

24 April 2022

Admiral William J. Fallon, Chairman  
Naval Historical Foundation  
PO Box 15304  
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Admiral Fallon:

A year ago, I was driving through rural South Carolina in search of the Civil War Battlefield at Rivers Bridge. Along an isolated country road, I stopped at a small cemetery. Downed limbs, leaves, and debris littered the cemetery, and many of the head stones were obscured by brush, vines, and weeds. Others have been broken and toppled. In several instances, trees have actually been allowed to grow around tombstones. The Old Bethel Presbyterian Cemetery was suffering from years of neglect.

One grave caught my attention. It was a family plot and partially surrounded by a broken wrought iron fence. A small American flag had been placed next to the tombstone, and a sad looking faded red plastic flower laid on top of the slab. I looked at the stone's engraving and was astonished by what I read; "John Herbert Dent, Captain US Navy, War of 1812, Feb 22, 1782 – Jul 29, 1823". My interest was piqued, and I was stunned by what I learned about this man.

John Herbert Dent was born on 22 February 1782 in Maryland, the eldest son of Congressman George Dent and Anne (Truman) Dent. His family had arrived in early Colonial times and had a long history of public service. At the age of 16, John received one of the earliest appointments as a midshipman in the newly created United States Navy. Dent was serving on the USS Constitution (Old Ironsides) when she captured the French frigate, *Insurgente*, in 1799.

During the First Barbary War (1801-1805), Dent served as the Acting Commander of the USS Constitution! Obviously, Captain Dent was a Naval officer whose leadership skills were greatly respected. Subsequent to the attack on Tripoli in 1804, Captain Dent served as the Captain of the USS Nautilus (1804-1805), USS Scourge (1805), USS Hornet (1806-1809), and USS John Adams (1810-1811). During the War of 1812, Captain Dent served as the Senior Officer in Charge of U.S. Naval Affairs in Charleston, SC.

Captain John Herbert Dent died on 29 July 1823 at his plantation home in Colleton County, South Carolina. Clearly, Captain John Herbert Dent, was both a US Naval legend and hero who served his country with distinction. In 1918, the newly constructed Wickes Class destroyer, DD-116, was named in his honor. The USS Dent served with distinction in both WW I and WW II.

As I stood over Captain Dent's grave my sadness turned into indignation. Captain Dent deserves better, much better. It is shameful that his burial site is unkempt, neglected, and permitted to deteriorate into such a shabby condition.

When I shared this information with one of my grandsons, 12-year-old William, he became interested in knowing more about Captain Dent and committed to joining me in "being part of the solution". On 19 March 2022, Will, along with his Mom and Dad and three brothers, spent the day at the cemetery, removing brush, raking leaves and debris, cutting down hanging limbs, and removing weeds and vines. We devoted special attention to Captain Dent's family plot (as well as other family plots), planting daffodil bulbs and placing American flags at the head of his grave.

The original fence that surrounds Captain Dent's gravesite has been damaged and one section is missing entirely. My Grandson thinks it only fitting that we now replace the fence. We have received a proposal from a local fence company, and they will incorporate the decorative scrolls from the original fence, that dates to the 1800's, into the replacement fence. Once the new fence has been fabricated and installed, our next project will be to repair and restore the marble slabs that cover Captain Dent's grave and that of his wife, Elizabeth Anne. My grandson and I have embarked upon a fund-raising program to honor the memory of Captain Dent and his service to our great nation by replacing the damaged fence and repairing the marble slabs.

Since your organization's mission is to promote the rich history and heritage of the United States Navy, I thought you would like to join us in honoring Captain Dent. He was one of the Navy's outstanding and respected officers, one who contributed so much to the legacy of the fledgling United States Navy and our emerging nation. I invite the Naval Historical Foundation to join us in honoring the memory of Captain John Herbert Dent. If your Foundation, you, or your Foundation Directors would like to support us, your tax-deductible donation (check made payable to Bethel Presbyterian Church) should be sent to the Bethel Presbyterian Church at 403 Church Street, Walterboro, SC 29488. Please be sure to indicate at the bottom of your check that your donation is for the ***Captain Dent Memorial Fund***.

Thank you for the wonderful work you do to honor the heritage of the United States Navy, your service to our great nation, and careful consideration of our request.

Bountiful Blessings,



Fred M. Apgar  
602 Trafford Lane  
Savannah, GA 31410  
206-940-7405  
[1ltintel@gmail.com](mailto:1ltintel@gmail.com)





**Captain Dent's Family Burial Plot  
Before Clean Up  
Note Broken Fence and Decorative Scrolls**





**Captain Dent's Family Plot Before and After**