



America's Children



Stephen of Philadelphia

by James Otis

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A NOTE TO THE READER

This book was written in the early 20th century, a time when societal attitudes and language were significantly from what we recognize today. As you delve into its pages, you might come across terms and descriptions that our modern sensibilities find offensive or inappropriate. These echo the beliefs and biases of that era, some of which were fueled by ignorance, fear, and misunderstanding.

We've chosen to preserve the original text, providing an unvarnished window into the past. It's essential to approach this reading with an open heart and mind, recognizing the historical context that shaped these terms and views. While we've made progress as a society, the shadows of these old attitudes sometimes persist.

By recognizing and reflecting on the profound impact such perspectives have left on our culture, we can deepen our understanding of history and chart a course towards a more inclusive and compassionate future.

THE NAME OF MY CITY

TWICE in the course of my life have I been in the city of London, and though I may never go there again, it will ever remain in my mind as a bewildering collection of houses and shops. I shall think of it as even more of a wilderness than can be found in this land of America, where, by the grace of God, I count to spend the remainder of the days allotted me on this earth in thankfulness, because of having been numbered among those who began the building of the city of Philadelphia.

I am told that among the settlements laid out by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, is one called Salem, which means peace, and verily it is a fitting name for a town where the people desire the peace of this world more than anything to be hoped for, save that peace which passeth all understanding.

But to my mind, the name of our town, Philadelphia, goes way beyond that of Salem, for its meaning is brotherly love, and if such be practised among us, then does it follow that peace will come



without a question, since love driveth out fear, and the absence of fear is the peace of this world.

MY OWN NAME

IT is a long distance from London in England to our Philadelphia in America, and if I am to show, as is my purpose, how my visit to the larger city led me to help build up the smaller, then is it wise that I explain somewhat concerning myself, even though those



who shall read what I here set down, have no care whatsoever as to whether I be white or black, halt or blind, young or old.

I was born in that city of England called Bristol, and my father's name is also mine. Stephen these good people call him, and in order that there may be no mistake as to which of us is meant when I am spoken of, they refer to me as Stephen of Philadelphia, which is much to my liking.

WHY WE WENT TO LONDON

I was just turned twelve, in the year of grace 1681, when my father took me to London. It may be that I cannot set it down exactly as my father would, why we made the long, wearisome journey; but yet I shall be able to

put forth all the facts, even though they are not given in due order.

First, it was known in Bristol that William Penn had been given a large tract of land in America by King Charles II, in settlement of a debt owed by the king to his father, the admiral, with the agreement that two beaver skins should be paid each year for the same, which, of course, was a most ridiculous price; but, as I understood it, this served simply to show that the king claimed, even after using it with which to pay a debt, the right to rule over the country.

All this would have concerned my father but little had it not been for the fact that William Penn had become a Friend, or Quaker, and my father was also of the same faith.

It had been made known by Penn that those Englishmen who wanted to make homes for themselves in America, where no man should be able to wrong them because of being Friends, could have land at the rate of forty shillings for an hundred acres, or five thousand acres for the sum of one hundred pounds.



There were many of our neighbors in Bristol who counted to journey overseas to where a man might believe or preach whatsoever seemed to him right in the sight of God, and many parcels of land had already been taken up by them in the new town, wheresoever it might be located.

My father was a cautious man, however, unwilling to embark in any enterprise, however trifling, until he had first a clear idea of what would be expected, and to that end he went up to London that he might have speech with William Penn.

BOUND FOR AMERICA

IT was my misfortune that I failed then to see William Penn, most like because of my father's thinking it unseemly to take with him a small lad when he talked about matters of business; but before the day was come to an end, I learned that already were there three ships fitted out for the voyage to America, one to sail from our city of Bristol, and the other two from the port of London.

That which my father heard from the lips of William Penn decided him to have a share in the enterprise, and because of our not having time to travel back to Bristol before the ship due to sail from there would have left port, he had agreed to take passage in the *John and Sarah*, a fine vessel even then ready for sea.

At that time my mother was in Greenwich, on a visit, but before another day had come she was with us, busied with her preparations for the voyage.

It caused me great sorrow because I was not to jour-



ney with the people of Bristol, whom I knew, and who were to sail in the ship *Factor*. For the time being it seemed as if my misfortune was very great, simply because of my being among strangers; but I soon came to understand that the Lord's hand is in all things, and, although I had no claim upon His mercy and goodness, it was bestowed upon me even at that time.

The *Amity*, which was the other ship to leave London at the same time as did the *John and Sarah*, and the *Factor* of Bristol, did not arrive in America, owing to tempests, until many months after we had landed, and the passengers on both the ships suffered much of discomfort, if not absolute misery, all of which was spared to us.

My father declared that this was a lesson to us who were about to make our homes in a new country. It showed that we should ever depend upon a strength greater than ours and not of this world, with never a word of repining when matters do not go the way we would choose since we little know what is best.