

Why Mary Faunce Was Not Isaac Robinson's 2nd Wife

The answer can be summarized in 6 key points, or in three-four sentences if one is inclined toward complete brevity.

1. All Faunce surnamed individuals in the Plymouth Colony and early New England descend from John and Patience (Morton) Faunce. They both arrived unmarried on the Ann in 1623. From where John Faunce came and who were his parents has never been revealed. Patience was the daughter of George Morton and Juliana Carpenter.
2. Every one of John and Patience Faunce's known children that reached maturity have documented families. This documentation includes reference by recorded vital records, land transactions, will and estate distribution matters, etc. John and Patience Faunce had two sons. The eldest, son Thomas², became the famous Elder of the Plymouth Church. He was born in circa 1647 and did not marry until December 1672. The other son, Joseph², was born in 1653 shortly before his father died, and did not marry until 1678.
3. Mary², daughter of John¹ Faunce, was born at Plymouth on July 25, 1638 [Plymouth VRs] while sister Mercy² was born on April 10, 1651 (m. Nathaniel Holmes of Plymouth on December 29, 1667). [ibid.]
4. Notwithstanding that Mary² Faunce was 28 years younger than her supposed husband Isaac¹ Robinson, in order for Mary² Faunce to have been the mother of Isaac's son Israel² baptized at Barnstable in October 1651, she would have to have married by late 1650, or at the unbelievable age of 12-1/2.
5. The coup de gras is that on July 15, 1658, ten days shy of her 20th birthday, Mary² Faunce [John¹] became the 2nd wife of Sgt. William¹ Harlow of Plymouth. She gave birth to four of Harlow's 13 children by three different wives and died at Plymouth on October 4, 1664, five-days after giving birth to son Nathaniel Harlow. [ibid.]
6. Isaac's wife named Mary was alive in November 1669, when in the only document that mentions her given name, she acknowledged a deed for the sale of the family's Falmouth homestead. Obviously, since Mary Faunce was now dead for 5 years, Isaac's wife Mary in 1669 was not Mary² Faunce [John¹].

Since the above facts have been readily accessible since the mid-1800s, I asked genealogists at the New England Historic Genealogical Society in Boston why does this fallacy persist? Paraphrasing the three more poignant answers:

- 1) "repeat something often enough as being the truth and it becomes the accepted truth";
- 2) "we regret that Stratton in his recent History of the Plymouth Colony did not do his homework on this matter"; and
- 3) "we all know Mary Faunce was not Isaac's 2nd wife. But no one has published a comprehensive updated genealogy for Isaac where a full discussion regarding this false marriage would be included. Until someone does that, we have learned that short correction 'snippets' in our publications do not work. People either do not see them or read right past them."