JUDGE THOMAS DENT, GENT.

It is matter of conjecture which prompted Thomas Dent, of Gisborough, Yorkshire, Gent. to seek the adventures of the New World and especially the Province of Maryland. The Calverts, you know, were a Yorkish family and second to London Town the Yorkshiremen were more acquainted with the virtues and advantages of Lord Baltimore's Province than perhaps other Englishmen. He was young, certainly in his twenties, unmarried and not the eldest son to receive the inherited wealth of his parents.

What vital part as a youth he played in the Parliamentary Wars between the Royalists and the Puritans is not known, but Yorkshire espoused the cause of the Stuarts rather than the Cromwellians. He was down to London about the time that the Cromwellians were losing favour with the populace and the agents of the Royalists were intriguing to recall Charles Stuart, later Charles II, from his exile in France.

While in London he contracted to transport as his own expense five willing Britishers to Maryland, for which he was responsible for their passage and "keeps" during the voyage and then saw that they were suitably housed in Maryland. That he had sufficient financial resources for this task is therefore inevitable. In all probability he and his proteges sailed from the port of London, but the name of the ship is not known. They arrived in Maryland sometime before 1658 or just about the time that Lord Baltimore was able to wrestle his Province from the rule of the Puritans.

Fresh from the Inns of London where he read law Thomas Dent upon his arrival soon established himself as a lawyer and sought quarters on Barristers' Row in the then flourishing village of St. Mary's. Cecilius, Lord Baltimore, granted him 50 acres of land within the town's limits on Aldermansbury Street which he called "The Lawyer's Lodging." His marriage to the young daughter of the Anglican clergyman soon occurred after his settlement, and then a young and interesting family group developed.

Peculiarly his wife had her roots in Yorkshire also. She was Rebecca Wilkinson, the Virginia born daughter of the Rev. William Wilkinson and Naomi his wife. His father-in-law was the first Anglican clergyman to be accredited to Maryland, although services of the Church of England had been read by laymen from the beginning. He was the son of the Rev. Gabriel Wilkinson, born 1576, in Yorkshire, a graduate of Merton Col-
lege, Oxford, and vicar of Woodburn, Bucks, until his death on December 17, 1658. William, the son, was born 1612, entered Magdalen College at 14, and received his M.A. in 1632. Within three years he had married and settled in Virginia.

On November 20, 1635, the Rev. William Wilkinson received 700 acres of land in "Linhaven, commonly called Chisopeian River" opposite the plantation of Captain Adam Thorrogood whose daughter became the ancestor of the Dents of another generation. After a residence of some fifteen years in Virginia during which time he buried his first wife and married the Widow Budden with a daughter, he settled in Maryland and became rector of Popular Hill parish.

On October 10, 1650, he applied to His Lordship's Land Office at St. Mary's for 900 acres of land, his right for his own personal adventure and for the transportation of his three daughters, Mary, Rebecca and Elizabeth, his wife and her daughter and three servants—William Warren, Robert Cornish and Anne Stevens.

Thomas Dent had not been married too long when his father-in-law died. Feeling that the end was approaching, the Rev. Mr. Wilkinson drew up his last will and testament on May 29, 1663, in the presence of Randall Hanson and Daniel Smith. He probably wrote his own will as neither one of the witnesses were literate, yet it is not beyond the realm of possibility that one of his sons-in-law was present and was responsible for the writing.

After a few legacies to his step-daughter, Elizabeth Budden, the daughter of Margaret "my last wife" and his two grandsons, William Dent and William Hatton, the residue of his estate was divided between his son-in-law Thomas Dent and Rebecca his wife and his son-in-law William Hatton and Elizaebeth his wife. The instrument was probated at court on September 21, 1663, with the two sons-in-laws as executors.

It is quite evident from circumstances that his last wife, Margaret, had pre-deceased him, as she received no bequest in the will. The step-daughter, Elizabeth, was apparently of young age, because she died in 1673/4, unmarried when Thomas Dent and William Hatton stated in court that they had cared for her since the death of her step-father and requested letters of administration upon her estate.

