

September 1, 2025

The English Origins of the Eden Family

This memorandum summarizes what we think we know about the English origins of the ancestors of John Rice Eden (1826-1909). I believe the evidence – including research conducted by two English family historians in the summer of 2025 -- strongly supports the conclusion that William Eden/Eaton (b. 1744) and his son Jeremiah (b. 1768) were part of a large family named EDEN or EATON who in the middle of the 18th Century lived in Oxfordshire, England. William the immigrant may have been born and raised in St. Mary Magdalen parish of Oxford itself.



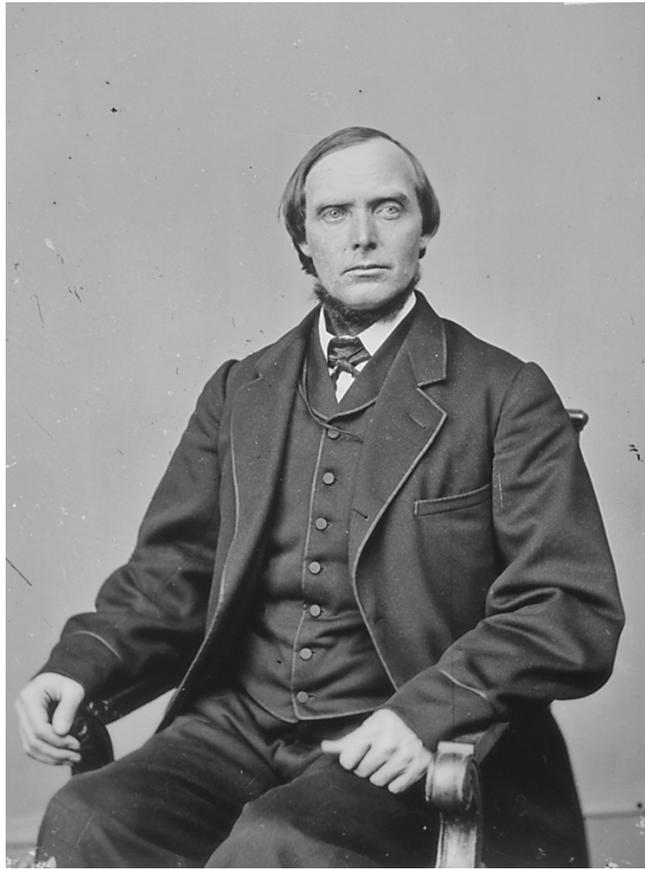
1805 Map of Oxfordshire, England



The historical counties of England. Oxfordshire just below mid-center.

I. The Edens in America.

John Rice Eden, 1826-1909, was my great grandfather. His daughter Rose Eden, b. 1858, married my Grandfather I.J. Martin on June 30, 1886. Both the Edens and Martins lived in Sullivan, Moultrie County. John R. Eden was a lawyer and Congressman from the Congressional district that included Moultrie County. He was first elected in 1862 and served during the last two years of the Civil War, as well as four other terms – 10 years in total. He was the Democratic Party's unsuccessful candidate for Governor of Illinois in 1868.



John R. Eden, House of Representatives 1863

John R. Eden's daughter, Rose Eden, married I.J. Martin and was my grandmother. She attended the Academy of the Visitation in Georgetown when her father was serving in the house of Representatives.



Rose Eden

II. Where Did the Edens Come From – and When?

John R. Eden's obituary in 1909 (below) reported the family tradition that he "was of English descent, *his grandfather, Jeremiah Eden, being a native of England.*"

SUDDEN DEATH OF PROMINENT CITIZEN

John R. Eden Found Dead In a Chair With Lemonade Glass In His Hand.

TEN YEARS IN CONGRESS



JOHN R. EDEN

SULLIVAN, June 8.—The death of Hon. John R. Eden, which occurred at his home at an early hour Wednesday morning, came as a shock, not only to his family but to the entire community. Mr. Eden had been in failing health for several years, but Tuesday he had seemed unusually well and was, as was his usual custom, at his office the greater part of the day. He ate a hearty supper and was very cheerful and the last any of his family saw him alive was when he retired about 8 p. m. Tuesday evening seemingly in his usual health.

He had arisen at an early hour Wednesday morning, dressed himself completely and made a glass of lemonade and sat down in his easy chair. When his oldest daughter, Miss Emma, who resided at home with him, arose about 7:15 a. m. and came down stairs, she found him sitting in his chair holding the glass of lemonade, life having been extinct an hour or more.

Hon. John R. Eden was Sullivan's and Moultrie county's most distinguished and honored citizen and widely known throughout this and adjacent counties. He had not only a local and state but national reputation, having served as a member of congress from the seventh district in the thirty-eighth congress, being first elected on the Democratic ticket in 1862, during President Lincoln's administration and was re-elected from this district to the forty-third, forty-fourth, forty-fifth and forty-ninth congresses, having served in all ten years with honor and credit to himself and his constituents, and it was during this long period of service that the boundaries and numbers of the congressional district were changed, and he represented the counties of Moultrie, Macon, Platt, Champaign, Ford, Trossard and Hamilton.

quels, Vermilion, Douglas, Coles, Edgar, Clark, Cumberland, Effingham, Shelby, Jasper, Crawford, Lawrence, Fayette, Montgomery and Macoupin.

During the thirty-eighth congress he was a member of the committee on accounts and revolutionary pensions, and in the forty-third congress was a member of the committee on claims and the Freedman affairs. In the forty-fourth he was chairman of the committee on war complaints and a member of the one appointed to investigate the presidential election. During the forty-fifth he was again appointed chairman of the same committee and during the forty-ninth congress he belonged to the committee on the judiciary and revision laws.

In 1868 he was the Democratic candidate for governor of Illinois, having always been a staunch Democrat and espoused the Democratic principles.

John R. Eden was the son of John Paul and Catherine Can Eden, and was born in Path county, Kentucky, Feb. 1, 1824, and was of English descent, his grandfather, Jeremiah Eden, being a native of England. In 1831 John P. Eden and family moved from Kentucky to Rush county, Indiana, where he entered a tract of government land and improved it. In 1835 Mrs. Eden was left a widow with six small children, and in 1837 she with her family moved from Indiana to Illinois.

John R. Eden received his early education in a log school house built of round logs. The chimney was made of sticks and clay and the fire place occupied one end of the building. He was very studious for the opportunities afforded, and at the age of 18 years began teaching in Rush county, Indiana receiving the usual salary, \$20 per month and his board, and taught during the fall and winter for seven years, occupying the remainder of the year in farming, using every fragment of time in the study of law. In 1852 he came to Illinois, travelling by railroad to Terre Haute, then by stage to Shelbyville, Ill., and a few days later was admitted to the bar and commenced practice. He practiced there until the fall of 1853, when he came to Sullivan, which has ever since been the main field of his work, and was actively engaged in the practice of law until the day of his death, having written and dictated briefs for the appellate and supreme courts, which are not yet printed, and was in his office and did considerable writing on Tuesday, the day before his death. His last case in which he was engaged was in the March term of the circuit court, and was the case, Drake vs. Steele. His last public speech was made at the court house at the Bryan v. ratification last year, and his last public writing was published in the Sullivan Progress, last week, which he wrote in favor of Attorney W. K. Wiltfield, candidate for circuit judge.

