
 SESSION OF MAY 1693

A PETITION OF RIGHT

P.H.M.C., Archives, RG-21, Records of the Proprietary Government, fragments of original; H.S.P., Logan Papers, Law Book, 1693-1699/1700; (copies of laws as certified by Patrick Robinson); printed in *The Charter and Acts of Assembly of the Province of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Peter Miller & Comp., 1762), Appendix, 7-9. Colonial Records, Vol. I, pp. 410-413.

To Benjamin Fletcher Captain-General & Governor-in-Chief in and over the Province of Pennsylvania and Countrey of New Castle, &c: Wee the Freemen of the said Province and Countrey in General Assembly met humbly shew,

That whereas the Late King Charles the second in the three and thirtieth year of his Reign by Letters-patent under the great Seal of England, did (for the Consideration therein mentioned) grant Unto William Penn & his Assigns this Colony or tract of Land, thereby erecting the Same into a province, calling it Pennsylvania, and constituting the said William Penn Absolute Proprietary of the said province (Saving amongst other things the Sovereignty thereof), thereby also granting unto the said William Penn his deputies & Lieutenants, by virtue of the said Royal Charter, full free & absolute power, by & with the assent of the freemen of the said province, to make enact and publish any Laws whatsoever for any end appertaining either to the publick state peace or safety of the said Country, or unto the private Utility of particular persons, according to their best discretion . . . Which Laws so as aforesaid made & published, The Said Late King did, by the said Letters patent, enjoin, require & command should be most absolute & available in Law, and that all the Liege people and Subjects of the Said Late King his heirs & successors should observe & keep the Same inviolably in these parts; But that the Laws for Regulating & governing of property within this province, and Likewise as to Felonies, might be and Continue the same, as they Should be, for the time being, by the general Course of the Law of England, Until the

said Laws should be altered by the Said William Penn and by the free-men of the said province, their delegates or deputies, or the greater part of them.

And to the end the said William Penn or the inhabitants of this province might not at any time thereafter, by misconstruction or Colour of the powers aforesaid, or by pretence of the said Laws hereafter to be made, through inadvertency or design, depart from the faith and allegiance, which by the Laws of England they & all the Kings Subjects in his dominions always owe to him his heirs and Successors . . . hee the Said Late King, did by his Letters patent, declare it to be his further will & pleasure, that a duplicate of all the Laws so as aforesaid made & published, should, within five years after the making thereof, be transmitted and delivered to the Kings Privy Counsel for the time being, and if any of the Said Laws, within the space of Six moneths after they were so transmitted, should be declared, by the Said King his heirs or Successors or his or their Privy Counsel, inconsistent with the Sovereignty or Lawfull preogative of the Said King his heirs or Successors, or Contrary to the faith & allegiance due to the Legal government of England from the Said William Penn or the Planters and Inhabitants of the said province, and that thereupon any of the said Laws wer adjudged and declared to be void by the said King, his heirs or Successors, under his or their Privy Seal, that then and from thenceforth Such Laws, concerning which the said Judgment and declaration wer made, should become void, otherwise the Laws so transmitted should Remain & Stand in full force, according to the true intent and meaning thereof.

By virtue of which Letters Patent and pursuant to the powers provisos and restrictions therein Specified divers reasonable and wholsom Laws wer made, transmitted and presented to the said King & Privy Counsel.

And whereas the King and Queen that now are over England &c. by their Letters Patent under their Great Seal, dated the one and twentieth day of October in the fourth year of their reign, having (for the reasons therein mentioned) taken the government of this Province and Country into their own hands and under their Immediate Care and protection, did think fit to Constitute and appoint thee the said

Benjamin Fletcher to be their Captain General & Governor in Chief in & over the Same, Thereby Requiring thee, amongst other things to do & execute all things in due manner that Shall Belong to thy Command and the trust reposed in thee by the said King & Queen, according to such reasonable Laws and Statutes as then wer in force, or thereafter should be made & agreed upon by thee, with the advice and Consent of the Council and Assembly of this Country.

Now forasmuch as the Laws of this government so made and transmitted as aforesaid have not been hitherto adjudged or declared (either by the Late King & Council, or by his Successors the said King & Queen & their Council, under his or their Privy Seal) to be void so that such of the said Laws as wer not discontinued or repealed by the Legislative Authority of this government are Still in force.

And seeing It hath pleased the said King and Queen so tenderly to regard the happy government and comfort as well as protection of this province and country, as to conserve those our Laws and Constitutions so fitly accommodated to our Cirsumstances (with respect to tender Consciencs as well as Commerce & Cultivation) wee can do no Less than with gratitude and sincerity acknowledge their Royal Bounty and peculiar favour therein, Earnestly desiring that thou wold be pleased (according to the tenor & most favourable direction of thy Commission) to govern us, and Cause the administration of Justice within this government to be agreeable with these following Laws which are now in force as aforesaid . . . That is to Say

The first Law . . . Concerning Liberty of Conscience . . .

The 2d Law, Concerning Qualifications of members of Assembly.

The 3d & 4th Laws—Against Swearing.

