THE MARYLAND DENTS

A Genealogical History of the Descendants of Judge Thomas Dent and Captain John Dent who settled early in the Province of Maryland

By

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FOREWORD

Harry Wright Newman is a recognized authority on genealogy and especially with respect to Maryland ancestry; therefore, I interested him in writing and publishing this book as a memento to those of my immediate family; first, because I remain the last of my generation and also I have much sentiment about those who have gone on to enjoy reward beyond.

Being orphaned at nine years, I was fortunate with my brother and two sisters to be offered love and a home by our Aunt, Mrs. Eva Gwynn Mushbach, widow of George A. Mushbach, and my Mother's sister, whose memory I shall ever cherish with gratitude for her unselfish devotion and guidance. Whatever I may have done or become largely stems from her.

I likewise owe much to my devoted wife, Edith Baily Dent, who now through nearly 45 years of married life has brought love, confidence and cooperation in enjoying and meeting daily problems. It has indeed been an inspiring and rewarding period for which I shall always be grateful.

Finally, our own children have matured and we are fortunate to have lived through their development stages and to see them definitely settled in their homes with their own children, who have already given promise of lives for accomplishment.

For all the blessings enumerated and many others, including relatives and valued friends, I am happy to record eternal appreciation.

Magruder Dent.
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JUDGE THOMAS DENT AND HIS DESCENDANTS
THE ENGLISH BACKGROUND

On the banks of the River Dee in West Riding of Yorkshire is a town called "Dent", the founding of which goes back to at least the 12th century, and thus originated the English family of that name. Four centuries later two members of this Yorkish family arrived in the Province of Maryland and without doubt established the most distinguished branch of that name in America.

Dent or Dente was the word for dale or a small valley in old Anglo-Saxon, so it is self evident that the patriarch of the family took his surname from the dale around the River Dee. At present Dent is a compact little town reasonably characteristic of the many villages of the Pennine dales. It is largely of 18th and 19th century buildings, except the Church which is considerably 15th century. The town was once of great importance in the hand-knitting industry, but its position in this respect and that of a market and industry has been largely surrendered to Serdbergh, a few miles away.

As the sons of the patriarch attached their Christian names to his with the de of the Normans, there developed a strong and prolific family which eventually wheeled a certain influence upon the economic and political life of the shire. They fought in all the battles of that period, taking side with this noble and that noble—sometimes losing and sometimes winning. They rose in statue and soon earned the titles of "Gent." and "Esq."

Several were knighted from time to time, especially during the War of the Roses, when North Britain for the most part displayed the Red Rose of the Lancastrians or adherents of Henry IV. In those ancient days when knighthood was in flower, only knighthood was bestowed for heroic exploits on the battlefield or at tournaments. As the Dent family rose in importance, it was armorialized by letters-patent and thus entitled to bear arms.

The patriarch selected a silver shield upon which he placed a bend and adorned it with three lozenges on which he placed dabs of ermine. Why he selected these charges and made the bend black and lozenges of ermine, records fail to relate, but it henceforth became the symbol and armorial bearings of the Yorkish House of Dent. It was the identical arms which was used by the early generations in Maryland and as a reverence for their heritage many members of the Dent family display it today. Unlike many family escutheons, the original Dent arms has undergone but few variances by cadet branches.
For their local pride and interest in the development of their native Yorkshire, the various members of the family did not mingle with the East Anglia and West County families. They were apparently satisfied with the fertile and pastoral scenes of their traditional environments of North Britain and intermarried with native Yorkshire families or the gentry houses of adjacent Durham and Northumberland.

While several branches of the Dent family appear in the Visitations of York in the sixteenth century, the herald somehow overlooked or failed to register the immediate branch of the Maryland emigrants. But it took an enterprising professor of natural sciences of Cambridge University, one Peter Dent, Gent., to record his pedigree in 1684, now a priceless document in the College of Arms, London.

Back in the late fourteen hundreds and early fifteen hundreds lived on James Dent, Gent., whose estate embraced “Ormesby”, a parish in Nortl Riding of York near Middlesborough and not far distant from Count Durham. He and his wife begot several children, some of whom distinguished themselves in battle, jurisprudence and the Church. Like all families some remained loyal to the ancient English faith, while other clung to the Roman ritual. For the most part, however, the Dents were adherents of the Reformation and followed the tenets of the Establishe Church of England.

James Dent, of Ormesby, Gent., had a son and heir, Peter, who inherited the parental estates in Ormesby. Of his children there was younger son, Peter, who acquired an estate which he called “Gisborough’. He married a daughter of the Rev. William Nicholson, of Hutton Cranwick, a parish in East Riding near Hull. One Margaret by name, and were they who became the parents of the learned professor of Cambridg and the father of Judge Thomas Dent, of Maryland, Esq.

Thomas Dent arrived at St. Mary’s City during the sixteen-fifties bring with him a young kinsman, John Dent. Immediately upon his arriv he became a leader in the political and social life of the Province and descendants in each succeeding generation followed his leadership. Tod while the Dent name is not associated so much with politics in Americ the descendants of Judge Thomas Dent play a conspicuous yet for the same part conservative role in the social life of America. John Dent, the kit man, became active in the Provincial Militia but was allied more with liberal group than Judge Thomas Dent.

The two branches remained quite apart socially, politically and econonically. In the early days there apparently were no intermarriages betw een them—but this was not so true in the Federal period or after
Revolution. Judge Thomas Dent received favours from the Lord Proprietary during his political ascendancy from the defeat of the Puritans in Maryland during 1658 to the overthrow of Lord Baltimore's rule by the radical Protestants in 1689. On the other hand Captain John Dent was involved in some spurious contrivances perhaps through the influence of his father-in-law, the one-time Puritan John Hatch of Kent Isle notoriety and had intrigued with the plotters to overthrow the rule of the Calverts. Judge Thomas Dent on the other hand, although he had passed on before the ascendency of William and Mary which encouraged the liberal Protestants to act against the rule of Lord Baltimore, received favours and honours from the Calverts up to the time of his death. Judge Thomas Dent, therefore, can be placed as a conservative and not a liberal like his compatriot, Captain John Dent.