

Penn's Treaty with the Indians, n.d.

Edward Hicks, 1780 – 1849

oil on canvas

Collection of the Mercer Museum of the Bucks County Historical Society.



Biography

Edward Hicks was born in 1780 in Langhorne, Pennsylvania. His mother died when he was an infant, so he was sent to live with family friends named the Twinings. He was lovingly raised in their home with their four daughters. The Twinings were Quakers.

As a young boy Edward Hicks became an apprentice to a carriage maker, and decorated coaches, signs, and different kinds of furniture and household objects. As an adult, he spent a lot of time preaching throughout Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and as far away as Canada and Virginia, to share the knowledge and insights of his Quaker faith with others. He didn't make much money preaching, so he began painting in order to earn "an honest living." For him, painting was a way to find spiritual peace and to share that peace with his viewers. He painted in oil on wood or canvas. He liked to paint scenes from the *Bible*, stories from history, and big views of Bucks County farm life. He painted George Washington Crossing the Delaware, the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and the Quaker William Penn signing a treaty with the Indians. He painted animals and people with realistic detail, but his use of perspective often seemed awkward. This is probably because he never received formal art training. He taught himself to paint the way many painters of his time learned, by copying paintings and prints made by other, more trained, artists. Because Hicks taught himself how to paint, today we call him a naïve painter.

Edward Hicks is most widely known as the painter of *Peaceable Kingdom*. He painted more than one hundred different images of this famous story from the Book of Isaiah in the *Bible*. You may recognize the story of a world in which "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid." This story was a favorite among the Quakers because it told about a future world where animals and people lived together peacefully. His *Peaceable Kingdom* paintings are some of the most beloved in American art.

Edward Hicks died in 1849.

What is an apprentice?

An apprentice is person who learns an art, a craft or occupation from one or more masters of the kind of art they would like to learn. In the arts, a master is an artist whose teachings and skills are regarded as excellent, and worthy of study. An



apprenticeship is a learning situation in which a master artist teaches skills to a student.

For thousands of years, people have been passing skills down from one generation to another in some form of apprenticeship. Four thousand years ago, the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi provided that artisans teach their crafts to youth. The records of Egypt, Greece, and Rome from earliest times reveal that skills were still being passed on in this fashion. When youth in olden days achieved the status of craft workers, they became important members of society. The status given the craft worker was well placed.

In Europe from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, being an apprentice was the only way to learn a profession or skill. During this period in history, there were no formal art schools like there are today. Apprentices were bound body and soul to their masters. They lived in their master's house, were dependent upon their master for handouts of food, a little clothing, or a few uncertain shillings.

The apprentice tradition came to the United States with the colonists. American patriot Paul Revere was a member of a famous family of silversmiths. Paul and his younger brother, Thomas, learned their craft from their father. In turn, two of Paul's sons served apprenticeships in the family's Boston shop. Paul Revere's skill in crafting silver can still be appreciated today. During his lifetime, he produced church silver, flagons, christening bowls, tankards, cups, spoons, tea sets, and trays.

He also became a coppersmith and cast church bells that may still be heard in New England cities. He founded the American copper and brass industry when, in 1802 at the age of 67, he set up in Canton, Massachusetts, the first copper-rolling mill. This mill remained in operation under its original name for 100 years. Later the business became part of the present-day Revere Copper and Brass Co. In many of the plants of this company, apprenticeship programs in the metalworking trades are conducted today.

A famous contemporary of Paul Revere — Benjamin Franklin — was indentured at the age of 12 to his elder brother, James. Their father paid James 10 pounds to teach the printing art to Benjamin and to pay for Benjamin's food, lodging, and other "necessaries." The indenture provisions were especially generous for those days. They specified that Benjamin was to receive a journeyman's wage in the last year of his apprenticeship just before he became 21 years old — if he remained on the job that long. Moreover, when the precocious Benjamin was 15 years old, he arranged for a cash payment for his food. This was a big financial advantage to him because he had become a vegetarian and found vegetables and fruit cheaper than meat. Out of his savings he was able to buy books.

Apprentices learned trades including leatherwork, bricklaying, carpentry, ceramics, basketry, bookbinding, printing and weaving textiles. In more modern times apprentices studied railroad building and automobile manufacturing.



Today, industrial companies host apprenticeships for men and women in professions including machinists, plumbers, computer operators, masonry, dental laboratory technicians, tool and dye makers, electricians, drafters, electronic technicians, operating engineers and maintenance mechanics. There are many laws in place regulating the fair treatment and certification of apprentices throughout the world.

