

Dent

The origin of this family name is English. The name denotes one who came from Dent (hills) in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

Armes: Or, on a bend, sable three lozenges erminois. (See Dent gravestone in St. Andrews Episcopal cemetery, St. Mary's County.

The proving of English parentage of American settlers is most difficult and through the unscrupulousness of early as well as later genealogists many flagrant errors have been made. Most of what has been written seems to bear some credence.

There is a market town on the bends of the river Dee in West Riding, Yorkshire named Dent. It is generally believed that the family derived its name from the town.

About 1318 Willielmus filius Roberti de Dent deeded land in the village of Werthern for the use of the knights Templar. It later reverted to the Dent family and according to the Historical and Archeological Journal of Yorkshire it was still held by descendents in 1889. A list of freemen of Yorkshire in 1365 records the name of Willielmus de Dent, pacemaker. In 1365 Earle de Dent was granted the armes of the family at Yorkshire. In addition it can be stated that the following has been proved with absolute certainty.

Peter Dent, naturalist and professor of Cambridge University recorded in 1684 the background of his family in Cambridgeshire Pedigrees in the Heralds Collage of London, England.

William Fenwick (a contemporary of King Henry VII) married Joane Musgrave who was coheirress with her brother Thomas, Lord of Ryall and Heaton. They had at least one son, Sir John Fenwyke of Ryall and later Knight and Lord of Wallington. The name of his wife is not known. Sir John had at least one son, John who married Joane Claving of Callaley County, Northumberland. Their son Sir Roger Fenwyck of Wallington and Mydelton was of an old family whose escapades with and against the Dukes of Northumberland made very thrilling history when the Percys and other border families were opposing the Kings. Roger married Dorothy Widdrington the daughter of Sir John. They had at least three children, two sons William and Raffé and one daughter Ann who married Roger Dent, born circa 1500.

Earlier Fenwicks are as follows:

Robert de Fenwick lived at Ville de Fenwick in 1190 and 1230.

Thomas Fenwick possessed the Manor Capheton.

Sir Thomas Fenwick was Knight of Fenwick Manor.

Sir John Fenwick was also Knight of Fenwick Manor.

He was knighted in the French war by Henry V and given the motto "perit ut Vivat" and "Trouble Ville" in Normandy. In this generation Fenwick Towers descended to Sir John's eldest brother Sir Alan de Fenwick.

John Fenwick of "Newburne Hall".

Sir Roger Fenwick, Constable of Newcastle and Squire of the body to King Henry VII, a brother or father of William.

Roger Dent and Ann Fenwyck had George, Rawfe, Thomas, William, a second George, Robert, Richard and Katherine. William had his pedigree recoded at the Visitation of Yorkshire in 1561. He was sheriff of Newcastle and Mayor in 1562. Earlier in 1548 he had purchased considerable monastic possessions in Newcastle Bourbe and other places. In 1582 he and his son William Dent conveyed the priory of St. Michael de Wall Knoll to trustee for the corporation of that town. It is not known which child of Roger and Ann was the father of the last known ancestor of the American immigrants.

James Dent of Ormseby was closely related to Roger Dente of Newcastell who used the same coat of armes of the Dents of Ormseby, York. James Dent was living in 1580. His wife's identity is not known. He had at least one son Peter who died in 1642. Peter had a son named Peter Dent of Gisboro who in 1674 married Margaret Nicholson, daughter of John Nicholson, Minister of Hutton Cranswick, York.

Peter and Margaret were the parents of a third generation Peter who married Elizabeth Pleys, daughter of John Pleys of Little Ebersden, Cambridge. Thomas Dent who died in Maryland (incorrectly located in the West Indies); William of Gisboro who is believed to be Captain John Dent's father; Thomas and George were elder brothers of Peter.

Perhaps no family of Southern Maryland is better known than the Dents. In the formative days of the Province it produced some of the most prominent and outstanding colonial subjects of Lord Baltimore and the Crown. The early members were conspicuous for their public services.

On May 26, 1662-63 Thomas Dent, born circa 1630 in Gisborough, Yorkshire appeared at the land office in St. Mary's City and proved rights to land. "Came Thomas Dent of St. Mary's County, Gentleman and proved his rights to 600 acres it being due him for transporting 12 persons (including John Dent) into the Province to inhabit."

On March 26, 1673 he again entered his rights for John Dent, four others and himself for land due him. Therefore the Surveyor General issued a warrant "to lay out for Thomas Dent 300 acres return 30, September next".

