

Pilgrim Village Families Sketch: Francis Eaton

By Robert Charles Anderson

Birth: Francis Eaton was born in Bristol, England shortly before September 11, 1596, the day he was baptized.

Death: He died in Plymouth sometime in 1633, between March 25 when his name appeared on a tax list, and November 8, when his possessions were inventoried for probate.

Ship: *Mayflower*, 1620

Life in England: The records in Bristol identify Francis Eaton as a house carpenter. The son of John and Dorothy (Smith) Eaton, he was the only one of their children known to have survived to adulthood. No record of his marriage or the birth of his first child has been found in Bristol, so he may have lived elsewhere in England before he traveled to New England.

Life in New England: Francis, his wife Sarah, and infant son Samuel arrived in New England aboard the *Mayflower* in November 1620. By the time of his death he was a freeman and owned various pieces of property in Plymouth. The inventory of “Fr Eaton carpenter of Plymouth” showed that his debts far exceeded the value of his estate. He was buried in Plymouth, but the location is unknown.

Family: Francis married (1) Sarah _____ in England. She died in the first winter of the “general sickness.” Francis’ second wife is generally believed to have been the maidservant of fellow *Mayflower* passenger, John Carver. Her first name was likely Dorothy. She died a year or two after the marriage. They had no children. He married (3) Christian Penn, who arrived in Plymouth in the summer of 1623, aboard either the *Anne* or *Little James*. They had three children. Christian Eaton married (2) Francis Billington, had nine children by him, and died in Middleboro around 1684.

Son of Francis and Sarah Eaton:

- Samuel grew up in Plymouth, later moving to Duxbury and then Middleboro, where he died in 1684. He married (1) Elizabeth _____ before March 10, 1646 and had two children. He married (2) his step-sister, Martha Billington, on January 10, 1660/1 and had four children.

Children of Francis and Christian Eaton:

- Rachel was born around 1625–6. She married Joseph Ramsdell (or Ramsden) in 1645 and had at least one son. She died in Plymouth between June 1656 and October 1661. Benjamin was born about March 1627/8. He married Sarah Hoskins on December 4, 1660, and had four children. He died in Plympton on January 16, 1711/2.
- Of the third child, Governor Bradford in his list of Mayflower passengers said merely that the child was “an idiot” and was still alive in 1651.