

New York, Sept 24, 1863.

Dear Sir:

I visited Europe a year ago this summer and spent some eighteen months there. While in England I made some inquiries into the history of our family name genealogy etc. The facts I have ascertained (or at least a part of them) with the traditions retained in the families in Rhode Island, New Jersey, Virginia and North Carolina, I will relate briefly and hope you will give me any information you may possess in confirmation or contradiction of them, for being mostly derived tradition they are very liable to be incorrect.

The name "Borden" is said to be by some of Norman extraction and was originally "Bourdon" which means a Palmer's or Pilgrim's staff. By others it is held to be derived from the Saxon word "Bour" which is the old Saxon word for a house or cottage and "dend" or den a Celtic word which means in the Ancient British language a woody dell dale or valley, the word "den" is a frequent termination in English Surnames and also of places, and always originally implied a situation in a woody valley. A learned writer in the Edinburgh review, April 1855 p 371) remarks that the word "den" is not found in any other Germanic or Teutonic dialect but the Anglo Saxon and was adopted into that form the old British or Celtic language. Our name then if not of Norman derivation allows us to be a Saxon family and the name means literally a cottage in a valley and is a combination of two words, one Saxon and the other Gallic or Celtic. John Borden, our ancestor, is said to have been born about 1607 in Borden Kent County, England, but that he married and settled first in Wales where his two oldest children Matthew and Elizabeth were born. The Hon. Jos. Borden, the proprietor of Bordentown, New Jersey, who was a delegate from New Jersey to the first American Congress which met in New York Oct. 1765, took some pains to trace the history of the family. It would seem he was the first contractor to carry mail between New York and Philadelphia and visited London to settle some controversy he had with the Colonial Post Office Department under Dr. Franklin. From his account it would appear that the family was of old English stock and resided many years in Kent before John Borden (the Emigrant) removed to the vicinity of Boston, Massachusetts, where he was temporarily located before he finally settled permanently at Portsmouth on the North end of the Island of Rhode Island. While in England, I went to the village of Borden in the North part of Kent. It is about forty miles a little South of East from London and about eleven easterly from Rochester and Chatham and fifteen North of West from Centerburg. The Bordens formerly held large landed estates in this part of Kent, and were distinguished among the landed gentry of that County. As

early as the 17th year of the reign of King John (1200) Simon De Borden made a donation of land to the Parish Church at Borden. The Church edifice is one of the oldest in England, having been erected as early as 1134 and as it now stands is a fine specimen of old Anglo Saxon period of Architecture. Philip De Borden is mentioned as having contributed yearly from his manor at Borden to the support of the Abbey of Radisgund and Osbert De Borden is recorded in the Charter in the time of Henry 3rd as having made handsome presents to the Monestery of St. Saxbury on the Isle of Sheppey which is an Island in the mouth of the Thames River about three miles north from the village of Borden. One of the family during the Reformation was Dean of Rochester. The name has however of late become extinct at Borden. Some of the family removed to other places in England and others emigrated to the English Colonies. The Church Records at Borden show the last person of the name buried there, was an old Bachelor named John Borden 1797. It is said that George Borden, brother of John, emigrated to Massachusetts before the latter but others contend that his name was Burden and not Borden and that he was not a near relative of John (the emigrant). It should be remarked that lower (lower) in his work on English Surnames says, "The singular name of Burden is a corruption of Bourdon, a Pilgrim's Staff, Vol. 1st, p. 205," One thing I have observed that wherever I have met with a person by the name of Borden of Quaker Hill in the Township of Portsmouth on the north end of the Island of Rhode Island as their progenitor. The coat of Arms of the family is as follows:
The field azure: A Chevron engrailed Ermine: The Bourdons of Pilgrims Staves in Chief: A cross crosslet in base. The Crest is a rampant lion standing on his sinister hind foot supporting or holding a battle axe. The motto is "Palma Virtuti"

The following extract from the Heraldic Office give some interesting information on the subject. It appears from the works of Berry Gueltine Burke and others on Heraldry on the books of family Crests that there are twelve coats of arms under the name of Bourdon Burden and Borden and all bear Pilgrims' Staves variously emblazoned and the crests are as uniformly a lion rampant; the battle axe and hautboy are the same as the Palmers Staff or take the place of it often in Heraldry; thus the Coat of Arms of one branch of the family is three battle axes and in another three hautboys and as many cross crosslets but the Bourdon or Pilgrims Staff is the appropriate device for the shield and a lion rampant is the proper crest belonging to the Coat of Arms of the family. John Borden the emigrant must have been born near the beginning of the 17th Century as he was reported to have lived to an advanced age of over ninety years. It is not now certainly known when he emigrated to America but tradition says about 1635 or 36 and the records of Rhode Island show him to have been a prominent citizen of Portsmouth as early as 1643. He was driven from his home in Mass. by the religious Zealots who then held power in both Church and State in the Colony of Mass. My grandfather, William Borden, Jr. was born in R. I. Feb. 6th, 1731. My father's grandfather was born at Portsmouth, Rhode Island. The father of the latter was John Borden, the 2nd, a son of John, the emigrant. This John Borden

Jr. as he is sometimes called John of the 2nd generation counting from the emigrant, had several sons one named Benjamin, went to England and visited the family in Kent. He was induced by his Lordship to go to Virginia as his land agent. He settled west of the Blue Ridge in or near Rockbridge County. Another son, brother of Benjamin, removed with some friends and began the settlement on the Delaware River at Bordentown, New Jersey. This family suffered much in the war of the Colonies against the Mother Country, having had their fine mansion burned at Bordentown.

My grandfather also had his property destroyed by fire in Cateret County, North Carolina. He was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention that met at Halifax in Dec. 1776 that founded the first constitution of North Carolina and was also a member of the State Convention which met at Hillsboro in July, 1788 that first rejected the constitution of the United States and again a member of one that met at Fayetteville in 1790 that finally ratified it. On both occasions he strenuously advocated the Federal Constitution. Those of the family who settled in North Carolina were Quakers and were annually visited by a committee of the yearly meeting of Rhode Island and hence I have heard from my father's oldest brother who was born in 1755 and died in 1840 that he well recollected their visits previous to the Revolutionary war and the traditions and historical reminiscences they always brought concerning the family in Rhode Island. If you have any facts or accounts in regard to the family, I would be much pleased to have you communicate them to me and it is for this purpose that I have written to you this long letter. After I have collected all the materials attainable at the present time I will submit them to you and I would be much pleased if you undertake the task of making out a correct and reliable memoir of the Borden family.

You will recollect me as a resident of Fort Wayne, Indiana and having acted with you in regard to the then proposed Rail Road from that place to Jeffersonville. Please address me here, care of Jeff Griswold & Kellogg, 126 & 128 Duane St.

I am Sir, very truly,

Your Obt Servant,

James W. Borden.

John Borden Esq.
Atty at law,
Chicago,
Ill.

John Borden

* John Borden 8th child born to Matthew & Joan. His brother Richard emigrated to New England about 1635 - settled in Portsmouth in 1638. Evelyn Borden Usrey is descended from Richard.

Evelyn Borden Usrey