The following children were born to Judge Thomas Dent and his wife, Rebecca:

1. William Dent, born 1660, married Elizabeth Powke and Elizabeth Brooke. q.v.

2. Thomas Dent, no further record.


5. Margaret Dent married May 26, 1681, Edmund Howard.


The first public office of note for Thomas Dent was his commission in 1661 as a Magistrate of the County Court of St. Mary's or one of the several Justices of the Peace, an institution for justice founded by Edward III of England back in the fourteenth century. In Colonial Maryland the office was invested with much dignity and prestige. He was soon advanced to a Justice of the Quorum, another honour of note for without the members of the Quorum no judicial action could be taken. He was a Magistrate as late as 1670.

As Lord Baltimore visualized his town of St. Mary's as an important metropolis and the entrepot for all trade with England and the Continent, it was incorporated and granted its first charter in 1667 with mayor, recorder, aldermen and councilmen. A second charter was issued in 1671, at which time Thomas Dent was named as one of the seven councilmen.

As the holding of office in those days was multifarious or prominent men holding several dignities, along with his judicial duties on the county bench, Thomas Dent was appointed in 1664 to the Shrievalty of the County—always an appointed post of that day. There is also a record of his being High Sheriff in 1667.

Continuing his interest in public service and winning the esteem of his fellow citizens in St. Mary’s County, he was elected by the freeholders to the Lower House of the Assembly in 1669. He was reelected in 1674 and 1675 and held the office at the time of his death.

While no direct evidence has been found of any military title or his serving actively in any armed conflict, the Council had sufficient confidence in his ability to secure provisions for the proprietary militia upon several armed campaigns against hostile Indians. On February 8, 1667/8, he and Robert Slye were appointed by the Privy Council to secure “28 barrels of corn and 4000 weight of meat out of St. Marie’s County.”

On one occasion he acted as an emissary to the Colony of Virginia by which he was entrusted with a letter of instructions to Colonel John Washington and Isaac Allerton advising that Maryland would do her share of equipping five troops of men with sufficient horses, arms, ammunition and subsistence for an expedition against the warlike and cruel Susquehanna Indians. The tribe would come down from what is now eastern Pennsylvania and New York and ravage the Maryland Plantations and on oc-
casions murder the settlers. Upon his return to Maryland he was commissioned by the Council, dated November 1675, to equip and organize the militia for the planned expedition.

While his activities centered mostly in public service, he did not neglect the opportunity to enlarge his estate for the future security and proper maintenance of his growing family. Land was plentiful for a small fee or by the financing of Britishers to settle permanently in the Province, and while the quit rent to Lord Baltimore was high, it did not deter him from patenting undeveloped tracts on the frontier or purchasing desirable plantations along the rivers and creeks in the more settled parts of St. Mary's and Charles Counties.

Although he had been in the Province for several years, it was not until March 26, 1663, that he proved his rights to 300 acres of land for transporting himself into the Province and financing the passage of John Dent, John Winne, Conant Stephenson, George Atley and John Venables.

On May 4, 1663, William Hatton, his brother-in-law, assigned him for a valuable consideration certain land rights amounting to 550 acres. One of the witnesses to the assignment was John Dent, presumably the protege whom Thomas Dent transported. With these rights of 850 acres, the Lord Proprietary granted him on September 4, 1663, a plantation of that acreage on the Anacostia River in a then unsettled portion of Maryland to which he gave the name of “Gisborough”. The survey stated that it lay on the east side of the Anacostia River in a branch of the said river called the Eastern Branch along a little arm which was given the name of Gisborough Bay. As the early surveyors had little knowledge of the geographic formation of the back country, the Anacostia River was undoubtedly the Potomac River. The Eastern Branch was the tributary of the Potomac which retained that name until the twentieth century when it was officially re-named the Anacostia River. Gisborough was virtually the land where the village of Anacostia developed in the 19th century, but now within the National Capital. Gisborough Point is still known today by old timers of the National Capital.

About this time or in May 1663, he and William Hatton agreed to the partition of the tract of 900 acres which they had purchased jointly a short time previously from Nicholas Guither known as “Guither” or “Guyther”. This tract later became the seat of his son, Colonel William Dent, and his descendants which became known as the senior branch of the family.

