

Mary Durland, Author/Researcher



KNOW YOUR ROOTS

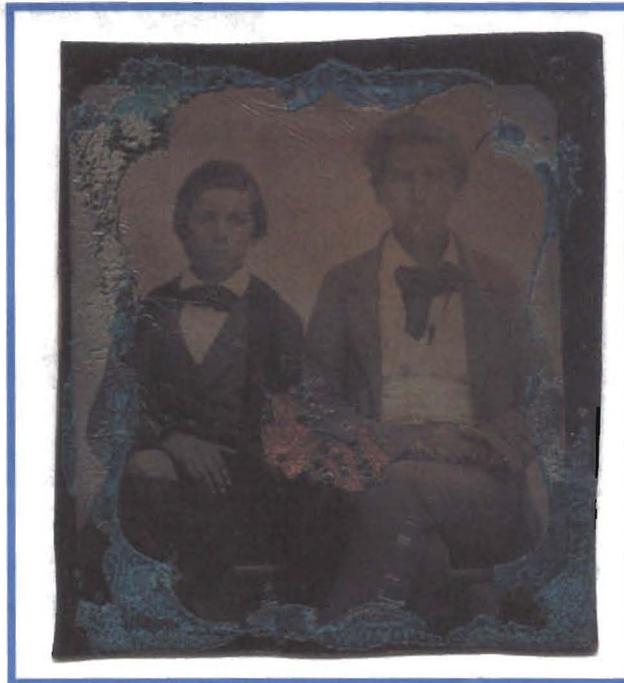
A Family That Doesn't Know Its Past Doesn't Understand Itself

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FREE/ELSON

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ARE THESE TWO YOUNG BOYS BROTHERS
OF MARY ELIZABETH ELSON FREE
AND IS ONE OF THEM THE FATHER
OF WILLIAM HARRIS ELSON,
THE FAMOUS EDUCATIONAL VISIONARY?



**CONDITION OF UNRETOUCHED PHOTO*

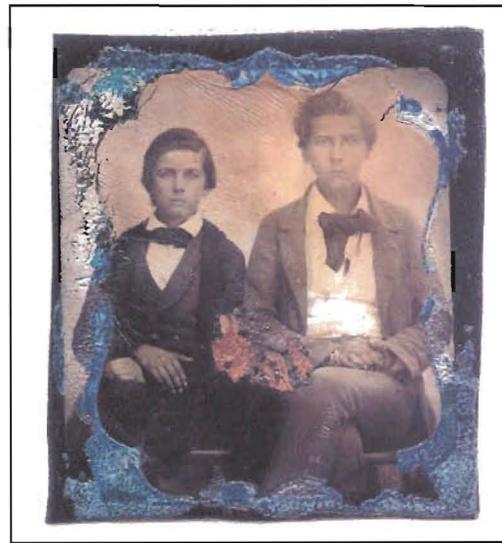
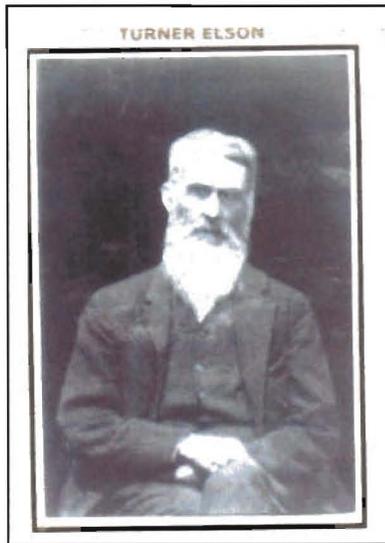
ANSWER TO COVER QUESTION

For some time, I have been trying to determine who the ancestors are in the old, old photos I have. I do have five slips of paper in Rebecca's handwriting, which were originally in the cases that held these photos, but through my carelessness these slips of papers were dislodged identifying the person. One of them, "My Mother, Mary Free" I am sure is Mary Elizabeth Elson. She was on the cover of the Free/Elson 2001 issue. Now I may have identified one other of two young males.

