

Individualist Anarchism in the United States: the Origins

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Libertarians tend to fall into two opposing errors on the American past: the familiar “Golden Age” view of the right-wing that everything was blissful in America until some moment of precipitous decline (often dated 1933); and the deeply pessimistic minority view that rejects the American past root and branch, spurning all American institutions and virtually all of its thinkers except such late nineteenth-century individualist anarchists as Benjamin R. Tucker and Lysander Spooner.

The truth is somewhere in between: America was never the golden “land of the free” of the conservative-libertarian legend, and yet it managed for a very long time to be freer, in institutions and in intellectual climate, than any other land.

Colonial America did not set out deliberately to be the land of the free. On the contrary, it began in a tangle of tyranny, special privilege, and vast land monopoly. Territories were carved out either as colonies subject directly to the English Crown, or as enormous land grabs for privileged companies or feudal proprietors.

What defeated these despotic and feudal thrusts into the new territory was, at bottom, rather simple: the vastness of the fertile and uninhabited land that lay waiting to be settled. Not only relative freedom, but even outright anarchist institutions grew up early in the interstices between the organized, despotic English colonies.

Albemarle

There is a good possibility that for a couple of decades in the mid-seventeenth century, the coastal area north of Albemarle Sound in what is now northeastern North Carolina was in a quasi-anarchistic state. Technically a part of the Virginia colony but in practice virtually independent, the Albemarle area was a haven for persons chaffing under the despotic rule of the English Crown, the Anglican Church and the large planter aristocracy of Virginia. Roger Green led a Presbyterian group that left Virginia proper for Albemarle, and many Quakers settled in the area, which specialized in growing tobacco.

This semi-libertarian condition came to an end in 1663, when the English Crown included Albemarle in the mammoth Carolina land grant bestowed on a group of eight feudal proprietors. Little is known of pre-1663 Albemarle, since historians display scant interest in stateless societies.[\[1\]](#)

“Rogue’s Island”

Undoubtedly the freest colony in America, and the major source of anarchistic thought and institutions, was little Rhode Island, which originated as a series of more or less anarchic settlements founded by people fleeing from the brutal politico-religious tyranny of the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay (who referred to the new territory as “Rogue’s Land”). Unsettled and untouched by the land grants or the Crown, the Rhode Island area provided a haven close to the Massachusetts Bay settlement.

Providence, the first refugee settlement, was founded in 1636 by the young Reverend Roger Williams. A political and especially a religious libertarian, Williams was close to the Levellers — that great group of English laissez-faire individualists who constituted the “extreme left-wing” of the republican side in the English Civil War. At first, the Williams settlement was virtually anarchistic. As Williams described it, “the masters of families have ordinarily met once a fortnight and consulted about our common peace, watch and plenty; and mutual consent have finished all matters of speed and pace.”

But this anarchistic idyll began to flounder in a tragically ironic trap that Williams had laid for himself and his followers. Williams had pioneered in scrupulously purchasing all the land from the Indians voluntarily — a method of land acquisition in sharp contrast to the brutal methods of extermination beloved by the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay. But the problem was that the Indians had erroneous theories of property. As collective tribes they laid claim to vast reaches of land on which they had only hunted. Not having transformed the land itself, they were not entitled to all of the land that they sold.

Hence, Williams and his group, by purchasing all of this unsettled land, willy-nilly acquired these illegitimate land titles. Thinking that he had been generous, voluntaristic and libertarian, Williams (and his group) fell into the trap of becoming a feudalistic group of landowners. Instead of automatically acquiring the land in Providence that they homesteaded, later settlers had to purchase or rent the land from the original Williams claimants. The result was that Williams and his original colleagues, who had formed “The Fellowship”, found themselves in the position of being oligarchic rulers of Providence as well as Providence’s land “monopolists.” Once again, as so many times in history, land-monopoly and government went hand in hand.

While a libertarian, Williams never became an explicit anarchist, even though he established an anarchistic community in Providence. The honor of being the first explicit anarchist in North America belongs to Williams’s successor, a leading religious refugee from Massachusetts, Anne Hutchinson. Anne and her followers, who had become far more numerous a band of heretics than Williams had amassed, emigrated to the Rhode Island area in 1638 at the suggestion of Williams himself. There they purchased the island of Aquidneck from the Indians and founded the settlement of Pocasset (now Portsmouth).