On March 15, 1665/6, he proved to the satisfaction of His Lordship’s Agent that he transported six additional settlers to Maryland at his own expense, namely James Thomas, John Mills, Katherine Festus, John Saun-
ders, William Pritchett and John Headland. He thereupon assigned the warrant to Alexander Frizell. On January 7, 1666/7, he entered land rights for transporting two additional settlers which he assigned to Sylvanus Gilpen, of Calvert County. On December 20, 1669, he conveyed his rights for bringing-in three persons to Francis Hill.

On July 9, 1670, he entered his rights for 29 named indentured servants, assigned him by Henry Hall, of St. Mary's County, for which he received a warrant for 1500 acres. Rather than patent this large survey he seemed to have assigned various portions from time to time. One of his assignees was William Hatton, Gent., to whom he conveyed 150 acres.

About this time Richard Edelen, Gent., was the Deputy Surveyor of St. Mary's County, a family into which the descendants of Thomas Dent later intermarried. It is certain that they were friends of that day, for Richard Edelen himself was likewise the son of an Anglican clergyman of England. On March 20, 1671/2, Richard Edelen made statement that he had laid out for Thomas Dent and William Hatton a plantation of 236 acres above Piscataway in the woods, indicating that it was not on a body of water, which was given the name of "Brothers' Joint Interest."

Before May 9, 1671, he had transported at his own expense eight additional settlers for which he received a warrant for 400 acres. This he assigned to Benjamin Salley, Gent., of St. Mary's County. He continued to finance the passage of prospective inhabitants and as late as November 18, 1672, he received a warrant of 750 acres for transporting 15 settlers. On the same day he assigned his warrant to Jeremiah Jadwin, of Westmoreland County, Virginia.

On May 26, 1673, he again proved land rights for bringing-in settlers, twelve in number, one of whom was a John Dent. These rights were assigned to Nicholas Proddy, of Charles County.

His brother-in-law, William Hatton, on August 14, 1674, sold him his share of a large tract known as "Guither" which they had bought jointly in 1662. In the deed he was styled "Thomas Dent of the said Province, Merchant", and the land consisted of 900 acres lying on the north side of the Potomac and on the west side of Nanjemoy Creek adjoining the plantation of Joseph Harrison. The consideration was 24,000 lbs. tob. and had been granted originally to Captain Nicholas als Guither on August 20, 1658.

On June 21, 1675, he received an assignment for 600 acres from William Calvert, son of the late Governor, and another 600 acres from John Bloomfield, of St. Mary's County. Two days later he was assigned an additional 650 acres by John Quigley, of St. Mary's County.
On September 16, 1675, he purchased from the sisters and heiresses, living in Beedale, Yorkshire, of Richard Watson, late of Charles County, deceased, a plantation of 200 acres known as "Wattfield", lying along Portobacco Cliffs.

He inherited from his father-in-law a portion of "Westbury Manor", an authentic manorial domain of 1250 acres which had been granted to Thomas Weston, Esq., in 1642, with full prerogatives of a baronial court. Weston died and the manorial privileges descended to his daughter and sole heiress of New England. Weston was indebted to William Stone, one-time Governor, who claimed the manor by right of default. Stone seized the manor and later sold portions to various planters. One section known as Hull's Neck on the west side of St. Mary's River was sold to the Rev. William Wilkinson, father-in-law of Thomas Dent, and it was this portion which fell to Thomas Dent and his brother-in-law, William Hatton.

By a subsequent deed of his son and heir, it developed that Thomas Dent was deeded "Jenifer's Gift", of 100 acres, by Daniel Jenifer which was intended to be held in trust for the use of the ministers or ministry of Popular Hill Church for good and pious intent.

Besides his professional duties as a barrister and his many civil honours, Thomas Dent engaged in importing and was often styled "Merchant". His dwelling-plantation bordered one of the Creeks of the St. Mary's River, but it was apparently on the west bank as he was sometimes styled of St. George's Hundred. He had his own private landing as shown during a lawsuit when the defendant declared that he delivered a boat "at the landing Mr Thomas Dent in his Creeke in St Georges [now St. Mary's] River."

