

A Search for the Father of Ephraim Elkins of Fulton County, Indiana

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Introduction

Ephraim Elkins likely died in Fulton County, Indiana in late 1842 based on guardianship and estate records from the county probate court on 26 November 1842.¹ U.S. federal census records,^{2 3 4} voter rolls⁵ and military records⁶ track Ephraim's movement between 1813 - 1843 from Butler and Miami Counties in Ohio to Marion County, Indiana and eventually to Fulton County, Indiana; but all of his children's 1880^{7 8 9} and 1900^{10 11} U.S. federal census records list his birth location as Virginia. His wife Christina (Prill) Elkins's family has been thoroughly researched back to Berkeley County, Virginia where they can periodically be found living near Elkins men in early 19th century records.¹²

By focusing on the Elkins family living in Berkeley County, Virginia in the early 19th century, it may be possible to answer the question: *Who is the likely father of Ephraim Elkins of Fulton County, Indiana?*

Research and Techniques

¹ Fulton County, Indiana, Probate Court Order Book, Vol A: 37, Ephraim Elkins; imaged in "Indiana, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1798-1999", *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9045/images/1870628-00317> : accessed 17 January 2022)> Ephraim Elkins, 1842, Probate, Fulton County > image 59 of 642.

² "1820 United States Federal Census," database, *FamilySearch.org* (<http://www.familysearch.org> : accessed 17 January 2022), entry for Ephraim Elkins, Lost Creek, Miami, Ohio.

³ "1830 United States Federal Census," database, *FamilySearch.org* (<http://www.familysearch.org> : accessed 17 January 2022), entry for Ephraim Elkins, Washington, Marion, Indiana.

⁴ "1840 United States Federal Census," database, *FamilySearch.org* (<http://www.familysearch.org> : accessed 17 January 2022), entry for Ephraim Elkins, Fulton, Indiana.

⁵ Union, Ohio, Poll Book and Tally Sheet (1817): Ephraim Elkins; imaged in "Ohio Tax Records, 1800-1850", *FamilySearch.org* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9PPN-9BVK> : accessed 17 January 2022).

⁶ "Roll of Captain Anderson Spencer's Company," Roster of Ohio soldiers in the War of 1812, *Ancestry.com*

(https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/20073/images/dvm_LocHist006374-00069-1 : accessed 17 January 2022).

⁷ "1880 United States Federal Census," database, *FamilySearch.org* (<http://www.familysearch.org> : accessed 17 January 2022), entry for Matilda Whaley, Green, Marshall, Indiana.

⁸ "1880 United States Federal Census," database, *FamilySearch.org* (<http://www.familysearch.org> : accessed 17 January 2022), entry for Lewis Elkins, Milltown, Polk, Wisconsin.

⁹ "1880 United States Federal Census," database, *FamilySearch.org* (<http://www.familysearch.org> : accessed 17 January 2022), entry for John William Elkins, Bourbon, Marshall, Indiana.

¹⁰ "1900 United States Federal Census," database, *FamilySearch.org* (<http://www.familysearch.org> : accessed 17 January 2022), entry for Lewis Elkins, Milltown, Polk, Wisconsin.

¹¹ "1900 United States Federal Census," database, *FamilySearch.org* (<http://www.familysearch.org> : accessed 17 January 2022), entry for John William Elkins, Bourbon, Marshall, Indiana.

¹² Tyler Finlayson, John Prill-Maria Elizabeth Russ Family Group Sheet, Privately held by Finlayson, [Address for Private Use], 2022. This sheet is thoroughly documented with quality sources.

Research was conducted via *FamilySearch.org*, some of which was done on site at the Family History Center. Genealogies from *FamilySearch* yielded inaccurate information, often confusing the Ephraim Elkins of Fulton County, Indiana with a different Ephraim Elkins in Peacham, Vermont; and no books could be found pertaining to his lineage.

U.S. federal census records, tax records and deeds from the *FamilySearch* website provided some of the most fruitful and elucidating information. The site's *Wiki* also provided additional context about the county and its surrounding areas.