I have put them on the cover as they appear. As you can see, the photo is rapidly deteriorating. In one of the books I bought about identifying old photos, it said that one of the oldest forms was on leather. This photo is on leather. It was framed with a copper frame, which has almost destroyed the rim of the photo. Also the large round blotch looks like acid had corroded the picture. I've tried to lighten it and restore it as far as I am able; that is why there are two copies.

Of the ten siblings of Mary Elizabeth, the very youngest males are two brothers very close in age. The elder, Thomas, was born in 1822 and the other, Turner, was born in 1824. If I am correct, I have to estimate the ages of the two between 15 and 17 because this process was not invented until 1839.

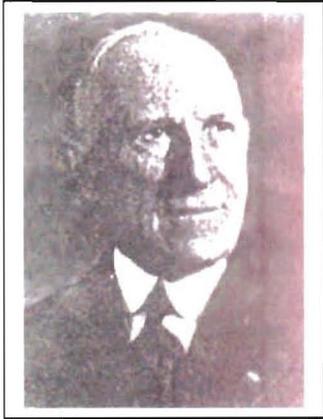
The other hint I have beside the clothing style of the period is a photo that I know to be that of Turner because it was sent to me by one of his descendants. Look at it closely and see if you can observe a resemblance. Turner is the younger one of the duo.



If you agree that there is a strong resemblance between the two Turners then the other has to be Thomas who is the father of the very well known author of the Elson Readers. That story follows.

THE ELSON READERS

William Harris Elson was the nephew of our Mary Elizabeth Elson Free and son of Thomas Elson, the older brother on page 2. He was born in Carroll County, Ohio in 1854 and educated in Indiana and Chicago Universities.



He began his teaching career in the rural schools of Ohio. From that beginning he started a long climb to becoming one of the most respected and eminent educators in American education.

There is much written about him in the National Cyclopaedia of American Biography. The long article not only mentions his many teaching roles in several schools and his administrative positions but it lists his status as a great educator.

The article extols his many accomplishments and makes note of his distinguishable career as a man who was far ahead of his time in several important educational movements.

When all the schools were focusing on essentially academic curriculum, he not only espoused technical education but also was the originator of the first technical high school in the country, his first deviation

from the accepted norm. This article, which was extensive in its praise, says that at first he was met with much opposition but later was accredited as the father of technical education and became known as opening up industrial education in the country.

Even though William Harris was successful in this area, his vision was soon fueled by other needs in education.

As a result, today he is also known by his most successful contribution to American education, his "Elson Grammar School Readers."

These readers were based on new principles in content and instruction and are believed to have revolutionized the teaching of reading. The first one was published in 1909 and there were nine in the series for grades 5 thru 8. He revised them constantly as the readers grew in popularity and others were added, "Child Library Readers", 9 volumes, "Good English" 3 volumes, "Elson Junior Literature" 2 volumes.

As his books grew in popularity, he took on other collaborators. There was the Elson Runkel Primer, the Elson Hand Cart with Keck, the first pre-primer, and the Child Library Reader, supplementary reading for the Elson Readers.

There were the Elson-Gray Basic Readers, a 1936 revision of the Elson Basic Readers. There was the first pre-reading book in 1937.