John R. Eden was united in marriage to Miss Roxanna Meeker of Delaware county, Ohio, in 1856, whose death occurred in this city several years ago.

He was a kind and indulgent husband and father, a respected and hospitable neighbor. He was never identified with any particular branch of the church, but in belief was an Old School Presbyterian, having been raised in that faith, his mother being a member of that denomination.

He leaves to mourn his loss, one son, Attorney Walter Eden of Fresno, Cal., three daughters, Miss Emma Eden, who resided at home, and Mrs. J. K. Martin of Sullivan, and Mrs. Paul Thackwell of Terre Haute. One aged brother, J. B. Eden of this city, and a number of grand-children. One son, Maxwell B. Eden, and Mrs. L. J. Martin, and two or three children who died in early childhood, with his wife, have preceded him in death. No arrangements for the funeral has as yet been made but will probably be held Sunday.

Two publications on the history of Moultrie County – both written while John R. Eden was a leading citizen of the county – tend to confirm what appears in the obituary: that the Eden family came from England; and one of them states that John R.'s grandfather, Jeremiah Eden, was born in England. It is virtually certain that these publications reflected information obtained from John R. Eden or the Eden family.

The first is the *Combined History of Shelby and Moultrie Counties, Illinois; With Illustrations ...* Philadelphia, 1881. It recites that John R. Eden's "great grandfather was an Englishman, who emigrated to this country and settled in Maryland."

JOHN R. EDEN, for four terms one of the Illinois representatives in Congress, is a native of Bath county, Kentucky, and was born on the first day of February, 1826. His great grandfather was an Englishman, who emigrated to this country and settled in Maryland. His father, John Eden, was born in the city of Baltimore, and was five or six years of age at the time of the removal of the family to Kentucky. John Eden was raised in Kentucky, and married Catharine Cann, who was a native

The second is *Portrait and Biographical Record of Shelby and Moultrie Counties, Illinois, Containing Biographical Sketches*, 1891. It states that, "Jeremiah Eden, the grandfather was a native of England, who *came when a young man to America* and settled in Maryland."

HON. JOHN R. EDEN, who resides in Sullivan, was born on the banks of the Licking River, eight miles from Owingsville, Bath County, Ky., February 1, 1826. His father, John Paul Eden, was born in Baltimore, Md., in 1796, and Jeremiah Eden, the grandfather was a native of England, who came when a young man to America and settled in Maryland. From that State he removed to Kentucky about the year 1800, and became a farmer in Bath County. There he bought a tract of timber land, which he cleared and turned into a rich and productive farm, making it his home until death called him away.

It is thus clear that the Eden family came from England. A question remains whether the first son, Jeremiah, was born in England or America.

The *Combined History* says that the great-grandfather (William) was an Englishman who came to America and settled in Maryland. The *Portrait and Biographical Record* says that

the grandfather (Jeremiah) was a native of England and came here “when a young man.” In other words, father William brought his young son with him as a child. This is consistent with what was stated in the later John R. Eden obituary.

These statements, reflecting family tradition, seem more persuasive to me than the Find A Grave Index statement that Jeremiah was born in Maryland.

There remains the question of when they came to America.

The 1776 census said William was 31 and Jeremiah was 8 1/2 years old -- (in roughly August 1776) – putting Jeremiah’s birth in early 1768 or late 1767. But the 1850 census said he was then 77, which – depending on when the census was taken -- would make his birth year 1772 or 1773.

1850 United States Federal Census for Mary Eden

Kentucky > Bath > District 1

Dwell No.	Fami No.	Name	Age	Sex	Race	Real Estate	Birthplace	Married 1 Attended Cannot R	Condition
		<i>Wesley</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>M</i>					
		<i>Amanda W.</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>F</i>					
<i>231</i>	<i>231</i>	<i>Wesley</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>M</i>		<i>500</i>			
		<i>Mary A.</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>F</i>			<i>W.Va.</i>		<i>1</i>
<i>232</i>	<i>232</i>	<i>Jeremiah Eden</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>M</i>			<i>W.Va.</i>		
		<i>Mary</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>F</i>			<i>W.Va.</i>		
		<i>Edgar</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>M</i>			<i>W.Va.</i>		
<i>233</i>	<i>233</i>	<i>Colbert Anderson</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>M</i>		<i>500</i>	<i>W.Va.</i>		
		<i>Sophia</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>F</i>			<i>W.Va.</i>		
		<i>James</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>M</i>			<i>W.Va.</i>		

If Jeremiah was born in England and came to America when he was “a young man,” as the family tradition says, it would be difficult to reconcile that report with a birth year as late as 1772/73. He would have been only 3 or 4 in the 1776 Maryland census – not 8. He would have been only 1 – or not yet born – when his father was reported on the 1773 tax list of Westminster Hundred.

If early 1768 – the 1776 Maryland census -- is the correct estimate for Jeremiah’s birth, and if he was “young” when the family came to America, that would perhaps put the immigration somewhere in the range of 1770-1772. That is consistent with William “Eaton” being listed in the 1773 tax list of Westminster Hundred in Baltimore County, as well as the tax list for Spesutia Lower Hundred in Harford County in 1774.

I think the 1776 census and the family tradition are more likely to be correct than the 1850 census.

III. Where Did the Edens Arrive?

Philadelphia was by far the most significant immigrant port in the 1770s for arrivals from England. Westminster Hundred – formerly in Baltimore County – is now in Carroll County, where Westminster is the county seat. It is north of Washington and 35 miles or so northwest of Baltimore in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Geography and migration routes make it more likely that the “Eatons” made their way to Westminster from Philadelphia than either Baltimore or Annapolis.

IV. From William Eden – via Jeremiah – then John Paul – to John R. Eden – then Rose Eden Martin.

In 2012 I put together a book of materials about John R. Eden and the Eden family. *John R. Eden 1826-1909, A Compendium of Materials*, Chicago, 2012. See edenmartin.com. It contained a brief early section setting forth what little we knew about the Eden family.

The linkages may be easier to understand if we first go back up the chain. My grandmother was Rose Eden, 1858-1907; she married I.J. Martin.

Rose’s father was John R. Eden, 1826-1909, the Congressman.

The father of John R. Eden was John Paul Eden, 1796-1835. John Paul married Catherine Cann. John Paul was born in Baltimore, spent much of his short life in Kentucky, and died in his late 30’s in Rush County, Indiana.

John Paul Eden’s father was Jeremiah Eden, born in late 1767 or early 1768 in England – died in Fleming County, Kentucky in 1859, just before the Civil War.