Anne soon became restive at Pocasset, seeing that her follower and major founder of the settlement, the wealthy merchant William Coddington, had quickly established his own theocratic rule over the infant colony. For Coddington, as “judge” of the settlement, based his decrees and rulings on the “word of God”, as arbitrarily interpreted by himself.

Coddington, this time far more explicitly and consciously than Williams, founded his dictatorial power on his deed of purchase of the island from the Indians. Since his was the only name on the deed of purchase, Coddington claimed for himself all the “rights” of land monopolist and feudal lord, allotting no rights to homesteading settlers.

Anne Hutchinson, not yet an anarchist, now launched a political struggle against Coddington in early 1639 forcing him to give the entire body of freemen a veto over his actions. In April, Coddington was forced to agree to elections for his post as Governor, a position that he had expected to be his permanently by feudal right. Anne’s husband, William Hutchinson, defeated Coddington in the elections, and Coddington and his followers left Pocasset to found a new settlement called New Port at the southern end of the island. The victorious Hutchinsonians adopted a new constitution, changing the name of the town to Portsmouth, and stating that (1) all male inhabitants were equal before the law; (2) Church and State were to be kept separate; and (3) trial by jury was to be established for all.

Immediately thereafter Coddington declared war upon Portsmouth and at the end of a year of turmoil, the two groups agreed to unite the two settlements. Coddington was once more chosen as governor, but with democratic institutions and religious liberty guaranteed.

From the point of view of social philosophy, however, the important consequence of this struggle with Coddington was that Anne Hutchinson began to reflect deeply on the whole question of liberty. If, as Roger Williams had taught, there must be absolute religious liberty for the individual, then what right does government have to rule the individual at all? In short, Anne Hutchinson had come to the conclusion of the “unlawfulness of magistracy government.”

As Anne’s biographer Winifred Rugg put it: “She was supremely convinced that the Christian held within his own breast the assurance of salvation ... For such persons magistrates were obviously superfluous. As for the others, they were to be converted, not coerced.”

Anne persuaded her husband to resign as one of Coddington's major assistants in the colony. In 1642, soon after his resignation, William Hutchinson died. Deprived of her husband and disgusted with all government, Anne left Rhode Island to settle at Pelham Bay, near New York City. There, in the late summer of 1643, Anne and her family were killed by a band of Indians, who had been set upon by the Dutch of New York.

But while Anne Hutchinson was dead, her ideas lived on. Some of her followers, headed by Anne's sister Mrs. Catherine Scott, headed the new Baptist movement in Rhode Island, which, as we shall see, was later to erupt as a highly important movement of Baptist anarchists.

One of the most interesting individualists of the American colonial period was Samuell Gorton. An English clothier, his libertarian political and religious views and individualistic spirit got him persecuted in every colony in New England, including Providence and Portsmouth. An opponent of theocracy, and indeed of all formal religious organizations, Gorton opposed all transgressions of government against the rights guaranteed by English common law. Fleeing Anglican England, Gorton successively had to escape from Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Portsmouth, and Providence. In the Providence incident Roger Williams began to display that totalitarian temperament, that impatience with anyone more individualistic than he, that was later to turn him sharply away from liberty and towards statism. Williams agreed to the expulsion of Gorton from Providence, declaring that Gorton was "bewitching and bemadding poor Providence ... with his unclear and foul censures of all the ministers of this country..."

Accused of being "anarchists," denounced by Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts Bay as a "man not fit to live upon the face of the earth," Gorton and his followers were forced in late 1642 to found an entirely new settlement of their own: Shawomet (later Warwick) which he purchased from the Indians. There the little settlement was under continued threat of aggression by their mighty Massachusetts neighbor. While Gorton was not explicitly an anarchist, the little town of Shawomet lived in an anarchist idyll in the years that it remained a separate settlement.

In the words of Gorton, for over five years the settlement "lived peaceably together, desiring and endeavoring to do wrong to no man, neither English nor Indian, ending all our differences in a neighborly and loving way of arbitration, mutually chosen amongst us." But in 1648, Warwick joined with the other three towns of Rhode Island to form the colony of the "Providence Plantation." From that time on Warwick was under a government, even though this was a government far more democratic and libertarian than existed anywhere else. As a respected leader of the new colony, now considered "fit to live" in Rhode Island, Gorton managed to abolish imprisonment for debt, lower the term of indentured service, and even to be the first to abolish slavery in America, even though abolition turned out to be a dead letter.