In the midst of a brilliant career Thomas Dent died at the age of about 42 in full manhood and left a fruitful widow, a daughter and four sons—the eldest being about 16 years of age.

He dated his last will and testament as of March 28, 1676, and was apparently quite ill at the time, because his death occurred in less than a month. The will was probated at the April session of the court on the 21st day. William Hatton, his brother-in-law, who probably wrote the instrument and William Harper were the only witnesses.

He spoke of his dearly beloved wife, Rebecca, made her the executrix and devised her the plantation at Portobacco Cliffs in Charles County. William, the son and heir, who was in his middle teens was devised a portion of the plantation at Nanjemoy in Charles County and Westbury Manor in St. Mary's. Thomas, the second son, was willed the remaining portion of the land at Nanjemoy.
Peter and George, the younger sons, were devised equally the unseated plantations of "Gisborough" and "Brothers' Joint Interest" which eventually fell into Prince Georges County in 1695. Margaret, the only named daughter, was willed one acre of land in St. Mary's City and several negro slaves.

Speaking most lovingly of his faithful wife, he devised her the plantation "Wattfield" on Portobacco Cliffs to "her heirs to dispose of for the good of her children or otherwise to keep it and at her death or during her life to bequeath or give to any child or children, as she in her discretion shall think fit". The residue of the real and personal estate was bequeathed to her "to dispose of as shall best please her". She was therefore well provided for and when she married John Addison a few months thence, she brought him a handsome estate in many respects.

Shortly after the death of Thomas Dent, his widow found that she was with child. A daughter who was given the name of Barbara was born in the early autumn of 1676. On November 20, that year, "Rebecca Dent, of St. Mary's County, Widow and executrix of Thomas Dent, late of St. Mary's County, Merchant, deceased" placed in trust with William Hatton 200 acres of land purchased by Thomas Dent from Richard Watson for the use of Barbara, her daughter. It was stated that Thomas Dent by his will had provided for his children with several parcels of land and "whereas the said Rebecca was big with child at the death of said Thomas and has since been safely brought to bed and delivered of a daughter named Barbara who is now alive and has no provision made for her in said will". The trust was to terminate when Barbara attained the age of 16 years, but in the event that she died before her 16th birthday, the land was to revert to Thomas Dent, the third son of Thomas and Rebecca Dent.

The personal estate was inventoried on May 4, 1676. At the Nanjemoy Quarters were four negro slaves and three white indentured servants, much livestock, a sail boat as well as the usual farm implements and furniture of its kind. The entire value there was 44,019 lbs. tob. At the dwelling-plantation in St. Mary's County were a number of books, silver plate, "Small hoop ring and a scale ring", the latter presumably his coat-of-arms. There were also a boat and a "canou" and much merchandise in the store. The entire personal estate was valued at 130,129 lbs. tob.

The inventory was filed by the widow on September 7-9, 1676. On November 20, 1676, as Rebecca Dent she made the deed of trust with William Hatton, but by February 13, 1676/7, she had married John Addison, a bachelor, certainly of middle age, as no previous marriage has been found for him.
Citations were issued her by the court on August 22, 1677, to render an account on the estate of her deceased husband, whereas she appeared in court on October 19, 1677, and "craved time till her husband, John Addison, returned into his Province."

John Addison was in Maryland as early as 1667, and soon identified himself with the civil and religious life of the Province, although he espoused the cause of the Whigs and was not allied with the Proprietary Party. He was first a Captain of the Foote in Charles County and later of the Horse, and a member of His Majesty's Council. As Colonel John Addison in 1694, he was appointed a trustee of the free institutions of learning in the Province.

In March 1689/90, John Addison acting on information obtained from Mr. Holliday and others addressed a letter to John West, of Virginia, stating that 9000 Frenchmen and Seneca Indians were surrounding Captain Bourne's plantation in Anne Arundel County. It later proved to be sheer propaganda to cause dissension in the Province, especially between the Roman Catholics and the liberal elements.