Jeremiah’s father – William Eden -- was the first member of his Eden family to come to America.

Now let’s come back down the chain of descent, beginning with our earliest-known Eden ancestor in Maryland.

William Eden/Eaton

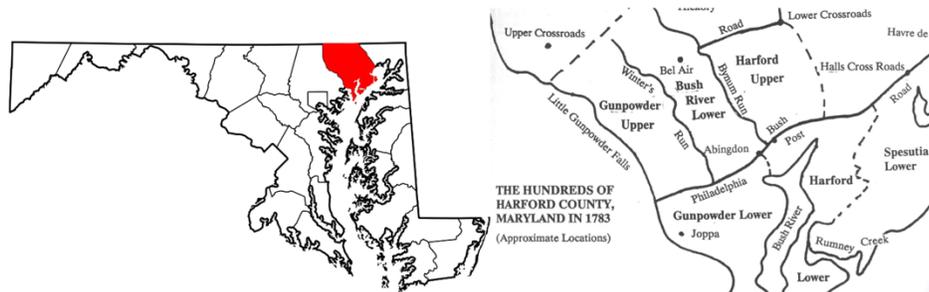
Before publishing the “compendium” in 2012, I commissioned research in Maryland. The researcher found some material on William Eden or Eaton – the last name was spelled several different ways. That research is summarized at the beginning of the *John R. Eden Compendium*.

The estimate of William’s year of birth – 1745 -- comes from the 1776 Maryland census, which is a “constructed” list – not an actual count taken at the time. The 1776 census states that William Eden’s age in 1776 was 31, with wife Sarah age 26, Jeremiah Eden age 8, Elizabeth Eden age 7, Benjamin age 3, and Mary age 10 months. That census was prepared by an extra-

legal committee in each county to support the levying of a tax to be imposed by the Continental Congress to pay bills. The census was constructed during the summer and early fall of 1776, and at least some county enumerations were completed by mid to late August 1776.

William EATON is listed as a taxable in the 1773 tax list of Westminster Hundred in Baltimore County. Willliam EATON is listed as a taxable in the 1774 tax list of Spesutia Lower Hundred in Harford County. William EDEN lived in Harford Lower Hundred in 1776. William EADIN was a private in Capt. Bradford’s Militia Company No 13 in September 1775. William EDEN was a private in Capt. Rigdon’s Militia Company No. 12 on December 2, 1775. William EDEN was a signer of the Association of Freemen of Maryland in 1776 in Deer Creek Upper Hundred. William EATON was head of a household of 7 white inhabitants in Gunpowder Hundred in 1783.

It thus appears that after arriving in Philadelphia sometime in 1770-72, William and his family settled temporarily in Westminster (now Carroll County), and then moved southeast to Harford County. They seem to have lived in several different locations within Harford County. Or -- it is possible that there were two or even more William EDENs or EATONs. At the time of the census record in 1776, they were in Eden Hundred. Henry Peden, *Early Harford Countians Individuals Living in Harford County, Maryland, In its Formative Years* Vol 1, 1999, p. 128. In 1783 William was in nearby Gunpowder Hundred.



Harford County, Maryland

Harford Lower Hundred

The term “hundred” was inherited from English tradition and referred to an area that could support about 100 households. In Maryland the hundreds became units for tax collection. The “Eden Hundred” was likely named in association with the name of Sir Robert Eden, the last colonial governor. Notes on the local “Eden Mill” located in the area state that it was named “after Sir Robert Eden or the Eden One Hundred.”

“Our” William Eden, died in Harford County, Maryland. The dates of death or probate given in the Will book: 12 July 1793, 18 Aug 1793. Sources: *More Marylanders to Kentucky, 1778-1828*, Henry C. Peden, 2000, p. 47; *1776 Census of Harford Lower Hundred, Harford County*. According to William Eden’s will, his wife was named Sarah; his children were

Jeremiah, (b 1767), Elizabeth, (b 1770, married John Smith); Benjamin, (b 1773); and Mary (b.1775-6). His executors were wife Sarah and son Benjamin.

Hampden County, Knowall men by these presents That We
Sarah Eden Benjamin Eden Jameson & Jeremiah Eden are Heirs
and Family Bound unto the State of Maryland in the full and just
Sum of Six Hundred pounds Current money to be paid to the said State
to which payments well and truly to be made and Done we bind our selves
and Every of our and Every of our Heirs Executors and administrators
in the whole and for the whole jointly and severally firmly by these presents
Sealed with our Seals and Dated this Nineteenth Day of August seven teen
Hundred and Ninety Three

The conditions of this obligation is such that if the within bounden
Sarah Eden & Benjamin Eden Executors of the last will and Testament of
William Eden Late of Hampden County Deceased do make or cause to be made
or cause to be made and perfect In or out of all and singular the Goods Chattels and
Credits of the said Deceased which have or shall come to the hands possession
and knowledge of them the said Sarah Eden & Benjamin Eden or in to the hands
and possession of any other person or persons for them and the same some
or to be exhibited in to the Registry of our or persons
Court on or before the Nineteenth Day of November next ensuing and the
same Goods Chattels and Credits and all other the Goods Chattels and
Credits of the said Deceased at or after his Death which at any time after shall
come to the hands possession of the said Sarah Eden & Benjamin Eden
or in to the hands and possession of any other person or persons for to well
and truly administer according to Law they shall pay the Debts of
of the said Deceased before the said Goods Chattels and Credits will
Extend and the Law will Charge as a full such Debts with the charges
and costs have arisen or shall arise or be Com Due to any of the officers
of this State from the said Sarah Eden & Benjamin Eden on account
of the said Deceased or his Estate and further to make or cause to be made
or cause to be made a true and just account of their said administration on or before the
Nineteenth Day of August next and all the Rest and Residue of the said
Goods Chattels and Credits which shall be found Remaining the said
Executors account the same being first Examined and adjusted by the Judge
or Judges for the time being of the said Court to Distribute or Dispose of
according to Law and the true intent and meaning of the last will and
Testament of the said Deceased and lastly to at all and every time and
times Hereafter clearly Discharge and save Harmless the Judges and others
the officers of the said Court from all persons having or pretending to
have any any Right Title claim or Interest to or in the said Goods and
Chattels then this obligation to be Void and of none Effect or else to remain
in full force power and Virtue in Law.

Signes Sealed & Acknowledged
In presence of
Geo. Bradford

Sarah Eden Seal
Ben. Eden Seal
James Eden Seal
Jeremiah Eden Seal

During the colonial period, literacy rates were low and English spelling rules were not firmly standardized until well after the colonial period. As a result, spellings during the 1770s were phonetical and inconsistent. Clerks wrote down names the way they heard them; and the named parties often had no opportunity or reason to check or “correct” the spelling. (A clerk in Kentucky recorded the name of one of John Paul Eden’s brothers as Jacob “Eaton.”) .” It would thus have been a natural mistake for clerks or scribes in Maryland familiar with the spelling of the governor’s name, the mill, and the hundred, to write down the name “Eaton” as “Eden.”