It is noted here that He twice proved headrights for a John Dent. It seems reasonable to believe that both were for one and the same man. Settlers returning to England for a temporary period were not infrequent. At least one of these John Dents was certainly the Captain John Dent who later appeared as an important personage in St. Mary's County.

It has been claimed that Thomas and John were brothers. No facts have been found to establish that relationship. The two led separate lives in the province and were not connected in business nor were there any matrimonial alliances between the two families. John was undoubtedly the son of Thomas' brother William. He was too old to be the son of Peter Dent of Cambridge or of the even younger brother George. Peter was the name of the sons of both Thomas and John thereby giving much credence that both settlers were descended from the

second and third Peter Dent of Gisboro.

Further, a memorial plaque to the Reverend Hatch Dent which is installed in the Dent Chapel at Charlotte Hall Military Academy reads as follows: "Reverend Hatch Dent, son of Hatch and grandson of Captain John Dent of Yorkshire, England, and one of the early settlers of Maryland was born May 1757 and died December 30, 1799. Hatch was an honored officer in the army of the Revolution of 1776 and an eminent teacher and Minister of the Church, ordained by Bishop Seabury in 1785".

The fact that Judge Thomas Dent came from Gisborough in Yorkshire is authenticated. One of his land patents was named "Gisborough". The name comes from a town and parish situated in North Riding about 6 miles northwest of Ornesby. The site is the location of the more ancient estates of the forebears of Thomas and John Dent.

Captain John Dent, Gentleman born 1645/1651, died 1712, possibly settled in Maryland as early as 1658 but probably not before 1662. He was claimed as a headright by his (uncle?), Thomas in 1663. John returned to England and came back to Maryland in 1773 where his relative Thomas claimed headrights for him a second time for additional land. There are definite indications that John married in England and left a wife and children there. His first wife is reputed to be Mary Schercliffe, born 1647, daughter of John Schercliffe and Anne Spinke. John and Mary's children were Peter and Abigail.

Captain John Dent had a warrant for a tract named "Promise" which was surveyed by Richard Edelen on September 26, 1673, and was located adjacent to "Baker's Rest" and the lands of Edward Swann and Richard Marshall

An exact quotation from the Land Office liber 18 folio 193. "Cecilius, Absolute Lord and Proprietor of the Province of Maryland and Avalon, Lord Baron of Baltimore etc.- To all persons to whom these presents shall come - greetings in our Lord God Everlasting. Know you that we for and in consideration that John Dent of Charles County in our said Province of Maryland hath due unto him 140 acres of land within our said Province, 40 acres due unto him for remainder of a warrant for 200 acres to him formerly granted and 100 acres by assignment from Giles Wilson and Nicholas Clemens for their time of service performed within our said Province as appeared upon record 1674.

Witness: Son Charles Calvert Esquire, our Captain General and chief
Governour of the Province.

A careful reading will show that Wilson and Clemens had been indentured servants of John Dent and had assigned their land rights to him.

John is believed to have been a widower at the time of his second entry into Maryland. Two of his children by his first wife, Peter and Abigail are named in his will. Peter was still living outside the Province in England when John died. Abigail is believed to have come to Maryland in 1677 when John Harris proved rights for 50 acres of land for the transportation of Abigail Dent.

Before 1678 John married Mary Hatch, daughter of John Hatch who was an employee of the William Cloberry Company and associate, employee or servant of William Claiborne who managed the company's interests on Kent Island at the site of the very first English settlement in Maryland.

John Dent, like his father-in-law, and unlike his relative Thomas Dent seems to have been a liberal. He escaped impeachment during the Fendall Rebellion despite indications that he was involved in it. During Council investigations on October 12, 1682, Thomas Perry of St. Mary's County made several references to him. Perry stated "if he (Dent) declared all that he knew against Fendall and which he (Dent) heard Fendall say at his (Dent's) father-in-law's (Hatch's) funeral he could have handed him". He was also a witness against Fendall in 1682.

In the trial of Captain Fendall, a onetime Governor of the Province John Dent was summoned by the Prosecution. On the witness stand he related how quite recently he had met with Captain Fendall "who after mutual salutations passed between them asked him how he did and told him he was glad to see him". Then according to Dent the following conversation ensued:

Fendall: What news?

Dent: "I live in the forest, where we have little or no news stirring.

Fendall: What? Do you hear no news of the Indians and the Papists joining with the Senaca Indians? Have you not heard of a track of two Indians lately seen in the snow? Do you not hear what my Lord has done?