Madam Dent-Addison presided over the dwelling of her husband, Colonel Addison, in January 1694/5, when "a sufficient and lawful number of inhabitants of Piscataway Parish" met and elected the first vestry of the Parish and Perfected plans for the erection of St. John's, the mother church of the Parish. Forty pounds of tobacco were to be assessed all freeholders of the Parish payable to John Addison and William Hutchinson who were to employ carpenters for the erection of the church and vestry.

The trust on "Wattfields" for her daughter, Barbara Dent, was terminated by 1704, when it was stated that Rebecca Dent relict of Thomas Dent conveyed in 1676 the plantation to William Hatton for her youngest daughter, Barbara Dent, and that the said Barbara had survived and was then married to the Hon. Thomas Brooke, Esq. Furthermore, "Rebecca Addison and her husband John Addison" confirmed the deed of conveyance of "Wattfields" from Thomas Brooke and Barbara his wife to Edmund Howard, of Charles County, Gent.

On a business trip to England, Colonel John Addison died without a will, leaving a widow and only son, Thomas, at his plantation near Piscataway. On July 19, 1707, describing herself as "Rebecca Addison Sr., Relict of the Honourable John Addison, late of Prince Georges County, Gent., deceased," she "for ever Quitt claim all her right of dower in the estate of the goods, chattels, Lands, Tenements & Hereditaments . . . . . which were belonging to the said John Addison, Esq., deceased, of which he said Rebecca might or may claim by viture of her Intermarriage with sd John
Addison, Esq." for a consideration of £620 to be paid by Thomas Addison, son and heir, of the said John Addison. The witnesses were William Hutchison, James Haddock, John Warren, John Michell and Hickford Leman. At the same time Thomas Addison obligated himself by bond to pay to Rebecca Addison £640 before July 20, 1709.

Her later life was spent with her daughter, Madam Barbara Brooke, and as the story goes, the Brookes acquired most of her wealth. She outlived her three Dent sons and died in 1726. While no visible strained relationship is found to suggest any differences between her Dent children and the Addisons, it is nonetheless true that she failed to leave any legacies to her Dent grandchildren.

She bequeathed her son, Thomas Addison, £20, and £200 to her grandchildren Lucy, Baker and Thomas Brooke, the children of her daughter, Barbara, by the latter’s husband, Thomas Brooke. In the event that the three named grandchildren died without issue or under age, then the legacy was to revert to another grandson, Benjamin Brooke. The residuary estate went to her daughter, Madam Brooke, whom she appointed executrix.

Although circumstances would indicate that she should had been a wealthy widow at her death, her personal estate was surprisingly negligible, unless property was concealed, and consisted only of the articles which an aged person would have in her room. There were no slaves, no silver plate and no jewelry. The total value was only £20/3/3. Thomas Addison, her son, was the only kinsman who approved the valuation.

The will was dated November 5, 1724, and probated in Prince Georges County on August 20, 1726, by Alexander Contee, John Howard and Mary Delihunt.

Colonel William Dent, Gent.
1660-1704

William Dent, son and heir of Judge Thomas Dent and Rebecca Wilkinson his wife, was born in or about the year 1660, inasmuch as in 1698 he deposed to be 38 years of age. His birth probably occurred at Hull’s Neck, Westbury Manor, the seat of his maternal grandfather. Being a name-sake of his clerical grandfather, he was thus favoured in his will of 1663.

Of the parental estates, he inherited the Hull’s Neck plantation on Westbury Manor in St. Mary’s County and a portion of the large plantation on the Nanjemoy in Charles County, where he eventually established his dwelling-plantation.
Few colonial squires lived in more feudal style and elegance than William Dent, with his numerous slaves and white indentured servants on his several plantations. Besides his country seat on the Nanjemoy, he maintained a town house in Annapolis, the capital and social center of the Province, and well-stocked plantations on the Mattawoman in Prince Georges County and another stock farm at Portobacco Cliffs. His library was considerable for that day and the value of his silver plate at his death was inestimable. In his town house at Annapolis were two pictures, undoubtedly family portraits, as according to the writings of the seventeenth century, family portraits were the only pictures found in the homes of the gentry.

