

# Researching family of early Bay of Islands settlers uncovered many surprises

[John G. Edgar](#)

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Corner Brook -

I would like to share my findings regarding the wife of William Blanchard, who was one of the first settlers to Bay of Islands.

From family history and phenotypical traits, Blanchard descendants are aware that William married an aboriginal woman, and from Archdeacon Edward Wix's 1835 records, we know her name was Elizabeth. I believe I have found Elizabeth's family.

In addition to charting the Cow Head Payne family for medical reasons, Hutchings and Buehler included some community histories and family anecdotes in their 1984 "Early Settlers on the Southwestern Shore of Newfoundland's Northern Peninsula" (MUN Faculty of Medicine).

Imagine my excitement when I read in the article about Parsons Pond: "He (Samuel Payne) married Hannah Blanchard from Bay of Islands. Hannah was said to be a cousin of John Joe, and John Joe's Steady was named after him."

It has been argued that Hannah was not a Blanchard, but was the daughter of John Matthews Brake and his wife Elizabeth Blanchard, daughter of William and Elizabeth. In either case, the reality is that Elizabeth Blanchard, wife of William Blanchard from England, was either Hannah's mother or her maternal grandmother.

Regardless as to which is correct, this unassuming anecdote establishes that Hannah was a relative of the Joe family, and the only way that this could be was for Elizabeth Blanchard, wife of William to be a Joe, or to have had a sister who was married to a Joe.

Even if Hannah was a Brake, her maternal lineage was still Blanchard. Either way, it

establishes that Elizabeth Blanchard was aboriginal because it is highly unlikely in those times that if she was white she would have a sister married to a Joe.

I was now faced with the problem of establishing that the Joe's lived in the Bay of Islands area in the early 1800s.

Wix stated that there were Mi'kmaq families in the Bay of Islands during the time of his visit. However, Mi'kmaq were not included on the known lists from 1806, 1838-39 and 1849. I thought of a trading company that operated out of Bonne Bay in those days and was owned by Joseph Bird of Dorset.

If the Joes were here, they would surely have accounts with the trading company. A narrow band of the Bird Company records are repositied at the National Archives in Ottawa, and microfilm copy of these records is available at the provincial archives.

Alex Haley of "Roots" fame could not have been more excited than I was when I viewed the microfilm on July 26, 2005. Mixed in with other Bay of Islands and Bonne Bay peoples there were: Thomas Joe Senior, Tom Joe Junior, Joseph Joe, Abraham Joe and later Frank Joe, trading with the Bird Company at Woody Point around 1840.

And what was the name of William and Elizabeth Blanchard's oldest son? It was Thomas of course.

I believe she named her first son after her father. Thomas went to White Bay and all White Bay Blanchards are his descendants.

Readers may have questions regarding the transparency of the Hutchings and Buehler document. However, it will be clear to anyone who reads the document that the purpose was not to establish aboriginal links.

What a blessing for Blanchard descendants that this particular anecdote about Hannah's cousin was so innocently included.

The known children of William Blanchard and Elizabeth Joe are Thomas, Elizabeth, Catherine, William, John, Susan (Susannah), Joseph, and Eliza (one of my great-greatgrandmothers). In their approximately 25-year span of childbearing, there may have been others.