In addition, many apprenticeship programs continue today throughout the world for the study of traditional arts and crafts including specific to a particular folk group or ethnic community. For example, in the state of Utah there is an active apprenticeship program with the aim of passing on Navajo traditions. In this program, an apprenticeship is not a class or workshop, but a chance for a highly skilled traditional Navajo artist to pass on his or her knowledge to another. Usually the master artist has only one or two apprentices at a time. They work together, one-on-one, so that the apprentice can learn as much as possible. The master artist and the apprentice may meet together every day, every week or just occasionally. The quote below will give you a sense of how important these programs remain as ways to preserve traditions that might otherwise be lost.

*“My Dad wants to tell you and the Utah Arts Council, thank you,
for your dedication in preserving heritage stories.
Because they represent who we are and if we don't share (and pass it on)
and have our young people learn them and know the stories,
we become a lost people.”*

Lucille Mescale Hunt, Navajo Storyteller

What are the men in the funny hats doing?

In this painting Edward Hicks has included an important scene from American history. You are looking at William Penn making a treaty with the Delaware Indians. William Penn is the chubby man in the gray suit with outstretched arms in the foreground of the painting. The other men standing with William Penn on the right side of the painting are his friends. William Penn was an English Quaker who founded the state of Pennsylvania, or “Penn’s Woods.” He wanted to create a safe place for his Quaker community in the new world because they were persecuted in England for their religious beliefs.

In keeping with his Quaker faith, Penn felt it important to maintain peaceful relations with the American Indian population by treating them with respect. In 1682 Penn took it upon himself to bargain with the Delaware Indians to purchase their land. He would add this land to the land given to him by the King of England to make present-day Pennsylvania. In this painting, Penn and the Indians stand under the Treaty Elm. The Treaty Elm depicted in *Penn’s Treaty with the Indians* stood on Founders Green at Haverford College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It eventually got Dutch Elm disease and died. It was thought that William Penn made his treaty with the Indians under this tree at Shackamaxon on the Delaware River.



In the painting, the Quakers are showing the Delaware Indians a chest of jewels and a bolt of fabric while other settlers bring more gifts from a boat at the shoreline. Why do you think the Indians would be interested in jewels and fabric? What else do you think might be in the chests the settlers are bringing to shore? Do you think the trade Penn was making with the Indians was fair?

Unfortunately, as more Europeans came to Pennsylvania over the next hundred years, relations with American Indians in Pennsylvania became hostile. However, the Quakers continued to have a respectful relationship with the American Indians, and they continue to have a respectful relationship with Indians to this day.

Are those Indians?

Yes, William Penn and his colonist friends are depicted here offering goods to Lenni Lenape Indians at Shackamaxon on the Delaware River. The name Delaware was given to the people who lived along the Delaware River, and the river in turn was named after Lord de la Warr, the governor of the Jamestown colony. The name Delaware later came to be applied to almost all Lenape people.

Lenni Lenape Indians are part of the Algonquian family, a Woodland Indian tribe. Lenapi is pronounced len-NAH-pay. It means "The People." The Lenape Indians were among the first Indians to come in contact with the Europeans (Dutch, English, & Swedish) in the early 1600s. They were known for their ability to keep peace with the colonists, and because of this they were called the "Grandfather" tribe. They also had a reputation for being fierce warriors in their relationships with other Indian tribes.

In the words of modern-day Lenni Lenape people: "Many of the early treaties and land sales we signed with the Europeans were in our people's minds more like leases. The early Delaware had no idea that land was something that could be sold. The land belonged to the Creator, and the Lenape people were only using it to shelter and feed their people. When the poor, bedraggled people got off their ships after the long voyage and needed a place to live we shared the land with them. They gave us a few token gifts for our people's kindness, but in the mind of the Europeans these gifts were actually the purchase price for the land. Our Delaware people signed the first Indian treaty with the newly formed United States Government on September 17, 1778. Nevertheless, through war and peace, our ancestors had to continue to give up their lands and move westward (first to Ohio, then to Indiana, Missouri, Kansas, and finally, Indian Territory, now Oklahoma)."

Did William Penn really meet with the Indians like I see it here?

Edward Hicks has created an imaginary setting for the characters in this story. This painting is painted realistically. That means you can tell it is people, a tree, some boats and a big house. But Edward Hicks meant for the painting to tell a symbolic story about peace – what might have happened and how it might have



looked when Penn was making peace with the Indians.

