

Darby Shawhan and Sarah Meeks: Some Historical Considerations

by Eric Shawn

Origins of the Surname & Variant Spellings

The mists of history shroud origins of the family surname and its variant spellings. The research of authors such as John O'Hart, Rev. Patrick Woulfe, Seamus Pender, Thomas Laffan, Robert Matheson and Edward MacLysaght assists our interpretation of these shrouded origins.

John O'Hart wrote in 1892 that the Dalcassians are one of three branches of the race of Heber.¹ Heber Fionn was the eldest son of Milesius and the first Milesian monarch of Ireland jointly with his brother Heremon. Heremon killed Heber in 1698 B.C.²

"Dalcassian" is the anglicised form of *Dal Cais*, the name given to descendants of Cas, descendant of Cormac Cas, king of Munster in the fifth century.³ The various families were located chiefly in the part of Thomond presently county Clare. The ruling family of these was the O'Briens, kings of Thomond.

The O'Sheehan's are one of about fifty of the primary families of the Dalcassian sept. The O'Cullen, O'Kenealy, and O'Sheehan were chiefs in the baronies of Conello, county Limerick.⁴

According to the Rev. Patrick Woulfe, O Shieghane, O Shehane, O'Sheehan, O'Sheahan, Sheehan, Sheahan, Shean, Sheen, and Shean are descendants of *Siodacan*, (diminutive of *riodac*, peaceful) the name of a Dalcassian family numerous throughout Munster, especially in Cork, Kerry and Limerick.⁵ O Sheahan, O Shaghan, Sheahan, Shahan, Shean, and Shane are derived from *Seadacain*, a common variation of *Siodacain*.⁶ Shehan is a variation of Sheehan.⁷ There is also an old Galway family who followed O'Kelly of Ui Maine.⁸

A number of variant spellings found in Seamus Pender's 1659 census of Ireland include Sheghane, Shehane, O'Sheghane, and O'Sheehane. O'Sheaghane and O'Shyghane are also found.

Variant surname spellings from the 1659 Census of Ireland.⁹

<u>County of Antrim</u>		<u># of People</u>
Barony of Belfast	Cannon	1
Richard Cannon, gentleman, is among the titalodoes listed in Belfaste Towne. 366 English, 223 Irish. 589 total. ¹⁰		

<u>County Cork</u>		<u># of People</u>
Barony of Kinalea	Sheghane	10
Ten Sheghane listed among the principall Irish names. The number of people: 234 English, 2,460 Irish. 2,694 total. ¹¹		

Barony of Kierycurrihy	Shehane	12
Twelve Shehane listed among the principall Irish names. The number of people: 168 English, 852 Irish. 1,020 total. ¹²		

... of Kilmore & Orrery	O'Sheghane	23
The number of people: 338 English, 2,847 Irish. 3,185 total. ¹³		

Moyalle Towne	O Shighane	9 ¹⁴
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the whole of the County Tipperary was taken from its lawful owners, and carefully allotted to English and Scottish settlers.”²³

Robert Matheson’s published list of surnames in Ireland includes Shane, Sheahan, Shean, Sheean, Sheen, and Shehan as variants of Sheehan, ranked 77th among one hundred of the principal surnames in 1890 Ireland.²⁴ One example of a given surname derived from a personal name is McShane (MacShawn in Irish), son of John.²⁵

Matheson describes “local variations in spelling and form, exhibiting the tendency of names to assume different forms in different localities; variations in spelling at pleasure; and changes owing to illiteracy and other causes.”²⁶ According to Matheson, the use of different names by the same person was a prevailing practice in parts of Ireland.

In 1890 the surname “Sheehan” was number 77 on the list of principal surnames in Ireland and there were estimated to be 9,600 people bearing this name.

Celtic is the predominant element in the Irish population. Many names retain the prefixes O and Mac. O is peculiar to Ireland. Mac is used in both Ireland and Scotland. It is common to find the same name in a record written with and without the prefix. In many cases the prefixes have been dropped.

It is very difficult to determine whether families are of Celtic or English descendants. Some English settlers took Irish names. Some Irish families were compelled to take English names. By a statute of 1366 it was required that “Every Englishman do use the English language, and be named by an English name, leaving off entirely the manner of naming used by the Irish.” In 1465 a law was passed “that every Irishman that dwells betwixt or amongst Englishmen in the County of Dublin, Myeth, Vriell and Kildare...shall take to him an English Surname of one town....or colour...or art or science...or office....”

The Shawn and Shawhan spellings do not appear in Matheson’s Special Report on Surnames in Ireland published in 1909. The closest similarities are the names Shane, Sheahan, Shean, Sheean, Sheen, Shehan and Shine, which are listed as varieties and synonyms of the principal name, Sheehan. According to Edward MacLysaght, Chair of the Irish Manuscripts Commission and author of Irish Families: Their Names, Arms and Origins, Sheehan (Sheahan, O’Sheehan) was the seventy-fifth most common name in 1957. The majority was born in Co. Cork or on its borders in the adjacent counties of Kerry and Limerick. In Irish the name Sheehan is O’ Siodhachain. There is an O’Sheaghyn mentioned in the Fiants of 1543 as Chief of His Nation in southern Co. Galway but this was not an O’Sheehan. O’Sheaghyn in that instance was an effort on the part of a foreign official to write the name O’Shaughnessy.

At the same time, one finds McShan, McShane, Shane and Shonahan listed as variants and synonyms of the principal name, Johnston, (thirty-third most common name in Ireland) meaning son of John. In this case, McShan, McShane, Shane and Shonahan are either Irish forms of English names or English forms of Irish names. McShane, for example, is the Anglicized form of the Irish “MacShawn”, meaning son of John and a principal name in its own right, though not among the one hundred most common. McShane (son of Shane or Shawn (Irish for John) is in use interchangeably with Johnston, Johnson or Jonson (son of John.) It is also common to find in the same record the same Celtic names written with and without the prefixes O and Mac. Based on Matheson’s report “Shawn” is the Celtic spelling of the Irish form of John still in use in Ireland.

Among the pertinent first names found in the records some are used interchangeably. For example both “Nahor” and “Conner” are used interchangeably for Cornelius. The Anglicised Irish forms of English names also include “Dhonal” for Daniel, “Shane” for John and “Tiege” for Timothy. Darby, Dermot, Diarmid and Diarmud are forms for Jeremiah.

The pattern which may be significant is that individuals with given names of Darby, Daniel and Cornelius are found in the Tipperary Hearth Money Rolls of 1665, are listed in the administrative records of Barbados in 1679 and appear in the Maryland Hall of Records after 1700. It remains possible that these names reflect a common kinship group.

Edward MacLysaght describes SHEEHAN an alternate spelling of Sheahan. In Irish the name is *Ó Siodhacháin*. According to MacLysaght, Celtic scholars question Woulfe’s conclusion that *Siodacan* is a diminutive of *riodac*, peaceful.²⁷ MacLysaght agrees with Woulfe that the sept originated as a Dalcassian one. He agrees that the O’Sheaghyn

mentioned in Galway was not an O'Sheehan but rather the result of the gross attempt of a foreign official to write down the name O'Shaughnessy.

