

Pamphlets and Booklets

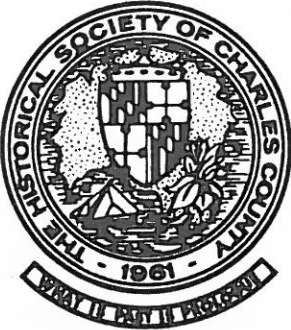
- 1. "La Plata" published by the A&P for the opening of its new store in 1958.
- 2. "Christmas in the County Seat": The Charles County Garden Club, La Plata, Md. 1979.
- 3. "The Glory That Was Port Tobacco", Society for the Restoration of Port Tobacco, 1955.

Additional Sources and Credits

- 1. The Senior Citizens of La Plata
- 2. The Senior Businessmen and Women of La Plata
- 3. Victor Bowling, Jr., Mayor of La Plata, 1981
- 4. John Newman, Town Manager of La Plata, 1981
- 5. Frederick Tilp, Architect AIA, Alexandria, Virginia
- 6. William Briscoe Stone Chapman, Jr.
- 7. Mrs. Harland Cravat, Mrs. Harry Wood, and the Brooke Matthews Family
- 8. The Davis Corporation
- 9. Observations by the author on the growth of the town where she has always lived and in which she was a teacher in a La Plata public school for 40 years

EDITOR'S NOTE

Articles of historic interest on Southern Maryland are needed for future issues of **The Record**. Please send articles and other communications to: Editor, **The Record**, P.O. Box 273, La Plata, Maryland 20646.



George C. Dyson, President

The RECORD

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Charles G. LaHood, Jr., Editor

Dent's Palace
PART 1

By Olga S. Hamer

Prologue

It is with pride, nostalgic memories, and a feeling of deep heritage, that I write about my birthplace. My goal in writing this article will be to delineate the historical background, the legends, and the happy events that were part of my childhood and maturing years; as well as customs and everyday events at Dent's Palace which are no longer a way of life to the present generation. Many customs of our way of life and our means of livelihood at that time are no longer a part of our social and economic structure. My children, because of economic and social changes, no longer know or need to experience the many interesting and obsolete ways of earning a living on a large farm in Southern Maryland. I lived on this farm known as "Dent's Palace" for twenty-nine years of my life, as a young girl and for four years after my marriage. The last four years I spent there while my husband was actively engaged in World War II as a Flight Instructor for the United States Army Air Force.

Historical Background

Records show that prior to 1720 John Dent, who was my sixth great-grandfather, had acquired several tracts of land which had been granted original patentees. In that year he petitioned the Lord Proprietor for a resurvey of his properties and some additional land. That new survey was made and the combined tract of 1169 acres was therein designated as "Dent's Inheritance, Trinity Parish, to be held of the Lord Proprietor's as Manour of Calverton."

It should be noted that the settlers in the Southern Maryland counties held the Indians in greater respect than did those who settled at the head of the Chesapeake Bay, in the region of the Susquehanna River. It had been intended that the Manour of Calverton should be settled by Adventurers and Indians alike in plots of fifty to one-hundred acres. The grant was later changed to Chaptico Manour, in honor of the Chaptico Indians. The manorial system lapsed prior to the American Revolution as the Colonies took on a character of a new and independent nature, and generally these holdings by tenancy were converted to fee and simple titles.

Following the death of John Dent, Sr., there was a division of Dent's Inheritance, and in 1754, one of her sons, Hatch Dent had his part resurveyed and repatented. In this patent, the property is referred to as "Dent's part of Dent's

Inheritance", and with some additional land is described as "reduced into one entire tract and called 'Dent's Palace'."

By his will of May 19, 1781, Hatch Dent, Sr., bequeathed to his son, Hezekiah, (Captain in Revolutionary War), Dent's Palace.

By his will of May 10, 1792, Hezekiah Dent bequeathed to his wife, Martha, for life "The free and entire use of all land I hold, part by the name of Dent's Palace", and directed that after her death, "the whole shall be sold and money arising from such sale shall be equally divided among my children." Martha Dent, widow of Hezekiah lived until 1824, and in 1826 the property was sold to their youngest daughter, Ann Dent and her husband Thomas O. Bean. Records of the deed show that he paid \$6.00 per acre for the land. The total acreage being 359 acres.

Records show that Hezekiah Dent owned real estate such as:

"Dent's Palace, Simpson's Coalback, and Cooksey's Duckpond"—359 acres—the amount of which paid by Thomas O. Bean was \$2,154.