Dent:" No,What is it ?"

Captain Fendall then recounted how he had been forced "to flye his house" for fear that Calvert might arrest him. In order to prevent the conspiracy between the Catholics and the Indians, Fendall said he thought it would be a good idea to seize the Proprietor and all his officials. At the end of their talk together, Dent said that he had told Fendall that his remarks were "plain rebellion and so we parted". William Fendall heard Dent make this last remark and asked why? Since he was Justice of the Peace he had not at once notified the proprietor of these treasonable words. As a matter of fact, continued Fendall, Dent himself had told him of the alleged plot, "and how Dent has inverted the scene and to save himself throws it upon me". Fendall was later found guilty and fined 40,000 pounds of tobacco.

John Dent became one of the leading planters in Maryland and held many offices of trust under the Lord Proprietor. In 1670 he and James Walker were appointed by the court to appraise the estate of Walter Beane. On November 9, 1673 he patented "Promise (see above) In 1674 he patented another 60 acres in Chaptico Hundred in St. Mary's county which became his dwelling plantation named "Barnaby". Before his death he had accumulated by purchase or inheritance an estate in excess of 3000 acres.

On August 13, 1678 John Dent and his wife appointed Richard Edelin their attorney to convey the right and title of "Promise" to Richard Ashman of Charles County.

John was a commissioner and Justice of the Peace for St. Mary's County in 1679, 1680, 1684 and 1685. He served in the war against the Indians at Susquehanna Fort in 1681. In November 1683 he was commissioned to purchase land for, and to lay out towns for the advancement of trade in St. Mary's County. In 1689 he was commissioned to raise a troop of horse from Chaptico Hundred and was made a Captain at a session of the General Assembly. In 1689 he signed a petition to Their Majesties William and Mary and identified himself as "a dutiful and loyal Protestant subject". In 1690 John Harrison of Charles County named John Dent executor of his will and principal heir.

The will on page 56, Md. calendar of wills reads as follows:

John Dent of St. Mary's County executor and residuary legatee of the estate of John Harrison of Charles County, dated 5 December 1690, probated 30 May 1705, real and personable property including "Harrisons Adventure" and, 215 acres "Providence". In event of sale of latter not being confirmed to Edward Greenhalge it is devised to Mr. Dent as also all land in Correctoman, Virginia 3.483 (acres ?) Dent in the administration of this estate showed that Harrison removed to Virginia and had no personal estate in Maryland.

In 1691 he was appointed a member of the Kings Council by King William. In 1692 John Dent became one of the first vestrymen of the newly organized of King and Queen Parish incorporated by William and Mary from the parish land bordering the eastern bank of the Wicomico river in Chaptico Hundred. In 1693 he was referred to as Captain of the Proprietary Forces and was designated to regulate military affairs in Chaptico Hundred in 1694. He was Justice of the Quorum and vestryman of King and Queen Parish in 1694.

On November 24, 1698 the vestry of All Faiths Church ordered the Parish to purchase 50 acres of land from Captain John Dent for 25 pounds. This land "near a fountain of healing waters" is the site of the Charlotte Hall Military Academy.

John Dent had six children by Mary Hatch. His will dated September 25, 1711 was admitted to probate in St. Mary's County on May 5, 1712 as follows:

To son John and heirs 200 acres "Cumberson"; 60 acres "Barnaby"; 300 acres "Reading"; 100 acres "Evans Addition"; house and lot at Newporttowne; 215 acres "Providence"; 200 acres "Pearly Progress"; 250 acres "Harrison's Adventure" and all land given testator by will of John Harrison excepting 50 acres "Haphazard" (total 1325)

To son George and heirs 50 acres 'Haphazard" and 324 acres "Greenstone Point"

To daughter Mary and heirs "Ashman's Freehold"

To daughter Lydia and heirs 100 acres "St. Anne's"

To daughter Anna and heirs "St. Stevens" and 200 acres "Coldman" and 100 acre "Evan's Reserve"

To daughter Abigail (by his English wife) and heirs 136 acres "Loves Adventure"

To daughter Christina and heirs 331 acres "Coldwells"; 25 acres bought out of "Trentforke"; 200 acres of "Horsorange". Should said daughter die without issue that land is to revert to the heirs of the testator.