After two decades of struggle against the aggressions of Massachusetts, Roger Williams was finally able, in the mid-1650s, to win immunity for Rhode Island, by gaining the protection of the victorious republican revolutionaries of England. At the time of winning its protection from Massachusetts, Williams described the colony as having "long drunk of the cup of as great liberties as any people that we can hear of under the whole heaven." "Sir," Williams added, writing to his libertarian English friend Sir Henry Vane, "we have not known what an excise means; we have almost forgotten what tithes are, yea, or taxes either, to church or commonwealth."

Yet it was almost immediately after this triumph that Williams savagely turned on the liberty of the colony he had founded. Why the shift? Several reasons can be found: first, the inevitable corruptions of governmental power on even the most libertarian of rulers; and second, Williams's impatience with those even more libertarian than he. But a third reason has to do with the loss of liberty in England.

For two decades, Roger Williams had worked closely with the most libertarian and individualistic groups in the revolutionary movement in England; but now, just as the *laissez-faire*, individualist "left" seemed to have triumphed, England suddenly moved precipitously rightward and stateward under the new dictatorship of the Independent Oliver Cromwell. The shift away from liberty in England was embodied in Cromwell's brutal suppression of the Levellers, the leaders of

libertarianism in the Revolution. With the mother country sliding away from liberty and into dictatorship, the aging Williams undoubtedly lost much of his previously firm grip on libertarian principle.

Williams's shift from liberty was first revealed in 1655, when he suddenly imposed a system of compulsory military service on the people of Rhode Island. It was in reaction to this violation of all the libertarian traditions of Rhode Island that a vigorous opposition developed in the colony — an opposition that eventually polarized into outright individualistic anarchism.

Heading this move toward anarchism was the bulk of the Baptists of Rhode Island. Led by the Reverend Thomas Olney, former Baptist minister of Providence, and including also John Field, John Throckmorton, the redoubtable William Harris, and Williams's own brother Robert. This group circulated a petition charging that "it was blood guiltiness, and against the rule of the gospel to execute judgement upon transgressors, against the private or public weal." In short, any punishment of transgressors and/or any bearing of arms was anti-Christian!

Williams's response was to denounce the petition as causing "tumult and disturbance." The anarchists thereupon rose in rebellion against Williams's government, but were put down by force of arms. Despite the failure of the revolt, the 1655 elections of a few months later, elected Thomas Olney as an assistant to the inevitably re-elected Williams, even though Olney himself had led the uprising.

Williams proceeded to aggrandize statism still further. The central government of the colony decided to bypass the home-rule right of the individual towns to finance the colony, and appointed central officials to levy general taxes directly upon the people. Laws against "immorality" were also strengthened, with corporal punishment to be levied for such crimes as "loose living." The anti-immorality laws were probably a part of an attempt by Williams to curry favor with the Puritanical Oliver Cromwell. Most ominously, after Cromwell had ordered Rhode Island to punish "intestinal commotions," the colony swiftly passed a law against "ringleaders of factions" who were thereafter to be sent to England for trial.

Baptist anarchism, however, continued to intensify in Rhode Island. One of the new adherents was none other than Catherine Scott, a leading Baptist preacher and the sister of Anne Hutchinson. In this way, Anne's lone pioneering in philosophical anarchism before her death had planted a seed that burst forth a decade and a half later. Also adopting anarchism were Rebecca Throckmorton, Robert West, and Ann Williams, wife of Robert. Finally, in March 1657, the crackdown on freedom of speech and dissent arrived. Williams hauled these four anarchist opponents into court, charging them with being "common opposers of all authority." After this act of intimidation, however, Williams relented and withdrew the charges. But Williams had accomplished the singular purpose of his repression: the frightened anarchist leaders lapsed into silence.

The formidable William Harris, however, could not be frightened so readily. Harris circulated a manuscript to all the towns of Rhode Island, denouncing all taxation and "all civil governments." He called upon the people to "cry out, No lords, No masters." Harris predicted that the State, which he called "the House of Saul", would inevitably grow weaker and weaker, while the "House of David" (namely Harris and his followers) would grow stronger and stronger. Harris also condemned all punishments and prisons, all officials and legislative assemblies.

