On August 13, 1735, he acquired from Benjamin Posey, of Prince William County, Virginia, but late of Charles County, the son and heir of Humphrey Posey, the tract “Wilford” at Nanjemoy, of 100 acres. Anne Posey waived all dower rights before Magistrates Robert Hanson and Gustavus Brown.

It seems as if the entailed plantation, one-time in the possession of his parents, was leased at some date to Edward Spoore, of Great Britain, Mariner, during and for the natural life of Spoore. On April 9, 1737, Wm Dent secured from Spoore for a consideration of £12 all the latter’s interests in the lease. The plantation of 600 acres was described as the late dwelling of Thomas Dent, deceased, and which was then in the possession of the said William Dent.

His plantation like most pretentious estates along the Potomac maintained a wharf or private landing which was familiarly known as Dent’s Landing. At one time the inhabitants of Durham Parish petitioned the legislature to erect a warehouse at or near “William Dent’s Landing”. The petition was read and rejected at a session of May 1748, but two days later at a second reading it was passed. The expenditures for the construction was to be borne by the parishioners of the parish.

Before his death he rightfully retrieved much of the lost holding of his father, and at the time of his passing his plantations consisted of: “Smoothy” of 400 acres; “Tanyard” of 79 acres; “Dent’s Bottom” of 29 acres; “Wilford” of 100 acres; “Guyther” of 700 acres; “Remainder” of 126½ acres; and another portion of “Guyther” of 100 acres. It also developed that he was in partnership with a kinsman, Bayne Smallwood.

At his plantation on the Nanjemoy, hospitality and graceful living was certainly the order of the day, for the inventory of his wine cellar at his death contained 106 gallons of imported rum, 2 gallons of spirits [wiskey], 11 bottles of Mallago (sic) wine, and 2 gallons of Gonora.

From the inventory of his closet, the dressing room of that day, his wearing apparel was appraised at £29/2/−, not including 11 wiggs. Instead of silver buttons and buckles there were gold ones, a silver watch, and a discriminating library, with law books, Bible, Book of Common Prayer, Latin Dictionary, a number of volumes of the Tattler and the Spectator, all of which had been imported from the mother country. Another interesting item was “Fashionable Plate”, presumably china, appraised at £83/16/−.

His last will and testament was dated October 3, 1756, and was admitted to probate in Charles County on February 21, 1757. Several of his children were under age.
The administration bond of his widow and executrix, Ann Dent, was fixed at £4000, with Bayne Smallwood and Richard Harrison as her sureties.

To son Warren the entire landed estate within the Province but reserving to his wife Ann the use of "that tract of land I now live upon during her natural life"; in the event that his son died without lawful issue of his body then to his second son George, but in the event that both died without issue then to their sisters equally.

To son George the land in Stafford County, Virginia, of 200 acres; also all claims and reversion in the land formerly belonging to the testator's brother Thomas then in the possession of Mr. Cox who had married his brother's widow, and if the land were sold by his wife, then the money was to be placed with interest for son George until he attained majority. His son George also was bequeathed "a Speciality of Mr. John Graham of Virginia" for £145/8/9, and also the money due from Mr. John Muschett; also money due from Mr. Allen Morea of Virginia of about £80—all of which were to be placed in good securities with interest until his son attained majority.

To grandchildren William Jordon and Ann Jordon about 20,000 lbs. tob. then in their father's, John Jordon, hands, and to be used for the purchase of negroes for his said grandchildren.

To daughter Judith Chase £20 Sterling to purchase plate.

To wife Anne all negroes, stock, household goods and plantation utensils during life and at her decease to be divided among his children—Warren Dent, Mary Dent, Ann Dent, Rebecca Dent, and Grace Dent. She was to settled with Bayne Smallwood "all our company accounts" and proceeds from the partnership were to be used for the maintenance of his five small children.

Executrix—Wife Anne Dent.

His widow was living as late as June 1763, when she petitioned to perpetuate the boundaries of "Smoothy" also known as "Gouches Land".

