

# William Penn (1644-1718)

de l'Académie protestante de Saumur  
à la Pennsylvanie



Saumur

Vendredi 20 mai

salle Joly-Leterme (Mairie)

Samedi 21 mai

salle Beaurepaire (près de la Sous-préfecture)

Entrée libre

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Avec le concours de :

Ville de  
**Saumur**





# Reflections about William Penn and Saumur

**Jeanne-Henriette Louis**, former Clerk of France Yearly Meeting, reflects about the influence of Saumur on William Penn's life and legacy, following the commemorations in May 2011 of his presence in the town.

From the time when I discovered Friends through history (in 1981), I was fascinated by Pennsylvania's Holy Experiment (1682-1756), and I asked myself the following question : did this experiment really die out in 1756, as official history tells us, or did it just disappear and hide? If this was the case, it became a game of *hide and seek* to find where it could be found in disguise. This is the kind of seeker I became as a historian. What was in hiding, of course, was the Spirit of the Holy Experiment.

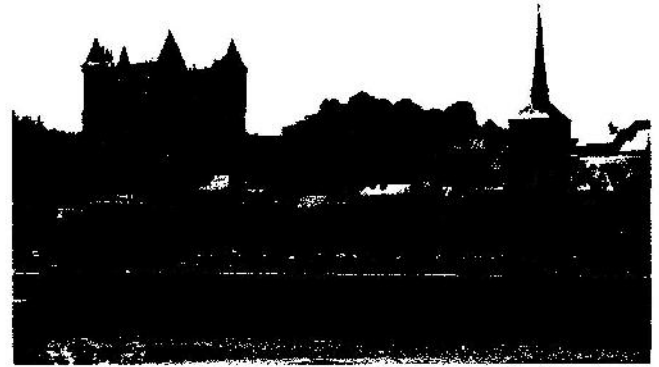
Since William Penn signed the Charter of privileges and Liberties in Philadelphia (the City of Brotherly love) in 1701, the Charter was respected and put into practice by the Quaker government of Pennsylvania, and this



*Jeanne-Henriette Louis Photo: Reveil FM*

included conscientious objection during the wars against the French and the Native Americans. But even before the Holy Experiment ended in 1756, Pennsylvania progressively drifted from a peaceful Province to a warmongering one, first against the French and the Native Americans, then against Britain after 1763. Indeed, the War of Independence was directed by George Washington from Philadelphia.

But the spirit of the Holy Experiment can be found even before the event itself, for the message is an old one : *Love your neighbour as you love yourself*, as Christ said, and William Penn said : *Let us then try what love*



*Saumur Photo: Reveil FM*

*can do* (Some Fruits of Solitude).

Fragments of the Holy Experiment in disguise have been found by several historians, and some of them take place in France : the Rotch family from Nantucket, settled down in Dunkerque in 1786, and were linked to Congénies, near Nîmes, where the French Quaker movement started in 1788. One episode has to do with French history even before William Penn became a Friend, and founded Pennsylvania : Penn spent 2 years studying in Saumur, listening to famous theologian Moïse Amyraut (1662-1664), and experienced tolerance and mutual respect in a religiously mixed population.

An international team of historian seekers plunged for the last three years into the Saumur experience of William Penn, collaborating with the Saumur authorities. In celebration of this episode, the Saumur townhall dedicated a square to the future founder of Pennsylvania on May 20th, 2011. This was a very moving and exciting experience.



*Quakers in Saumur Photo: Dominique Pécaud*