Discussion

Beginning with the 1810 U.S. federal census for Berkeley County, Virginia – now Berkeley County, West Virginia – a John Elkins is enumerated six households from Ephraim Elkins's then-future brother-in-law, Michael Brill.¹³ John is listed as a white male over the age of forty-five and is one of two Elkins men on the 1810 U.S. federal census in Berkeley County. The other Elkins man, James Elkins, is enumerated as a white male between the ages of twenty-six and forty-four with what appears to be a wife of a similar age and a teenage, or pre-teenage, son.¹⁴ Given that the 1840 U.S. Federal Census puts Ephraim's birth date between 1781 and 1790,¹⁵ both John and James could theoretically have been old enough to be his father, but James's assumed younger family makes John the more likely choice.

Since the 1800 U.S. federal census for Berkeley County was destroyed, Berkeley County personal property tax lists from 1800 - 1820 provide the next best opportunity to locate Elkins family members at the turn of the century. A "John Elkin" appears on the Berkeley County personal property tax list for the first time in 1803.¹⁶ There are two white males above sixteen and one slave above sixteen in the household. He appears next to a "James Elkin" whose household has one white male above sixteen.¹⁷

John and James's initial appearance on the 1803 Berkeley County personal property tax list raises the inference that they may have also purchased property in the county around the same time. Two deeds can in fact be located for James Elkins for the purchase of land in Berkeley

¹³ "1810 United States Federal Census," database, *FamilySearch.org* (<http://www.familysearch.org> : accessed 17 January 2022), entry for John Elkins, Berkeley, Virginia.

¹⁴ "1810 United States Federal Census," database, *FamilySearch.org* (<http://www.familysearch.org> : accessed 17 January 2022), entry for James Elkins, Berkeley, Virginia.

¹⁵ "1840 United States Federal Census," *FamilySearch.org*, database entry for Ephraim Elkins, Fulton, I.N.

¹⁶ Berkeley County, Virginia, Tax Rolls, 1800-1813, unpaginated entries arranged chronologically; all years read for all entries relating to John, James, Ephraim and Benjamin Elkins; images, "Berkeley County, Virginia, Personal Property Tax Lists, 1800-1813," *FamilySearch.org* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSQK-RY3J> : accessed 17 January 2022), path: Browse > Berkeley > County tax rolls.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

County in October 1803,¹⁸ but none for John Elkins. Since Berkeley County was formed from Frederick County, Virginia a few decades earlier, it seemed likely that the Frederick County deed book could contain land purchases in Berkeley County as well. On 16 March 1802, Barnett and Elizabeth Lee of Frederick County, Virginia sell a tract of land to John Elkins, also of Frederick County.¹⁹ The tract consists of 288 acres on the drain of Sleepy Creek in Berkeley County.²⁰

John Elkins appears on a Frederick County tax list as early as 1782, specifically on the list of Colonel Dowdall as the head of household of nine white family members and eight slaves.²¹ Frederick County personal property tax lists began in 1782, and John appears on a list for the first time in 1785 with one white male over the age of twenty-one in the household.²² He appears on each consecutive Frederick County personal property tax list through 1802, with the exception of 1792, 1795 and 1798.²³ Some pages may be missing from these tax lists, or tax collectors could have missed the Elkins family these years, as John does not appear to have left Frederick County for Berkeley County until 1802/03. Over the course of these two decades, numerous male Elkins begin to appear, including James Elkins (1789), John Elkins Jr (1793), Stephen Elkins (1799) and Reuben Elkins (1800).²⁴ These are likely sons of John Elkins, and each seems to be added to the tax list as they come of age and acquire personal property. Particularly noteworthy is the appearance of “John Elkins Junr” on the 1793 tax list, which coincides with John Elkins’s name being written as “John Elkins Senn”;²⁵ this helps build the case that the Elkins men who appear over time are probably his sons.