By way of background, MacLysaght writes:

"The subject of Irish families is one in which much interest is evinced, but the popular books usually consulted and regarded as authoritative, particularly in America, are in fact unreliable. The inaccurate and misleading information thus imparted with cumulative effect is, however, much more deplorable in the armorial sphere than in the genealogical." "The serious genealogist uses O'Hart (Irish Pedigrees) with caution, if at all, for he is a far from reliable authority except for the quite modern period."²⁸

"... it is a pleasure to be able to say that there exists a book which deserves high praise: the Reverend Patrick Woulfe's Irish Names and Surnames."²⁹

"There is no doubt that up to the middle of the seventeenth century many of the labouring class had no hereditary surnames."³⁰

Colonial Records

Maryland records show that the ship *Encrease of Youghal*, Ireland carried Thomas Shehawne and Cornelius Sheehane to Talbot County, Maryland in 1679. Barbados records include given names of Dearman, Teague, Cornelius, Derby, Daniel, John, Edward, Thomas and Mary. Last name spellings include Shoham, Shahane, Shahan, Shon, Shenehan, Skahane, Shehan. In the course of research into the Cornelius branch, Elizabeth Shahan has come across over thirty variations in the spelling.

"Cornelius, his son and grandson, (both named David) are listed variously as Sheehane; Shehane; Sheehan; Shehan; Shehaan; Shahan; Shehawn; Sheehawn; Sheehon; Shehon; Shehom; Sheehorn; and Shehorn, Shahorn, and Shahorne."³¹

For example, the spelling progresses from Cornelius Shehane to David Shehawne to David Shehorn to John Shehan. David Shehorn's other children continue the Shehorn spelling.

Also on the Eastern Shore were Daniel, Darby, Dennis, Patrick and Thomas with spellings including Shehawne; Shehaun; Shawvin; Shawhan; Shawn; Shawhawn, Shauhaun, and Shaughan. The last name of the Thomas who arrived in 1679 aboard the ship "Encrease" was spelled Shehawne. In 1713 the Dorchester county clerk wrote Shehane and Shehan in the same document. The Shehawn and Shawhane spellings continue through the century and continue with the migration to North Carolina.

Depending on the individual record, the last name of Darby who married Sarah Meeks was spelled Shawhawn (1707 marriage record), Shehan (Shad's Hole property record), Shawhan, Shehorne (bond), Sheighane (patent for Darby's Desire), and Shawn (1733 debt records and will of 1735). A Darby Shohon died in 1721 in St. Mary's County, Maryland. His wife was named Elizabeth.

A Daniel Shehawne died in Talbot County in 1714 and another Daniel Shawhan witnessed the will of William Huddleston in Kent Co., in 1728. The Shehawn spelling is used in the 1733 tax list for Talbot Co. Daniel, son of Darby Shawhan and Sarah Meeks, left the Eastern Shore of Maryland in 1740 and began this branch's migration to Western Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania. The Daniel branch of Darby maintains the Shawhan spelling.

The Shawhorn spelling was used to record the marriage of John and Elizabeth and the birth of their son, Daniel, in Kent County, Maryland, in 1735. Various spellings including Shawhan, Shawhawn, Shawn, and Shehawn are found in the records. The John branch of Darby maintains a presence on the Eastern Shore of Maryland to the present time. The John branch of Darby uses the Shawn spelling.

Conclusion

Not only did members of the working class have no surnames until after the middle of the seventeenth century, surname spellings were as varied as the mixture of illiterate workers and inaccurate scribes. The Shahan, Shawhan and Shawn spellings are among many, which seem to derive from the Sheehan's of Ireland. The spellings of our various family branches on the Eastern Shore of Maryland come to us out of the mists of history.

Naming Practices

According to Margaret Falley, the immigrant more often than not named his eldest son in honor of his father and another son for his grandfather. The two elder daughters were named after their grandmothers.³²

According to Elizabeth Shahan, the Irish were almost religious in their naming practices:³³

- 1st son named for the paternal grandfather
- 1st daughter named for paternal grandmother
- 2nd son named for maternal grandfather
- 2nd daughter named for maternal grandmother
- 3rd son named for the father
- 3rd daughter named for the mother

This practice may or may not have been followed closely by the Shahawn, Shawn and Shahan family branches on the Eastern Shore.

Migratory Routes

The family's pathway to this country has slightly more clarity than the history of its name. Isobel Chandler Madsen writes of an unconfirmed family tradition describing four brothers on their way to America when their parents died at sea.³⁴ Robert Benson Shawn passed along an equally unconfirmed story of the family arriving on the Eastern Shore before the Mayflower.

Regardless of tradition, the principal voyages of discovery to the Eastern Shore of what is now the United States followed four paths. First, Columbus sailed from Spain and the Canary Islands, almost due west to San Salvador in 1492. Second, later voyages of Columbus and Vespucci from 1493 to 1504 followed a more southerly route from the Canary Islands to the West Indies. Third, in 1497-8, John Cabot, under the English flag, sailed northerly courses to Newfoundland and the area, which later became New England. Fourth, in 1524, Verrazano, under the French flag, sailed south from France to the Madeira Islands and almost due west to area of the Virginia coast. Although no record of family members landing on the Eastern Shore prior to 1679 has been found, these early voyages warrant future research.

Carl and Roberta Bridenbaugh wrote that ships crossing the Atlantic with cargoes of servants usually made direct for Barbados, the first island ships would reach in the West Indies.³⁵ Seldom did they stop at the smaller Leeward Islands. Maps of ocean currents and shipping routes help us understand this likely path the ship "Encrease", with Thomas and Cornelius aboard would have taken from Ireland to Maryland. Ships from Great Britain, following the path of Columbus and Vespucci, caught the Canary Current off the coast of Portugal, and continued down the coast of Africa past the Canary Islands, before linking up with the North Equatorial Current and heading to the West Indies.

In Ireland itself a number of resources help us locate potential family members. Among the earliest of available sources with family names is the Civil Survey of Ireland, which was undertaken between 1654 and 1656. Another is the Hearth Money Rent Roll. This latter was a tax rolls drawn up between 1663 and 1666 to list all households with a fireplace. The list exists in full for the Ulster counties of Antrim, Armagh, Donegal, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Monaghan and Tyrone. Parts of others exist as well, such as the Hearth Money Records for County Tipperary. (Laffan, Thomas. Tipperary's Families: Being the Hearth Money Records for 1665-6-7. Dublin: James Duffy & Co., 1911.)

Other valuable sources include Edward MacLysaght's Irish Families: Their Names, Arms and Origins. Dublin: Hodges

Figgis & Co., 1957. This author was Chair of the Irish Manuscripts Commission, formerly Chief Herald of Ireland. It is MacLysaght who points out that O'Hart's Irish Pedigrees is used with caution, if at all, by the serious genealogist. Also used as sources for this edition are Robert E. Matheson's Special Report on Surnames in Ireland. Dublin: Alex. Thom & Co., 1909, and his Varieties and Synonyms of Surnames and Christian Names in Ireland. Dublin: Dublin: Alex. Thom & Co., 1901.

Ireland and Irish Emigration in the 1600's

According to Murray, following the "Rebellion of 1641," (the thirteen years war of 1641-1654) approximately half the available land in Ireland was confiscated by the British Crown. Between five and six hundred thousand men, women and children were slaughtered, or died from starvation. Many thousand were sent to the West Indies, or to the American colonies, and sold as slaves. Over one hundred thousand young children who had been made orphan were sent to the West Indies, to Virginia, or to New England.

Cromwell conquered part of the island in 1651, his government wanted to remove the entire native population to the

western counties of Connaught and Claire and to replace them with Protestant Irish and English soldiers. In the resulting social disorganization (Smith, p. 163) the vast majority of people leaving Ireland during these years went to Spain and Flanders. It is estimated that 40,000 persons were transported from Ireland between 1651 and 1654 (Sir William Petty The Political Anatomy of Ireland, London, 1691, ch. Iv.) It was not until 1654 that numbers going to the colonies became considerable.

John P. Prendergast writes in his Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland (Dublin, 1875, pp. 88-93) that English government officials "had agents actively employed throughout Ireland, seizing women, orphans, and the destitute, to be transported to the Barbadoes and the English Plantations in America." "Captain John Vernon was employed...(1653)...to supply...two hundred and fifty women of the Irish nation above twelve years, and under the age of forty-five, also three hundred men above the age of twelve years, and under fifty, to be found in the country within twenty miles of Cork, Youghal, and Kinsale, Waterford, and Wexford, to transport them to New England."