In the event son Peter by his English wife coming in to the Province to settle he is

to have a portion of lands devised to son John, also part of “Horserange” and half of “Freestone Point”
To wife - personality and joint executrix with son John

An inventory of John’s personal estate was taken on May 5, 1712 with George Dent and Samuel Turner signing as nearest of kin. His widow and son John rendered an account to the Court on April 5, 1713 when all children were declared of age. Mary Hatch Dent died intestate during 1726 at an advanced age. The inventory of her personal estate was taken June 2, 1726 with George Dent and Samuel Turner signing as kinsmen.

George Dent a son of John Dent and Mary Hatch was born sometime after 1676 in Chaptico Hundred. He married twice. His first wife was Elizabeth, daughter of George Short, planter, who died testate in Charles County. By his will dated October 17, 1718 and proved March 4, 17019/20 he devised “Simpson’s Supply” to his daughter Elizabeth Dent and one half interest in the unnamed dwelling plantation (at the demise of his widow Anne) and 60 acres ‘Smith’s Purchase” if brother Daniel Short died without heirs.

George Dent’s second wife was Mary Boarman, daughter of Colonel William Boarman of Boarman’s Manor. They had issue as follows:

John, George, Mary, Lydia, Charity, Peter, Thomas and William.
The will of George Sr. was dated April 5, 1746 and probated June 7, 1750. Son John received 100 acres. Son George, High Sheriff of Charles County 1754/55, received 50 acres and the uninventoried remainder was divided among Peter, Thomas and William. Various articles of personal property and Negroes were bequeathed to his daughters.

Thomas Dent son of George and Mary Boarman was born about 1730 in St. Mary’s County. According to family tradition he married first Elizabeth Edwards of St. Mary’s County who is believed to be the mother of all of the following:

George, Born December 22, 1756 who married Margaret Smoot.
Henry, who married Charity Cox and
Thomas, who married Rebecca Chappalear.

On August 11, 1777 Thomas Sr. purchased from kinsman John Dent a portion of “Dent’s Inheritance”. He was married a second time to Mary Ann Hancock (born 1734) on December 18, 1781. He died intestate prior to 1790. In the latter year widow Mary was the head of a family in St. Mary’s County with two males over 16 years old and five females (Mary Ann, Chleo, Rebecca, Elizabeth and herself).

Captain George, son of Thomas and Elizabeth Edwards was born December 21, 1756 in All Faith’s Parish. At the beginning of the Revolutionary War he was a student at Charlotte Hall when he and other boys formed a Militia Company under Captain Sothoron. On May 25, 1778 he enlisted in the Maryland Line under Captain Carberry. George enlisted with his three cousins Benjamin, Edward and Hatch Dent. With 70 other volunteers he was marched by Sergeant King to Annapolis. After a few days they embarked for the head of the Elk River. Upon arrival Lt. James took command and marched them to headquarters in New Jersey.

The unit heard the firing in the distance during the battle of Monmouth, but they failed to reach the battlefield in time for combat. While in New Jersey he was transferred with two others to Captain John Davidson's Company of the Second Maryland Regiment in order to be with friends Richard Hall and Henry Spalding. His new Company marched to White Plains where they had frequent skirmishes with the British and then marched with a detachment to strengthen the Fort at West Point. Private George Dent was discharged April 3, 1779. Upon his return to St. Mary's he volunteered under Captain Mills to guard the coast in the lower part of the county for two months. He also served under Lt. Edwards when his unit was stationed at Llewellyn's warehouse to guard the Potomac shore for two weeks. He was taken ill and prevented him from being present with his Company for the British defeat at Yorktown.

In 1818 upon his application for a pension he stated that he had received a discharge at Middlebrook, New Jersey in April or May 1779 from Captain Davidson. About one mile from camp he and his comrades met General Baron deKalb. "He accosted us in the following manner: Where are you going soldiers? I being ahead told him we are going home. He asked me if we had been discharged. I told him we had and I gave him my discharge to look at. While looking at it, his horse threw its head down which caused the discharge to be torn into pieces. He remarked that it would answer and I bought it home with me but it has long since been lost or mislaid" George Dent further stated that he was known to three fourths of the respectful men of his county and referred to the Reverend John Claxton the Rector of his Parish church for character.

About 1790 George married Elizabeth Temperance Mills (born about 1767 according to Newman or 1758 according to Mackenzie) and died after November 14, 1839 when she made her will, probated December 14, 1842. Their children were: William, Hezekiah, Mary Ann, Elizabeth, Elizabeth Temperance, Harriet, Charles, and George.