From the year 1827 until 1862 Thomas O. Bean deeded away the following lands:

1827	F	William H. Smost	T	I.B. 17/348
1829	F	N. Stonestreet		18/458
1832	T	Walter Latimer	D/T	I.B. 20/150
1833	F	Walter Latimer	D	I.B. 20/508
1840	T	John Brady	D	I.B. 20/142
1840	T	Levi Dent	D	I.B. 24/151
1842	F	Henry B. Godwin	D	24/503
1846	F	Alex Mathis	WM	2/21
1847	T	Henry Good	WM	3/15
1849	T	Jane E. Johns	D WM	3/338
1851	T	Wm. S. Keech	D R H M	1/30
1862	F	Samuel T. Swann	D I W C	1/225
1862	F	Mary N. Mathis	G W C	1/167

Because of this transfer of lands, Dent's Palace acreage was reduced from 359 acres to 300 acres, more or less.

Thomas O. Bean's two grandsons Henry H. and James W. Bean, sons of Dr. Hezekiah Bean, were deeded the property of Dr. Hezekiah Bean. Since they were minors, the vestry of Trinity Episcopal Church went on their bond. The Charles County Courthouse records state as such, "Deed BG 521307—Henry H. Bean and James W. Bean from Fredrick Stone and John G. Mitchell Trustees—deed dated 12-1-1877—recorded 12-31-1877.

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Bobby Jones



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While the two sons were in ownership of the property, they gave a mortgage to Samuel K. George of Howard County. Equity records “7-20-1883—and recorded BGS 6-452—which sale was made after default occurred and was sold to Samuel K. George for \$3,240 to be paid with interest half yearly for five years from date of being.” Samuel K. George foreclosed the mortgage and on the Courthouse steps of Port Tobacco Maryland on July 28, 1886, my grandfather, Philip Briscoe Swann, bought at Public Auction from Samuel K. George and his wife, Ella C., the tract of ground known as Dent’s Palace for the sum of \$1,800 and recorded in Liber BGS No. 8, folio 616 of Land Records of Charles County

In 1890, my grandfather, Philip Briscoe Swann died three years after purchasing Dent’s Palace. He willed to my grandmother, Chloe Hatton and his children, Barney, Thomas Edward, Lillian, and Philip Briscoe, Jr. who was born three days posthumously, Dent’s Palace and two other farms not associated with the original tract. When my father, Thomas Edward Swann, reached majority (21) he paid off the other heirs for \$1,500 and obtained ownership of Dent’s Palace, the acreage being at that time 300 acres, more or less, as written in the deed Liber BGS No. 8 Folio 616. My father used the same deed as did my grandfather. My father, the last of the line of Dents to own and operate this farm, sold 280 acres of it, including the Palace, to Moultrie and Johnnie Lee Hitt on January 28, 1947. My father retained the 20 acres on the front of the farm which the author now owns. Moultrie and Johnnie Lee Hitt sold the farm to Arnold and Lillian Barnett, December 12, 1958. They are the present owners.



Dent’s Palace - 1958 photograph

Description of Dent’s Palace

Charles County has a wide range of frame construction homes, but perhaps is most famed for homes constructed with brick ends and frame sides. Rose Hill and LaGrange are noted

for this type of construction. Dent’s Palace is all brick and telescopic in design. It is a large brick house of three descending parts, each of three descending parts, each of distinctive age and each with somewhat of a personality of its own. The first and smallest part was built around 1720, the second 1730, the large part 1750. An old out door kitchen was still standing ding until around 1850.

The home is large and spacious. There are twelve rooms and three wide center halls. The entrance from the south as one enters a wide center hall, faces a beautiful walnut stairway with delicate hand railing rising to the third floor. The first landing is called a Port Tobacco Landing. This is where the stairway opens to the third floor and there is a window on the first landing. Double drawing rooms with folding doors open to the side creating one immense parlor. The floors constructed of heart pine are in perfect condition. These floors are called shiplap floors. The boards are rabbeted so that the lower edge of each board overlaps the upper edge of the next.

There is a delicacy and sturdiness about this home that is somewhat reminiscent of that at Myrtle Grove in Talbot County. There is a preciseness about the dormer windows. Those in the central portion break the roof line at the eaves, the balancing pair in the three storey section set back toward the roof crown in perfect relation to roof and flanking chimneys.

The original floor of the kitchen was made of large brick tiles brought from England. Their size was 10” by 10” . The very large fireplace with its original swinging crane still stands. On either side of the fireplace there were two large double-door cupboards, each five feet wide and five feet high. Under each cupboard there was an opening; in the one on the left of the fireplace was stored wood; and in the other a barrel of flour and a barrel of meal was kept which was used for bread for the family and for the many workers who were fed three meals daily from the big kitchen.

