

## **Fresh look at early Maryland Denbow family records reveals more questions than answers.**

The *Denbow Diaspora* recently hired a professional genealogist, Nathan Murphy, to look over our Maryland studies to date and see if he could identify holes in our research and point us in the proper direction for future research. Below you will find a summary of his findings. A much longer and more detailed report will be published in the next issue of this newsletter. In the meantime, please send any reactions or comments about this summary to the editor for his consideration.

### **Objective**

Extend pedigree of Thomas Denbow (died 1826 Harford County, Maryland)

### **Results**

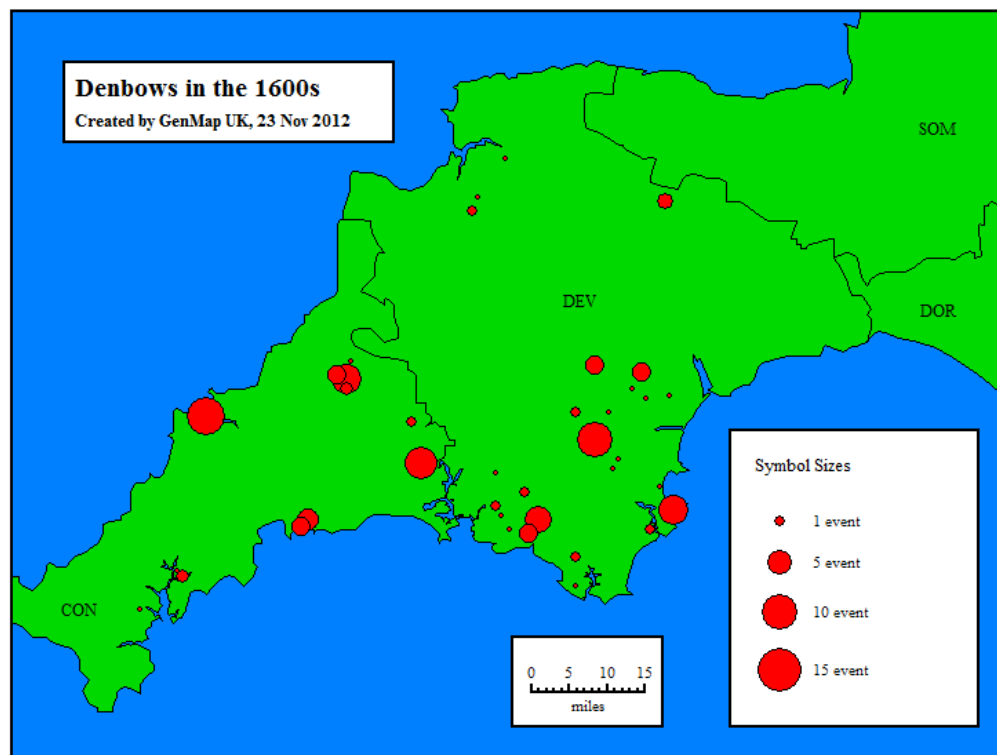
The most likely candidate for Thomas Denbow's (d. 1826) father is John Denbow, as you have pieced it together in your files. I would regard John as your earliest documented Denbow ancestor.

The parentage of John Denbow (who began baptizing children in the 1730s) is more problematic. I do not think he was the same John Denbow who paid taxes in 1704 as Barnes concluded. He could descend from that family though. Available records do not clarify the situation. There are few Maryland record types left to search. I'm afraid we have to make due with what records are available and try to reconstruct the family. Unindexed county court records at the Maryland State Archives, however, may provide further information.

Located a deed stating John Denbow (probably the 1663 immigrant) was leaving Cecil County in 1692. It would make sense that his children settled in adjacent Baltimore County. Found no other Denbows in the area in nearby Maryland or Delaware counties. The name disappears from Cecil County in the early 1700s.

Pinpointed parishes in England where the Denbow surname (or its variants) were

most common in the 1600s, when John Denbow decided to emigrate to Maryland. As you probably know, nearly all Denbows lived in Cornwall and Devon back then. The largest families at the time in Devon lived in Ashburton, Brixham, and Ermington parishes. In Cornwall, the heaviest concentrations were in Laneast, Padstow, and St Mellion.



Read all Denbow wills and administrations known to survive in England between 1600 and 1725. Found no references to Maryland kin in these documents.

Because there is no known will linking the family in America to the family in England, we must rely on parish registers to continue documentary research. Many parishes, unfortunately, did not record baptisms in the 1640s and 1650s (English Civil War and Interregnum), which are decades when immigrant John could have been born. In other words, a record of his baptism may or may not have been created.

