



FOUNDING FEMALES Female Qualifying Ancestor Index

Female Ancestor Number: 026

Name: Penn, Hannah (Callowhill)

Dates:

Bap. 11 Feb 1670, Bristol England

Died 20 Dec 1726, London, England

Colonial Society: PA

Date added to ROA: Before 2020

Service: Manager of Proprietary Affairs for the Colony of Pennsylvania, 1712

Authority: Horle, Craig W., A.D. Hirsch, M.S. Wokeck & J. Wiltenburg, editors, *The Powers of William Penn*, Vol. 4, 1701-1718, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), pp. 22, 729.

Biography:

Hannah Callowhill was the daughter of Thomas Callowhill and Anna Hollister. Her father was a successful merchant, and as the only surviving child, Hannah was taught the skills needed to run the family store and button-making company.

Hannah was a member of the Society of Friends when she married Quaker William Penn on 5 March 1696. She was 25 and he was 52. His first wife, Gulielma Springett had died two years prior. Hannah was pregnant with son John when the couple sailed to "William's" colony in 1699. This journey was a "return" for William to the colony he founded in 1681. Hannah and William lived in style, both in Philadelphia and at Pennsbury Manor, their large estate up the Delaware River in Bucks County. Though the cost of living was supplemented with Callowhill money when colony funds ran tight.

When William Penn suffered a stroke in 1712, Hannah began administering the affairs of Pennsylvania. When he died in 1718, Penn gave Hannah full control of the colony and his fortune. William's oldest son by his first wife, William, Jr., contested his father's will and tried to obtain control of the colony. His suit was unsuccessful, and Hannah remained in charge of the colony until her death. This position meant that Hannah Penn was the first women in U.S. history to hold formal political authority. It is said she paid off her husband's debts and kept things running smoothly, and she even settled an old land dispute with Lord Baltimore of Maryland.

Hannah gave birth to nine children, four of whom lived to adulthood; John, Thomas, Margaret, and Richard. Thomas and Richard were active in the Pennsylvania colony.



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Hannah Penn is one of the few individuals, and the first woman, granted the status of "Honorary Citizens of the United States" which was awarded by Presidential Proclamation through an Act of Congress by Ronald Reagan on 28 November 1984. President Reagan also noted that Hannah devoted her life to the pursuit of peace and justice.