The fundamental cause for economic conditions in Ireland was political. Emigration of servants from Ireland was great throughout the 17th, 18th & 19th centuries because of these unstable conditions on the island (Smith, p. 174.)

TIPPERARY 1665-1667

The following is taken from Thomas Laffan, Tipperary's Families: Being the Hearth Money Records for 1665-67. Dublin: James Duffy & Co., 1911.

The lists of names in the hearth money records were drawn up less than twenty years after the slaughter connected with the Cromwellian war. In the Cromwellian Settlement most of the Irish inhabitants were ordered to depart to Connaught, where they were assigned to live. The former holdings of the Irish were distributed to Cromwell's soldiers. The whole of County Tipperary was taken from its lawful owners and allotted to English and Scotch settlers as reward for services rendered. What is surprising is that most of the names listed in the hearth money records are those of native Irish. This bears testimony to the tenacity of the Irish as well as to circumstances of the time. First, the English and Scotch soldiers who occupied the land were unused to farming and probably lacked the skill essential to success on Irish soil. Second, being located on separate parcels of land they were exposed to attack by those Irish who rather than moving to Connaught took to the hills and bogs. Third, a good number of the Cromwellian landlords kept the native Irish as tenants, though this was against the Law of Transportation.

These hearth money lists represent the inhabitants of Tipperary five years after the restoration of Charles II and thirteen years after the surrender of the last organized Irish force. 1665 is the first year the tax was levied in Tipperary. Only the name of the head of the family appears. (According to MacLysaght, up to the middle of the seventeenth century many of the labouring class had no hereditary surnames.) The owner or occupiers of the house was taxed two shillings sterling for every fire, hearth, stove or other place used for firing.

To place this in the context of Maryland and our present family records, Thomas and Cornelius Shehawn came to Maryland aboard the ship *Encrease* out of Youghal, Ireland in 1678, thirteen years after the hearth money tax of 1665. Based on documents researched so far, the only ship coming out of Ireland to Maryland between 1634 and 1679 is the *Encrease*.

Following are names of interest found in the rolls. The last name spellings are listed in the index under Sheehan as variant spellings of the Sheehan name. Darby and Daniel are among the earliest first names found in family records in Maryland.

Teige O'Shigane, Parochia de Burriny, Baronia de Elliogurty and Ikyryn.

Edmund O'Shehane, Killorney, Parishes of Lissronagh, Killygrant & Rathronane, Barony de Kiltemanagh.

Darby Shehane. 1 hearth & 1 forge, Templenny, Parishes of Killshillane, Templeruny & Killcogoane,

Donnogh O'Shahane. Ballybeggane, Parishes of Templeniry and Cloneloffe

Daniell Shehan. Rosgeile, Parish of Killneragh (in Owny)

Connor Sheehane. Bollteen, Parish of Anamedull.

Settlement of the Eastern Shore of Maryland to 1709

Settlement of the Eastern shore beyond Kent Island began in the 1660s.³⁶ Initial settlement took place in the Great Choptank area (Talbot County) because the Choptank River was closer than the Chester River to the mouth of Chesapeake Bay and closer to the Atlantic tobacco trade.

The Eastern Shore became a coastal society and Talbot County planters dominated the region's early economic development.³⁷ The first farmers to arrive in the region between the Chester and Great Choptank Rivers found food scarce.

The first English settlers in Talbot and Kent counties began clearing farmland in the 1660s to plant tobacco.³⁸ The taxable population of Talbot grew to 620 people between the first settlement around 1660 and 1672. With Kent County, over 1,000 colonists lived on the Eastern Shore.³⁹

“Once settlement moved inland beyond the sites that had been planted by Indians, the colonists faced a bleak task, so arduous that it provided succeeding generations of Americans with one of their most forceful figures of speech denoting hard work - clearing the ground. A settler could clear in a year no more than an acre or two, and in a lifetime he would have less than a hundred acres of cultivable land and pasture to pass on to a son. It took about a half century to carve a farm with cleared fields out of the wilderness.

Much has been made of the so-called Protestant work ethic the early settlers brought with them. It would be truer to say that the demands of clearing the ground created such an ethic. England, with its surplus of labor, was a land of underemployed people who averaged about four hours a day at their work. American might be a land rich and fat, but it asked more work than that from someone who expected to survive.”⁴⁰

The Eastern Shore of Maryland

The distinctive difference between produce from English villages and tobacco was that tobacco had only exchange value. Chesapeake planters sold what tobacco they could and bought most of the household goods they needed from English merchants. The importance of tobacco as a market crop was the distinguishing feature of the Eastern Shore economy.

“For at least a generation most farmers worked the land with hand tools. Plows were uncommon until the 1670s, and even when plows came in they, too, were made from wood, sculptured from ash or oak usually; because their final form depended on the workman’s talent no two looked alike. The late arrival of plows, which awaited the arrival of oxen and horses powerful enough to pull them, kept all farmers imprisoned in a pattern of garden husbandry, as opposed to field husbandry, that lasted through most of the century. Meanwhile, the hoe, the shovel, and the mattock were used to cultivate the land.”⁴¹

In order to clear the land, fell the trees, plant the crops and ship tobacco to Europe, London and Bristol merchants induced English and Irish poor to come to the Chesapeake as servants and later forced African and West Indian blacks to come as slaves.⁴²

“Clearing in the Chesapeake began by girdling the trees, a technique that probably was learned from the Indians though it was known in England. ... Soon sunlight filtered through the withered branches and the farmer planted beneath them.”⁴³

“The Chesapeake settlers displayed their second innovative response to America in the way they fenced their lands. Fences were obligatory in America, and they had to be ‘pig-tight, horse-high, and bull-strong.’” The Chesapeake region quickly settled on a program that called for settlers to fence in their crops and fence out their livestock, letting cattle and other domestic animals run wild in the surrounding forest.”⁴⁴

The cost of transporting servants from Ireland cost around £4 (1,000 pounds of tobacco) to £5. The cost from Hull, England was £6 for a servant and £12 for a freeman. Most of the people who came after 1670, in the absence of capital, accepted passage in return for selling their services upon arrival in Maryland. The Headrights became the property of the ship captain who sold them to local speculators.

According to Lois Green Carr and Russell R. Menard, 70% of colonists who came to Maryland between 1634 and 1681 arrived as indentured servants.⁴⁵

“The Navigation Acts of the early 1660s included Ireland as part of England: Irish trade was not differentiated until the 1670s. Trade between the colonies and Ireland was temporarily excluded, but it flourished when such restrictions were not in force; in any case, colonial exclusions were notoriously easy to evade. The colonies of Irish in the West Indies, notably Trinidad and Montserrat, and the Irish addiction to tobacco, created a ready-made network.”⁴⁶

“In 1660 Bristol and Chester (and Minehead for cattle) were still the traditional ports for Irish produce, though by 1700 the emphasis had shifted to Liverpool.”⁴⁷

Excursus: The Voyage

“...the Atlantic crossing of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was perhaps the most arduous and dangerous adventure in which large numbers of ordinary people have ever engaged. It meant eight or ten weeks, more or less, in a vessel of fifty, a hundred, or two hundred tons, usually cooped up with many other passengers, threatened by pirates and hostile navies as well as by ordinary perils of wind and sea, and frequently tortured by seasickness if by no worse ills.”⁴⁸

St. Paul’s Parish, Kent County, Maryland

St. Paul’s is one of thirty Maryland parishes formed by the Act of Establishment in 1693. The first vestry meeting was held in January 1693 in the house of Thomas Joce at New Yarmouth, at that time a commercial center on Eastern Neck, just north of Kent Island. There is physical evidence that a church building was standing in the New Yarmouth area prior to the Act of Establishment.