By this time the Elson books were all over the world in 34 different countries

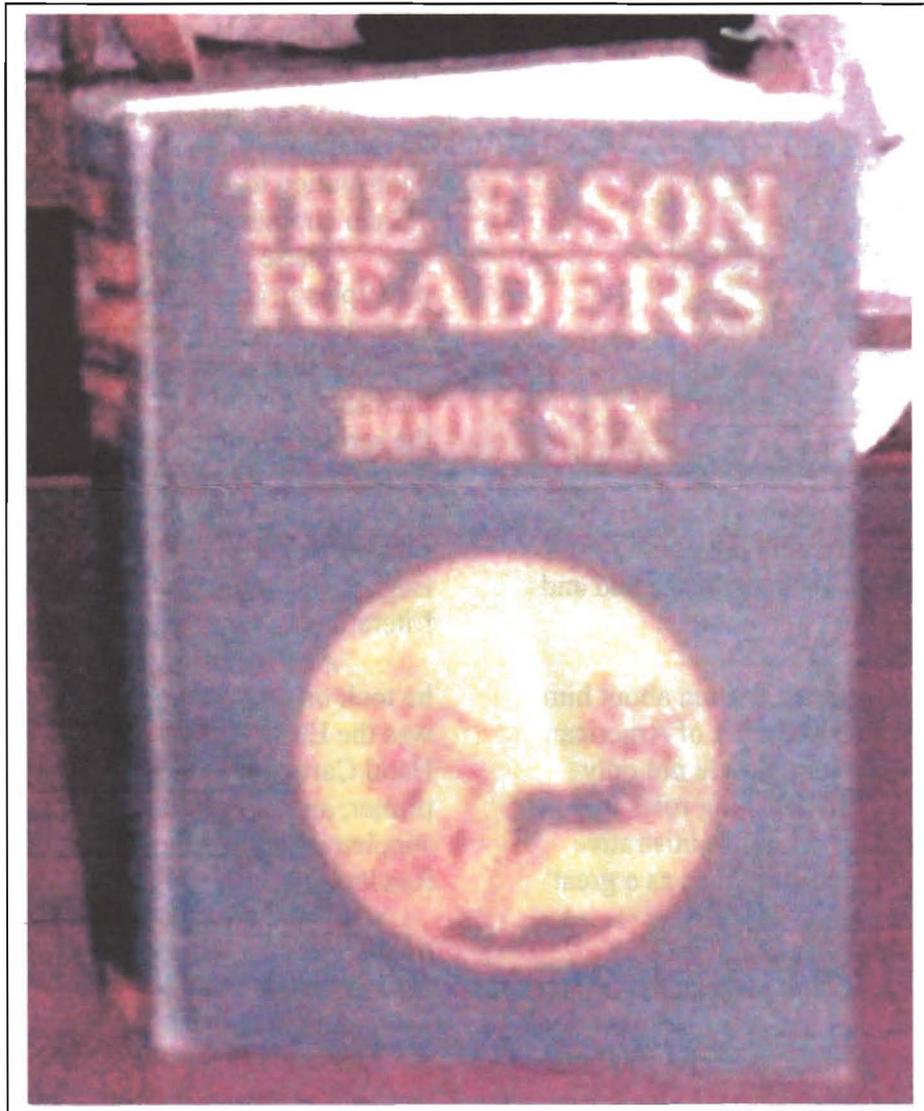
But those of you who studied reading with "Dick and Jane" probably weren't aware that all these other books were forerunners of that popular series

which began in 1930. They all carried the name of Elson among others.

William Harris Elson lived to see the fifty millionth reader sold. Scott, Foresman & Co. the publisher of educational material may still publish material with his name. The Internet auction site eBay continually has old Elson books for sale. I have Book two

and three of the “Elson Grammar School Reader” for sixth and seventh grades.

Lost Classics, a website on the Internet, is going to reprint all of the Elson Readers replete with Teachers’ Manuals. William Harris Elson is truly a great ancestor of our family. He died in Chicago in 1935.



WOW!

My oh my! What a Pandora's box of surprises I found when I started to look for our ancestor Mary Turner. Let me preface my findings by first explaining where in our family this ancestor makes her appearance.

Mary Turner was the wife of one of our Revolutionary ancestors, Richard Elson. You can find a story on him in a previous newsletter. His roots go back to the 1600s in Maryland. Mary Turner, his wife, is the grandmother of Mary Elizabeth Elson who married William Free.

One researcher says Mary Turner was born 25 December 1742 but I have to do more searching before I'm sure of the date and place. As you can see from that birth date, we are in a time frame before the Revolutionary War. The British were the rulers of the land. One Mary Turner's father, Thomas, was very prominent in Virginia. He was also a Colonel in the British Army.

I found quite a biography of him in the annals of the famous families of Virginia in King George County, VA. This Thomas Turner married Martha Taliaferro from the prominent Taliaferro family in 1715. He had a son Thomas. Is our ancestor the son or the father?