William Harris was now hauled into court by the Williams administration. He was charged with "open defiance under his hand against our Charter, all our laws ... Parliament, the Lord Protector [Cromwell] and all governments." Instead of quieting under repression as had Mrs. Scott and the others, Harris swore that he would continue to maintain his anarchism "with his blood." Persistently refusing to recant, Harris reiterated his interpretation of Scripture, namely that "he that can say it is his conscience ought not to yield subjection to any human order amongst men." The General Court found Harris guilty of being "contemptuous and seditious," and the evidence against Harris and his son was sent to England in preparation for a trial for treason.

The treason trial never materialized, because by good fortune the ship carrying the evidence to England was lost at sea. But Harris was finally sufficiently cowed to abandon his anarchism. He

turned instead to a lifelong harassment of the hated Roger Williams through endless litigation of land claims.^[2]

Pennsylvania: The Holy Experiment

The third great example of anarchism in colonial America took place in Pennsylvania. This was William Penn's "Holy Experiment" for a Quaker colony that would provide "an example [that] may be set up to the nations." While religious liberty was guaranteed, and institutions were relatively libertarian, Penn never meant his new colony, founded in 1681, to be anarchistic or anything of the like.^[3] Curiously, Pennsylvania fell into living and functioning anarchism by happy accident.

Lured by religious liberty and by cheap and abundant land, settlers, largely Quaker, poured into Pennsylvania in large numbers.^[4] At the end of eight years 12,000 people had settled in the new colony. The first touch of anarchy came in the area of taxation. While low excise and export duties had been levied by the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1683, Governor Penn set aside all taxes for a year to encourage rapid settlement. The next year, when Penn wanted to levy taxes for his own personal income, a group of leaders of the colony persuaded Penn to drop the tax, in return for them personally raising a voluntary gift for his own use. William Penn returned to England in the fall of 1684, convinced that he had founded a stable and profitable colony.

One of his major expectations was the collection of "quitrents" from every settler. This was to be in continuing payment for Penn's claim as feudal landlord of the entire colony, as had been granted by the Crown. But Penn, like the proprietors and feudal overlords in the other colonies, found it almost impossible to collect these quitrents. He had granted the populace a moratorium on quitrents until 1685, but the people insisted on further postponements, and Penn's threatened legal proceedings were without success.

Furthermore, the people of Pennsylvania continued to refuse to vote to levy taxes. They even infringed upon the monopoly of lime production, which Penn had granted to himself, by stubbornly opening their own lime quarries. William Penn found that deprived of feudal or tax income, his deficits from ruling Pennsylvania were large and his fortune was dissipating steadily. Freedom and a taxless society had contaminated the colonists. As Penn complained, "the great fault is, that those who are there, lose their authority one way or other in the spirits of the people and then they can do little with their outward powers."

When Penn returned to England, the governing of the colony fell to the Council of Pennsylvania. Although Penn had appointed Thomas Lloyd, a Welsh Quaker, to be president of the Council, the president had virtually no power, and could not make any decisions of his own. The Council itself met very infrequently, and no officials had the interim power to act. During these great intervals, Pennsylvania had no government at all — as indicated by the fact that neither quitrents nor taxes were being levied in the colony.

Why did the Council rarely meet? For one thing because the Councilors, having little to do in that libertarian society and being unpaid, had their own private business to attend to. The Councilors, according to the laws of the colony, were supposed to receive a small stipend, but as was typical of this anarchistic colony, it proved almost impossible to extract these funds from the Pennsylvanian populace.

If the colonial government ceased to exist except for the infrequent days of Council meetings, what of local governments? Did they provide a permanent bureaucracy, a visible evidence of the continuing existence of the State apparatus? The answer is no; for the local courts met only a few days a year, and the county officials, too, were private citizens who devoted almost no time to upholding the law. To cap the situation the Assembly passed no laws after 1686, being in a continuing wrangle over the extent of its powers.

The colony of Pennsylvania continued in this *de facto* state of individualist anarchism from the fall of 1684 to the end of 1688: four glorious years in which no outcry arose from the happy citizens about "anarchy" or "chaos". No Pennsylvanian seemed to believe himself any the worse for wear.