Judge Warren Dent, their bachelor son, died in 1794. He bequeathed legacies to his nieces, Eleanor Dowie, Janett Dent and Mrs. Anne Harrison. All property from the estate of his late sister, Mrs. Grace Harrison, he left to his nephew William Dent Harrison and nieces Anne Warren Harrison and Rebecca Harrison. The plantation tract "Brawner's Chance", of 153 acres, was to be sold and the money applied to the education of his nephew, William Dent Harrison. He devised "Blue Plains" which had been purchased from John Maddox to his nephew, Robert Hanson Harrison, and the plantation where Samuel Ratcliffe dwelt to his niece Mrs. Ann Harrison. The residue of his estate was willed to his brother, George Dent, whom he named as executor.

His literary taste was quite examplified in the inventory of his estate,
when his library consisted the works of Pope, Milton, Catoes, Oldham’s poems, and copies of the Spectator and the Tattler.

CAPTAIN GEORGE DENT, GENT.⁴
17——1785

George Dent, son of George and Ann (Herbert) Dent, was born at his father’s plantation near Pope’s Creek, Charles County. His marriage with Eleanor Hawkins was the first union of a member with that early and affluent family of Southern Maryland. She was the daughter of Henry Holland Hawkins, Gent., by his wife, Jane or Johannah Greenfield, of Truman ancestry. Henry Holland Hawkins who had served in the Lower House of the Assembly from Charles County bequeathed his daughter, Eleanor, a legacy by his will of September 1746. At the probation five years later or on April 22, 1751, she was all likelihood Madam George Dent. George Dent Jr. was one of the bondsmen for the widow and approved the inventory as one of the kinsmen.

He inherited the river plantation of his father and from contemporary accounts his home was among the most pretentious dwellings which lined both shores of the Potomac but fell a prey to British raiders during the war.

Children of George and Eleanor (Hawkins) Dent

1. Eleanor Dent, spinster, died 1819.
2. Johannah Greenfield Dent.
4. Henry Dent, married ————. q.v.
5. George Dent married Elizabeth Yates. q.v.
7. Anne Dent married John Parham, M.D.

He represented his county of Charles in the General Assembly, taking his seat for the first time, it is believed, at the session of 1757-58. He was styled Captain, but it is believed that his military service occurred during the colonial period, inasmuch as his age in 1776 was rather against any vigorous participation as a Captain. He was High Sheriff for Charles in 1755.

He with others was made trustee of the “school to be erected for the counties of St. Mary’s, Charles and Prince Georges at the Cool Springs, in St. Mary’s County”, to be called Charlotte Hall, according to the Act of the Assembly, dated March 1774. At that time it is evident that the
leading planters of Maryland still retained a reverence for their English allegiance and perhaps the thought of separation was foreign in their minds. The first institution of academic learning in Southern Maryland received the name of Charlotte from Queen Charlotte of Mecklenbury-Strelitz, consort to George III. The school still functions and has trained many of Maryland's young men for successful careers.

In the early morning of April 1781, the British landed unexpectedly in Charles County and caused much damage including the burning of "the elegant seat of George Dent, Esq." Daniel Jenifer of Portobacco writing to Governor Lee at the time gave a very vivid picture of the destruction, as follows:

"By Col. Ware's desire (he being stationed at a place without the convenience of writing) I have to inform your excellency, that on Thursday evening two arm'd Schooners with a Cutter and some barges came above Cedar point. Landed some of their men at Mrs. Young's ferry and plundered her of her most valuable effects; at 2 o'clock Friday morning this town was alarm'd with an Acc't of two barges being at the warehouse, possibly they being apprised of an alarm being given was the means of preventing any damage being done either to the warehouse or town, from thence they proceeded to Walter Hanson Esq., pillaged himself and family of every kind of wearing apparel and other valuable effects and carried off his son Sam'l a Lieutenant of the State Regiment and exceedingly insulted the whole family. They then moved to the Rev'd Mr. Matthew's and committed the same devastations, and then removed farther down and showed an intention of landing at G. B. Causin Esq., which was prevented by the appearance of some militia who had march'd from this place; from thence they proceeded to the elegant seat of Geo. Dent Esq., and after plundered him retired; but being strongly reenforced with three additional barges; they again landed and reduced to ashes all the houses in the place save the corn house which happened to stand at a considerable distance. The evening of the same day some barges were sent into Nanjemoy Creek where they took out a vessel loaded with Indian corn and returned to their vessels without doing farther damage. Yesterday (as is supposed) upon observing some people busied in removing tobacco from Cedar Point warehouse, they immediately fell down and secured it; by lying three vessels in such manner as to subject any person opposing 'em to a cross fire from the vessels: However some few of the militia march'd down and attacked their sentries by which one of their men was killed. The situation of these few men being too dangerous they retired. Many were busied all night in getting the tobacco on board their vessels, which they perfectly effected, having only 2 hh'ds in the warehouse and a bulk of unprized tobacco belonging to the State. The armed schooners still lay at Cedar Point. Two ships and two other vessels are standing up the river; their object manifestly is plunder, and we are by no means prepared to prevent their designs taking effect; having an extent of coast but few arms and less amunition. I have it therefore in order from the Col to request your Ex'cy to forward some musquets powder and ball cartridge paper and if possible two or three
The Maryland Dents

small field p's well mounted upon light carriages. The militia seem ready and willing to act with vigour if supplied with the means”.

His last will and testament, dated September 12, 1785, was admitted for probation in Charles County on December 31, 1785. To his single daughters Eleanor, Jane and Johannah Greenfield he devised “Huckleberry Swamp” of 300 acres, but after their marriage or death it was to revert to his sons, Henry and George. To his married daughters unnamed he bequeathed negroes and other personalty. The landed estate was devised equally between his two sons, Henry and George, and the personal estate equally to his unmarried children.

His daughter, Eleanor, died a spinster in 1819, and made her sister, Jane Dent, the executrix. One-sixth of the value of her slaves was bequeathed to her niece, Elizabeth Dent Peyton, and one-sixth to her nephew, Johannis Greenfield Dent Storke, with the residuary going to the testatrix’s sister, Jane Dent. After the death of her sister, she requested that the children of her brothers and of her sister, Ann Parnham, receive a part of the negroes equal to what would be the legal distributive share of their respective parents. Furthermore, she requested that her sister, Jane, bequeath by her will or otherwise give to the children of her brothers, Henry Dent and George Dent, and her sister Ann Parnham respectively a portion of the negroes herein bequeathed to the said Jane.

Her sister, Jane Dent, survived her nearly eight years. Her will, dated January 25, 1825, was probated July 10, 1827, with her niece, Eleanor H. Dent, as the executrix. She devised her brother, George Dent, all right and title to a tract on the Potomac lying between the estates of her said brother and General Brent, known as “Jarbo” or “High Cliffs”. She also bequeathed him her negroes provided that her brother gave her nephew Johannis Storke the slave Aaron. To her sister, Anne Parnham, and her nieces Eleanor H. D. Parnham and Susan Parnham and nephew George Dent Parnham each a mourning ring.

To her nephew, Johannis Storke she willed a number of slaves then in the possession of her brother, George Dent, also one-half of her live stock and utensils on the plantation. Other nephews mentioned were Henry Ashton, Henry Dent Storke and George Dent Storke. Slaves were also bequeathed to her niece, Eleanor H. Dent.

General John Dent
1733-1809

John Dent, son of Colonel George Dent and Anne Harbert his wife, was born in Durham Parish, Charles County, about 1733. On February
20, 1753/4, he received certain legacies from his parents in consideration of a marriage contract about to be negotiated between him and Sarah Marshall. The ceremony occurred seven days later, no doubt at "Marshall Hall", as it is now known, on the Potomac facing Mt. Vernon. She was born in 1735, the daughter of Thomas Marshall, Gent., and Elizabeth Bishop his wife.