This is the beginning of one of Pandora's surprises. Martha did not have any daughters and she died about 1724 before Mary our ancestor was born. Many records on the Elson side showed Martha as the mother of Mary but if the birth date of Mary is correct this is not possible. One descendant even had a record of her father being James Turner and her mother Karenhappuch Norman.

And with the other Tom and another Mary, by this time I'm going bonkers trying to figure out exactly who are the parents of our Mary Turner.

I have only one option and that is to find the real mother of our Mary Turner. I thought it would be easy to just accept the one I liked best but then what credibility would I have if it were wrong?

When I looked at the children of Mary Turner Elson, I saw a daughter named Sarah. There was no Martha, no Karen, and no James. Sarah had to have some relationship to the second wife of Thomas Turner.

After hours of work in the genealogical library, I was able to prove with authentic resources, that after Martha died, Colonel Thomas Turner married Martha's sister Sarah Taliaferro in 1726 and Sarah had two daughters, Sarah and Mary. This meant that if I was on the right track, we could still claim a relationship to the Taliaferros.

As I mentioned before, Thomas Turner himself was prominent in pre-Revolutionary times. He was quite wealthy, owned land, and held several important positions, among them being Burgess of the colony, but is he the father of Mary? Which Taliaferro, if any, is related to Mary and in what way?

So you can understand why I said I opened a Pandora's box of surprises. Remember the name Mary Turner. More to come when I get this all straightened out. Just keep in mind one parent or another of Mary Turner, wife of Richard Elson, is one of our ancestors.

REBECCA FREE'S SIBLINGS

Rebecca Free had eight siblings, some I'm sure she didn't even know very well because her father moved the family from Ohio to Illinois, leaving some behind. Her mother, Mary Elizabeth Elson, married William Free at the age of 16, and Rebecca was the youngest of their nine children.

From page two of this issue, you learned that I have been trying to identify all the old ambrotypes, daguerreotypes, and tintypes I have of either the Elson or the Free families. I have made some progress but many remain unidentified. The one below fits the fashion of the time.

The eldest in the Free family was Ruth, born in 1825 in Ohio. This ambrotype, an image on glass, may be Ruth, the first born of the family. The dress style is very similar to that of her mother's ambrotype.



Ruth appears on the 1840, 1850, 1860, and 1865 census but not on the 1870 census in Flora, IL. In 1865 she was still single but she disappeared between 1865 and 1870 so I don't know what happened to her.

John, the first-born male, stayed with the family in Ohio but when the family moved to Jersey County, he had his own farm. However, the entire Free family was listed together on the 1870 census in Flora as head of the household. Also on this same census, his real estate

was valued at \$6000 and his personal property at \$750. His wife was from England and they had four children, three girls and one boy, William.

It is strange that John was listed as head of the household on that census when his father was living at the same address. We can speculate that John was running the farm at that time and the two families lived together.

However, John left Flora to farm elsewhere, but I haven't traced him after 1870. He is not in the family picture that was taken about the time of William Free's death late in 1872.

Two brothers, William Henson and Elson were no longer on the Ohio census by 1850. William Henson married in 1853 in Ohio and probably had a farm of his own. Rebecca was only five at the time so I doubt very much if she remembered him at all.

The other son that followed, Elson, was born in 1830 in Ohio but after the 1840 Ohio census there is no record of him. The 1850 census in Ohio shows the Free family, minus these two, William Henson and Elson, and Rebecca on that census was only 2.

The next three, Elizabeth, Milton, and Mary remained with the family in the move to Illinois, first to Jersey County and then to Flora.

Milton married in 1870 and had three children, two boys and a girl. His son William was killed in the St. Louis cyclone in 1896. His wife died in 1877.

Elizabeth never married nor did Mary because after William Free died, both sisters went to live with their brother Milton and ended up in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma before 1889 was known in governmental circles as Indian

Territory. In 1889 Congress passed a bill opening up the area to a homestead settlement. The first great Oklahoma rush began.

Milton had been in the Civil War and was probably entitled to land as a veteran. History tells us that the only government during this period were the people themselves and yet there was no lawlessness. In 1890 the territorial government came into existence and Beaver County was added.