About the time he and his brothers were arriving at manhood or about the time that William and Mary ascended the English Throne, the Liberals or Anti-Proprietary Party in Maryland overthrew by force of arms the regime of Lord Baltimore and established a Royal Colony directly under the Crown. A series of Royal Governors were appointed with brief tenure of office until the arrival of Colonel Francis Nicholson, Esq., with a commission from Their Majestys, dated February 10, 1693/4. During his term of office the three sons of Judge Thomas Dent received numerous favours, and it is possible that there was a close blood relationship. Judge Dent's grandmother was none other than Margaret Nicholson of York. Concurrent with the rule of Colonel Nicholson, the Secretary of State was Sir Thomas Lawrence, Knt, Bart. who was also an intimate of the Dent family.

Certainly at an early age William Dent read law with one of the leading barristers of the Province, but it is not beyond the realm of possibility that he read law under the guidance of his father—for there is no record of his being sent to England to attend one of the English Inns of Law. On March 20, 1682/3, at the age of 22 he was sworn before His Lordship's Justices of Charles County as an Attorney and he eventually developed into one of the outstanding legal minds of early Maryland. He was eclipsed only in the next generation by the brilliancy of Daniel Dulany the Elder. At the age of 26 he began his public service to the Province as clerk to the Lower House of the Assembly.

His legal acumen was recognized in England, inasmuch as on November 10, 1691, he was appointed by the Court to be the Attorney "for our Sovereign Lord and Lady ye King and Queen" and was so sworn and admitted.

He became interested in the virgin farm land of his plantations on the Nanjemoy near the then growing port town of Port Tobacco which was
destined to become the capital of the growing County of Charles. Portobacco was the ancient spelling, as it was named from the tribe of Portobacco Indians and not the popular belief that it was a river port where tobacco was shipped and thus received its name.

At Portobacco settled after 1661 Colonel Gerard Fowke, Esq., from across the Potomac in Westmoreland County, presumably upon the plantations of the late Job Chandler, Esq., whose wealthy widow Colonel Fowke married.

In the vicinity of Nanjemoy and Portobacco grew up the several daughters of Colonel Fowke, especially one Elizabeth. Fair she must have been to have caught the eye of young William Dent who was winning his spurs in the military but more especially in jurisprudence. A romance developed and they were married at candle light at the home of Madam Fowke on February 8, 1684/5.

The following is from the minutes of the county court; though not recorded until “May ye 28-1689.”

“I doe hereby certifie that on the eight day of Febry 1684 at the house of Mrs. Anne Fowke at Portobacco in Charles County I joyned together Wm Dent & Elizabeth Fowke Daughter of ye said Anne Fowke in the Holy Estate of Mattremony in ye presents of ye sd Mrs. Anne Fowke, Coll. Wm Chandler Mad'm Mary Chandler Mr. Gerard Fowke Mrs Mary Fowke Owen Newen & Divers others Witnesses. I haveing Received a Lycense from the Hon'ble Wm Diggs Esq., to doe ye same.”

By John Turlinge,
Presb'tn Anglican Eclesiac.

His early seat was at his Portobacco Quarters for there his three oldest children were baptized, according to court records “the said three children were all baptized at ye dwelling house of ye said William and Elizabeth Dent near Portobacco”. Between February 1689 and September 1690, he had moved farther up the river bank to Nanjemoy, for there his fourth son was baptized.

This marriage in Colonial America united two ancient and armorial families of Old England and it was perhaps the most promising and advantageous of all the marriages of the sons of Judge Thomas Dent.

Gerard Fowke, the father-in-law of William Dent, later earned the title of Colonel. He was brought to Virginia before 1654 by his brother, Thomas Fowke, Merchant, who received 3380 acres of land in Westmoreland County for transporting, that is, financing the passage of 27 persons. Thomas and Gerard were the sons of Roger Fowke, Esq., of “Gunston, County Stafford and Parish of Brewood”, as he styled himself in his last
will and testament of 1649. He referred to his ancestral estate received from his father, John Fowke, and among his children, he provided for his sons, Thomas and Gerard, presumably then in England.

Gerard Fowke became the proprietor of thousands of acres along the south bank of the Potomac, and by marrying the wealthy widow of Job Chandler, he increased his estate considerably. Besides being a Magistrate of the County Court of Westmoreland, before his removal to Maryland, he represented that county in the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1663. Thomas Fowke, his brother, also represented Westmoreland County, but died at a comparatively young age in 1663, naming his brother, Gerard, the executor of his estate.