But was it a mistake? The fact that Maryland William’s last name was sometimes spelled “Eden” and sometimes “Eaton” or “Eadin” does not answer the question: which was “correct.” Perhaps “correct” in this context refers only to the consistent pronunciation of a name over time – say a few generations. Language was spoken before it was written. But what if there was no such consistent pronunciation – or at least no consistent rendering of it into written text? For our present purpose – tracking family genetic connections -- it is worth noting that the last name of the Oxfordshire William Eden b. 1744 was spelled “EATON” – and that seems also to have been the case with our William EATON who first settled in Maryland c. 1770-72.

William Eden or Eaton was an American soldier during the Revolutionary War. Multiple historical records from Harford County confirm that the Rigdon militia company served during the Revolutionary War, but as a home guard for local defense rather than operating as part of the Continental Army.

Jeremiah Eden/Eaton

Jeremiah Eden, William’s first child, born in England in 1768, married Mary Summers on May 2, 1791, in Bel Air, Harford County, Maryland. He died February 2, 1859, Fleming County, Ky. Mary Summers Eden, according to the 1850 census, was born in Philadelphia about 1771 – perhaps not long after her own family arrived from England.

In February 1795, Jeremiah sold two horses, a number of household goods, and one “skoner” (schooner) named the Sally of Harford to Harmon Beedle of Harford County. This would indicate that Jeremiah may have been a waterman by trade. By 1797 he and brother Benjamin were in Baltimore City where they appeared on a tax list for carts – Jeremiah 2 carts, Benjamin 1 cart.

Jeremiah EDEN purchased the “residium” of a 99 year lease on a lot on Goodman Street at Honey Alley, and Benjamin EDEN, laborer, leased part of a tract called ‘David’s Fancy’ Jeremiah is on the 1798 and 1799 tax lists and is enumerated in the 1800 Federal Census with a boy under age ten, two little girls, a young woman and another woman over age 45. The 10-year old boy was John Paul Eden, born 1796. In 1801 Jeremiah leased another property near the first one. A few months later “Jere. EATON” sold three plats at auction, which became involved in a

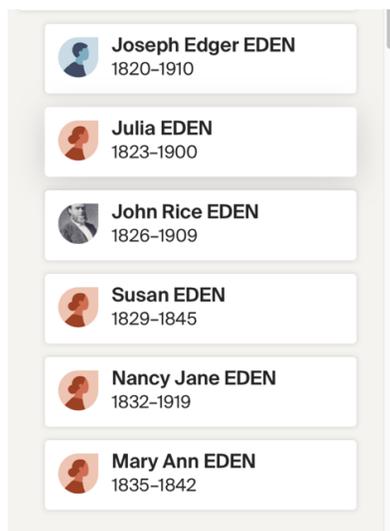
lengthy chancery case; Benjamin posted a guardianship in the same case. Jeremiah was about to lift stakes once again.

The time of the family's move can be estimated by the reported births of their children. Son Jacob was born October 1801, in Baltimore. Son Benjamin was born August 23, 1803, in Fleming County, Ky. By 1810 Jeremiah and wife Mary had six children under age 10 and four from age 10 to 16. Jeremiah moved from Fleming County to nearby Bath County in 1812. He was buried in Fleming County on February 2, 1859, at Eden Chapel Cemetery where wife Mary had been buried in 1850. *John R. Eden Compendium*, p.6.

John Paul Eden

Jeremiah's son, John Paul Eden, born in Maryland on April 30, 1796, married Catherine ("Kitty") Cann (Sept 26, 1800 – Aug 29, 1870) in Bath County, Kentucky, on November 19, 1819. Catherine may have been the daughter of Joseph Cann (c. 1777-1814) and Jane Rice Cann (1776-1836) who, according to a Rice Family Newsletter, migrated to Montgomery County, Kentucky around 1810. The 1810 census has both Joseph Cann and James Cann as well as members of the Rice family there at that time. In 1811 part of Montgomery was hived off to form Bath County. If this Joseph and Jane Rice were parents of Catherine Cann, that would explain how "Rice" became the middle name of the first son of John Paul and Catherine.

John Paul Eden and his wife Kitty had several children born in Kentucky: Joseph Edgar, born September 10, 1820; John Rice Eden, my great-grandfather, born February 1, 1826. Susan Eden was born February 21, 1829; Julina Eden was born February 26, 1823; Nancy Jane Eden, born August 27, 1832; and Mary Ann Eden, born August 12, 1835. The family moved to Rush County, Indiana, in 1831, where John Paul died only four years later, July 16, 1835, at the age of 39, leaving his widow with six children and few resources.



John Rice Eden

In 1852 the Eden family, including the widow Catherine, relocated from Indiana to Illinois. In 1856 John R. Eden married Roxanna Meeker. On June 30, 1886, their daughter Rose married I.J. Martin, my grandfather, the son of a Whitley Point farmer. Rose Eden was well educated, a Georgetown Academy graduate, a musician – particularly gifted at the piano – and a music teacher. *Rose Eden's Family Letters*, R.E. Martin editor, Chicago, 2012.

V. Where in England did our Eden Ancestors – William and Sarah, their son Jeremiah and their forebears – live before coming to America?

To state the question differently -- which of the several “William Edens” or “Eatons” mentioned in English records is “ours”?

Until now we have not known where in England William Eden and other members of the family came from. The last royal governor of Maryland, Robert Eden, was part of a large Eden family group living in or near Durham, England, in or near West Auckland. Because the name “Eden” was not common, some folks guessed that our William Eden was related in some way to this aristocratic Governor Robert Eden. But that was no more than a guess. And just as reasonable a guess was that the farmer William Eden of rural Maryland was not a relative of the aristocratic and influential -- not to mention very rich – Eden family of West Auckland.

Having raked through several haystacks seeking information about my Martin ancestors, as well as my Scotts and Neelys, the results of which may be found on my local history website, edenmartin.com, I decided to take one more run at the Edens. In July 2025, after learning that a large archive of materials relating to the Eden family could be found in a library at Durham University, I retained a local historian, Margaret Hedley, who lives near Durham. When she narrowed the search to Oxfordshire, she helped me find a very talented family researcher, Jessica Feinstein, to help with the Oxford research.

Let's first dismiss a couple of unsupported suggestions.

A. William Eden, b 1744 – brother of Sir Robert Eden

Within the Oxfordshire records, the names “Eden” and “Eaton” are considered separate surnames but each has different spellings. Eden appears as “Edden,” “Edens,” “Eaden” ... And

Eaton appears as “Eton,” “Eaten, Heaton,” ... The former is thought to come from the place name of Eden in Durham. The latter is thought to come from a place name of Eaton or Eton.