This is where we find the three, Elizabeth, Milton, and Mary in 1900. Milton is listed as a Stock Grower so he is no longer farming. His sister Elizabeth is the housekeeper, and his sister Mary is a schoolteacher.

Milton died in 1915 in Beaver County and strangely his body was taken back to Flora. I'm surmising that the family plot was there. The funeral was held at the residence of James and Rebecca Durland with burial in Elmwood Cemetery.

I don't know if Elizabeth and Mary stayed in Oklahoma, as I haven't tried to trace them since 1900.

The sister next to Rebecca, Alwilda, was a beautiful young girl.



She married Isaac K. Clark who was a dealer in groceries. Their wedding in Flora was just five months after Rebecca's to James Durland.

They had three girls and a boy. Alwilda spent much of her life in

California. Today, two of her grandchildren, Geraldine McKone and Frederick Mounts, live in Santa Barbara. They are the only closely related Free family that I know.

A few years ago, Geraldine came to Texas and we drove together to Flora to look up the Free family. We searched in vain for the Free family plot because I know that William Free, father of the family, who died in 1872 is buried there in as much as Milton's body was returned there for internment.

William began his life in Pennsylvania. Mary Elizabeth, his wife, was born in Virginia. They met and married in Columbiana, Ohio where all their nine children were born.

When William moved westward to Illinois in 1851 to a farm in Jersey County, Illinois, two of his sons who had reached their maturity stayed in Ohio. The family was pretty much intact until after the Civil War, and about 1861, he began farming in Flora, Illinois.

Sometime between those two locations Mary Elizabeth died and Ruth was no longer listed in the family. When William died in 1872, both the boys, John and Milton left Flora, John for an unknown location, Milton for Christian County, Illinois. The two unmarried sisters ended up with Milton in the Oklahoma Territory. Moving from civilized country to the land of the Indians must have been an exciting experience for them.

It is there where Mary taught school and we can very well conjecture that she might have taught the Indians at one time.

As you can see, this Free family, except for the two males that stayed in Ohio, had an adventurous spirit. Some place in the west there are Free cousins waiting to be discovered.

MARY'S MESSAGES



This is the end of the school year and I have received some very good news about the younger generation.

If this information isn't correct you can blame their grandmothers. Also if there are some important kudos I've missed you can also blame that on the grandmothers.

Amanda Griffith is a Merit Scholar. Even though she lives in California her grandmother keeps me informed. Good for you, Amanda.

Nicholas Hodge and Jay Cuda, both graduated from 8th grade. Jay can't wait to get into high school. He informs me that he's changed his focus to weather reporting. Look for him in the future as a meteorologist.

Leigh Cuda was chosen to represent her high school at the leadership conference at North Park University in June. She was the only sophomore chosen for this honor.



Andy Cuda came home with a big prize from the 36th annual Business Professionals of America National Leadership Conference May 7th in Chicago. He took first place in the Economic Research Project-Individual. This was especially exciting for Andy because Business is not even his first love. Maybe he will change his mind now.

Mara Caudill finished her two years in the Peace Corps in Haiti but has signed up for at least six months more. She feels she is really making a difference there and wants to be sure she has trained the one replacing her. She is in charge of three projects training women, a program that she developed. 1) She has begun a business strategy to run a vision clinic in her little town with a local group of women. It's called Small Enterprise Development, a Vision Screening process. 2) She has initiated a Micro-Finance program, which is a Savings and Loan program to facilitate business opportunities for those who are unable to receive formal credit. She uses the profit generated from the eyeglass business. And 3) She has installed Information Technology, which is a Solar-Power Computer Center. Here, she is training teachers to help integrate computer programs into the school programs. I am so very proud of her.

And so to all these super-achievers I give my congratulations. Their parents are proud, their grandparents are proud, and their aunts and uncles are proud.

Debbie Griffith is also making a name for herself in the publishing field. Bill Bolger in the Market Journal, a widely circulated area paper, mentions her often in the column of News & Views. Debbie is a display advertising executive and I hear is doing a great job.