John Elkins also appears on each Berkeley County personal property tax list from 1803 - 1813, with the exception of 1808 when no tax lists are available.²⁶ Like Frederick County, additional male Elkins begin to appear on the Berkeley County tax list in 1809, starting with Ephraim Elkins

¹⁸ Berkeley County, Virginia, Deed Book, Deed Book 18, 1801-1804, pp. 458-463; consulted as “Berkeley County Deeds, 1772-1926,” browsable images, *FamilySearch.org* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSG6-X3GH-3> : accessed 17 January 2022), path: Browse > Berkeley, Virginia > Deeds.

¹⁹ Frederick County, Virginia, Deed Book, Deed Book 27, 1800-1804, pp. 564-565; consulted as “Frederick County Deed Books, 1743-1867,” browsable images, *FamilySearch.org* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSLD-1S93-W> : accessed 17 January 2022), path: Browse > Frederick, Virginia > Deeds.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Bureau of the Census, *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States taken in the Year 1790: Records of the State Enumerations, 1782-1785, Virginia*, pg. 20, col. 3, John Elkins; image, *FamilySearch.org* (<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/778825-heads-of-families-at-the-first-census-of-the-united-states-taken-in-the-year-1790-records-of-the-state-enumerations-1782-1785-virginia>).

²² Frederick County, Virginia, Tax Rolls, 1782-1802, unpaginated entries arranged chronologically; all years read for all entries relating to John, James, John Jr, Stephen and Reuben Elkins; images, “Frederick County, Virginia, Personal Property Tax Lists, 1782-1802,” *FamilySearch.org* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSQQ-6SL3-S> : accessed 17 January 2022), path: Browse > Frederick > County tax rolls.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Berkeley Co., Virg., Tax Rolls, 1801-1813, all entries for John, James, Ephraim and Benjamin Elkins.

(1809) and later Benjamin Elkins (1810).²⁷ On the 1809 tax list, Ephraim appears near “John Elkins & son Benjamin” and “James Elkins”.²⁸ There is one male over the age of sixteen in Ephraim’s household.²⁹ 1809 is the only year that Ephraim Elkins appears on the Berkeley County personal property tax list.³⁰ However, given that John Elkins is probably the progenitor of the other Elkins men who appear with him between 1789-1810 on Frederick and Berkeley County tax lists, he is likely the father of Ephraim Elkins as well.

Conclusion

Though available information is not definitive, U.S. federal census records, tax lists and deeds found on *FamilySearch* seem to suggest that John Elkins is the father of Ephraim Elkins of Fulton County, Indiana as well as the father of other Elkins children - both male and female - who appear in various tax and marriage records in the area over time.

Subsequent to his appearance on the 1809 Berkeley County personal tax list, Ephraim likely married Christina Prill and left Virginia for Ohio. Given that he does not appear on the 1810 U.S. Federal Census, Ephraim and Christina likely left Berkeley County before its enumeration; and since no 1810 schedule is known to exist for Ohio, Ephraim does not resurface in records until 4 June 1813 as a Corporal in Captain Anderson Spencer’s Rifleman Company of the Ohio Militia.³¹ Other assumed children of John Elkins were already living in Butler County, Ohio by this time, specifically Stephen Elkins³² and Thurza (Elkins) Catterlin,³³ both of whom can be traced to Frederick County, Virginia through marriage and tax records, providing further proof that John is probably Ephraim’s father.

Since no additional records seem to exist for Ephraim Elkins in and around Berkeley County, Virginia, research connecting Ephraim to John could be strengthened by piecing together the lives of Ephraim’s assumed brothers. Tracking the movements of these various siblings across time could help confirm that each and every Elkins male that appears near John on Frederick and Berkeley County tax lists is, in fact, a son.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ “Roll of Captain Anderson Spencer’s Company,” Roster of Ohio soldiers in the War of 1812, *Ancestry.com*.

³² Tyler Finlayson, Stephen Harrison Elkins-Abigail Catterlin Family Group Sheet, Privately held by Finlayson, [Address for Private Use], 2022. This sheet is documented with quality sources.

³³ Tyler Finlayson, Darby Catterlin-Thurza Elkins Family Group Sheet, Privately held by Finlayson, [Address for Private Use], 2022. This sheet is documented with quality sources.