	8	☽	7 24 5 Last Q. 21 d.
21	☽	St. THOMAS.	9	☽	7 24 5 Take my Ad-
22	☽		10	☽	7 24 5 vice, and go to
23	☽		10m 7	☽	24 5 Bed, And be
24	☽	☽ ☽ ☽ Rain or Sn	11 22	☽	7 24 5 content. with
25	☽	CHRIST BORN.	12 7	☽	7 23 5 whom thou art
26	☽	St. STEPHEN.	1	☽	21 7 23 5 wed.
27	☽	St. JOHN.	2	☽	7 23 5
28	☽	INNOCENTS.	2h 21	☽	7 22 5 New ☽ 28th
29	☽	Hail Rain or Sn.	3	☽	7 22 5 day at 6 in the
30	☽		4	☽	21 7 21 5 Morning.
31	☽	7 Stars sou.	7 36	☽	17 20 5

# Jacob Duché, “Pennsylvania: A Poem”

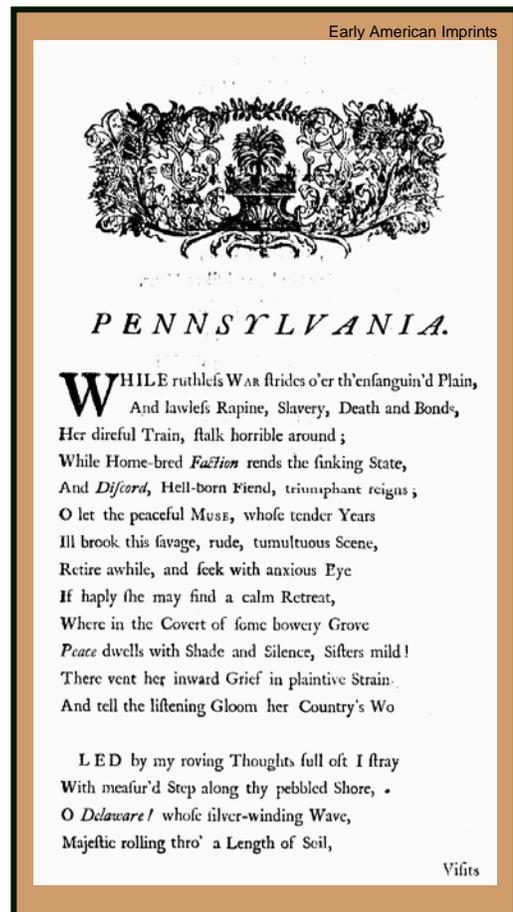
By a STUDENT of the College of PHILADELPHIA, 1756, excerpts<sup>4</sup>

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**W**HILE ruthless WAR strides o'er th' ensanguined Plain,<sup>5</sup>  
And lawless Rapine, Slavery, Death and Bonds,  
Her direful Train, stalk horrible around;  
While Home-bred *Faction* rends the sinking State,  
And *Discord*, Hell-born Fiend, triumphant reigns;<sup>6</sup>  
O let the peaceful MUSE, whose tender Years  
Ill brook this savage, rude, tumultuous Scene,  
Retire awhile, and seek with anxious Eye  
If haply she may find a calm Retreat,  
Where in the Covert of some bowery Grove  
*Peace* dwells with Shade and Silence, Sisters mild!  
There vent her inward Grief in plaintive Strain  
And tell the listening Gloom her Country's Woe.

...  
ONE Evening mild, as at my wonted Hour  
I walk'd the Margin on my native Stream,  
Musing of *Good* and *Just*, the sacred Themes  
That thro' the Day, devolved from STREPHON's Tongue,  
Had charm'd my listening Ear — I chanc'd to stray  
Where KENSINGTON her growing Honours spreads,  
And views her Features in the crystal Wave;  
Straight with a Flood of Glory compass'd round  
A form celestial struck my dazzled Sense;  
In her majestic Mien, her Looks divine,  
And graceful rich Attire, the Goddess shone;  
And PENNSYLVANIA's Genius stood confessed.  
But tho' surrounded with th' effulgent Blaze,  
Her down-cast Eye and Tresses discompos'd  
Some inward Discontent and Anguish spoke.  
Torn from her Brow the peaceful Olive lay  
All withered and neglected at her Feet.  
Her Right Hand grasp'd the dreaded Spear of MARS  
And on her Left MINERVA's Ægis hung.  
Pensive and sad she fix'd her Eyes on thee,  
Fair PHILADELPHIA! Offspring of her Toil;  
And thus, with many a mingled Heart-fetch'd Sigh,  
In Accent mild, she spoke, or seemed to speak:

AND is it thus my Cares are recompens'd?  
Is this the Issue of my anxious Toils? —  
To see this fertile Soil, this sacred Spot,  
My fair Inheritance, the calm Abode



<sup>4</sup> Accessed through Early American Imprints online, American Antiquarian Society; permission pending.

<sup>5</sup> The French and Indian War, 1754-1763.

<sup>6</sup> Tensions between the Quakers, who were pacifists and politically dominant in the colony, and non-Quaker residents who urged the creation of a colonial militia to defend the western territory of Pennsylvania, where much of the French and Indian War was fought.