Job Chandler, of Portobacco, was first in Accomac County, Virginia, but settled in Maryland, acquired an estate, and married Ann Thorowgood, the daughter of Adam Thorowgood, of Lower Norfolk County, also a prominent gentleman of Virginia and a member of the House of Burgesses. Chandler died testate in 1659 at Portobacco and it was not so very long thereafter that his widow married Colonel Fowke.

On February 12, 1661/2, Colonel Fowke wrote Robert Slye, Merchant, of St. Mary’s County and referred to the orphans of Job Chandler. It was furthermore announced that “Colonel Gerard fowke of the County of Westmor Land, Gent., for and in consideration of a marriage lately had and consummated with me and the mother of the children above mentioned”. Shortly after the marriage, Colonel Fowke removed to Maryland and thus established himself in Portobacco Hundred.

Continuing his public service in Maryland, he was elected a delegate from Charles County to the General Assembly. He died intestate, leaving several young children. Letters of administration were issued to his widow on October 30, 1669. Madam Fowke, though certainly in young womanhood, did not remarry, and at the time William Dent wrote his will she was living with him and her daughter at Nanjemoy.

To William Dent and Elizabeth his wife were born nine known children, several of whom predeceased their parents.

3. Elizabeth Dent, eldest daughter, born 1688, died 1699.
5. George Dent, born Sept. 27, 1690, bapt. April 16, 1696, married Anne, daughter of William Harbert, Gent. and Mary his wife. q.v.

7. Peter Dent, named after his great-grandfather, born 1693, baptized Jan. 13, 1694/5, married into the distinguished family of Robert Brooke. q.e.

8. Philip Dent, namesake and godson of Philip Lynes, died in his youth.

9. Elizabeth Dent, married Richard Tarvin and left by his many descendants.

It has already been stated that at a comparatively young age in 1686 William Dent was made Clerk of the Lower House and there he had the occasion of meeting the representative men of both houses of the General Assembly from all counties of the Province and also to learn at first hand the parliamentary methods of law making and procedure. He was rewarded in 1692 when he entered the Lower House as an elected delegate from Charles County. He received the confidence of the electorate at each succeeding election and on April 26, 1704, a short time before his death, he was elected the Speaker of the House.

It was in the science of law that he excelled and received many honours from Francis Nicholson, the Royal Governor, during twenty or more years that Maryland remained a Royal Colony after the Revolution of 1689. Colonel George Plater, the Attorney General for the Crown from 1692 to 1698, complained on November 13, 1694, that "there is so much King's business that he can not possibly discharge his duty without further help". Thereupon, William Dent was made his deputy and from all circumstances acted in that capacity until Plater resigned to become the Naval Officer of the Patuxent and Tax Receiver for the same. Dent's commission as Attorney General, was dated October 20, 1698, under the signature of Governor Nicholson and he was again appointed by Governor Seymour and continued to serve until his death.

At the time that he was serving as Attorney General, Governor Nicholson conferred another honour upon him by "constituting Mr. William Dent His Majesty's Advocate of the Admiralty Court" on October 21, 1698. He took the accustomed oath the following day.

On May 20, 1695, under the patronage of Governor Nicholson, he was sworn in as Their Majesty's Solicitor General. During his tincture of office, he made the important decision in 1696 that "His Majesty held no land in the Province but His Majesty's Agents may make leases" from the landed proprietors who held technically tenancy under the Lords Baltimore.

Although there is no record of his having been appointed to the Pro-
vicial Court or the Court of Chancery, yet he drew up the Rules for the former and for his services he was allowed 120,000 lbs. tob. out of the Public Treasury. He appeared, however, frequently before the court to represent his many and varied clients.

On November 19, 1694, by Governor Nicholson he was appointed the Naval Officer for Upper Charles County from Portobacco to an undetermined point or all the settlements along the Potomac until the frontier or wilderness was reached. As the plantations became more thickly seated along the Potomac and the inlets, his duties and responsibilities multiplied, so in 1697 he was authorized to appoint his half-nephew, Mr. Thomas Addison, his deputy. In 1700 he turned over to the Commission of Accounts for the Province as Naval Officer £21/18/—collected as duty on the importation of rum. The period which it covered was not disclosed.

