

Ambrose Bennet (Fellow 1649-before 1658)

Ambrose Bennet was appointed a Fellow of University College in 1649, and resigned his Fellowship some time before 1658. Bennet had lived in Virginia in 1635–48, and is the earliest known member of the College to have come from America. More information on his remarkable life, which ended with his fleeing to Jamaica in 1672 to escape his creditors, can be found in Jack Zoeller, “Ambrose Bennet: College Fellow, Adventurer, and Scoundrel—I”, *University College Record* Vol. 14 no. 3 (2007), pp. 95–104, and “Ambrose Bennet II: London Orphan, Virginia Planter, and Oxford Fellow” *University College Record* Vol. 15 no. 1 (2008), pp. 95–110).

Ambrose Bennet was also a nephew of Sir Simon Bennet, who on his death in 1631, had left the estate of Handley Park, in Northamptonshire, to endow new Fellowships and Scholarships at University College. It had been agreed that some Bennet posts should be made available to Sir Simon’s kinsmen, and so Ambrose became a Bennet Fellow.

The following document provides important evidence on the financial situation at University College in the 1650s. After a hearing in the Court of Chancery in 1649, it was decided that accounts relating to Fellows and Scholars supported by Sir Simon Bennet’s endowment should be administered quite separately from the Fellows who were on the College’s existing foundation. Fellows on what become known as the “new foundation” are therefore nowhere mentioned in the College’s General Accounts, which only record payments to Fellows on the “old foundation”. Bennet’s are the only accounts to survive for the new foundation during this period when two sets of accounts were being produced within one College.

This double foundation produced financial and administrative chaos within the College, and in 1662, the decision of the Court of Chancery was reversed, so that from henceforth there would be one Bursar, and one set of accounts, to manage the finances of all Fellows and Scholars within the College. See further Robin Darwall-Smith, *A History of University College* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 173–5 and 184.

From the 1650s, the College leased Handley Park to Ambrose Bennet (although he left it to a succession of trustees to manage it), but he proved a disputatious and difficult tenant. Papers about his tenancy, and his many disputes with the College, may be found at **UC:E14** especially **UC:E14/L7/1–49** and **UC:E14/C1/1–93**.

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1652/3-1653/4

Rough accounts of Ambrose Bennet, Bursar of University College (bound in a deed concerning property at Rickmansworth). The pages are now difficult to read. They are just a list of payments and receipts, in the order that they were paid or received.