

Pilgrim Village Families Sketch: William Gilson

By Robert Charles Anderson

Birth: He was born at the latest by 1610, but probably years earlier. He was referred to as “ancient” in 1649 deposition concerning some land he requested for his sister’s children.

Death: He died February 1, 1639/40.

Ship: Unknown, 1632

Life in England: Little is known of his life in England. According to the various documents related to the disposing of his estate, he had a married sister there. He had brought two of her children, John and Hannah Damman/Damon, to New England with him.

Life in New England: William Gilson’s name is listed in the 1633 list of Plymouth freemen. He moved to Scituate and built a house prior to September 1634. He served as a Governor’s assistant in 1633, as assessor in 1634 and 1637, and on a committee on trade in 1634. He also served on several juries. He owned a windmill, referred to in a codicil to his will relating to his nephew. Controversy had arisen after his death when, having acquired various lands claiming he needed them to provide for his sister’s children “as if they were his own,” the two received very little in his will. In the codicil, Gilson thought “that [Damman’s] Aunt would employ him in the windmille after his Death.” Eventually, the Court proclaimed John Damman/Damon was heir to his uncle’s lands.

Family: William Gilson married Frances _____ by January 8, 1634/5. No children of this couple were recorded.