Of the children born to General Dent and his wife, three only survived:

1. Elizabeth Dent, born Dec. 6, 1754, died young.
3. George Dent, born about 1758, married Ann Magruder Truman. q.q.v.

At the inevitable break between Maryland and England, no planter in Southern Maryland was more active and held in higher esteem than John Dent of Pomonkey Hundred. In 1775 when political ties were at the near breaking point, he was a delegate to the General Assembly from Charles County. He signed the celebrated document of the Association of Freemens of Maryland, the original of which now hangs in the gallery of the Maryland Historical Society. He also served on the Council of Safety as a representative of his county. In that capacity he was delegated to cooperate with the Commissioners of Virginia in erecting beacon lights on the shores of the Potomac. By April 30, 1776, thirteen had been erected in Maryland—one in Prince Georges, nine in Charles County, and three in St. Mary’s County. On June 11, 1776, £50 were appropriated for the purpose.

The Maryland Convention on January 6, 1776, by ballot elected him Brigadier-General in command of all the Militia of the Lower District on the Western Shore. In July 1776, he reported to the Council that the fleet under Lord Dunmore had appeared at the mouth of the Potomac and it was feared that it would make a landing on some portion of the river in the Lower Counties.

The Council reported by dispatch the same month that it was expedient for him to remain in his District as the Flying Camp was not ready to march and that Captain [Rezin] Beall with his Independent Company was then at St. Mary’s County ready to oppose the Enemy. Furthermore, that Captain Beall and his company were subject to his command.

A dispatch dated July 19, 1776, Charles River Head Quarters, from General Dent to the Council read as follows and throws much light upon the so-called Lord Dunmore’s War which was heavily recruited from Tories in Somerset County.
Gent'n

On my arrival at this place on the 16th Inst. I found there had been an engagement with the Enemy with no loss but the misfortune of Capt. Rezin Beall being badly wounded, tho' its hoped not mortal. By four Deserters who came over to us yesterday we are informed the mate or midshipman of the Roe Buck was killed in the action. By the best information the Enemy have not more than 50 Regulars of the 14th Regiment, about 150 Tories and 100 negroes that bare arms; all of whom are landed every morning and embarked in the evening under cover of the Fleet, which continues in the mouth of St. Mary's River opposite the lower end of St. George's Island. Our strength at present is about 400 Militia exclusive of the Independent and Capt'n Forrest's company. I made bold immediately on my arrival (the strength of the Enemy being much magnified) to order to our assistance three full companies of Militia from Col Hawkins Battalion, to be selected from the interior part of the County, which I expect will arrive about to morrow evening, when I shall discharge an equal number of the most necessitous of those now on duty. The Fleet (which at first consisted of eighty sail) is now reduced to little more than half that number, many of the Tenders and Square Rigged vessels having gone to Virginia opposite the mouth of Potowmack where a pretty constant Cannonade has been kept up ever since I have been here. We are told by the Deserters (two more of which have come over since I began to write) that the fleet intend only to wood and water on the Island, burn all, or most of their small craft and proceed to sea. Had we a few great guns at a place called Cherry Fields Point, well planted and served, we might annoy the Fleet so as to oblige them to quit their Station. Capt. Forrest's Company has relieved an equal number of the militia who readily parted with their arms, such as they were. I shall as often as any thing of consequence happens communicate it to you with the utmost dispatch, 'til when I am your most obedient Serv't

JNO. DENT

On July 20, 1776, from "St. George's Head Quarters" he addressed the Council as follows:

Gent.

From the acct's given me by several deserters that the Fleet entered up Potomack River to water, and from the motions of the Roebuck, five other ships and a sloop I have the greatest reason to believe they are now on their way for that purpose. Nanjemoy, we suppose to be the place of their Destination. I have by letter informed the Committee of Correspondence of the motions of the above ships and shall endeavor to watch their motions and prevent their Depredations with all my Might. There was a brisk and severe Cannonade from two or three tenders and a row galley off Smith's Creek about six o'clock this morning the consequence of wh'h I have not yet heard.