Organized 100s of pre-1700 Denbow entries found in indexed English parish registers. Created maps to show the precise distribution of the surname. Here are the Johns of approximately the right age to be the immigrant that were discovered:

- John Denbow, baptized at Moreton Hampstead, Devon in 1658. He appears to have remained there, married in 1686, and raised his family. (unlikely the immigrant)
- John Denbow, baptized at Ermington, Devon in 1646. He was the son of Digory and Blanch Denbow. I believe you have corresponded with Digory's descendants. Do they know what happened to this son? (possibly the immigrant)
- John Denbow, baptized at Brixham, Devon in 1624. He appears to have left the area (unless he waited until he was 44 and married there in 1668 – which would have been quite old to take a bride in those days). (possibly the immigrant)
- John Denboe, baptized at St Mellion, Cornwall in 1636/7. He appears to have remained there, married in 1668, and raised a family. (unlikely the immigrant)

Identified Denbow genealogists who live in Australia, England, and Scotland. They may be able to help you recruit more DNA samples from English Denbow families. They state their ancestries extend back into Maine, Cornwall, and Devon. Do you know these folks? There are also several genealogists who list living Denbow individuals in their databases at GenesReunited. They should be invited to join your DNA project. DNA matches still hold the potential of helping you pinpoint your family's English origin and kin.

**Recommendations**

Search Devon and Cornwall parish registers that have not been indexed in places where our survey revealed Denbows lived in the mid-1600s. They may contain additional candidates for the baptism of immigrant John. Some of these records are available at the Family History Library (Salt Lake City, Utah), others would need to be searched by our agents at Devon's record offices. Searches should include Granville and Mugford's Abstracts of the Existing Transcripts of the Lost Parish-Registers of Devon, 1596-1644 (FHL British Book 942.35 V26g).

Double-check printed indexes to Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills and administrations from 1500 to 1750 to ensure the Devon Wills Project includes all Denbow wills proved there.



**Editors:**  
 Carl J. Denbow, Athens, Ohio  
 Email: [cjd@denbow.org](mailto:cjd@denbow.org)

James Denbow, Round Rock, Texas  
 Email: [jdenbow@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:jdenbow@mail.utexas.edu)

**Editorial Offices:**  
 17 Coventry Lane  
 Athens, Ohio 45701-3718

This newsletter is published quarterly, for the most part, by the co-editors, who are proud to claim that it is the only newsletter in the world "For Denbows by Denbows."

Contact Denbow genealogists with documented English pedigrees to recruit participants for the Denbow DNA Project.

To attempt to further solidify the Maryland pedigree, search court records of Cecil, Baltimore, and Harford counties at the Maryland State Archives (Annapolis). This would require at least a week of onsite research.

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\* Lynda Denbow Bible of Matagorda County, Texas, has informed the *Denbow Diaspora* newsletter of the passing of her parents: Elmer Denbow died in December 2006, at age 88; and Eloise Davis Denbow in May 2011, at age 93.

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# Twin Tales now Treble Trouble!

*Or . . . a follow-up article on how an Ohio Denbow may or may not have ended up “down under” — Complete with flow chart at the end to help keep players straight!*

**By Mark William Fletcher, Sydney, Australia**

In December 2009 I wrote an article about my family’s search for the true identity of GGrandfather, Thomas B. SPRING. I said back then that in polite circles Thomas would have probably been described as “a bit of a rogue.” He was always on the move, playing fast and loose in business, with relationships and, I believe, with the truth in general. When he died in Durban, South Africa, in 1922 he claimed to be Anglo-Canadian (b. abt.1851 in Toronto, Ontario). However, two generations of my family had tried and failed to reconcile this identity. The theory back then was that he was really a descendant of the Ohio DENBOWs. Now in light of some recent discoveries, our Thomas may turn out to be all I originally thought he was and more, better described as “a complete ratbag.”