A bit of government came to Pennsylvania in 1685, in the person of William Dyer who was the appointed Collector of the King's Customs. Despite frantic appeals from William Penn to cooperate with Dyer, the Pennsylvanians persisted in their anarchism by blithely and consistently evading the Royal Navigation Laws.

It is no wonder that William Penn had the distinct impression that his "Holy Experiment" had slipped away from him, had taken a new and bewildering turn. Penn had launched a colony that he thought would quietly follow his dictates and yield him a handsome feudal profit. By providing a prosperous haven of refuge for Quakers, Penn expected in return the twin reward of wealth and power. Instead, he found himself without either. Unable to collect revenue from the free and independent-minded Pennsylvanians, he saw the colony slipping quietly and gracefully into outright anarchism — into a peaceful, growing and flourishing land of no taxes and virtually no State. Thereupon, Penn frantically tried to force Pennsylvania back into the familiar mold of the Old Order.

In February 1687 William Penn appointed five Pennsylvanians as commissioners of state. Assigned to "act in the execution of the laws, as if I myself were there present." The purpose of this new appointment was "that there may be a more constant residence of the honorary and governing part of the government, for keeping all things in good order." Penn appointed the five commissioners from among the leading citizens of the colony, and ordered them to enforce the laws.

Evidently the colonists were quite happy about their anarchism, and shrewdly engaged in non-violent resistance toward the commission. In the first place, news about the commission was delayed for months. Then protests poured into Penn about the new commission. Penn soon realized that he had received no communication from the supposedly governing body.

Unable to delay matters any longer, the reluctant commissioners of state took office in February 1688. Three and one-half years of substantive anarchism were over. The State was back in its Heaven; once more all was right in William Penn's world. Typically, the gloating Penn urged the commissioners to conceal any differences among themselves, so as to deceive and overawe the public "Show your virtues but conceal your infirmities; this will make you awful and revered with ye people." He further urged them to enforce the King's duties and to levy taxes to support the government.

The commissioners confined themselves to calling the Assembly into session in the spring of 1688, and this time the Assembly did pass some laws, for the first time in three years. The most important bills presented to the Assembly by the Council and the Commissioners, however, was for the reimposition of taxes; and here the Assembly, at the last minute, heroically defied Penn and the government, and rejected the tax bills.

After a brief flurry of State activity in early 1688, therefore, the State was found wanting, taxes were rejected and the colony lapsed quickly back into a state of anarchism. Somehow, the commissioners, evidently exhausted by their task, failed to meet any further, and the Council fell back into its schedule of rare meetings.

In desperation, Penn acted to appoint a Deputy-Governor to rule Pennsylvania in his absence. Thomas Lloyd, President of the Council, refused the appointment, and as we saw from the reluctance of the commissioners, no one in happily anarchic Pennsylvania wanted to rule over others. At this point, Penn reached outside the colony to appoint a tough old non-Pennsylvanian and non-Quaker, the veteran Puritan soldier John Blackwell, to be Deputy-Governor of the colony. In appointing him, Penn made clear to Blackwell that his primary task was to collect Penn's quitrents and his secondary task to reestablish a government.

If John Blackwell had any idea that the Quakers were a meek people, he was in for a rude surprise. Blackwell was to find out quickly that a devotion to peace, liberty, and individualism in no sense implied an attitude of passive resignation to tyranny — quite the contrary.

Blackwell's initial reception as Deputy-Governor was an augur of things to come. Sending word ahead for someone to meet him upon his arrival in New York, Blackwell landed there only to find no one to receive him. After waiting in vain for three days, Blackwell went alone to the colony.

When he arrived in Philadelphia on December 17, 1688, he found no escort, no parade, no reception committee. After having ordered the Council to meet him upon his arrival, Blackwell could find no trace of the Councilor or any other governmental officials. Instead he “found the Council room deserted and covered with dust and scattered papers. The wheels of government had nearly stopped turning.”^[5]

Only one surly escort appeared, and *he* refused to speak to his new Governor. And when Blackwell arrived at the empty Council room, his only reception was a group of boys of the neighborhood who gathered around to hoot and jeer.

