

The Parents of Edward J. Turner

Authors note: The following was written before I had obtained, in June of 2007, a copy of E.J. Turner's 1916 death certificate which definitively establishes his parents as John Turner (b. England) and Margaret John-Turner (b. Wales).

Relationship Analysis by Ted Hine – July 2006

I believe that I have definitively determined from 1870 and 1880 census and other records that John and Margaret Turner of Rock County, Wisconsin were the parents of Edward John Turner (my great-grandfather). Most of the individual pieces of evidence that I've obtained are circumstantial but, looked at collectively, very strongly suggest that this is the case. Following is my analysis:

Background Information:

According to surviving cryptic and sketchy handwriting notes made by my mother (Betty Hulburd-Hine-Alderson) apparently taken in the early 1940's shortly after marrying my father, E. K. Hine, and apparently summarizing discussions with her new mother-in-law (Rose Turner-Hine) regarding Rose and her father (Edward John Turner) and his ancestors:

"Lord Butler Turner - part Scottish - English" "related to Mary Queen of Scots".
"His son Edward John Turner born in England. Came to Quebeck" (probably Quebec)
"Edward John Turner, Jr. - born in Wisconsin (one of 8) (mother Hine's Dad)."
"Went to Milton College in Wisconsin." (Referring to Rose's father E.J. Turner.)
(Note that the above indicates that father and son were both named Edward John Turner.)

A search of the internet determined that Milton College (located in Milton, WI) closed in 1982 but an e-mail address for an archivist was available. In response to my e-mailed questions Judy Scheehle (Administrator/Curator of the old records) replied in part:

"But anyway I found your great-grandfather in hand written record books of William Whitford who was President of the Academy and the College. Not a lot of information, just says E. J. Turner, Fall Term 1864 from Palmyra, Winter Term 1864 no address. In 1864 student book there is a J.E. Turner (lady) from Palmyra. In the Spring Term of 1865 it looks like it says Edward Turner, not quite sure. Also in the Spring term of 1865 is a Emily A. Turner from Rock Prairie and E.J. Turner from Rock Prairie. Rock Prairie is a township about 8 miles form Milton. Palmyra is a town in Jefferson County about 30 miles away." In another e-mail Judy Scheehle wrote in part "I found a Sarah Turner from Rock Prairie listed in the catalogue of Milton College for the years 1867-68 and 1868-69.....A Charles Turner is listed in an earlier one....."

I have been unable to find a “Rock Prairie” (last indicated home above of E.J. and possible siblings Emily A. Turner and Sarah Turner) on the Wisconsin maps I currently have handy but a quick search of the internet suggests that the words “Rock Prairie” are closely associated with many establishments in the Janesville area of Wisconsin. This is consistent with Rock Prairie being near the town of Milton as indicated by the archivist above as Janesville is also nearby. Milton, Janesville, and presumably Rock Prairie are today located in Rock County, WI.

 A formal photograph identified on the back as being of Martha Catherine Turner (wife of Edward John Turner of Idaho) found in the family photo collection of Ruth Hine-Darling (granddaughter of Edward John and Martha Turner) and likely taken in the later 1800's is labeled as coming from a photographic studio in Evansville, WI which is also in Rock County near Milton and Janesville. (I assume the photo was taken when Martha was visiting her husband's family in Wisconsin.)

Three formal photographs in a box of miscellaneous family pictures kept by Ellen Darling-Benson and passed down from her grandmother, Rose Turner-Hine are from three different photographic studios in Janesville, Wisconsin (Rock County). They are all undated and unidentified as to who the subjects are but appear to be from the later part of the 1800's and are presumably of some of Rose Turner-Hine's Wisconsin aunts, uncles, or cousins.

 According to my mother's notes (above), Edward John Turner (the son) was born in Wisconsin and his father (the subject of this article) was born in England.

The 1900 Idaho census shows Edward John Turner (the son) born in Wisconsin (March 1845) and his father born in England and his mother in Wales. (Note however that the 1880 Idaho census shows E.J. being born in England along with both of his parents. I strongly suspect that this was a mistake on the part of the census taker as even most of the census records for his children also show him as being born in Wisconsin.)

 Ellen Darling-Benson has two “autograph” books which belonged to our grandmother, Rose Turner-Hine, from Rose's childhood in the 1880's and 1890's. There is an entry made in 1889 in the “Gentile Valley” (Idaho) clearly signed “Your Uncle, F.H. Turner”. This indicates that Edward John Turner (the son in Idaho) had a brother who was at least visiting the area, if not lived there at the time. I've searched the online records and found that a Frederick Hugh Turner was married in the Gentile Valley, Idaho in 1881. Since both “Frederick” and “Hugh” are apparently family names (as E.J. and Martha's son Edward had the middle name Hugh and another son was named Frederick) I have a high degree of certainty that this in fact was E.J.'s brother. 1900 Idaho census records (Idaho Falls) show that this same Fred H. Turner (he is shown with his wife) was born in Oct. of 1855 in Wisconsin with his father being born in England and his mother being born in Wales.

Another entry in one Rose's autograph books made on Aug 24, 1892 starts “My dear niece” and is signed “Your aunt, Emily A. Turner”. This would have been E.J.'s sister.