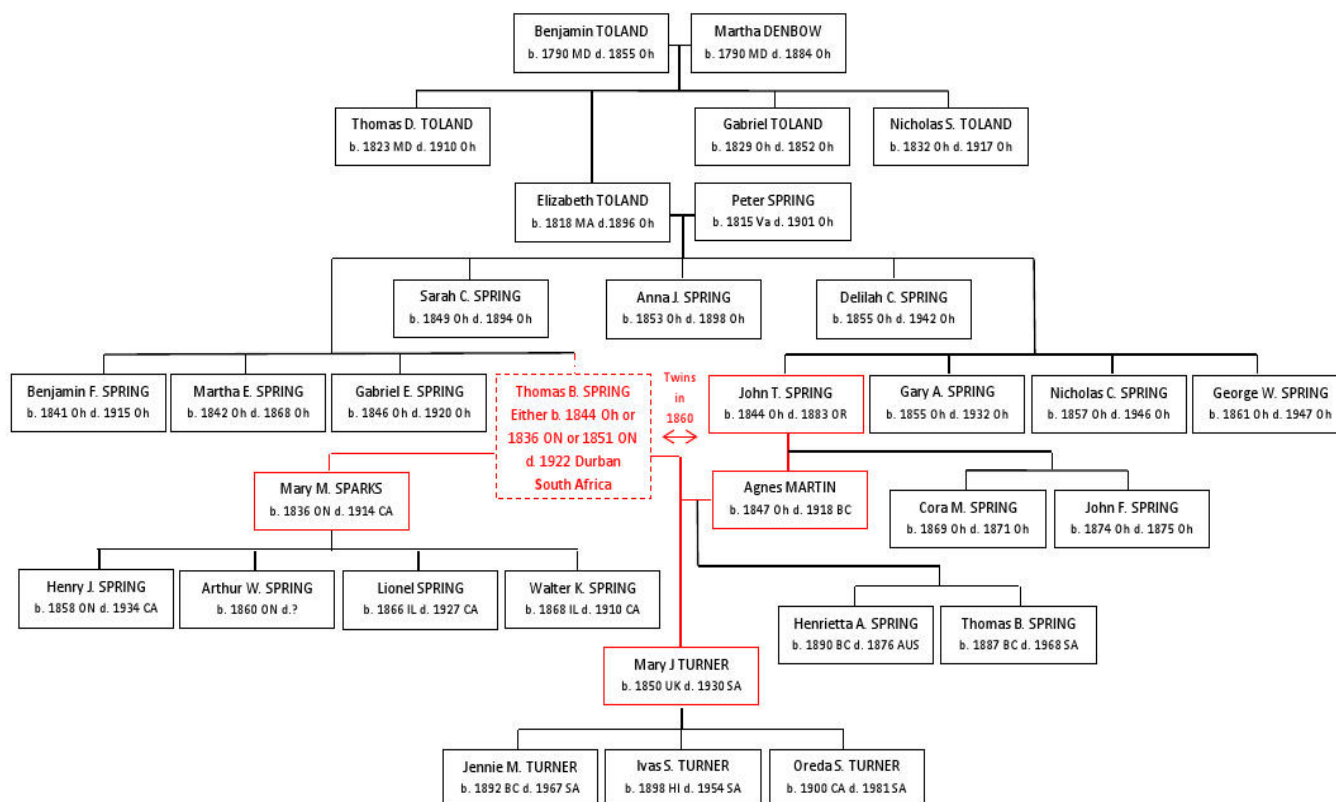
The fly in the genealogical ointment had always been that Thomas seemed to have appeared out of nowhere when he married my GGrandmother, Agnes MARTIN (b.1847 OH, d. 1918 BC) in 1884 Portland, Oregon. The other twist was that Agnes was already the widow of John T. SPRING (b. 1844 OH, d. 1883 OR), grandson of Martha DENBOW (b. 1790 MD, d. 1884 OH) and Benjamin TOLAND (b. 1790 MD, d. 1855 OH). For Agnes to have married two unrelated men called SPRING is a co-incidence that probably wouldn’t sit comfortably with most researchers. Added to this, there was strong evidence to suggest John T. SPRING, son of Peter SPRING (b. 1815 VA, d. 1901 OH) and Elizabeth TOLAND (b. 1818 MA, d. 1896 OH), had a mysterious missing Ohio twin brother whose name was also Thomas!

Subsequently I spent over a decade trying to discern the origins and outcomes of this missing SPRING twin brother who disappears from Ohio after 1860. At the same time, I was attempting to fill the gap between this disappearance and the appearance of my GGrandfather with Agnes MARTIN, 24 years later in Portland Oregon, in 1884. Recently however I’ve discovered another Thomas B. SPRING who was a resident at the time of Tacoma, Washington. This 3rd Thomas gets divorced in Tacoma the month before my Thomas appears and marries Agnes MARTIN in Portland. This 3rd Thomas is also everything our Thomas said he was, except he was born in 1836, in Toronto, Ontario, not 1851! I have also been able to make contact with the descendant of this 3rd Thomas and their research has him vanishing from Tacoma the same year as my Thomas appears with Agnes in Portland!