The 5th & 83d Laws—Against Profane Speaking

The 6th Law—Against Cursing

The 7th Law—Against Adultry

The 8th Law—Against Incest

The 11th Law, Against Polygamy

The 12th & 83d Laws Against Drunkenness

The 13th & 169th Laws—Against Such as Suffer drunckedness in their houses—And About ordinaries.

The 14th Law—Against drinking healths

- The 17th Law—Against Breaking into houses
- The 19th Law—Against forcible Entry
- The 20th Law, Against Rioters
- The 21st Law, Against menacing parents
- The 22d Law, Against menacing magistrates
- The 23d Law, Against menacing masters or mistresses
- The 25th Law, Against challenging to fight
- The 26th & 27th Laws, Against Rude Sports, plays & games
- The 28th Law, Against Sedition
- The 30th Law, Against Spreaders of false news
- The 31st & 121st Laws, Against Scolding
- The 35th Law, Concerning days of the week, moneths &c:
- The 37th Law, About pleading in English
- The 38th Law, About Trial by twelve men
- The 39th; 123d & 150th Laws, about fees, bribery & extortion
- The 41st Law, About defalcation
- The 42d: 74th & 167th Laws, About Arrests
- The 43d Law, About Verbal Contracts
- The 45th & 46th Laws, About wills
- The 50th Law, Against defacers of Charters &c;
- The 53d Law, About Gaolers
- The 54th Law, About prisons
- The 55th Law About False Imprisonment
- The 56th Law, About the manner of punishments
- The 58th Law, About Free Elections
- The 59th Law, About Taxes
- The 64th Law About Liberty and property
- The 66th Law, About Summons & Court proceedings
- The 72nd Law, about derogators of Judgments of Courts
- The 74th Law, about making debtors pay by servitude
- The 75th Law, Against Barratours
- The 77th Law, About Orphan's Courts
- The 79th Law, About acknowledging deeds in court
- The 80th Law, About Seven years possession
- The 81st Law, About County Seals
- The 82d Law, About Counterfeiting Hands and Seals

- The 84th Law, about viewing pipestaves
- The 90th Law, against taking away boats or canoes
- The 91st & 184th Laws, about fences
- The 93d Law, about fireing woods
- The 95th Law, About hog-stealing
- The 100d Law, About Cart ways
- The 101st Law, about house of Correction
- The 102d Law, About weights and measures
- The 108th Law, About departers out of the province
- The 114th Law, About Buying Land of natives
- The 118th Law, Against murder
- The 119th Law, About binding to the peace
- The 120th Law, Against fornication
- The 125th Law, About Assigning Bills and Specialties
- The 126th Law, About Bills of Exchange
- The 132d Law, Against trusting Mariners
- The 134th Law, About passes
- The 135th Law, Against Selling Servants out of the province
- The 136th Law, Against Attaching Servants
- The 137th Law, About entertaining Servants
- The 138th Law, about Trucking with Servants
- The 153d & 180th Laws, About Run-away Servants
- The 146th Law, About Summoning Juries
- The 149th Law, About exporting horses
- The 156th Law, about monethly Courts
- The 164th & 165th Laws, about Robbing & Stealing
- The 168th Law, about Appraisers
- The 177th Law, About Juries not appearing
- The 178th Law, About Removing Land Marks
- The 181st Law, About debts payable in country produce
- The 183d Law, about Tanning Leather
- The 187th Law, Against Usury
- The 188th Law, About Sale of Intestates Land by the widow or Administrator
- The 189th Law, About taking Lands in execution for debts &c.

The 194th Law, Against witnesses refusing to give evidence being Summoned.

The 198th Law, About the Dike of New Castle

The 199th Law, Against Rangers

The 200d Law, about determining Debts under forty shillings

The 201st Law, About the Registry kept by Religious Societies

The 203d Law, Concerning the Surveyor Generals fees

All which said Laws & Chapters & every part thereof, We humbly desire, that you will be pleased to cause thy officers & ministers to Observe and put in due execution, as they tender the Honour of God, the Kings Commands, the prosperity of this government, and the Rights and Liberties of the free people thereof which Said Laws & Chapters hereafter follow in these words . . . That is to say:

CHAPTER 1.

[1] THE LAW CONCERNING LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.

Almighty God being only Lord of Conscience, Father of Lights and Spirits and the Author as well as Object of all divine knowledge faith & worship, who only can enlighten the minds & perswade & convince the understanding of people In Due Reverence to his Sovereignty over the Souls of Mankind.

Be it enacted by the Authority aforesaid that no person, now or at any time hereafter living in this Province, (who shall confess & acknowledge one Almighty God to be the Creator Up-holder & Ruler of the world, & that professeth him or herself obliged in Conscience to live peaceably & quietly under the civil Government) shall, in any case be molested or prejudiced for his or her conscientious perswasion or practice, Nor shall he or she at any time be compelled to frequent or maintain any Religious worship place or Ministry whatsoever contrary to his or her mind but shall freely & fully enjoy his or her Christian liberty in that respect without any Interruption or Reflection. And if any person shall abuse or deride any other for his or her different perswasion & practice in matter of Religion, such person shall be lookt upon as a disturber of the Peace & be punished accordingly.