For Hicks, a Quaker himself, the message of peace was a very important one. To convey his message of what a "peaceable kingdom" might look like in *Penn's Treaty*, Hicks has broken the historical event down into its most basic elements.

In this painting, shown below, Hicks uses animals of all different kinds to show how anyone and anything could get along in a perfect, peaceful world. There is a lion in the painting the artist is making. What other animals do you see? Edward Hicks is most widely known as the painter of *Peaceable Kingdom*. He painted more than one hundred different images of this famous story from the Book of Isaiah in the Bible. About fifty of them still survive today. They were usually given as gifts or painted for relatives, neighbors, and friends who commissioned them. This story was a favorite among the Quakers because it told about a future world where animals and people live together peacefully. Sometimes he showed beautiful sunrises to symbolize the new world coming. His *Peaceable Kingdom* paintings are some of the most beloved in American art.

Look at the painting carefully. Do you see parallels between the animals in *The Peaceable Kingdom* and the people in *Penn's Treaty with the Indians*?

This painting looks familiar to me. Is it the only one like it in the world?

There are many versions of the painting *Penn's Treaty with the Indians*. This is an important event in American history, and since at that time artists did not have a camera to record the event, the only way to show what it might have looked like was to create a painting (or drawing or print) of the scene.

Two artists who painted the scene of William Penn with the Indians are Edward Hicks and Benjamin West. Hicks copied the scene of *Penn's Treaty with the Indians* from a painting by the American artist Benjamin West that pays tribute to the same event. Hick's painting is original. He painted it entirely by himself using oil paint on canvas. He did not trace West's painting, and he could not photograph it or scan it or Xerox it (those things hadn't been invented yet!). But he did borrow the idea completely from West. So, do you think it is an original work of art? Do you know of other famous paintings that are also copied versions of other paintings?

Benjamin West was a Quaker born near Philadelphia. He showed a lot of natural art ability as a child, although at first his conservative parents were against the idea. He showed much talent at an early age, and in 1760 a group of American merchants sent him to Rome to study art. He spent three years there, studying classical art and being influenced by large-scale history paintings. He returned to London and started an art school. His studio in London was the first American Art School, and it attracted many Americans to London to study art. West ran the studio from 1763 until 1820. West's reputation as a painter was sometimes great and other times rather poor. He was, however, famous and honored in his lifetime.



Look at Benjamin West's version of *Penn's Treaty with the Indians* at www.hsp.org. Now look at an engraving by J.C. Armytage, at <http://www.penntratymuseum.org>, after Benjamin West. Can you find William Penn? The Lenape Indians? The colonists? What other details has West included that Hicks also used?

Now look at the three works of art side by side. List the differences and similarities you notice in the works.

West was a trained painter with a European education. As you know, Hicks was a naïve painter; that is, he was self-taught, he had no formal art training. Can you see qualities in these paintings that show the difference between the art training both men received?

Learn More

Write about peace, guided by the activity below.

To read detailed accounts of the Book of Isaiah in the *Bible*, take a modern look at ancient text at www.bible.org.

The apprentice system throughout history is fascinating. Learn more at www.britannica.com.

Read more about artists and their training in the book *Artists and Artisans* by Irene M. Franck and David M. Brownstone, at www.amazon.com.

Related Images

Look at several versions of *Penn's Treaty* on the website of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at www.hsp.org.

J.C. Armytage was an English engraver, known for his steel engravings of landscapes, portraits and historical and military scenes. Look at many examples of his work at the National Library of Australia in Canberra, Australia, at www.nla.gov.au.

Look at the Visions of Peace collection of children's art on the web at www.celebratingpeace.com.

Related Links

For an excellent overview of the significance of William Penn, Penn's Treaty, the Lenni Lenape Indians and more, visit the website of the Penn Treaty Park, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Learn more at www.penntratypark.org. Better yet, visit the Penn Treaty Museum. For details, look at



www.penntratymuseum.org.

Visit the Lenni Lenape Historical Society in Allentown, Pennsylvania,
www.lenapeindians.com.

Read more about William Penn at www.quaker.org.

The version of Penn's Treaty on display at the Michener is on loan from the Mercer Museum of the Bucks County Historical Society at
www.mercermuseum.org.

Learn more about Quakers and the Quaker religion at www.quakerinfo.org.