In 1695 the Vestry hired Daniel Norris to build a church at the present location of St. Paul's (west fork of Langford's Creek) on a parcel of land belonging to Michael Miller. The Vestry sued builder Daniel Norris on November 27, 1707 (seven days after the date of the Shawhan-Meeks wedding) for an unfulfilled contract. In 1711 the Vestry contracted with James Harris and the present church was built in 1713, reflecting the inland shift of the population.

The marriage of Darby and Sarah (1707) pre-dates the existing church building (1713) by six years and likely took place at the church building in the New Yarmouth area, eight to ten miles south (by way of Langford's Creek) of the present site of St. Paul's Church. Darby, Sarah and two children — Daniel and John — were living at Shad's Hole (in Shrewsbury Parish) by the time the present church at St. Paul's was built.

The Headright System & Indentured Servitude 1633 - 1683

The partition of land among original settlers occurred through the headright system. The proprietary government (since 1633) granted immigrants, freed servants and people who transported people to the colony the right — known as a headright — to have fifty acres of land surveyed and patented. The headright was the right to have land, not an actual grant of land. The owner of the headright still had to locate the land as well as pay surveyor's and clerk's fees to lay out and patent the land. Many immigrants sold their headrights, which became a commodity, traded on the open market.⁴⁹

The cost of land was 400 pounds of tobacco. A new planter needed between 50 and 100 acres to begin farming on the Eastern Shore. The Headright system ended in 1683.⁵⁰

Servitude

“A servant's life was not easy.... Probably they worked the ten to fourteen hours a day, six days a week specified in the famous Elizabethan Statute of Artificers. Servants could be sold, and there were severe penalties for running away. They were subject to the discipline of their masters, including corporal punishment within reason. On the other hand, servants had rights to adequate food, clothing, shelter, and a Sunday free from hard labor. Servants could not sue at common law, but they could protest ill-treatment and receive a hearing in the courts.”⁵¹

The usual period of service was four years, with some indentures extending to five, seven or occasionally fourteen years. Roughly forty percent of those who immigrated under indentures during the middle decades died before finishing their terms. A substantial number died of a vague complex of diseases that contemporaries called “seasoning.” Males who reached the age of twenty-two could expect to die in their early forties. Seventy percent failed to reach their fiftieth birthday. At the end of the period of service, the planter owed the freedman three barrels of corn, a suit of clothes, an axe and a hoe.⁵²

From the 1660s to the 1680s servitude was followed by tenancy and tenancy by landownership. After the 1680s tenancy following servitude became a permanent condition. By the end of the 1600s about half of those who owned land on the Eastern Shore were linked by birth or marriage to some other landowner.

From 1660 to the early 1670s most immigration was free. The servant trade peaked in 1680.

“About a third of those who emigrated to northern colonies in the seventeenth century came as servants. In the Chesapeake the ratio was even higher — above 40 percent. There were exceptions, but most of these young men and women came from the working class and had few skills.”

“The combination of hard times at home and labor demand in the colonies, facilitated by a well-organized servant trade in the chief English port towns, drew thousands of people who knew little or nothing of the Chesapeake or the Caribbean into emigration abroad. Only such an explanation can explain why English laborers flocked in great numbers to Virginia and Barbados at a time when disease, mortality rates, and agricultural working conditions were so disadvantageous to newcomers.”⁵³

Dower Rights, Marriage and Family

In Old England and New England parents held long-lasting influence over the lives of their children. The head of the household had patriarchal authority. Children did not acquire economic independence until well after reaching legal age. Marriage required parental consent as well as a marriage settlement.

“Marriage, in England a standardized ceremony controlled by the Anglican church, took on a variety of forms in America. The steps leading to it remained fairly constant - negotiations between parents or guardians over the dowry, followed by a betrothal, or engagement as it would later be called - but the ceremony itself differed widely. The Dutch and Pennsylvania Germans performed it in their native languages. The Quakers held it in their meetinghouses, where to the astonishment of strangers a couple without benefit of clergy or any secular authority married themselves with vows often of their own devising. In the South the Anglican rite embedded in the Book of Common Prayer remained intact, but local government interjected itself into what had once been the exclusive domain of the church. Publication of banns, which had sufficed at home to alert a village of an impending marriage, failed to work among the dispersed settlements of the Chesapeake. Some way had to be found to spread the word to all - parents, guardians, masters, and kinfolk - of the intended event, and to that end the marriage license, issued by the county clerk, was created.”⁵⁴

In contrast, immigrants to the Chesapeake experienced an immediate disruption in the patterns of family life.⁵⁵ Break with family in Europe tended to be complete upon departure from England or Ireland. Few came as family groups. A majority of immigrants were young and single. Males outnumbered females three to one. Three-quarters arrived as indentured servants and were not free to marry until indenture was complete. They married late. Most were brief. One half of all marriages ended within seven years with the death of one or other spouse.

The farmers' difficulties were the greatest between 1689 and 1713, a time of almost continuous war between England and France.

In the middle range of wealth were small planters with estates ranging from 100 to 300 pounds in value. These constituted the most numerous and productive class in Eastern Shore society.

“The tobacco and corn planting seasons coincided, which often meant that he failed to plant enough corn to carry the family through the year. He knew that tobacco wore out the soil in three or four years, yet he failed to fertilize his fields. Not out of ignorance, however, but because his livestock grazed in the woods and, more important, because merchants told him that fertilized fields produced a leaf that tasted of manure.”⁵⁶

“Work began in late February or early March when the seeds were planted in flats. They had to be closely watched as they sprouted, covered with brush or straw to protect them from late frosts, then uncovered to catch the sun again. The seedlings were transplanted in early April by the same laborious technique used to plant corn. One man tended some ten thousand plants which covered about three acres. Unlike corn or other grains the plants had to be closely cared for through the summer - swept clean of worms and other pests, pruned, hoed free of weeds. The plants were cut in August, carried to the tobacco shed, and hung from horizontal stakes. There the shaded leaves dried slowly, wafted by breezes that flowed through the open ends and loose-jointed sides of the shed. They hung there for six weeks, or until late October when they were taken down, the leaves stripped from the stalks and pressed into hogsheads. By midcentury the hogshead had been standardized into a cask four feet high with a diameter of two and a half feet, weighing between a thousand and thirteen hundred pounds. The season finally ended in late November or early December when the hogsheads had been lifted aboard one of the tobacco ships that drifted up and down the streams of Tidewater country. Winter...; in the Chesapeake conviviality rose to the surface.... This was the season, not the early summer for later generations, when young couples had the leisure to get married.”⁵⁷

The first large movement out of older areas of Kent and Talbot counties occurred in the late 1680s. Another migration inland occurred during their 1697-1701 boom period.⁵⁸

“The characteristic economic unit was the small farm. References to manors and plantations should not mislead us, for

one was no more representative of the established position and wealth associated with the term in England than is the other of any group comparable to the relatively small class that later monopolized the name 'planter.' In the usage of these early days, 'planter' was synonymous with 'colonist,' any colonist who was free, and his plantation was simply his farm"⁵⁹