Census Data Regarding John and Margaret Turner in Wisconsin:

Armed with the information above regarding a brother of E.J. Turner named Frederick I again checked Wisconsin Census records (I'd failed at this before) and came up with the following:

1870 Census Data for Harmony, Rock County, Wisconsin (June 6, 1870)

John Turner, head of household, age 68, male, farmer, born in England.
 Margaret Turner, wife, age 43, keeping house(?), born in Wales.
 Sarah Turner, daughter, age 18, at home, born in Canada.
 Charles Turner, son, age 16, born in Wisconsin.
 Frederick Turner, son, age 14, born in Wisconsin.
 George Turner, son, age 12, born in Wisconsin.
 Arabella Turner, daughter, age 10, born in Wisconsin.
 Walter Turner, son, age 7 born in Wisconsin.

1880 Census Data for Harmony, Rock County, Wisconsin (June 8, 1880)

John Turner, head of household, age 78, born in England.
 Margaret Turner, wife, age 54, born in Wales.
 Frederick Turner, son, age 24, farmer, born in Wisconsin.
 Emely A. Turner, daughter, age 30, born in Canada.
 Sarah Turner, daughter, age 28, milliner, born in Canada..
 Arabella M. Turner, daughter, age 19, school teacher, born in Wisconsin.
 Walter B. Turner, son, age 17, born (?).
 Nicholas Murphy, servant, farm laborer.

No other census records for this family could be found for any other year in Wisconsin (before or after) or any other state (before or after) but the family had children born in Wisconsin who would have been alive for the 1860. Perhaps the family was simply missed or somewhere else when the census was taken.

Analysis and Conclusions:

Edward John Turner ("E.J.", the son) doesn't show up in either of the census records above having more than likely left home by 1870 (he would have been 25 years old that year) but there is plenty of evidence that this was in fact his Wisconsin family.

1) E.J.'s brother Frederick shows up in both the 1870 and 1880 census records in Wisconsin with the same (or almost the same) birth year as in his 1900 Idaho census record. Frederick could certainly have been in Wisconsin for the June, 1880 census and married in Oct. of 1881 in Idaho which is what the data shows. The birth place of Frederick's parents as shown in the 1900 Idaho census (England and Wales) are consistent with those of John and Margaret Turner in 1870 and 1880, and with E.J.'s census data regarding his parents.

In addition, E.J.'s sister Emily A. Turner shows up as "Emely A." in the 1880 Wisconsin census record.

2) The Rock County, WI location of the 1870 and 1880 census records are consistent with all other location information I have for the parents of E.J. including the Milton College archive reference to Rock Prairie being E.J.'s home (as last reported in spring of 1865) and the various photographs passed down through the family from Evansville and Janesville, Wisconsin. I note that today the only town of "Harmony" (the town shown in the 1870 and 1880 census records above) I can find in Wisconsin is far from Rock County so I suspect that the Rock County "Harmony" may have changed its name or is now defunct.

3) E.J. Turner fits into the John Turner family child bearing pattern. E.J. would have been the oldest child having been born in 1845 (when his mother would have been 18).

4) My mother's notes indicate that E.J.'s father also had the name Edward John Turner. The 1870 and 1880 census records for the John Turner family do not record the name Edward but he could have been commonly known by his middle name and thus recorded that way by the census takers. It is common for the eldest son to carry the name of the father and in this case the name John would be consistent with this tradition. Had both father and son been named Edward John Turner and the father was routinely known by his middle name of John, the son would have likely been known as Edward, Ed, or E.J. to differentiate him from his father. This was certainly the case for the son from all the Idaho records I have.

5) The Milton College records for the Spring term of 1865 show "Emily A. Turner from Rock Prairie and E.J. Turner from Rock Prairie", "Sarah Turner from Rock Prairie listed in the catalogue of Milton College for the years 1867-68 and 1868-69", and "A Charles Turner" suggesting (but not confirming) possible sibling relationships. The 1880 census for the John Turner family shows a daughter named Emely A. Turner, age 30 (apparently again living at home after not being there for the 1870 census). She would have been 15 years old while attending Milton in 1865 and E.J. would have been 20. This is very likely the same Emily A. Turner that signed my grandmother's autograph book in 1892. The 1870 census records also show probable siblings Sarah and Charles Turner both of whom apparently attended Milton College.

6) My mother's notes indicate that E.J. came from a family with a total of 8 children. If E.J. is assumed to be part of John Turner's family and added to the 7 children identified in the 1870 and 1880 census records, there would have been a total of 8 children.

7) My mother's notes suggest that E.J.'s father, born in England, may have come to Wisconsin by way of Quebec. The 1870 and 1880 census records for John Turner show that 2 of his children (Sarah and Emely) were born in Canada (with the rest being born in Wisconsin) thus possibly confirming a Canadian connection for John Turner. I note that there is a time frame ambiguity in the birth locations of the children. E.J., the oldest presumed child, is known to have been born in Wisconsin in 1845 while the next two births, Emely in about 1850 and Sarah in about 1852, are recorded as taking place in Canada. (The rest of the children were born in Wisconsin.) Perhaps the John

Turner family moved around quite a bit or maybe Margaret was visiting relatives in Canada when two of the children were born.

8) Both John Turner and presumed son Edward John Turner shared similar professions, John being a farmer and E.J. being a rancher.

9) I could find no other reasonable candidates for the parents of Edward John Turner in census records in Rock County or anywhere else in Wisconsin for any year in the 1800's.