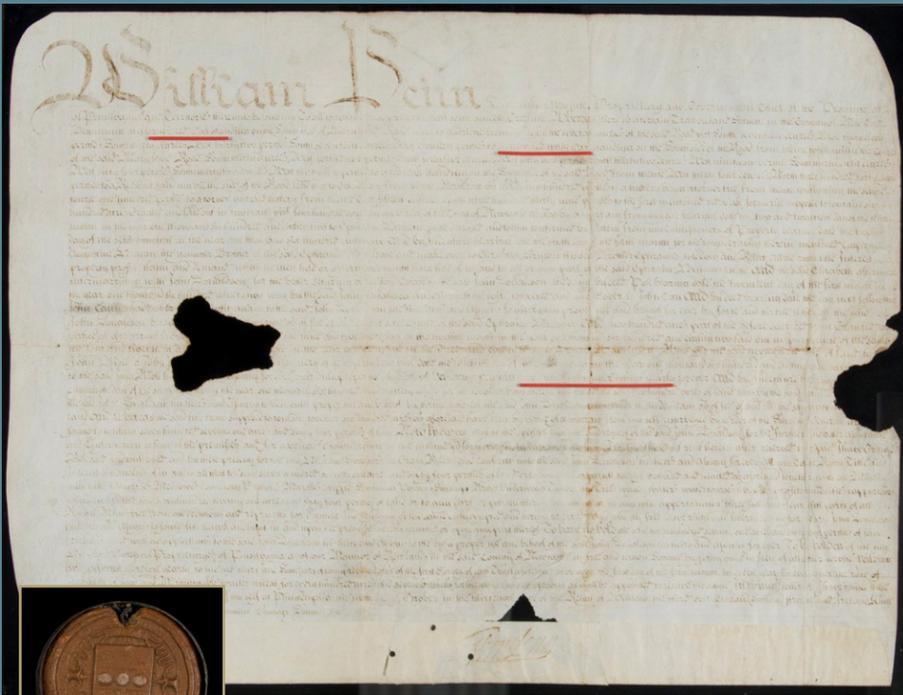


FOCUS

August 2011

Ten historic documents
Delaware Public Archives (Dover, DE)



Above: 1701 land deed signed by William Penn, before treatment / Left: Penn's royal seal / Top right: CCAHA Executive Director Ingrid Bogel and Delaware State Archivist Stephen Marz examine the ten historic documents after their arrival at CCAHA



Clayton Douglass Buck, who served as governor of Delaware from 1929 to 1937 and United States senator from 1943 to 1949, lived his entire life on a beautiful estate in New Castle known as Buena Vista. He was not the first statesman to own the property, as John M. Clayton, who built the house between 1845 and 1847, had been a United States senator and then Secretary of State under President Zachary Taylor. Buck and his family honored the land's distinguished history by displaying its original deed, dated 1701 and featuring William Penn's signature and royal seal, in their home.

This past May, Buck's grandchildren donated the deed and several other historic documents—including 19th-century land deeds passing Buena Vista from one owner to the next; boundary surveys; and the 1849 commission of Clayton as Secretary of State—to the State of Delaware. Buck had left instructions in his will for Buena Vista to be sold (for one dollar) to the State, which now uses the house and grounds as a conference and event facility. In keeping with the State's goal of making important historic documents and other cultural treasures accessible to the public, the deed and other donated documents will once again hang in the Buena Vista house.

First, however, they will receive conservation treatment at the Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts (CCAHA). In the case of the 1701 deed, CCAHA conservation staff will consolidate insecure ink on the parchment using dilute gelatin. They will remove flyspecks and glassine tapes and reduce adhesive residue. Next, they will relax the parchment between dampened sheets and reduce planar distortion by drying it on the suction table, which restrains the document so that it dries as flat as possible. Finally, CCAHA staff will mend tears and losses.

Some of the other documents will receive similar courses of treatment; for others, treatment steps will differ depending on the document's condition and whether it is parchment or paper. After treatment, each document will be placed in a sealed package, which protects against pollutants and environmental changes, and each will receive a new frame for safe display at Buena Vista.