"Once the traveler had passed beyond the Delaware Valley and crossed into Chesapeake country he came upon farms that resembled nothing seen before either in America or Europe. Rarely did he find anything about them to praise. They were shoddy, carelessly managed, almost disgustingly shabby. Carville V. Earle reprimands travelers and historians who denigrate these tobacco farms and defends the dilapidated landscape of the Chesapeake. 'In a mobile agricultural system the deterioration of buildings and land was integral to the functioning of the system. Unkempt old fields restored fertility. In stump-littered tobacco fields, laborers hoed around the hulks and thus saved the expense of rooting them out. Tobacco houses were semi-permanent facilities relocated with shifting fields. The planters either abandoned the old tobacco house or dismantled it for reconstruction near the new field.... The planter's eagerness to produce a large cash crop left him little time for other sides of farm life. His house remained a hovel. He tended to neglect the orchard and sometimes even the kitchen garden."⁶⁰

"Meals were leaner in winter, but over the year settlers did not as a rule want for food. They took from the water all they could catch except salmon, which for reasons unknown they did not like, and shad, which they 'profoundly despised."⁶¹

"The first real houses were not much better than the original shelters, still little more than huts, still 'decidedly substandard housing.' These 'ramshackle hovels,' as Edmund Morgan has called them, persisted in the Chesapeake region and elsewhere well into the second half of the seventeenth century, 'suggesting this was just a stopping place.' A few of the better-off citizens eventually built with brick, 'but everyone else still lived in the rotting wooden affairs that lay about the landscape like so many landlocked ships. A heavy storm would knock them down or fire devour them in an instant. But no matter - sift the ashes for nails and put up more - wood was cheap.'

These huts were small, say twenty feet by twenty feet, and seldom rose over a story and a half high. A ladder or ladder-like stairway led to a loft, if there was one. Construction was simple: four posts or logs pounded into the ground with a siding of clapboard (riven planks five or six feet long lapped over each other when nailed to the posts), roofed with thatch or sod. The fireplace or chimney might be made of stone but more likely were built of logs plastered with clay. Light seeped in through slits of varying sizes, perhaps covered with glazed paper, waxed cloth, or pieces of animal horn scraped thin enough to be translucent. Shutters, a practical necessity then, not an ornament as now, helped keep winter winds out. Doorways were often small, forcing a visitor to stoop as he entered; he arrived headfirst, bent double, and if unfriendly was thus easy to disarm. What the arly settler wanted, John Stilgoe remarks, 'was an inward-focused house, a sure defense against human and animal enemies."⁶²

"Beds for many years were a rarity. A bedroll r 'shake-down' that could be rolled up during the day was common at least during the early years of settlement. The family ate from a long board or pair of boards nailed together, which stood on trestles close to the fireplace. No one called it a dining table. It was, instead, the board table, and the cloth that covered it, if the family had one, the board cloth. To sit 'at the board' was to eat, and a hired hand expected both 'room and board' as part of his pay."⁶³

Slavery

Family participation in the history of slavery cannot be overlooked. Regardless of how well these enslaved men, women and children were treated, the fact remains they were held in bondage. Earliest mention of slavery in the family is found among members of the Thomas branch (Dorchester County, Maryland) in 1731. The holding of slaves continued in the migration of this branch to the Carolinas.

Darby, Jr., the bachelor son of Darby Shawhan and Sarah Meeks, passed two slaves (Bob and Tom) to Darby and

Sarah's grandson, Joseph, son of John, in 1767. The 1790 Census of Kent County, Maryland, shows Charles Shawhan with one slave and Isaac Shawhan, son of Dennis, with two. The Joseph, son of John, branch of the family participated in slavery on the Eastern Shore of Maryland until the manumission of 9 slaves (Dash, Jack, Priss, Pery, Emory, George, Westly, Marian, Benjamin and Mary) by Charles Shawhan announced on 25 January 1813 was implemented. The "Charles Nine" were released between 1815 and 1838. The names of 5 slaves are mentioned in the will of Samuel Shawn probated in 1831. The names of the "Samuel Five" were John, Lott, Isaac, Emiline and Harriet.

Frederick Douglas was born into slavery around 1817 in Talbot County on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. He escaped from slavery in 1838 and wrote the story of his life, describing the reality of slavery on the Eastern Shore.⁶⁴

"My mother was named Harriet Bailey. She was the daughter of Isaac and Betsey Bailey...." My father was a white man. The opinion was also whispered that my master was my father...." "My mother and I were separated when I was but an infant - before I knew her as my mother. It is a common custom, in the part of Maryland from which I ran away, to part children from their mothers at an early age. Frequently, before the child has reached its twelfth month, its mother is taken from it...."⁶⁵

"My first master's name was Anthony. ... He was a cruel man, hardened by a long life of slaveholding. I have often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt (Hester) of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her scream and whip her to make her hush."⁶⁶ This occurred in Talbot County on the home plantation of Colonel Edward Lloyd.

It is unlikely that slaves in Kent County were treated different.

1712

The tax act of 1712 states that all male persons and all female slaves of the age of 16 or above shall be accounted taxable except clergymen and such poor people as receive alms from the county and all such slaves as adjudged to be past labour.⁶⁷

1731

April 7 - Nicholas Mace of Dorchester Co. to son John, daughters Elizabeth Mace and Ann Shawhane. Includes slaves. Mentions grantor's son, Thomas Mace.⁶⁸

1767

September 18 - Will of Darby Shawhan, Jr., dated this date, left his estate to "Joseph, son of my brother John." Will was witnessed by Wm. March, Jonathan Turner, and Gideon Hayne.⁶⁹

"In the name of God Amen. I Derby Shawn of Kent County in the Province of Maryland planter being sick and weak in body but of sound mind, memory and understanding so make and publish this my will and testament in the manner and form following viz. - First of all I give and bequeath unto Joseph Shawn the son of my brother John Shawn, two Negroes slaves viz. Tom and Bob to him and his heirs for ever.

1771

A committee of Friends petitioned the Maryland Assembly for an import duty on slaves and secured a tax of £9.⁷⁰

1789

February 3 - Delaware prohibits the slave trade.⁷¹

1790

Charles Shawhan (Shawhawn).⁷²

1 male over 16:

Charles

1 female:
1 slave.

Isaac Shawhan (Shawhawn).⁷³

1 male over 16:
Isaac
2 males under 16: b. 1774-1790
2 females
2 slaves.

Thomas Shehan.⁷⁴

1 male over 16:
1 male under 16: 1774-1790
2 females
6 slaves

Henry Shehorn.⁷⁵

1 male over 16:
5 females

1801

September 2 - Sarah Sheehan, of Dorchester County, widow, sold to Robert Guy, hatter: negro slaves and furniture. Witnesses: John Stevens and Thomas Jackson.⁷⁶

1807

November 25 - William Dorsey, Dorchester Co. to Edmund Shehan: negro slave, Sam. Witnesses: Thomas Woolford, James Busick.⁷⁷

1813

January 25 — Charles Shawn of Queen Anne's County declares the following Negroes will be free on dates ranging from 1815 to 1838:

1 Negro woman, Dash
1 Negro man, Jack
1 Negro woman, Priss
1 Negro boy, Pery
1 Negro boy, Emory
1 Negro boy, George
1 Negro child, Westly
1 Negro child, Marian
1 Negro child, Benjamin
1 Negro child, Mary

Witnesses: Joseph Thompson, George Meginnis.⁷⁸

February 5 — Charles Shawn's manummission of slaves was brought to be recorded.

1831

January 3 - Valuation & division of slaves in the estate of Samuel Shawn.⁷⁹

We the subscribers being appointed and authorized by the orphan court of Queen Anne's County to divide the Negroes among the heirs of Samuel Shawn late of Queen Ann's County deceased which we have accordingly done this 3rd day of January 1831.

