

Prologue

On the top of a hill overlooking northeastern Philadelphia stands a modest obelisk bearing on each of its four sides an inscription:

In memory of Thomas Holme, d. 1695, aged seventy-one, Surveyor General of William Penn. He drafted the plan and laid out the city of Philadelphia.

He became the proprietor of 1600 acres of land in one tract by grant of Penn in 1683 named his "Well Spring Plantation" of which this ground is a part.

In lieu of a donation in his will for school purposes, his heirs gave the land on which Lower Dublin Academy is located.

This stone was erected in 1863–64 by the following named Trustees of the Lower Dublin Academy, as a mark of respect to the memory of the originator of the School. Benjamin Crispin, George W. Holme, Isaac Pierson, George Fox, Henry Dewees, Samuel Willits, Charles T. Harrison, George Wagner, Alfred Enoch, Thomas Shalcross, Firman D. Holme.

The man so commemorated is said to have selected the site himself. One may well believe that he frequented the spot in life, looking about him at his beloved plantation, and, as far as he could see, at the vast tracts of rolling land that he had surveyed or caused to be surveyed and had mapped for "The Governour." Far away to the southwest, where Delaware turns sharply south from its southwesterly course, lay the city whose "portraiture" he had drawn before it was laid down in the two-mile span of rich Pennsylvania earth between the Delaware and the Schuylkill. The prospect was not unlike that of his native northern Lancashire, nor was the quality of the man much different from that of the generations of yeomen from whom he sprung.

Thomas Holme had come a long way from his early haunts. He had

fought in three wars and had engaged in allegedly peaceful protests; he had won and lost prestige and property; he had suffered still more personal defeats and disappointments. With all his faults and frustrations, he had contributed to the planting of a new land. He died and was buried on his hilltop. His work remains, an ineradicable part of Pennsylvania history.

An attempt has been made in the following pages to set in this history a "portraiture" of Thomas Holme himself, who remained throughout the ups and downs of the more than quarter-century of their friendship, not subserviently but militantly loyally, "The Governour's Man."