The resourceful Pennsylvanians now embarked on a shrewd and determined campaign of non-violent resistance to the attempt to reimpose a State on a happy and stateless people. Thomas Lloyd, as Keeper of the Great Seal, insisted that none of Blackwell’s orders or commissions were legally valid unless stamped with the Great Seal. And Lloyd, as Keeper, somehow stubbornly refused to do any stamping. Furthermore, David Lloyd, the clerk of the court and a distant relative of Thomas’s, absolutely refused to turn over the documents of any cases to Blackwell, even if the judges so ordered. For this act of defiance Blackwell declared David Lloyd unfit to serve as court clerk and dismissed him. Thomas promptly reappointed David by virtue of his power as Keeper of the Great Seal. Moreover, out of a dozen justices of the peace named by Blackwell, four bluntly refused to serve.

As the revolutionary situation intensified in Pennsylvania, the timid and shortsighted began to betray the revolutionary libertarian cause. All of the Council except two now sided with Blackwell. Leader of the pro-Blackwell clique was Griffith Jones, who had allowed Blackwell to live at his home in Philadelphia. Jones warned that “it is the king’s authority that is opposed and [it] looks to me as if it were raising a force to rebel.” On the Council, only Arthur Cook and Samuel Richardson continued to defy the Governor.

Blackwell was of course appalled at this situation. He wrote to Penn that the colonists were suffering from excessive liberty. They had eaten more of the “honey of your concessions than their stomachs can bear.” Blackwell managed to force the Council to meet every week in early 1689, but he failed to force them to agree to a permanent and continuing Councilor from every county in Philadelphia. Arthur Cook led the successful resistance, pointing out that the “people were not able to bear the charge of constant attendance.”

The climax in the struggle between Blackwell and the people of Pennsylvania came in April 1689, when the Governor introduced proceedings for the impeachment of Thomas Lloyd, charging him with high crimes and misdemeanors. In his address, Blackwell trumpeted to his stunned listeners that William Penn’s powers over the colony were absolute. The Council, on his theory, existed not to represent the people but to be an instrument of Penn’s will. Blackwell concluded his harangue by threatening to unsheath and wield his sword against his insolent and unruly opponents.

Given the choice between the old anarchism or absolute rule by John Blackwell, even the trimmers and waverers rallied behind Thomas Lloyd. After Blackwell had summarily dismissed Lloyd, Richardson and others from the Council, the Council rebelled and demanded the right to approve of their own members. With the entire Council now arrayed against him, the disheartened Blackwell dissolved that body and sent his resignation to Penn.

The Councilors, in turn, bitterly protested to Penn against his deputy’s attempt to deprive them of their liberties. As for Blackwell, he considered the Quakers agents of the Devil, as foretold in the New Testament, men “who shall despise dominion and speak evil of dignities.” These Quakers, Blackwell charged in horror, “have not the principles of government amongst them, nor will they be informed...”

Faced with virtually unanimous and determined opposition from the colonists Penn decided against Blackwell. For the rest of the year, Blackwell continued formally in office, but he now lost all interest in exerting his rule. He simply waited out his fading term of office. Penn in effect restored the old system by designating the Council as a whole as his “deputy governor.” Replacing vinegar

with honey Penn apologized for his mistake in appointing Blackwell, and asserted, "I have thought fit ... to throw all into your hands, that you may all see the confidence I have in you."

Pennsylvania soon slipped back into anarchism. The Council, again headed by Thomas Lloyd, met but seldom. When a rare meeting was called it did virtually nothing and told William Penn even less. The Assembly also met but rarely. And when Secretary of the colony William Markham (a cousin of Penn, who had been one of the hated Blackwell clique) submitted a petition for the levying of taxes to provide some financial help for poor William Penn the Council totally ignored his request.

Furthermore, when Markham asked for a governmental organization of militia to provide for military defense against a (non-existent) French and Indian threat, the Council preserved the anarchistic status of the colony by blandly replying that any people who are interested could provide for their defense *at their own expense*. Anarchism had returned in triumph to Pennsylvania. The determined non-violent resistance of the colony had won a glorious victory.

Penn, however, refused to allow the colony to continue in this anarchistic state. In 1691 he insisted that a continuing deputy-governor be appointed, although he would allow the colony to select a governor. The colony of course chose their resistance hero Thomas Lloyd, who assumed his new post in April. After seven years of *de facto* anarchism (with the exception of a few months of Council meetings and several months of Blackwellite attempt to rule), Pennsylvania now had a continuous, permanent head of government. "Archy" was back, but its burden was still negligible for the Assembly and the Council still met but rarely and, above all, there was no taxation in the colony.