1 Negro man, John, aged 40yrs	\$175.00
1 Negro woman, Lott, aged 34yrs	\$110.00

1 Negro boy, Isaac, aged 12yrs	\$150.00
1 Negro girl, Emiline, aged 7yrs	\$60.00
1 Negro girl, Harriet, aged 3yrs	<u>\$30.00</u>
	\$525.00

Earliest Family Names on the Eastern Shore of Maryland

There are several relationships, the timing, locations, and names of which may point to family connections. In Talbot County these include the arrival of Cornelius and Thomas aboard the ship Encrease in 1679 and the marriage of David Shehan to Bridget in 1713. There is also the July 1714 death of a Daniel Shehawne whose estate was administered by his wife, Bridgett. Finally there is the October 1714 birth of a Daniel Shehane to parents Cornelius and Alice at St. Peter's Parish, followed by the birth of David in 1716. The names Daniel and John appear frequently in Shawhan-Shawn-Shahan families of Kent and Talbot counties.

Across the bay in Calvert County there is the 1718 death of John Shehon and in St. Mary's County the 1721 death of Darby Shohon. In Dorchester County the name, Thomas, appears in 1715 and again in 1722. The name of Miles Mason Shawhan appears in Bertie County, North Carolina as well as in Kent County, Maryland. Other Shawn names appear in Massachusetts.

The following were mentioned earlier. The 1659 Census in Ireland lists a number of families with spellings such as Sheghane, Shehane, O'Sheghane, O'Shighane, O'Sheehane, and O'Sheaghane, O'Shyghane in Counties Cork, Limerick and Clare. The Tipperary Hearth Money Records of 1665-67 carry the names of Darby Shehane, Daniell Shehan, Teige O'Shighane, Edmund O'Shehane, Donnogh O'Shahane, and Connor Sheehane.

A number of names also appear in records of the sixteen and seventeen hundreds for the Island of Barbados, which is located in the West Indies along the shipping route from the British Isles to the Americas. Barbados records include given names Dearman, Teague, Cornelius, Derby, Daniel, John, Edward, Thomas and Mary. Last name spellings include Shoham, Shahane, Shahan, Shon, Shenehan, Skahane, Shehan.

These families likely arrived during the middle of the seventeenth century when a booming tobacco economy drew wave after wave of English immigrants to the Chesapeake Bay colonies. The Eastern Shore of Maryland filled with settlers and saw a thriving tobacco economy in the last half of the century. At the close of the century English immigration virtually stopped. Recession gripped the Chesapeake region.

The Shad's Hole Property

In 1709 Darby and Sarah purchased (from Francis Bellows and his wife Margaret, also from St. Paul's Parish) 100 acres of a 650 acre tract named Shad's Hole on a branch of Morgan's Creek in upper Kent County.

The name has been variously written as Shad Hole, Shads Hold, Shads Hold, Shads Hole, Shadshold, Shadshole, Shadds Hole, and Shades Hole.

Over the years various pieces of the property originally willed to Francis and Margaret Bellows were sold as follows. William Jones passed the 650 acres of Shad's Hole to Francis Bellows in 1681 in his will. Francis Bellows in turn sold one parcel to Richard Bennett in 1708 and another (100 acres adjoining the part sold to Richard Bennett) to Darby Shawhan in 1709. In Richard Bennett, "Poor Dick o' Wye," next door neighbor of Darby and Sarah, there lies a story.

This Richard Bennett III was born 16 Sept 1667, the son of Richard Bennett II and Henrietta Maria Neale and the grandson of Richard Bennett I. Richard Bennett I was Oliver Cromwell's hatchet man in Virginia and Maryland during the 1650's. Richard Bennett II drowned four months before the birth of his son and within two years Henrietta married the wealthy Philemon Lloyd. Philemon was as staunchly Protestant as Henrietta was Roman Catholic.

Henrietta openly attended Catholic services and publicly supported Catholic causes at a time when Catholicism was equated with treason against England. She provided clergy with financial support and used her social standing in Maryland to counter anti-Catholic legislation. Henrietta's support for Catholicism was more influential than that church's structure at the time.

After the death of Henrietta in 1697, Richard Bennett III began to buy up property throughout the Eastern Shore. He set up and operated his own stores and built his own fleet of ships. Richard Bennett III became the chief shipowner on the Chesapeake. When the price of tobacco plunged from three cents to one cent Bennett loaned cash readily and foreclosed ruthlessly, taking homes and property.

Throughout this time, Darby and Sarah kept their land. The close proximity of Richard Bennett and the local memory of his mother, Henrietta Maria Neale Bennett Lloyd, may account for the statement found in the lineage book of the Daughters of the American Colonists that Darby Shawhan "helped promote religious freedom among the Colonists."⁸⁰ Richard Bennett III was one of four Roman Catholic leaders who appeared before the Assembly in 1706 to protest laws denying Catholics the right to vote or hold public office. Although the Anglican church was declared the official church of the land in 1688, Darby may have supported religious freedom.

Back to Shad's Hole, Hannah Bodeen received a portion in 1722 paid for by Frances Bodeen. Perkins (1733)... Kelly (1734)... In 1736, Darby Shawhan left Shad's Hole to his sons, Darby, Jr. and David. By 1738 Daniel Shawhan held the debt on the property. In October 1740, Daniel sold 50 acres of the property to his brother, John, prior to departing the Eastern Shore for points West. Other portions of Shad's Hole once held by Frances Bellas were in the hands of Ferdinando Hull in 1738-1747, Hezekiah Cooper in 1760, Peregrine Cooper in 1783 and John Hudson and Abraham Taylor in 1783. John Shawhan passed the Shawhan portion of the property to his son, Joseph in 1783. Joseph sold a stake in the property to his son, Samuel, in 1800 for £250. Samuel Shawn in turn sold the property to Edward Simms in 1804 for £517. Charles Shawn, grandson of John Shawhan, received a stake in the property from his grandfather. He sold his stake to Edward Simms for £250. Shad's Hole remained in the family a few months short of one hundred years.

House at Shad's Hole 1995

Shad's Hole — now part of Glenmore — is one half mile north of Kennedysville (settled by an Amish community in 1954) on the west side of Turners Creek Road, roughly two and one half miles south of Shrewsbury Parish in which their children were born. 50 acres in the same area, called 'Darby's Desire' was surveyed in 1714 and patented in 1716. This purchase was consistent with the agricultural movement of the time toward richer soil for the growth of higher quality tobacco. Rose Lane, a descendant of John Shawn and living in Crumpton, on the Eastern Shore, reports the house at Glenmore is now gone.

Darby Shawhan and Sarah Meeks

(1) 1. Darby Shawhan (Shawn)

Birth Date:	1673, location unknown
Marriage:	1707, St. Paul's Parish, Kent County, Maryland
Spouse:	Sarah Meeks
Children:	Daniel (b. 1709) John (b. 1711) Dennis (b. 1713) Sarah (b. 1715)

Elizabeth (b. 1722)
 Darby, Jr. (b. 1724)
 David (b. 1726)
 William (b. 1728)
 Death Date: 1736, Kent County, Maryland
 Death Place: Kent County, Maryland
 Burial Date: 1736
 Burial Place: Darby's Desire, Kent County, Maryland
 Occupation: Farmer

The parents and place of birth of Darby Shawhan remain to be identified. However, in the 1660's people left Virginia and the western shore of Maryland and migrated to relocate in Talbot and Kent counties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Darby's origins may yet be found in Virginia or Western Maryland. The parents and place of birth of Sarah Meeks also remain to be identified. However, research data points to James Meeks as the father of Sarah.

New Yarmouth

The peninsula of Eastern Neck — just north of Eastern Neck Island and Kent Island — is one of the earliest areas of settlement on the Eastern Shore. A man named Tovey built the site of the seventeenth century settlement known as New Yarmouth on Eastern Neck near Gray's Inn Creek. He purchased one hundred acres of land called "Huntingfield" from Thomas Ringgold. Maps still show "Hunting Field Point" and "Huntingfield Creek." In 1674 (Darby Shawhan, age 1) Charles Calvert had ordered court sessions to move from Eastern Neck Island to the mainland and by 1679 (Darby Shawhan, age 6) the first Kent County courthouse had been built at New Yarmouth. This area remained a commercial center and a port of entry until 1696 (Darby Shawhan, age 23) when the courthouse was moved to its present site on the Chester River. With this relocation, the center of county government followed the inland shift of the population.