The bricks in the home, other than those on the original kitchen floor, were made by slaves on the farm much of the wood work and trim of the interior was brought from England. The doors of the two larger portions of the house are made of birds-eye maple. They are called witch-doors, the design made in form of a cross. The idea at that time was that this architectural design would cast out any evil spirits that might try to enter the home. The cellar is constructed under the central portion of the home. The walls were iron-mine stones; each stone about 30 inches in length and 12 inches high. The walls of two larger sections of the home are brick, 12 inches thick. All of the rooms are plastered. The plaster is made of lime sand, hair and even now is in perfect condition. There is a bedroom over the kitchen. It is a small room with one window known as a pent window. This room was referred to as the kitchen loft. It ascended from the kitchen by an open stairway. The railway was made of one solid board, three feet high. From the kitchen one ascends to the dining room by three steps. This is the second part of the telescopic house.

This room has four windows, two facing west and two facing east. Each window is receded into the brick wall three feet from the floor and has a window seat 10”deep. The window frames are solid walnut. Also there was a fireplace. The mantel in this room dates about 1720. From the dining room one

enters into the large center hall; the two entrances facing east and west. On the north side of the hall one enters the two large double parlors, each with its large fireplace. The hand carved mantels in each room are sunburst in design and were reportedly brought from England. The plastered cornices in the center hall and parlors are rare in their beauty and in perfect condition. On the second floor is a wide central hall leading to four large bedrooms each with its own fireplace and spacious closets, not usually found in the bedrooms of that architectural period. Each closet has a door. These closets are on either side of the fireplace and as the chimneys are flush (whose face is even with the outside wall) this gives ample room for the closets. On the third floor there is a center hall and leading off from this are three bedrooms, small in size. Two bedrooms have only one window; dormers facing west. The third bedroom also has one window; facing north. There is a small door leading to the side attic, used for storage.

Under the eaves of the large section of the house is a white trim which adds a rare beauty and a finished look. There are little blocks of wood running the length of the house which are joined to the bricks. This is known as Greek Key Trim.

The first and original porch on the front of the house was 10 feet wide and forty feet long, enclosed by shutters. This porch was in bad repair when my father took over the farm. He had another porch built of the same dimensions, but had it screened. When the Arnold Barnetts purchased the farm, they removed this porch and added a Georgian front. The lovely white columns rise to the second story. This home today is in excellent repair and the Arnold Barnetts can be proud that their home, so beautifully decorated with authentic 18th and 19th century period furnishings, is one of the loveliest in Southern Maryland.

The dimensions of the interior of the house are:

Kitchen	18’ by 15’
Dining Room	20’ by 20’
Parlor	each 22’ by 20’
Downstairs Hall	length 31’ by 6” width 13’ by 8”

Second Floor

Center Hall	12’ by 12’
Front Bedroom	22’ by 20’
North Bedroom	20’ by 20’
Center Bedroom or Nursery	12’ by 12’
East Bedroom	20’ by 20’

Third Floor

Hall	length 20’ width 12’
Bedrooms (3)	each 15’ by 15’

¹ Charles County Maryland Wills Liber A-1 #7
Folio 655, Maryland Hall of Records

More on Revolutionary War Soldiers
By Susan Shaffer

These men are examples of some of Charles County’s young people who left the area in the late Eighteenth Century, seeking a better life in the West. They and their descendants helped tame another wilderness, as their ancestors had done earlier in Maryland.

John Higdon

b. 18 July 1759, Charles County
d. 6 February 1836, Barren County, Kentucky
m. Margaret_____b. 17 February 1766
Mr. Higdon entered into service in June 1781, in Montgomery County, Maryland. He served as a Private and Corporal in the Maryland Line. After the Revolutionary War, he moved to North Carolina, where he lived for 13 years, then on to Tennessee. In 1801, he lived in Barren County, Kentucky. By 1833, he had applied for and had begun to receive his soldier’s pension. He listed fourteen children on his pension application.

Jacob Corbet

b. 1758, Charles County
d. _____
m. _____
Mr. Corbet was born in Port Tobacco, Maryland. He enlisted in 1777 in Charles County under Captain John Stone. He was a Private in the Maryland Line. After the War he moved away. The only record found was his pension application in 1826, from Washington County, Kentucky.

Bibliography for “The Town of La Plata” by Kathryn Cochrane Newcomb, which appeared in The Record, No. 22, May 1981.

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