Of Peace and Virtue, Liberty and Law,  
 Laid waste and ravag'd by a cruel Foe!  
 To see my bleeding Sons, like blasted Plants,  
 Falling beneath the Russian Murderer's Hand! ——  
 And not one Arm uplifted to assert  
 The pious Cause, avenge their guiltless Blood,  
 And hurl Destruction on an impious Race! ——  
 Was it for *this* I left my native Soil,  
 Thee, great BRITANNIA! Mistress of the Main!  
 And sought these distant Shores then far remote  
 From the sweet Influence of thy temper'd Rule  
 To spread thy Sway and give this fruitful Land  
 A fair Accession to thy wide Domain?  
 Was it for *this* I planned the Scheme of State,  
 A Constitution just impartial, free;  
 And gave my Sons to know the ruling Art,  
 To balance fair the Legislative Pow'rs,  
 And teach the *Free-born* Subject *Freedom's* Laws?  
 Was it for *this* I bade the teeming Earth  
 Pour from its Bosom the luxuriant Crop,  
 To crown with smiling Plenty, Wealth and Ease,  
 The vig'rous Labours of my hardy Swains?  
 Was it for *this* I bade each useful *Art*,  
 Each Heav'n-born *Science* spread their Blessings round,  
 And taught my rising Sons bright *Wisdom's* Lore?  
 For *this* I toiled with all a Mother's Care,  
 And raised my Patriot-Deeds my Infant State? ——  
 To see at last the proud Usurper's Arm  
 Outstretch'd, in Act to seize by brutal Force,  
 And Rapine base my just and righteous Claim;  
 Myself, despairing yet of brighter Days,  
 Constrain'd to drink the bitter Cup of Woe! ——  
 Great my Misfortunes now, as erst my Bliss! ——

Was it for *this* I left my native Soil

Was it for *this* I planned the Scheme of State

Was it for *this* I bade the teeming Earth

Was it for *this* I bade each useful *Art*

For *this* I toiled with all a Mother's Care

...

AND shall my Sons, a numerous Race robust,  
 With ill-tim'd, base Forbearance tamely brook  
 This savage Treatment from a treacherous Foe? ——  
 And have you then forgot your high Descent,  
 The peerless Fame of your illustrious Line  
 Renown'd of old, from great BRITANNIA sprung? ——  
 For sure I am, the Queen of Nations bore  
 Me, your presiding *Genius*, and uprear'd  
 Her PENNSYLVANIA with a Mother's Care;  
 Fair as the fairest of her beauteous Race,  
 And bless'd with equal Honour, Wealth and Strength.  
 And will you then my Sons, my much-loved Race!  
 For whom I toiled so many a rolling Year,  
 At last degenerate from your pristine Worth,  
 And level all a Mother's towering Hopes?  
 Why is the ruthless Sword of Vengeance sheath'd?

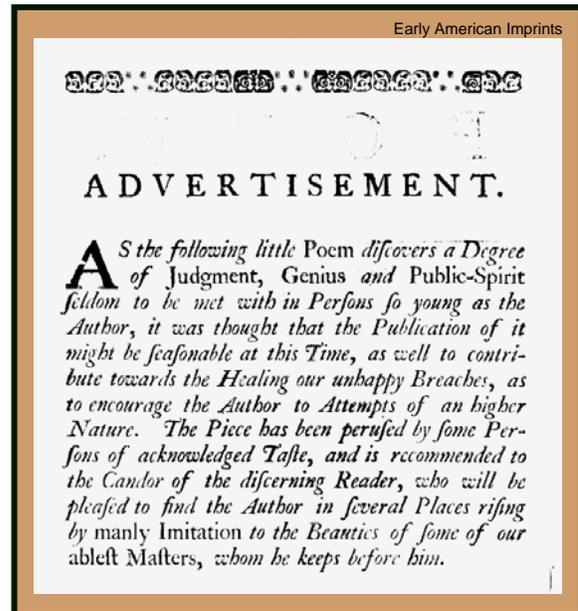
Why careless sleeps the *British* Lion bold,  
 Nor threats Destruction with his lifted Paw?  
 Ah say, what means this Lethargy supine,  
 Whose baleful Influence lulls th' inactive Land? ——  
 Is there no daring, martial Spirit here?  
 No dauntless Breast to rouse my slumbering Sons,  
 And guide their Strength combin'd against the Foe? ——  
 O for some bold intrepid Son of MARS,  
 A God-like MARLBOROUGH, or a brave EUGENE!  
 To train my docile Race to Arms and War,  
 And lead them forth to Deeds of martial Fame.  
 Then should I see the haughty *Gallic* Troops,  
 With their confederate *Indians* black and fierce  
 All routed fly before my conquering Sword.  
 Then should I see well-pleas'd the British Flag  
 Triumphant rear'd on fair OHIO's Banks,  
 And proud DU QUESNE laid level with the Dust.

...

YET ere I close —— one racking Thought disturbs  
 My anxious Bosom, and alarms me more  
 Than all the Terrors of a foreign War.  
 Still shall the *Gallic* Tyrant uncontrol'd  
 Spread wide his Conquests thro' my fair Domain,  
 And still persist in Violation base  
 Of perfect Rights, and Treaties sacred held;  
 While restless Party-Rage divides your Strength,  
 And Feuds intestine rend your infant State.  
 Where shall I find some generous healing Hand  
 Of dexterous Skill, and honest, friendly Views,  
 By calm, impartial Reason, and the Tongue  
 Of soft Persuasion, to close up the Breach  
 That Discord makes between my jarring Sons?  
 What means, ah say, what means this Frenzy dire  
 That spreads and burns in every rankled Breast?  
 Rouse, rouse, my Sons, nor weigh in equal Scale  
 With Matters of high Import and Concern  
 Those of inferior Worth; —— but *know* betimes,  
 And dearly prize, th' unconquerable Force  
 Of Arms united, and of Strength combin'd.

...

THUS spoke the ruling *Genius* of our Land,  
 Then sudden vanish'd from my wond'ring Gaze.  
 And now bright-issuing from her Eastern Dome,  
 In Silver Car the peerless Queen of Night  
 Triumphant rode thro' Heaven's illum'd Vault.  
 Homeward I sped, and bade the *Muse* record  
 This awful Vision in her artless Strain.



*FINIS.*