But the virus of power, the canker of archy, once let loose even a trifle, feeds upon itself. Suddenly, as a bolt from the blue, the Council in April 1692 passed a new bill for the reestablishment of taxation and the revered Governor Lloyd concurred in this betrayal. The question now reverted to the popularly elected Assembly, always the political stronghold of liberty in the province. Would they too succumb? The freemen of Philadelphia and of Chester sent the Assembly petitions strongly protesting the proposed imposition of taxation. They urged the Assembly to keep "their country free from bondage and slavery, and avoiding such ill methods, as may render themselves and posterity liable thereto." Heeding these protests, the Assembly refused to pass a tax law. *De facto* anarchy was still, though barely, alive.

Anarchy, however, was by now doomed, and governmental oppression, even without taxes, quickly returned to Pennsylvania. This new outcropping of statism was stimulated by opposition from a split-off from Quakerism headed by the scholarly Scottish Quaker George Keith, the outstanding Quaker minister of the middle colonies and the schoolmaster at Philadelphia. He was religiously more conservative than the bulk of the Quakers, leaning as he did toward Presbyterianism, but politically he was more individualistic. Stimulated by the anarchism he found in Pennsylvania, Keith quickly concluded logically from the Quaker creed that *all* participation in government ran counter to Quaker principles.

The return of Pennsylvania to government in the spring of 1691 especially provoked George Keith. How, he asked, could a Quaker minister like Thomas Lloyd, professing belief in non-violence, serve as a governmental magistrate at all, since the essence of government was the use of violence? A telling point: in short, Keith saw that Quaker non-violence logically implied, not only refusal to bear arms, but complete individualistic anarchism.

Finally, in the fall of 1692, the Keithian "Christian Quaker" faction was expelled from the body of Quakers. And to their shame, the main body of Quakers, after having been persecuted widely for their religious principles, reacted to a split in their *own* ranks in the very same way. Keithian pamphlets were confiscated and the printers arrested; Keith himself was ordered to stop making speeches and publishing pamphlets "that have a tendency to sedition, and disturbance of the peace, as also to the subversion of the present government." Three Keithian leaders including Keith himself, were indicted for writing a book denouncing the magistrates, and the jury was packed with the friends of the Quaker rulers. Despite Keith's pleas that Quakers are duty-bound to settle all their

disputes peacefully and voluntarily, and to never go to court, the men were convicted and fined (though the fines were never paid), and denied the right to appeal to the Council or to the provisional court. Government was back in Pennsylvania — with a vengeance.

Taxation would very soon be back too. William Penn, a close friend of the recently deposed King James II of England, was in deep political trouble at court. Angry with Penn, peeved at the anarchism and the pacifism of the colony, and anxious to weld the northern colonies into a fighting force for attacking the French in Canada, King William, in late 1692, named Benjamin Fletcher governor of both New York and Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania, no longer under the proprietary of William Penn, was now a royal colony.

Governor Fletcher assumed the reins of government in April 1693. As in other royal colonies, the Council was now appointed by the Governor. Fletcher convened the Assembly in May, and was able to drive through a tax bill because of his and the Council's power to judge all the existing laws of Pennsylvania, and of a threat to annex the colony to New York. Taxes had arrived at last; archy was back in full force, and the glorious years of anarchism were gone.^[6]

But a flurry of anarchism remained. In its 1694 session, the Pennsylvania Assembly decided to allocate almost half its tax revenue to the personal use of Thomas Lloyd and of William Markham, whom Fletcher had appointed as his Deputy-Governor. Infuriated, Fletcher dissolved the Assembly. After a year of imposition, taxes had again disappeared from Pennsylvania.

Disgusted, Fletcher lost interest in Pennsylvania, which after all these years was decidedly a poor place for raising tax revenue. The colony returned to its old quasi-anarchistic state, with no taxes and with a Council that did little and met infrequently. But, meanwhile, William Penn was campaigning energetically for returning to his feudal fiefdom. He abjectly promised the King that Pennsylvania would be good: that it would levy taxes, raise a militia, and obey royal orders. He promised to keep Fletcher's laws and to keep Markham as governor. As a result the King restored Pennsylvania to the ownership of Penn in the summer of 1694, and by the spring of the following year, Markham was installed as Deputy-Governor under the restored Penn proprietary. But in the spring 1695 session, the now elected Council again refused to consider any tax bill.