Ms. Hedley surveyed the information about the Eden archives in Durham and quickly concluding that that aristocratic family was not a likely place to find traces of “our” William Eden.

Sir Robert Eden was the last royal governor of the colony, then state, of Maryland. He had a brother named William who married Eleanor Elliott – the wrong name for “our” William’s wife. Also, this William (brother of Sir Robert) died in England – not Maryland. There is no reason to think that our ancestor, the Maryland farmer named William Eden, was related to the aristocratic, wealthy Eden family of West Auckland, England.

B. William Eden, b. 1745, Maryland; married to Sarah Foot. Parents reportedly named William Adams and Freelove Arnold.

Ancestry.com shows a William Martin as born in 1745 in Maryland and married to Sarah Foot. “Our” William’s wife was named “Sarah.” The entry is associated with families with names: Eager-Newman -Gundy-Fetters. It might be entertaining to think our ancestor William had a mother named “Freelove.” But this listing is unverified, and there is no reason to think our ancestor William “Eden” had parents with last names Adams or Arnold. The Ancestry listing states that William Eden of Harford County was born in Maryland, though ours was born in England. Nor is there any evidence that the maiden name of Our William’s wife Sarah was “Foot.” A William Eden may have married a Sarah Foote in Pitcombe, Somerset, England in March 1770, but he could not have been “ours.” His first son, Jeremiah, was born in 1767 – three years before the year of the Pitcombe marriage.

The Pitcombe William and Sarah Eden reportedly had four children in Pitcombe, including Jane in 1775 and Elizabeth in 1780. But in those years “our” William Eden was in Maryland.

(A lot of unverified stuff gets reported on Ancestry.com by folks who think that common first names or family lines, without more, prove relationships.)

C. The Eatons of Oxfordshire, England.

After dismissing the aristocratic Aucklund Eden family as candidates, Ms. Hedley, the English researcher, identified a family of Edens/Eatons in Oxfordshire. Jessica Feinstein, an

experienced and knowledgeable researcher who lives near Oxford, then conducted extensive research into the Eden and Eaton families in and around Oxfordshire.

The Oxfordshire family name was sometimes spelled “Eaton.” So was the name of our family of Edens in Maryland. Indeed, that was probably the original, “correct” spelling (and pronunciation), which was then mistakenly written as “Eden” in Maryland – a mistake made more likely by the fact that the royal Governor’s last name was “Eden,” and our family of ancestors lived in “Eden’s Hundred.”

Research discloses several generations of Oxfordshire Edens/Eatons but does not reveal their relationships to each other. As Jessica Feinstein has pointed out, those two family names – and their variants – are considered separate surnames:

Eden is thought to come from a place-name of Eden in Durham, e.g., Castle Eden or Eden Burn, or from the personal name Edun;

•

Eaton is thought to come from a place-name of Eaton or Eton.

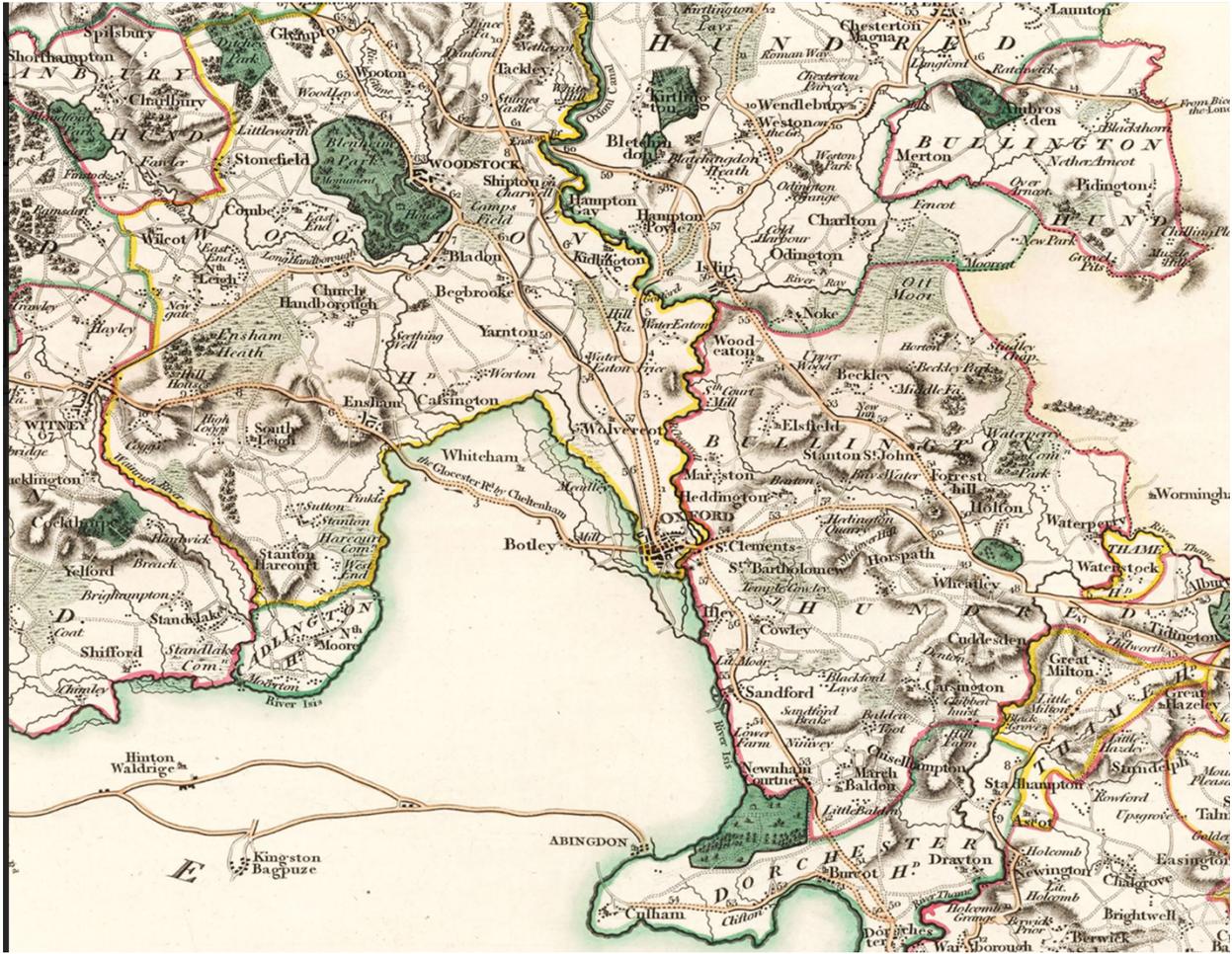
The name Eden appears in Oxfordshire records as EDEN, EDDEN, EDENS, EADEN, EDDENS, EDON, EDDING, EDDON, EADON, EDDINGS, EADIN, EADUN, EDAN, EDANE, EDDIN, EDDINS, EDDNES, EDDONS, EDENES, EDONS, EDYNS, EDDAN, EADON, EADONS, EADION, EDINE, EDINGS, EDINS, EIDEN.