I Gent. with much Esteem
Your most obed't Serv't

JNO. DENT.
On August 1, 1776, John Dent tendered his resignation as Brigadier General of the Flying Camp and recommended that Major Price take command of St. George’s Island. The Council reply in accepting his resignation:

“We tell you candidly that we have no reason to believe that you were not equal to the task, or that you were deficient either in military knowledge, assiduity or personal courage and that we are surprised you should entertain any such idea... we were actuated by no other views than those of service to the public, and taking effectual measures to repel the common enemy”.

As chairman of the Committee of Observation he had recommended two of his kinsmen, George Dent Jr. and Henry Dent, as first lieutenants of the County Militia.

He resumed his seat as a delegate from Charles County to the State Legislature, and on November 8, 1776, he addressed the Council and recommended Hugh Gardner, of Charles, as captain of the militia. He served as one of the Magistrates of Charles during the war and in that capacity he took the Oaths of Allegiance and Fidelity to the State in his district.

On February 15, 1785, he made a deed of gift of “Clarke’s Inheritance” on the east side of the road leading from Portobacco to Pomonkey to his son, George, for natural love and affections. According to the 1783 tax list, his estate embraced 1080 acres in Pomonkey Hundred.

His wife predeceased him and was buried on her father’s plantation known as Marshall Hall “Under this Stone is deposited the Body of Sarah Dent daughter of Thomas & Elizabeth Marshall. She died April 9th 1795 aged 59 years and 8 months. This tribute due to the Memory of an excellent Mother and good woman is made by George Dent”.

General Dent died in Charles County in 1809. His will, dated March 10, 1803, was probated on August 24, 1809. He devised his grandson, John Dent, the dwelling-plantation which embraced “Clarke’s Purchase” and part of “Clarke’s Inheritance”. Servants, presumably negroes, were bequeathed to his three children and were to be instructed in some useful trade and then to be set free at the age of twenty one. The residue of his estate was willed equally to his three children—Ann H. Wilkinson, George Dent and Thomas M. Dent.

Peter Dent
1728-1785

Peter Dent, son and namesake of his father by his wife, Mary Brooke,
was born at “Whitehaven”, then in Prince Georges County, on January 10, 1728/9, according to the register of St. John’s Parish, Piscataway. By 1749 he had settled on a 180-acre portion of his father’s land on the south side of the Mattawoman in Charles County which his parents in that year conveyed to him in fee. He also shared with his brothers the parental plantation “Whitehaven”, but it was not until 1770 that an equitable division was made among the three heirs. Unlike his father he was not interested in politics, but preferred to live the quiet life of a planter at “Whitehaven”.

Before 1757 he married Mary Eleanor ———, and of his ten children, two—William the older and George are proved of this union. By December 2, 1760, he had married his second wife Anne ———. The identity of his first wife is unknown and likewise the second. By the incomplete entries in the Parish Register, the maternity of some of his children is unproved, but it is generally believed that all except the first two were issue of his wife Anne. It has been suggested that she was a Marbury, but documentary proof has not been established.

Children of Peter Dent

1. William Dent, born Mar. 4, 1756/7, of Mary Eleanor, died young.
2. George Dent, born about 1755, of Mary Eleanor, married Suzanna Dawson, the Widow Cromwell. q.v.
3. Theodore Dent, born 1760, of Anne, married Eleanor Sheid. q.v.
7. William Dent, born Feb. 4, 1773, of Anne, died without issue.
8. Thomas Dent, died without issue.

By the readjustment of the boundaries between Charles and Prince Georges Counties in 1748, “Whitehaven”, south of the Mattawoman fell into the former county. On April 16, 1770, Peter Dent whose wife Anne joined him in the deed, declared himself to be the son and heir-at-law of Peter Dent, Gent., late of Prince Georges County, deceased, and deeded to his brother, Thomas, for natural love and affections 339 acres of “White-
The Maryland Dents

haven" and "Addition to Whitehaven", which began at the corner of "Market Overton".

In March 1778, he subscribed to the Oath of Allegiance and Fidelity to the State of Maryland in Charles County before his kinsman, General John Dent.

