

Mayflower Ancestor – John Billington

By RICIGS member Linda Walker

I have numerous ancestors that lived in the New England states that were on my father's side. I was thrilled when I found a Mayflower ancestor in 2008. By 2012 I thought I had enough documentation to join the Mayflower Society so I contacted the IL Society and started working with one of their Historians, who happened to be a distant cousin on my mother's side.

My Mayflower ancestors were John Billington, his wife Ellinor/Eleanor and their son Francis. They all came over on the Mayflower along with another son, John Jr., who died at a young age and had no children. Francis Billington married a widow, Christian Penn Eaton. She came over on the Anne in 1623 and married Francis Eaton, who came on the Mayflower. Christian is a distant cousin to William Penn. I looked at the book, "Mayflower Families Through Five Generations, Volume 21, John Billington." My 4th Great Grandmother Hannah Kingsley along with her husband George Hawkins, are listed in the book. I thought this shouldn't be too hard to find the documentation that I needed from me to my 4th Great Grandparents.

I had the book, Genealogy of the Elderkin Family with Intermarriages by Dyer White Elderkin, published in 1888. He was married to Cornelia Walker, sister to my 2nd Great Grandfather Daniel Walker. This book showed that Daniel married Sophia Hawkins. It also lists their children and has my Great Grandfather Denzil J. Walker listed as Jesse D.

The 1860 Census record for my 2nd Great Grandparents Daniel Walker and Sophia Hawkins showed them living in Warren County, PA. Sophia's parents Jesse & Hannah Hawkins were living with them. This was how I found out who Sophia's parents were. My Great Grandfather Denzil J. Walker was 2 and is listed on this Census record as Jesse D. I figured this was a nick name.

I found the marriage record for Hannah Kingsley & George Hawkins and their son Jesse Hawkins birth record in the Ricker Compilation of Vital Records of Early Connecticut, the Barbour Collection. That gave me documentation to my 3rd Great Grandfather Jesse Hawkins. I knew that the 1860 Census record was not enough proof and I needed some other record to show that Sophia Hawkins was Jesse's daughter.

I thought maybe the Elderkin Family book would give me the proof I needed, but the IL Mayflower Historian didn't think that the Mayflower Society would accept the book as a source. So my application was put on hold until I could find more documentation.

Sophia was born in New York and I figured that Jesse and Hannah Hawkins were probably married in New York as their three children that I found were all born in New York. I found the cemetery in Chautauqua County, NY where Jesse & Hannah are buried. I contacted the sexton numerous times trying to get information, but he would never call me back. I contacted the Warren County, PA clerk's office to see if they had a death record or will for Jesse Hawkins. They told me they had a fire years ago and there were no birth or death records before the 1890's. I contacted Chautauqua County NY for a will for Jesse and there wasn't one. I contacted two different genealogy societies and got no response from them. It's really hard to find documentation from New York and I thought someday I'll have to go there and do research.

My friends were getting tired of hearing me whine. In July 2017 I went to the New England states with my friends Kitty Humphrey and Deb Van Sant. They were nice enough to let me stop at the cemetery in Warren County, PA where my Walker family are buried and then we went to New York to the cemetery where Jesse & Hannah Hawkins are buried. Right across the street from this cemetery was where the town Historian lived. I talked to her, but she had no new information for me. We went to the county clerk's office and only found a land record for Jesse Hawkins. No will.

When we were in Plymouth, MA, we went to the Mayflower Society library. I asked them to check my descendant line to see if anyone had joined with my 4th Great Grandmother Hannah Kingsley. No one had. There were members that joined with her siblings, but not her.

In September 2017 I attended the IL Heritage Weekend in East Peoria, IL. This is a weekend when numerous lineage societies get together and have their meetings. It's a great way to find out if you are eligible to join other societies. As I listened to the IL Mayflower Society have their meeting, one of the Historians mentioned that the Mayflower Society in Plymouth was publishing more Mayflower Family books. They are adding more generations and she said they just published a part 2 book to Volume 21 the John Billington family. I had just been in Plymouth in July and the book wasn't published yet. The genealogy Gods must have been smiling

down on me. I talked to her after the meeting and she said she had the new book at home and she would email the pages that had my line. A few days later when I opened the email from her, I got teary eyed when I read the information because

there was my Great Grandfather Denzil J. Walker/Jesse D. listed in the book. The Mayflower Society had used the Elderkin Book as a source for the information. A book that I've had since 2012 and was told that they probably wouldn't use it as a source and now they have.

All I had to do now was prove myself to my Great Grandfather. No problem. I had his marriage record, his death certificate, which listed his father's name. I also had a copy of his father's will, which showed that his correct name was Denzil and not Jesse D. I also had a copy of his obituary which listed a brother James Walker living in Warren County, PA.

The IL Mayflower Society Historian submitted my application to Plymouth, MA in October 2017 and it was approved in January 2018. I did the genealogy happy dance.

Some of my famous distant cousins who are also related to the John Billington family are:

James A. Garfield, 20th President of the U.S., actor Richard Gere and Countess Mercy Lavinia Warren Bump the wife of Tom Thumb.

The only thing left for this family that I want to find is Jesse Hawkins' wife Hannah's maiden name. She was born 3 Mar 1787. The 1850 Census says she was born in MA and the 1860 Census says she was born in CT. She died 25 Mar 1864. The hunt continues.

My advice is to never give up on your genealogy research. Someday, you just might find that gem of information that you've been looking for.