The name Eaton appears as EATON, ETON, EATEN, HEATON, EATTEN, EATMAN, EATION, EATTON, ETTEN, EATAN, EATHAN, EATINS, ETEN, ETTON, YEATON, EATONE, HEATON, HETON, HETTON.

The research in and around Oxfordshire – including the university town -- identified several generations of Edens and Eatons who are probably related to each other and seem likely to be in or collateral to our ancestral chain. Let’s take a closer look at the part of the 1805 Oxfordshire map that centers on Oxford.

This area was home to several generations of families named EATON (or one of its variant spellings) – including men with given names of “William” and “Jeremiah.” We know of these people mostly from the baptism records kept in some of the local parishes. We thus have a good view of some of the parent-child relationships, but not so great a view of siblings and cousins.

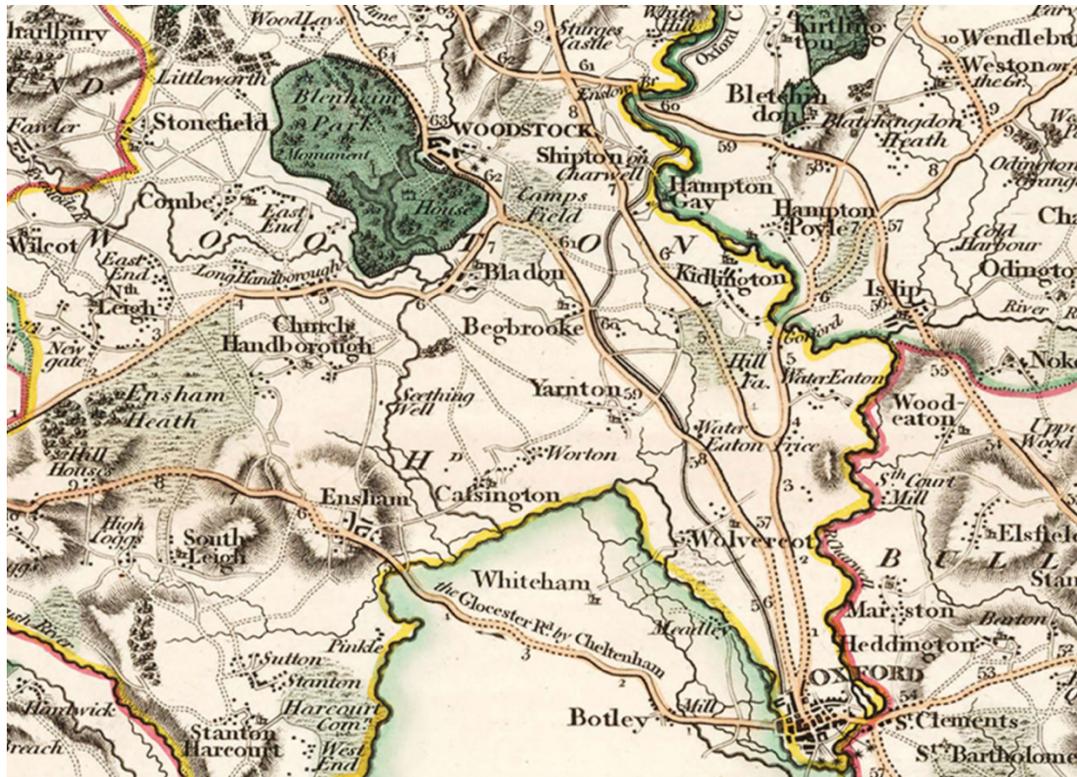
\



Segment of 1805 Map, Oxfordshire (Oxford is in the center.)

The name EATON goes back in Oxfordshire at least to the 16th century. John Eden or Eaton. One of his sons, Thomas Eaton, was baptized Sept 18, 1575. William Eaton, buried June 8, 1589.

We should now identify the locations – villages or parishes – within Oxfordshire where Edens or Eatons lived. Several of these are northwest of Oxford – clustered around Blenheim, the gift of the English people to John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough.



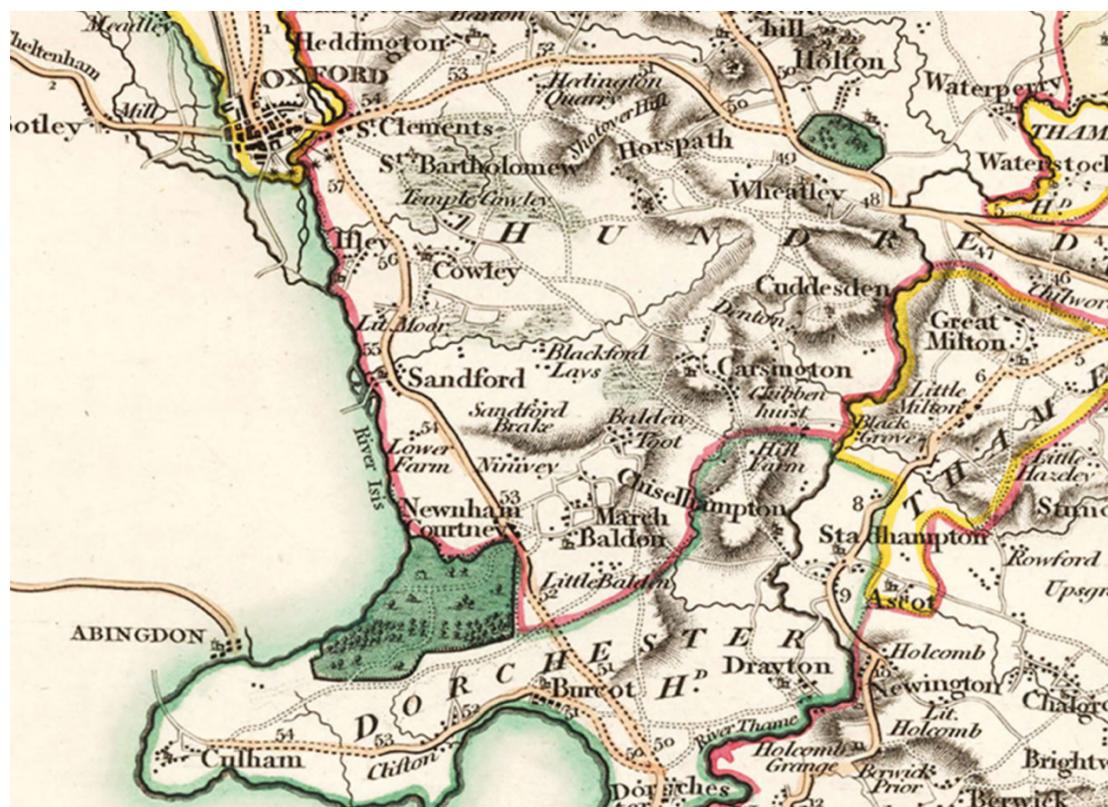
Oxfordshire – Oxford, Bladon, Combe, North Leigh

Many men named “Eaton” appear in the records from the parish of **North Leigh** (left center, just north of Ensham Heath). These include both William and Jeremiah. A 1680 Jeremiah was born to a father named William; another Jeremiah was born in 1720 to another William. As there are no death records recorded there for a Jeremiah, it is possible the man of that name moved away – possibly to Newington, which is 22 miles southeast.