Kent County

County boundaries shifted in 1706 with the creation of Queen Anne's County from portions of Kent and Talbot. The Shad's Hole property moved from Cecil to Kent as the Sassafras River became the northern boundary for Kent and the southern for Cecil. The southern boundary of Kent became the Chester River. The taxable population of Kent County was about three hundred at the time of Darby's birth and had risen to a little over eight hundred by the time of the Shawhan - Meeks marriage.

Darby Shawhan and Sarah Meeks were married within the geographical boundaries of St. Paul's Parish, Kent Co., Maryland in November 1707. Queen Anne's War had begun in 1702 and would continue until 1713.

"Marriage, in England a standardized ceremony controlled by the Anglican Church, took on a variety of forms in America. The steps leading to it remained fairly constant - negotiations between parents or guardians over the dowry, followed by a betrothal, or engagement as it would later be called - but the ceremony itself differed widely. The Dutch and Pennsylvania Germans performed it in their native languages. The Quakers held it in their meetinghouses, where to the astonishment of strangers a couple without benefit of clergy or any secular authority married themselves with vows often of their own devising. In the South the Anglican rite embedded in the Book of Common Prayer remained intact, but local government interjected itself into what had once been the exclusive domain of the church. Publication of banns, which had sufficed at home to alert a village of an impending marriage, failed to work among the dispersed settlements of the Chesapeake. Some way had to be found to spread the word to all - parents, guardians, masters, and kinfolk - of the intended event, and to that end the marriage license, issued by the county clerk, was created."⁸¹

St. Paul's Parish

St. Paul's is one of thirty Maryland parishes formed by the Act of Establishment in 1693. The first vestry meeting was held in January 1693 in the house of Thomas Joce at New Yarmouth, at that time a commercial center on Eastern Neck, just north of Kent Island. There is physical evidence that a church building was standing in the New Yarmouth area prior to the Act of Establishment.

In 1695 the Vestry hired Daniel Norris to build a church at the present location of St. Paul's (west fork of Langford's Creek) on a parcel of land belonging to Michael Miller. The Vestry sued builder Daniel Norris on November 27, 1707 (seven days after the Shawhan-Meeks wedding) for an unfulfilled contract. In 1711 the Vestry contracted with James Harris and the present church was built in 1713, reflecting the inland shift of the population.

The marriage of Darby and Sarah (1707) pre-dates the existing church building (1713) by six years and may have taken place at the church building in the New Yarmouth area, eight to ten miles south (by way of Langford's Creek) of the present site of St. Paul's Church. The wedding may also have occurred at home, a common practice on the 18th century Eastern Shore. Darby, Sarah and two children — Daniel and John — were living at Shad's Hole (in Shrewsbury Parish) by the time the present church at St. Paul's was built.

The Meeks Family

Indications are that Sarah Meeks was the daughter of James Meeks, son of the Walter Meeks and wife Sarah who came to Kent County, Maryland from Virginia in 1674. The Meeks children include James, Francis, Sarah, Walter, Jr., Robert, and Elizabeth. The will of Walter Meeks was probated in 1688.

Walter Meeks, Jr. married Jane Reed at St. Paul's in 1700 and Francis Meeks married Mary Smith in 1704. (The names of a John and a Francis Reed (Reede, Read) appear as witnesses to Shawhan wills.) These marriages are recorded within St. Paul's Parish and like that of Darby and Sarah pre-date the present site of St. Paul's Church.

In 1706 both James and Francis Meeks were working on the plantation of John Willis of Kent County. In 1723 Robert Meeks was listed as a petit juryman in Kent County and in 1732 he witnessed the will of Phillip Kennard. In 1736 the name of Daniel Shawhan appears on a bond for Robert Meeks. In 1722 and 1723 an Elizabeth Meeks is listed as a poor woman receiving county supplements. In 1743 a William Meeks is born to James and Esther Meeks of St. Paul's Parish. There is also a Meeks Point at the confluence of Chesapeake Bay and the Sassafras River on Still Pond Neck in northwest Kent County.

Shad's Hole

The time when Darby purchased one hundred acres of the Shad's Hole property, located in Shrewsbury Parish, in 1709 was a time of low tobacco prices. The Chesapeake economy was in a decade long depression. Many small planters were driven from the tobacco trade. Fifty acres, re-named "Darby's Desire," was surveyed in 1714 and patented in 1716. In 1706 Queen Anne's County was formed from parts of Talbot and Kent. Between 1706 and 1710 people who had previously been counted in the records of Cecil County were put on the tax in Kent. This is why Darby Shawhan's name is found in the records of both counties.

Shrewsbury Parish

According to Katherine DeProspero in her history of Shrewsbury Parish, the colonial Anglican Church was run more as an arm of local government than as a place of worship. The Vestry, doubling as county commissioners, was responsible for levying taxes, distributing charity, disciplining parish members and controlling the financial affairs of the parish. Little actual worshipping was done at church. Baptisms, marriages and funerals were held at home, if at all.

Although Shrewsbury parish was founded in 1692, the earliest recorded baptisms are dated 1697. The church building was rebuilt in 1701 and the first marriage was recorded in 1706. The first full time pastor died in 1713 after only six months in office. A new brick church was completed in 1729 and the year 1730 saw the first burial in the church cemetery. Rev. John Urmston, the assistant rector, appeared so drunk in church he was unable to read. In 1731 he fell into a fire while drunk and burned to death. The first reference in Shrewsbury records to the Shawhan family is the 1730 marriage of John Shawhan and Elizabeth Peach.

Family Life

The typical dwelling of the time for small landowners was a 20 by 15 foot clapboard home with dirt floor. The structure was generally separated into two rooms and heated by fireplaces with wooden chimneys.

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According to William Hills, eldest son Daniel was born in 1709, the year of the Shad’s Hole purchase. Darby was 36. Sarah’s age is unknown. The period 1711 to 1715 saw the births of John (1711), Dennis (1713), and Sarah (1715). The births of Elizabeth (1722), Darby (1724), David (1726), and William (1728) followed after an unexplained gap of seven years.

The tax act was passed in 1712, which meant that Darby had to start paying taxes on all males over the age of 16.

The period between 1711 and 1722 saw a number of births and deaths with potential bearing on the extended family. Mary, first child of Cornelius Sheehane and his wife Alice was born in 1711 in Talbot County. David Shehan married Bridgett Fairbanks of Talbot County in 1713. A Daniel Shehawne died in Talbot County in 1714. Joane Shehon administered the estate of her husband, John, in Calvert County in 1718 and Elizabeth Shohone filed the inventory of one Darby Shohon in St. Mary’s County in 1721. The estate of Thomas Shehawn, Sr. of Dorchester County was filed in 1722.

The Daniel Shawhan who witnessed the will of William Huddlestone of Kent County in 1728 may have been Daniel, eldest son of Darby and Sarah, and would have been 19 at the time.

Darby and Sarah were planters. Authorized river ports in north Kent County were the former site of Shrewsbury on the Sassafras River to the north and at Edward Walvin’s plantation on the Chester River to the south. Although tobacco was the primary crop at Shad’s Hole, the family was herding sheep for wool, corn for food, and raising a limited number of diverse livestock. Darby owned a cart and harness, which were uncommon on the Eastern Shore before 1740.