Like his father, he engaged in trade, but perhaps not so extensively. Anyhow on October 14, 1693, “William Dent, Gent., of Charles County, having sent for a parcel of Indian goods which are now arrived and being desirous to carry on a small trade with the Indians prays a license which was granted.”

Among his many duties both legal and legislative he found time to devote himself to the militia and defence of the Province. Before 1694 he was addressed as Captain. By 1694 he had been advanced to Major. In 1704 when he was commissioned His Majesty’s Attorney General, he was addressed as Lieutenant Colonel William Dent. In the same year he was styled Colonel when he attended a session of the Privy Council.

Having been reared in the traditions and faith of the Established Church of England with several ancestors ordained to the Clothe, he was prominent in the life of the community and when the Anglican or Episcopal Church was instituted the Established Church of Maryland, he and his brother-in-law, Gerard Fowke, Esq. were elected members of the vestry of Nanjemoy Parish, now called Durham Parish.

On May 1, 1694, styling himself as the son and heir of Thomas Dent, Gent., he deeded to Kenelm Cheseldyne, of St. George’s Hundred, Gent., “principall Vestryman” “Jenifer’s Gift”, of 100 acres, on Herring Creek which “was made over and conveyed to the said Thomas Dent in nature of a Trustee and for the use of the minister or ministry of Popular Hill Church and so to remaine forever” by Daniel Jenifer. Thereupon, William Dent conveyed to the vestry for “good and pious intent” and the further consideration of five shillings.

At the organization of King William School at Annapolis in 1696, now St. John’s College, he served on the first Board of Visitors. His educa-
tional responsibilities and interests were not only confined to the welfare of King William School, for he was on the commission to erect schools and foster education throughout the Province.

When Governor Francis Nicholson assembled the Privy Council prior to his acceptance of the Governorship of Virginia he advised that body that he was delivering the government to his Excellency Colonel Nathaniel Blakiston who His Majesty had appointed Governor. He recommended to his successor all persons whom he had left in the various offices, but “particularly Major William Dent and William Bladen whom he had always found very loyal to His Majesty and ready in their duty.”

That the Colonial Courthouse at Portobacco displayed the Royal Arms of England is evidenced by the fact that Major William Dent underwrote it and ordered it from Britain. At a court held in Charles County during March 1701/2, the High Sheriff was ordered to pay Major William Dent 1250 lbs. tob. for sending for “ye King’s Arms for the Court House.”

His wife, Elizabeth, whom he referred to as “my Dear and most respected wife” was alive when he executed his last will and testament on October 2, 1702. But before its probate a little more than two years thence, she had passed on and he had married Sarah Brooke, a daughter of Thomas and Anne Brooke and step-daughter to his sister Barbara (Dent) Brooke. Their nuptial life was necessarily brief and no issue resulted.

On June 14, 1704, Thomas Brooke assigned to his daughter, Sarah, a tract of land called “Dan” on Rock Creek. This was definitely her marriage dowry and her marriage to Colonel William Dent certainly followed shortly thereafter.

There are all reasons to believe that he presided over the closing session of the Lower House on October 3, 1704, certainly on September 30, according to record, but when the Lower House re-convened on December 5, 1704, he was deceased. At the opening session of that date, Henry de Coursey, Robert Goldsborough, Colonel Smallwood, Elias King and James Philipps were appointed to acquaint the Governor “that they were Come... to inform his Excell of the death of Col Wm Dent their Speaker and desired his Commands to make Choice of another.”

At the time of his death he was handling the affairs of Sir Thomas Lawrence, Bart. Her Majesty’s Secretary of the Province who was then in England. The Council reported that “it is thought fitting that the Council give order to some person to take care of Sir Thomas’ interest”. William Bladen was thereupon appointed.

His will with a codicil dated March 1, 1703/4, was probated in Charles County, on February 17, 1704/5, by John Beale, Gerard Fowke, William