Another batch of EATONS, including several Williams, appear in the records of **Bladon** (center, south of Woodstock), less than 5 miles from North Leigh. (But apparently no Jeremiahs.) One was William Eaton, baptized 1722, son of William & Ann. Another William EATTEN, son of William and Mary, was baptized in 1748.

In **Combe** (very near North Leigh) appears a William Eaton, b. 1745, son of John Eaton Jr.. (William had a brother Benjamin.)

Now we move to the south of Oxford.



South of Oxford – Newington, Abingdon

Newington (lower right corner of map segment), unlike the three mentioned above, is a small village 8 miles *southeast* of Oxford. There in 1745 was recorded the marriage of Jeremiah “Eaden” and Elizabeth Allen, both of Newington parish. One of their sons was a William, b. 1753. Another was Jeremiah, born 1756.

Oxford. A further batch of Edens/Eatons are recorded in the parish of St. Mary Magdalen, Oxford -- the university town. William Eaton married Hannah Taylor, both of St. Mary Magdalen parish, Oxford, June 26, 1733. In 1735, Mary Eaton was baptized, “da. Of William (occ. Smith).” In 1737, Sarah Eaton was baptized. A William Eden, son of William (laborer) was buried April 4, 1742. Parish of St. Mary Magdalen. This identifies both a father (laborer) and a deceased son – perhaps an infant or child.

Here we also find William Eden, probably born 1722, identified as a “laborer”; he and his wife Mary caused their children to be baptized at the church of St. Mary Magdalen (at roughly the same time Jeremiah and Elizabeth were baptizing their children at nearby Newington). Here are the baptized children of William Eden and Mary, baptized in the years indicated:

Mary, born 1742. Oxford

William, born 1744. Oxford

Sarah, born 1746. Oxford

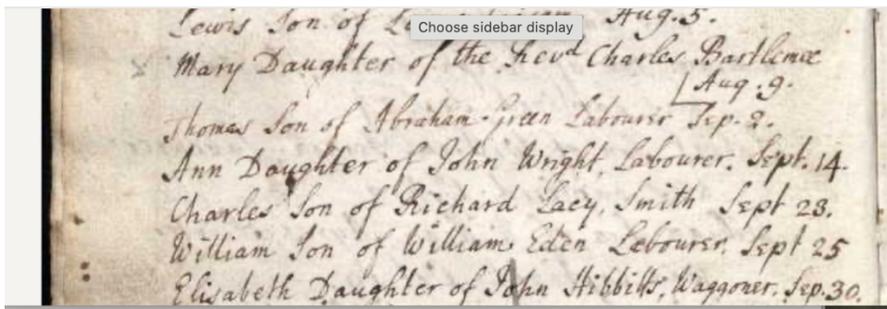
Joseph, born 1748. Oxford

Ann, born 1749. Oxford

Susannah, born 1754. Oxford

There were several other William Edens or Eatons in the neighborhood. One was **William EATON, born 1744**, in Oxford (St. Aldate), son of Stephen, a maltster and Priscilla. As the profession suggests, a “maltster” prepared malt – an ingredient for brewing beer and distilling spirits. It would be nice to have a maltster in our family tree. On February 5, 1744/45, Stephen made his will and died shortly thereafter. In the will he identified his wife Priscilla and his brother William Eaton, whom he made his Executor. However, he did not mention a son named William – perhaps because the son of that name, born months earlier, had not survived. Yet in 1757 in a listing of Oxford apprentices where was a mention of “Priscilla, widow, mother of William.” So perhaps young William EATON had survived after all. But his father had not.

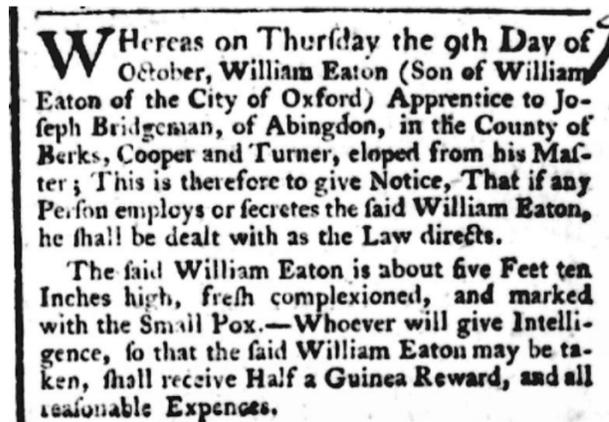
William Eden, son of William and Mary, born 1744 in Oxford and baptized in St. Mary Magdalen Church, September 25, 1744, was born at the “right” time to be the same person as the William Eden/Eaton age 31 who appears in 1776 in the Maryland census. St. Mary Magdalen Church in Oxford has stood in its present form since the late 12th century with later additions. It appears today very much as it did when William EDEN was baptized there in September 1744.



I have suspected that the William Eden/Eaton b, 1722, and Jeremiah Eaton, b 1720, were brothers. Each had a father named William. William was born in Bladon and Jeremiah in nearby North Leigh. (The two villages were and are 10 miles apart.) The putative father William might have moved to Bladon in that two-year interval. If they were brothers or cousins, “Jeremiah”

was a family name of both the Oxfordshire William b. 1744 and the Maryland William, who bestowed that name on his first son.

A newspaper clipping over two decades later, December 6, 1766, hints at a possible motive for William Eden/Eaton b. 1744 to pick up stakes and emigrate to America. The clipping states that on October 9, “William Eaton (Son of William Eaton of the City of Oxford) Apprentice to Joseph Bridgeman of Abingdon, in the County of Berks, cooper and turner, eloped from his Master.” “Elope” in this context means “run away from ...” William evidently wanted to escape from his apprenticeship and his obligation to perform labor as spelled out in an indenture, a kind of contract.



WHEREAS on Thursday the 9th Day of October, William Eaton (Son of William Eaton of the City of Oxford) Apprentice to Joseph Bridgeman, of Abingdon, in the County of Berks, Cooper and Turner, eloped from his Master; This is therefore to give Notice, That if any Person employs or secretes the said William Eaton, he shall be dealt with as the Law directs.

The said William Eaton is about five Feet ten Inches high, fresh complexioned, and marked with the Small Pox.—Whoever will give Intelligence, so that the said William Eaton may be taken, shall receive Half a Guinea Reward, and all reasonable Expences.