His maiden aunt, Rachel Brooke, of Prince Georges County, by her will bequeathed him a negro wench called Sall providing that he paid half of her value to his brother, William. When the will was probated in June 1789, he had passed on, but in January 1790, his son, Theodore, gave his receipt to the Rev. Clement Brooke, his aunt's executor.

The last will and testament of Peter Dent was dated June 21, 1784, it being probated in Charles County on March 26, 1785. He devised his wife, Ann, his whole estate during widowhood, but all children were to enjoy the use of the dwelling-plantation. At the death or remarriage of his widow, the dwelling-plantation was to revert to his sons, Theodore, Thomas and William. His sons were to provide especially for their sister, Frances, the youngest daughter. He acknowledged his son, George, and also spoke of his "poor, unhappy wandering son Joseph who ran away... to be taken back and forgiven if he returns". He appointed his wife and son Theodore the executors.

Letters of administration were issued to the widow and her son, Theodore Dent. His estate consisted of two negroes, one of whom was blind and naturally without monetary value. Elizabeth Dent and Richard Dent approved the valuation of the inventory of September 17, 1785. The estate was unsettled by October 1789, when citations were issued to the executors. A second inventory with appraisement was filed with the court in March 1790, by Ann Dent and Theodore Dent.

Thomas Dent, the unmarried son, died early in 1800. The personal estate was not too extensive, but among the items were a gun, a sword and a silver watch. On March 20, 1800, his brother and administrator, Theodore Dent, filed the inventory. His sisters, Fanny Dent and Martha Tubman, approved as the next of kin. At the time of his death, Thomas Dent was indebted to Nicholas Lingan, of the District of Columbia, who instituted legal action in July 1810, against the estate of Thomas Dent through his administrator.

It was stated in the bill of complaint that Thomas Dent was in partnership with George Lee and Henry Marbury trading under the name of Henry Marbury's Co., as merchants with a warehouse at Pomonkey village. Thomas Dent became indebted to them for £38/15/4, and executed his bond in January 1798. He died and his brother administered on his estate,
but the personalty was insufficient to meet all obligations. The bill furthermore stated that Thomas Dent in common with his brothers, William and Theodore, was seized of certain realty. Judgement was obtained against the estate for £17/0/5.

The lawsuit cited the heirs of Thomas Dent and thus a complete list of the surviving children of Peter Dent was proved. The heirs-at-law were: brother George Dent, of Allegany County; brother Theodore Dent, of Charles County; the children of a deceased sister, Henrietta, that is, George Dyer, Francis Dyer and Polly Magruder, of Prince Georges County; the children of his deceased sister, Mary Eleanor, who married one Hatton, that is, Henrietta Hatton who had married Collin Hunter, of Alexandria, and Peter Dent Hatton, Ann Marbury Hatton, and George Hatton, of Prince Georges County, all minors; sister Martha the wife of Samuel Tubman; and sister Frances A. the wife of Hawkins Tubman, both of Charles County.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM DENT
1730-1805

William Dent, son of Judge Peter Dent by his wife, Mary Brooke, was born in St. John's Parish, on August 8, 1730, according to the parish register. By the will of his father he received virtually all of the western lands and became the first member of the Dent family to invade the frontier which today is nothing more than Montgomery County—but in 1758 was organized into Frederick County out of western portions of Prince Georges and Baltimore Counties. In addition to the unseated land from his father's estate, he patented additional tracts in Frederick County.

He married into that mighty Beall family from Scotland, and if his wife were not a descendant of that venerable old Indian fighter and leader of the Revolution of 1689, Colonel Ninian Beall, who overthrew the Proprietary Government, she was certainly a kinswoman. She was born Verlinda, daughter of Judge Samuel Beall and Eleanor his wife, who pushed farther west than William Dent and ended up in Washington County where he died after sharing many honours and offices of note in Western Maryland. She was made an heir in her father's will, dated October 1774, and probated at Hagerstown on January 10, 1778.

Much legion has been written about Old Ninian, but it is known that he was foremost in establishing the Scotch Presbyterian Faith in Prince Georges County, and in 1704 gave without a monetary consideration one-half acre of land on the Western Branch of the Patuxent in the village of