The Assembly continued to refuse to pass a tax bill for another year and a half. With the exception of one year, Pennsylvania thus remained in a quasi-anarchist state of taxlessness from its founding in 1681 until the fall of 1696: fourteen glorious years. Governor Markham was only able to push through a tax bill at the end of 1696 by a naked usurpation of the powers of government: decreeing a new constitution of his own, including an appointed Council. Markham was able to purchase the Assembly's support by granting it the power to initiate legislation and also to raise the property requirement for voting in the towns, thus permitting the Quakers to exclude the largely non-Quaker urban poor from having the vote.

A libertarian opposition now gathered, led by Arthur Cook (Thomas Lloyd now deceased. It included a coalition of former Keithians like Robert Turner and old Blackwell henchmen like Griffith Jones. The opposition gathered a mass petition in March 1697, signed by over a hundred, attacking the imposed constitution, the increase in suffrage requirements in the towns, and particularly the establishment of taxation. When the opposition Councilors and Assemblymen, elected as a protest under a separate set of votes under the old constitution, were summarily rejected, Robert Turner denounced this threat to "our ancient rights, liberties and freedom." Turner particularly denounced the tax bill of 1696, and urged that the tax money seized from its rightful owners "by that unwarranted, illegal and arbitrary act, be forthwith restored." But all this was to no avail. Pennsylvania soon slipped into the same archic mould as all the other colonies. The "Holy Experiment" was over.

Bibliographical Note

None of this material has ever appeared in any work on the history of individualist anarchism in the United States. James J. Martin's excellent *Men Against the State* (DeKalb, Ill., Adrian Allen Associates, 1953) does not go back before the nineteenth century. In any case, Martin's methodology prevents him from acknowledging these men and women of the seventeenth century as anarchists, since he believes Christianity and anarchism to be incompatible. Neither Rudolf Rocker's *Pioneers of American Freedom* (Los Angeles, Rocker Publications Committee, 1949) nor Henry J. Silverman's (ed.) *American Radical Thought: The Libertarian Tradition* (Lexington, Mass., D. C. Heath Co., 1970) touches on the colonial period. The only history of individualist anarchism that deals with the colonial period is the pioneering work by Eunice Minette Schuster *Native American Anarchism* (1932, rep. by New York, De Capo Press 1970.) Schuster deals briefly with the religious views of Anne Hutchinson and the Quakers, but deals hardly at all with their political ideas nor with the institutions that they put into practice. Corinne Jacker's *The Black Flag of Anarchy* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968) only sharply condenses Schuster.

Notes

[1] The lack of recordkeeping in stateless societies — since only government officials seem to have the time, energy, and resources to devote to such activities — produce a tendency toward a governmental bias in the working methods of historians.

[2] He was one of the original band that had helped Williams found Providence.

[3] 1657 was the year that the first Quaker landed in Rhode Island from England. It is no surprise that within a decade this new individualistic sect had converted a majority of Rhode Islanders, including most of the former Baptists and Hutchinsonians.

[4] Particularly remarkable was the treatment of the Indians by Penn and the Quakers. In striking contrast to the general treatment of Indians by white settlers, the Quakers insisted on voluntary purchase of Indian land. They also dealt with the Indians as human beings, deserving of respect and dignity. As a consequence, peace with the Indians was maintained for well over half a century; no drop of Quaker blood was shed by the Indians. Voltaire wrote rapturously of the Quaker achievement; for the Indians, he declared, "it was truly a new sight to see a sovereign William Penn to whom everyone said 'thou' and to whom one spake with one's hat on one's head; a government without priests, a people without arms, citizens as the magistrates, and neighbors without jealousy."

[5] Edwin B. Bronner, *William Penn's "Holy Experiment"* (New York, Temple University Publications, 1962), p. 108.

[6] One reason for the failure of any Pennsylvania resistance to the new regime was that the unity of the colonists had foundered on the rock of the Keithian schism. One beneficial result of royal rule was the freeing of Keith and his friends. Keith, however, returned to England, and with his departure the Keithian movement soon fell apart. The final irony came in later years when Keith, now an ardent Anglican minister in America, his former Quakerish individualist anarchism totally forgotten, helped to impose a year's imprisonment on grounds of sedition against the established Anglican Church of New York, upon the Reverend Samuel Bownes of Long Island.