It is noteworthy that the family name of both this apprentice and his father William, of the City of Oxford, as they appeared in the “elopement” announcement, was spelled EATON. The other William EATON born in 1744 was the son of the maltster Stephen, who had been dead over 20 years. That William could not be the escaping apprentice in 1766. Therefore, in 1766 there had to be another father/son combination of Williams in Oxford who spelled family name “EATON.” The only such father/son combination appearing in the Oxford records is the William, married to Mary, who had a son in 1744 baptized at St. Mary Magdalen.

At the risk of repetition: the William EDEN born in 1744, baptized in Oxford at St. Mary Magdalen, son of William and Mary, was apparently the same person as the William EATON, son of William, who ran away from his apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships in England in the 18th century generally began in the youth’s early to late teens. Until 1768 the apprenticeships could last until 24 but the age was reduced then to 21. Indenture contracts often included a clause prohibiting marriage without the master’s consent.

In October 1766, “our” Maryland William – born 1744 – would have been 22. We are pretty sure his first child, Jeremiah, was born a couple of years later, in early 1768, in England. (He was 8-1/2 at the time of the August 1776 Maryland census.)

William the apprentice was running away from Joseph Bridgeman, of Abingdon, a small town 6-7 miles south of Oxford. Bridgeman was reportedly a cooper and turner – a man who made barrels and other wood objects using a lathe. Joseph Bridgeman of Abingdon had married Mary Hamerton on November 29, 1759.

William had become an apprentice of Joseph Bridgeman, cooper in 1762, for a premium of 16 pounds. If he is “ours,” then he was born in 1744; that would have made him about 18 when he began his apprenticeship – seemingly a bit old for it. He would have been 22 when he “eloped” from the job.

The reward of a half guinea in 1766 was worth 10 shillings and 6 pence; it contained roughly 3.8 g of gold. At that time a skilled worker might earn roughly 1 shilling per day.

If an escaped apprentice were captured, his term of apprenticeship would typically be extended by the amount of his absence, and a short term of imprisonment or hard labor might be imposed. (Info provided by Perplexity.)

Thanks to the clipping, we have a description of our ancestor – if “ours” he was: About five feet ten inches. Fresh complexion, marked with smallpox. He was a big man. The average height of Englishmen in the latter part of the 18th century was apparently about 5 feet, 6 inches.

Was William EATON, b. 1744, the absconding Oxford apprentice, our ancestor? Each reader may judge the probabilities for himself or herself. I think it is more likely that he was than that he was not. He was born in the right year. “Eaton” is apparently the spelling/pronunciation that our Maryland William used shortly after arriving in America. Also, because “our” William named his first son Jeremiah, I would put an even higher probability on the likelihood that “our” Maryland William and son Jeremiah were part of the cluster of Eatons who lived in Oxfordshire in the mid 18th Century.

#####

APPENDIX – children of Jeremiah Eden b 1767 and Mary Summers Eden, b. 1769. List of family names may be helpful.

Husband: Jeremiah EDEN
Birthdate: Sep 2, 1767
Birthplace: Maryland
Death date: Feb 2, 1859
Place of death: Fleming County, Kentucky
Father: William EDEN

Mother: Sarah

Marriage date: May 3,1791

Marriage place: Bel Air, Harford County, Maryland

Wife: Mary SUMMERS

Birthdate: 1769

Birthplace: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Death date: Oct 5,1850

Place of death: Fleming County, Kentucky

Father: unknown

Mother:

CHILDREN

Child No. 1: Nellie EDEN

Sex: F

Birthdate: ABT.1795

Birthplace: Baltimore, Maryland

Death date: BEF.1822

Place of death: Bath Co., Kentucky?

Marriage date: Sep 20,1817

Marriage place: Bath Co., Kentucky

Spouse's name: William GROVER

Child No. 2: John Paul EDEN

Sex: M

Birthdate: April 30,1796

Birthplace: Baltimore, Maryland

Death date: July 16,1835

Place of death: Rush County, Indiana

Marriage date: Nov 19,1819

Marriage place: Bath County, Kentucky

Spouse's name: Catherine CANN

Child No. 3: Sarah EDEN Duty

Sex: F

Birthdate: March 20,1798

Birthplace: Maryland

Death date: Feb 9, 1882

Place of death: Bath Co., Kentucky

Marriage date: July 20,1819

Marriage place: Bath Co., Kentucky

Spouse's name: John DUTY

Child No. 4: Isaac EDEN
Sex: M
Birthdate: Oct 9,1801
Birthplace: Baltimore, Maryland
Death date: unknown
Place of death: Fleming County, Kentucky
Marriage date:
Marriage place:
Spouse's name:

Child No. 5: Jacob EDEN
Sex: M
Birthdate: Oct 9,1801
Birthplace: Baltimore, Maryland
Death date: Oct 6,1868
Place of death: Fleming County, Kentucky
Marriage date: Oct 18,1827
Marriage place: Fleming County, Kentucky
Spouse's name: Rachel MCCRACKEN

Child No. 6: Benjamin Franklin EDEN
Sex: M
Birthdate: Aug 23,1803
Birthplace: Fleming County, Kentucky
Death date: Sep 22,1881
Place of death: Fleming County, Kentucky
Marriage date: Sep 2,1832
Marriage place: Bath County, Kentucky
Spouse's name: Charlotte ALEXANDER

Child No. 7: William EDEN/ "Eaton" in 1860 census
Sex: M
Birthdate: March 25, 1805
Birthplace: Fleming County, Kentucky
Death date: March 30,1891
Place of death: Slate Creek, Bath Co., Kentucky
Marriage date: Nov 19,1832
Marriage place: Bath County, Kentucky
Spouse's name: Nancy VICE

Child No. 8: Jeremiah EDEN
Sex: M
Birthdate: abt.1808

Birthplace: Fleming County, Kentucky
Death date: Feb 3,1890
Place of death: Fleming County, Kentucky
Marriage date: Feb 17,1834
Marriage place: Bath County, Kentucky
Spouse's name: Catherine ADAMS

Child No. 9: Andrew EDEN
Sex: M
Birthdate: April 7,1811
Birthplace: Fleming County, Kentucky
Death date: June 5,1888
Place of death: Hillsboro, Fleming Co., Kentucky
Marriage date: Aug 15,1836
Marriage place: Bath County, Kentucky
Spouse's name: Jane JOHNSON

Child No. 10: Nancy EDEN
Sex: F
Birthdate: abt.1815
Birthplace: Fleming County, Kentucky
Death date:
Place of death: Fleming County, Kentucky
Marriage date: Dec 25,1836
Marriage place: Bath Co., Kentucky
Spouse's name: Absolom Lyman

Child No. 11: Mary EDEN
Sex: F
Birthdate: 1809
Birthplace: Fleming Co., Kentucky
Death date: unknown
Place of death:
Marriage date: March 17,1845
Marriage place: Bath Co., Kentucky
Spouse's name: Howard MCLAIN