George Sr. purchased "Scegy" from Clement Dorsey of Charles County on August 22, 1807. He sold "Trent Fort" on December 18, 1809. In 1810 he petitioned the Court to perpetuate the boundaries of "Scegy" which lay at the door of the church of All Faith's Parish. His manor house "Urquhart's Gift" near St. Andrews church in St. Mary's county nine miles northeast of Leonardtown.

George died on October 15, 1842. His will dated November 14, 1849, probated December 14, 1842 by Thomas C. Dent, Enoch Hammett and John R. Lusby. The dwelling plantation "Urquhart's Gift" was bequeathed to his son William. Certain tracts were left to Hezekiah and Mary Ann and other bequests were made to the rest of the children.

Mary Ann Dent, born about 1800, married John Duke Jr. of Whitemarsh. Their license was dated February 10, 1824. Their children were: Susanna M., Mary Priscilla, George Dent, James Thomas, John Francis, and Elizabeth Ann.

References:

Early Settlers of Maryland - Skordas pp 131/32
New Dictionary of Family Names - Eldon C. Smith
Chronicles of St. Mary's Vol.2 No.10; Vol. 4 no.1 p 42
Register of Maryland's Heraldic Families Vol. 1 pp 139-144 and 402.

Maryland Calendar of Wills - Baldwin Vol.3 p 229; Vol. 2 p226
Tercentenary History of Maryland Vol. 2 p162
Charles County Gentry - Henry W. Newman pp 4-87
Archives of Maryland Vol. 1-7 per index
Colonial Families of America - George N. Mackenzie Vol.1 and 2 (re Duke)
Index of American Revolutionary War Pension Applicants
Captains and Mariners of Ancient Maryland p 642
Papers Relating to the Early History of Maryland, Genealogies of Members of the
Society of Colonial Wars in Maryland - Sebastian Streeter p 224
Flowering of the Maryland Palatinate H.W. Newman pp 130,165, 221, 285
Founding Of Maryland - M.P. Andrews p 249 and Chapter 12
Keidel's Colonial History of Catonsville p 48 MF 187 82K27P(?)
Armes - Dent gravestone in St. Andrews Episcopal cemetery, St. Mary's county.
There is great detail of Dents from 1318 to 1848 with a list of references retained in the Dent
folder in the files of James Codd at his residence.

Lineage of Mary Ann (Dent) Duke
William Dent of Gisboro, Yorkshire
Peter Dent wed Margaret Nicholson
Issue: Peter wed Elizabeth Pleys
: Thomas, died in Md. Born 1630 in Gisboro to Md May 26, 1662
: William of Gisboro, Yorkshire (Captain John Dent's father?)
: George
Captain John Dent, born 1645/1651 died 1712 (in Md. 1658? or 1662?) wed first Mary Shercliff
in England. Issue: Peter and Abigail. Wed second Mary Hatch before 1678. Issue: John, George,
(Will dated 4/5/1746)
Mary, Lydia, Anna, and Christina
Son George, born 1676+ wed first Elizabeth Short. Wed second Mary Boarman.
Issue: John, George, Mary, Lydia, Charity, Peter, Thomas and William.
Son Thomas, born circa 1730, wed first Elizabeth Edwards. Issue:
George, born 12/22/1756, wed first (circa 1790) Elizabeth Temperence
Mills, Issue: William, Henry, and Thomas. Wed second Mary Ann Hancock
George died 10/15/1842. Daughter Mary Ann, born about 1800 wed John Duke Jr. License
dated 2/10/1824 Issue: Susanna M, Mary Priscilla, George Dent, James Thomas, John Francis
and Elizabeth Ann.

MILLS

John Mills of Walmersley in the parish of Bury wed Sarah Gregory in the Parish of Ratclife at
Newhall 19 May 1656.
John Mills' son born 19 January, baptized 4 February 1657/58.
Charles son of John born 12 May, baptized 21 May 1682 in Bury, Lancashire.
Charles Mills aged 16 was bound to Mr. Johnath Leivsay for a period of eight years. On
September 25, 1699 He was transported on the "Concord" bound for Virginia or Maryland
December 7, 1699.
Peter Mills appraised livestock of William Brown July 26, 1666.
James Mills was located in St. Mary's County July 29, 1678.

William Mills was the overseer of the estate of Cuthbert Fenwick's widow Jane's Will dated November 24, 1660 and probated December 12, 1660.

James Mills appraised the will of Elinor Nevitt in St. Mary's County on August 4, 1725

Elizabeth Temperance Mills daughter of George Mills wed Captain George Dent, son of Thomas and Elizabeth Dent born about 1790.