

**ANDREW BENTON,
1620-1683;
A SKETCH**

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Andrew Benton, 1620-1683; a sketch by Josiah Henry Benton

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JOSIAH HENRY BENTON

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ANDREW BENTON

1620-1683

A Sketch

BY
JOSIAH HENRY BENTON, JR.



PRIVATELY PRINTED
The Herrymount Press
BOSTON
1900

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*I*N the preparation of this sketch I have been aided by Mr. Charles Towneley Martin, of Hartford, Connecticut, who is also a descendant of Andrew Benton. Mr. Martin has freely allowed me to make use of material gathered by him, and has also personally examined all the original records to which I refer. The sketch is the first part of a book soon to be printed, giving an account of Andrew Benton and of his descendants in my own line of descent. I print it separately now, thinking it may be of interest to all his descendants.

J. H. B., JR.

Andrew Benton

1620-1683

THE Bentons of New England are descended from Edward Benton and Andrew Benton, who came from England between 1630 and 1635. It is not now possible definitely to determine to what particular branch of the English family they belonged. That family was an ancient and honorable one, and was at one time quite numerous, especially in Wiltshire and in Essex. (*History of Rochford Hundred*, by Phillip Benton, pp. 394 *et seq.*)

There are six coats of arms belonging to the English Bentons, but as it is not yet possible to ascertain from which branch of the English family the Bentons of New England came, any of their descendants who covet a coat of arms must suit themselves at the risk of choosing a coat which they have no right to wear. I think, however, they may well be content to trace their lineage from Andrew and Edward Benton, plain yeomen from the English farms, who came to the new world to better their condition, and that they might own the land they tilled.

My earliest ancestor of whom I have as yet found any accurate information, is Andrew Benton, who was born in England in 1620, the year in which the *Mayflower* brought the Puritans to New England. His tombstone, still standing in the "Old Center Burying Ground" near the rear wall of the First Church in Hartford, Connecticut, and doubtless erected by his son Samuel, bears this inscription:—

ANDREW
BENTON AGED
63 YEARS
HE DYED IVLY
31 ANO 1683.

He probably came from England among those who settled first at Watertown in 1630, a portion of whom went to

ANDREW
BENTON
1620

Wethersfield and Hartford, Connecticut, in 1634 and 1635, and some of them to Milford in 1639.

The Indian name of Milford was Wepowage. It was purchased of the Indians by a committee for the planters, February 12, 1639, for the consideration of "6 coats, 10 blankets, 1 kettle, 12 hatchets, 12 hoes, 2 dozen knives and a dozen small glasses" (mirrors). The original settlers or "planters" are said to have come mostly from the counties of Essex, Hereford, and York, England. A number of them came with the Eaton and Davenport Company, and were at New Haven in 1638, their pastor being the Rev. Peter Prudden from Edgton, Yorkshire. While they were at New Haven they decided to settle at Wepowage at the head of a small harbor on Long Island Sound about ten miles from New Haven. Mr. Prudden preached at that time at Wethersfield, adjoining New Haven, and when he went with his church company from New Haven a number of the settlers in Wethersfield went with him, and became members of the Milford Church, organized at New Haven, August 22, 1639. These settlers from Wethersfield, of whom Andrew Benton was probably one, were from Watertown, Massachusetts, and a part of Sir Richard Saltonstall's company from Essex, England. The planters went from New Haven by the devious Indian trail, driving their cattle and other domestic animals with them, while their scanty household effects, farming utensils, and materials for a common house were taken by water. They erected a common house at the head of the harbor, and a few huts for temporary occupation, and then, as they were without the jurisdiction of any established settlement, they made a government of their own. November 20, 1639, they agreed that the power to elect officers and to manage the common interests of the plantation should be in the church only, and also that they would "guide themselves in all their doings by the written Word of God till such time as a body of laws should be established." They also chose five magistrates, directed that they should hold courts once in six weeks, and agreed as to the payments to be made by each person for the public charges, and November 24, 1640, "with the common consent and general vote of the freemen the plantation was named Milford."

The first record of Andrew Benton is in the list of the original settlers in 1639, but he is not recorded among the "free planters," which shows that he was not then in church fellowship. The Milford planters declared this to be a necessary qualification to "act in the choyce of public officers for the carrying on of public affays in this plantation." In the original allotment of Milford lands made in 1639, and recorded in 1646, Andrew Benton received lot 64 containing three acres, and shown on the accompanying plan. The record is: "Andrew Benton hath three acres be it more or less being bounded with a highway on the East, with George Clark Sen' on the South with the comon on the West, and with Edward Riggs on the North." (*Milford Land Records*, Vol. I. p. 80.) These lots were laid out in narrow parallel strips on each side of Mill River and West End Brook, doubtless for convenience of access to water.

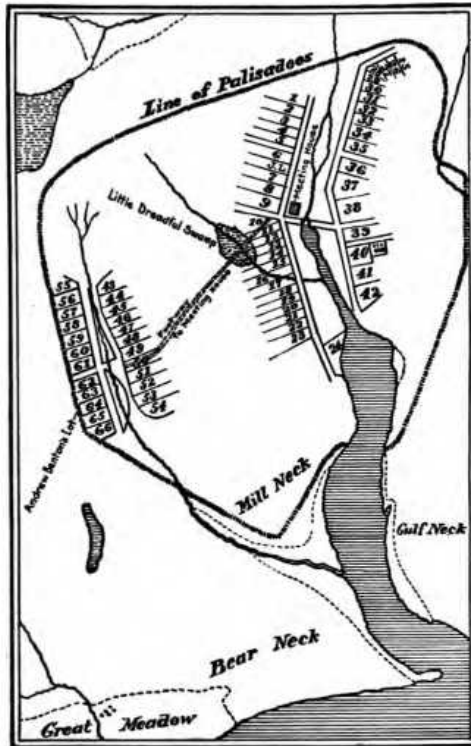
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BENTON
1620

By the original allotment each owner was required to build a good house on his lot within three years or it went back to the town, but this condition evidently was not strictly enforced. The houses of the settlers were not of logs, but were framed in the low lean-to style, and covered with split oak shingles. There were no division fences until 1645, by which time it is said most of the planters had built on their lots, though Andrew Benton may not have built until a year or two later.

All the lots were surrounded by "palisades" for common protection. These "palisades" were of the trunks of trees planted in the ground, and set so thickly that a man could not pass between them, making a fence ten or twelve feet in height, enclosing an area of nearly a mile square on both sides of the river. But for this the little settlement would probably have been destroyed at the time of the Indian combination against the white men in 1645 and 1646. At that time the settlers kept guard by sentinels every few rods along the whole line of "palisades" day and night. As early as March 10, 1640, the settlers organized themselves in military service, and provided that "every male above the age of 16 years, whether magistrates, ministers, or any other (though exempt from training, watching and warding) shall always be pro-

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[Herewith is given a plan of the original town plot of Milf



projected on a scale of three inches to a mile. The lot of And.
Benton is number 64 on the plan at the left of the plate.]