



A Mixed Multitude: The Struggle for Toleration in Colonial Pennsylvania (American Social Experience Series)

Sally Schwartz

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Religious and national diversity characterized the settlements of the Delaware Valley almost from the first arrival of Europeans, and America's first pluralistic society evolved from this colony established by William Penn on the western shore of the Delaware River in 1681.

Penn himself set forth a new, ideological basis for pluralism and tolerance, and this transformed a tentative, pragmatic pattern of relative harmony and tolerance into official policy. The English culture transplanted to Pennsylvania was itself fragmented. Quakers and Anglican, for example, had very different religious, social, and cultural values. Colonists from different parts of the British Isles—the Welsh, the Scots, and the Scotch-Irish—did not share common experiences or cultures. The “Swedes” were both Swedish and Finnish in origins and culture and, while often designated “Germans” or “Palatines” by English-speaking Pennsylvanians, emigrants from the Rhineland spoke different dialects, practiced a wide variety of religious observances, and had little in common historically or culturally.

Penn’s ideals, ideas and policies set in motion forces that had significant effects on the development of this extremely heterogenous colony. This book explores the ways in which the implications of Penn's ideals were gradually worked out in Pennsylvania and how a stable and generally tolerant society was created.

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