In 1730 the second son, John, married Elizabeth Peach and by 1732 Darby and Sarah’s first grandchild, John, Jr., was born. 1735 saw eldest daughter, Sarah, marry Edward Dyer. March saw the birth of Darby and Sarah’s second grandchild, Margret, to eldest son Daniel and his wife, Jennett. April saw the birth of Darby and Sarah’s third grandchild, Daniel, to second son, John and his wife Elizabeth.

Death

At the time of a deposition taken in 1733, Darby was 60 years old. In October of 1735 Darby (age 63) and Sarah wrote their wills. Both died in April 1736 within seven days of each other. Their possessions included an old mare with yearling colt, an old earthen pot, and 800 pounds of tobacco. Other items included: 3 feather bed bolsters and pillows, 58 pounds of wool, 3 rugs, 1 linen wheel, 4 blankets, 3 chests, 4 large pots with hooks, 3 stone jugs, 1 frying pan, 3 axes, 3 augurs, 2 files, bricks, tackle & block, 43 lbs corn “stick basket”, carving knife, iron candle stick, branding iron, 2 locks, 2 bells, 1 “speling book,” “buter churn tub,” washing tub, 1 cart with traces and “pare of harnes,” 9 sheep, 1 old sow, 4 young hogs, 2 cows and calves, 2 barren cows, 1 “tabel and forms,” 1 old bay horse 15 yrs old, 1 plowshare, 1 old mare and yearlong colt. Neither knew how to write. They still owed money to Francis Bellows from whom they purchased Shad’s Hole. In 1736 the tobacco was valued at 1.4 pence per pound and the corn was valued at 97 pence per barrel. The absence of hoes in the inventory is unusual for a tobacco farmer.

Son Dennis (age 23) received Darby’s clothing. Daughter Sarah (age 21) received her mother’s saddle. Responsibility for the younger children did not pass to the two oldest sons, Daniel or John. Sarah’s husband Edward Dyer (Dier or Dial) was delegated responsibility for raising Darby and Sarah’s sons Darby (age 12), David (age 10) and William (age 8) until age 21 and for providing education.

Although Darby willed his dwelling plantation to sons Darby, David and William, debt book records show the payments for Shad’s Hole transferring to eldest son, Daniel, who later (1740) sold the property to his brother John. Daughter Elizabeth (age 13) was to receive a cow, a calf, and a lamb when she reached 16.

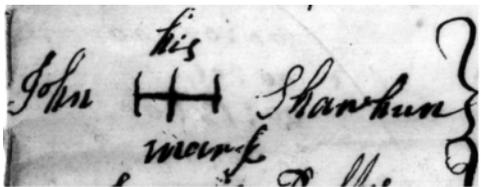
Darby Shawhan signature

The oldest son of Darby and Sarah, Daniel, a cordwainer (shoemaker and worker in leather) sold Shad’s Hole to his brother, John, in 1740 and left the Eastern Shore for Frederick County. Daniel and his wife, Jennet, settled about seven miles from Frederick. Daniel served in the French and Indian War in 1748 and moved in 1759 to the vicinity of Romney in Hampshire Co., Virginia (West Virginia). Daniel and Jennet are ancestors of the Kentucky and Ohio Shawhans. Daniel, son of Daniel and Jennet, was a pioneer of Bourbon County, Kentucky. Darby, the youngest son of Daniel and Jennet, pioneered in Warren County, Ohio.

Sarah Shawhan signature

The second son, John, married Elizabeth Peach in 1730, and had a number of children: John, Jr. (b. 1732), Daniel (b. 1735), Elizabeth (Blackiston), Avis, Shadrack, and Joseph. The Shads Hole property is a few miles north of Chestertown where in 1774 “The brigantine Geddes arrived with a small lot of dutiable tea for some of the neighboring counties. The inhabitants assembled in town meeting May 13, held indignation meetings and threw the tea overboard. This same day the tea was thrown overboard in Boston Harbor.” John died in Kent County in 1783 after serving in the War of Revolution, and passed Shad’s Hole to son Joseph and grandson Charles. John and his descendents on the Eastern Shore were slave owners until the middle of the 1800’s.

Little is known of Darby and Sarah’s third son, Dennis, born in 1713. He received a horse named “Doktor” in his father’s will of 1735. In 1746 he was living on 114 acres of land in Kent County, owned by George Garnett and in March 1747 was accused of fornication with Elizabeth Gilbert and of having a bastard child. Dennis was a pew holder of Shrewsbury Parish in 1751 and 1752. Parish records show the birth of a daughter, Bathsheba, and a son, Isaac, in 1754 as well as a son, Daniel, in 1761. His name shows up in 1763 as a creditor to the estate of one wealthy Sarah Brookes and may also be listed as a next of kin. He witnessed the will of his brother, David, in 1766 and is listed on the schedule of debts owed to John Vansant, operator of a grist mill at head of Chester River in Kent County. Dennis sued his nephew, Joseph, in 1767 for expenses incurred in the care of his brother, Darby, and appears to have been sued in turn by a number of creditors. Dennis’s will mentions a daughter Bathsheba and a son Isaac. According to Barnes and



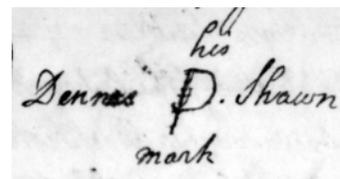
John Shawhan signature

Wright, the residue of Dennis's estate was distributed to eleven unnamed children.

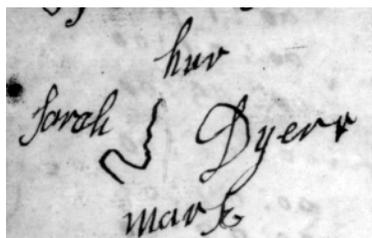
The eldest daughter, Sarah, married Edward Dyer, whose parents remain unidentified. Edward died in 1747 and Sarah, widowed at age 32, administered the estate in Kent County. Sarah's brother, David, age 21, is mentioned in property documents of 1747 when David Shawn, Sarah (Shawhan) Dyer, and Sarah's daughter, Sarah, continued to lease property formerly rented by Sarah's deceased husband, Edward Dyer. Unverified evidence suggests that Sarah married a

wealthy Quaker, named Brookes, following the death of Edward Dyer. Some Shawhan's appear to be listed in 1763 as creditors as well as next of kin in the probate of one Sarah Brookes.

David Shawn is mentioned in the same property documents as his sister, Sarah, following the death of her husband, Edward Dyer in 1747. As a single man, he was accused in March Court 1761 of fornication with Jane Greenwood on 7 Dec 1759 and of having a bastard child. A nine-month pregnancy would place birth of the child in August of 1760 and suggests that David Shawn and Jane Greenwood might be parents of Frederick Shawhan of revolutionary war fame. David may be listed in 1763 as next of kin in the probate of one Sarah Brookes. David died in 1766. The estate was administered by his brother Darby and witnessed by his brother John along with John's son, Shadrack. The family bible was listed among David's assets. In his pension application, Frederick Shawn makes reference to a family bible in the hands of his stepfather in Kent County, Maryland.



Dennis Shawn signature



Sarah Dyer signature

Darby, Jr. never married and died in the home of his brother, Dennis, in Kent County in 1767. His name appears among those assessed for the bachelor's tax between 1759 and 1763 and he witnessed the will of his brother, David, in 1766 and appraised David's estate. Darby left his estate to Joseph, son of his brother John. Darby's brother, Dennis, filed suit against Joseph, executor of David's estate for costs incurred in the care of Darby on his deathbed.

Of daughter Elizabeth and son William there is no further record after mention in Sarah's will of 1735.

Darby and Sarah died in 1736. As far as we know, both are buried in the graveyard on the family farm, "Darby's Desire/Shad's Hole", Kent Co., Maryland. No markers survive.

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