So now the story seems to be: my GGrandfather, Thomas B. SPRING, was born in 1836 in Toronto, Canada, and fathered nine children with three different women across Canada, the US, the Pacific and Africa. After marrying Mary M. SPARKS (b. 1836 ON, d. 1914 CA) in Toronto, in 1855, he assumes the identity of a New Yorker travelling west across the US chasing building opportunities with the Northern Pacific Railroad. Then after an acrimonious divorce in Tacoma in 1884, he leaves this 1st wife and children and relocates to Vancouver with 2nd wife Agnes MARTIN. There he reverts to the identity of a Canadian, but born in 1851 in Toronto, and chases building opportunities with the Canadian Pacific Railroad. He then abandons Agnes in Vancouver in 1895, but keeps the children and takes up with a 3rd woman, Mary J. TURNER (b. 1850 UK, d. 1930 SA) relocating to Durban, South Africa, via Hawaii sometime between 1890 and '95. Finally he widows this 3rd woman in Durban in 1922 leaving her children nothing, not even his name!

In an effort to avoid years of more research, and to reconcile the identity and age changes as well as the missing phantom DENBOW descended twin brother, Y-DNA testing is now underway between 2 male SPRING descendants of 1st wife Mary M. SPARKS and second wife Agnes MARTIN, one in California and the other in South Africa. However I remain open to further suggestions or contributions from any and all interested DENBOW researchers!





## **Mini-Reunion in Zanesville in August 2012: Lots of fun, story sharing and good food**

A reunion was held on Aug. 4, 2012 at the home of Larry and Kay Denbow in Zanesville, Ohio. More than 20 people signed the attendance book. They were, in addition to Larry and Kay: Carl and Jane Denbow, Athens, Ohio; Pat Denbow, Lancaster, Ohio; Gilda Haddox, Parkersburg, W.Va.; Floyd and Mabel Denbow, Woodsfield, Ohio; Susan Denbow Griffin, Cincinnati, Ohio; Sarah Wymer and Madison Dalton, Zanesville, Ohio; Johnny and Sandra Denbow, Lewisville, Ohio; Bonnie Denbow Miller, Pana, Illinois; Charyl Pingleton and Michael Pingleton, Dayton, Ohio; Mary Denbow Wymer, Zanesville, Ohio; Shaun Wymer, Zanesville, Ohio; Eric Wymer, Zanesville, Ohio; and James and Leah Denbow (along with Jamie, Autaleania, James, Brian and Danielle), Columbus, Ohio.

Activities included a sharing time where Denbow family stories both new and old were shared, lots of good food and beverages provided by the hosts and that brought by attendees, as well as time for individual conversations and fellowship.

On this and the following page you will find a few photos from the reunion. The group photo will be published in the next edition due to the fact that I'm embarrassed to admit I can't ID everyone in the photo, especially members of one family who came toward the end of the reunion.

You can view higher resolution versions of these photographs as well as additional reunion photos at the following url: <http://www.denbow.org/gallery3/index.php/Reunions/2012-Reunion>. Also, on the [denbow.org](http://www.denbow.org) photo gallery you can see photos of Carl and Jane Denbow's trip to Denbow Thatch and Denbow House near Exeter, England, this past summer.



On right (from l to r):  
Floyd Denbow and his  
wife Mabel, of Woods-  
field, and Bonnie  
Denbow Miller, of Pana,  
Illinois, prepare to leave  
the reunion after what  
we hope was a joyous  
and happy occasion.





**Top:** Johnny and Sandra Denbow, of Lewisville, Ohio, enjoy a Denbow anecdote being related during “Denbow Story Time” at the Reunion. **Bottom:** Gilda Haddox, of Parkersburg, W.Va., holds up the quilt that was made from the government-issue flag that had been placed on the casket of Thomas Denbow (1833-1903) at his funeral; Gilda is a direct line descendant of Tom, who served in the 77th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in the Late Rebellion.





**Left:** (l to r) Char Pingleton, son Michael Pingleton, and grandmother Bonnie Denbow Miller

**Bottom Left:** An original Sons of Veterans Medal brought to reunion by Bonnie. This is probably the medal originally owned by Elisha Sherman Denbow. In what is now called the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, these are known as “true sons.”

**Bottom Right:** Pat Denbow (standing), Kay Denbow (left) and Hannah Jane Denbow (right) listen to Denbow story time.

