Chapter 24 of
The Kenyons of Cattaraugus County, NY

The first Kenyons in America
Richard L. Kenyon
This chapter is one of a series of 24 chapters, which cover the lives and descendants of the pioneer Kenyon and Kinyon families of Cattaraugus Co, NY. Their Kenyon ancestors are traced all the way back to the first Kenyons to arrive in the Colony of Rhode Island. Hall, Champlin and Mayflower ancestors are also included.

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The Kenyons of Cattaraugus County, NY
The first Kenyons in America
Richard L. Kenyon
E-mail rlkenyon@cox.net
32 Almond Tree Ln, Irvine CA 92612-2230
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Introduction
Most of the Kenyons who settled in Western New York during the
pioneer era were descendants of a John Kenyon, and to a lesser extent
his brother James. They came to the Colony of Rhode Island from
England circa 1684.

Almost everything about John and James Kenyon that is known today
was first published in the 19th Century in the book *The Genealogical
Dictionary of Rhode Island, Comprising Three Generations of Settlers Who
Came Before 1690*, by John Osborne Austin. The information was
obtained from Rhode Island town records.

A major step backward was made in 1935 in Howard Kenyon's
genealogy *American Kenyons*, where he erroneously concluded that John
Kenyon married Anna Mumford, and was the son of James and Esther
(Smith) Kenyon of Lancashire, England. This misinformation has been
endlessly repeated in family trees.

A year after publication of *American Kenyons*, it was proven that John
did not marry Anna Mumford. But it was not until 2004, 69 years later,
that it was shown conclusively that John's parents were not James and Esther
Kenyon, as claimed in *American Kenyons*. The same research
proved that John Kenyon married one of the daughters of Thomas
Mumford, but not Anna Mumford.

Few Kenyon family researchers were aware of the 2004 discovery that
proved that *American Kenyons* was wrong about the English ancestors.
In 2010, Randy Seaver posted his Kenyon ancestors on his genealogy
blog "Geneamusings", and included the erroneous information from
*American Kenyons*. Professional genealogist Martin Hollick contacted
Seaver to point out the errors. On Aug 16, 2010, Seaver posted a
correction and explanation of the error, which he used as example of
database errors.
The new research was done by Gerald Parsons in 2003, and Michael Wood in 2004, using English Parish records, and published in the journal *The American Genealogist* (see Bibliography).

A variety of spellings appear in early records. Genealogists usually standardize the spelling as Kenyon. However, when quoting source, we use the same spelling as the source.

**James Kenyon**

James Kenyon was born in England at an unknown date. His first documented appearance in Rhode Island is in a March 1684 court record. He next appears in a Sep 6, 1687 tax list two lines away from John Kenyon. James and John are assumed to be brothers. James died in 1724 in Rhode Island. He married **Ruth Wells**, daughter of Thomas and Naoma (Marshall) Wells.

Children:

1. **James** (b 1693)
2. **Thomas**
3. **Ebenezer** (d 1775)
4. **John** (d 1774)
5. **Peter** (1704-1746)
6. **Sarah**
7. **Ruth**

James is the ancestor of Cattaraugus County settler Horace Kenyon. Horace is the subject of Chapter 9, where the line of descent from James is included.

**John Kenyon [#1]**

John Kenyon #1 is the earliest American ancestor of all of the Cattaraugus County Kenyons, except Horace Kenyon of Chapter 9.

John Kenyon was born about 1657 in England. His parents are unknown. His first documented appearance in Rhode Island is in a 1687 Kingstown tax record. He married a daughter of Thomas and Sarah (Sherman) Mumford whose given name is unknown. He had a farm in Kingstown on land that he received from his father-in-law Thomas Mumford. He made out his will June 12, 1732, and died shortly afterward in Westerly, Washington Co, RI. His will was proved June 26, 1732.
The children of John Kenyon are named in his will:

i. **John**: b 1682
ii. **James**: b 1684-5
iii. **Enoch**
iv. **Joseph**
v. **Samuel**
vi **David**: b 1693
vii **Jonathan**: b 1695

**Descendants of James and John**
Where practical, each chapter traces the Kenyon ancestors all the way back to John Kenyon #1 (or James Kenyon in one case).

For the ancestors of the five brothers Madison S., Sylvester S., Matthew S., Nelson S., and John S Kenyon (Chapters 1, 16, 17, 18, and 19, respectively) there was no previous research that identified their ancestors. A series of chapters were required to report the original research that worked backwards two generations to their common ancestor Thomas W. Kinyon. The ancestors of Asa B. Kenyon (Chapter 15) could not be determined.

**Bibliography**

**Genealogies**


G2 Howard Kenyon, 1935, *American Kenyons*. It was mostly compiled from RI town records, but the sources are not usually cited in the text. While still a valuable reference, subsequent research has revealed errors, so that this is no longer the last word on the early Rhode Island Kenyons.

G3 Howard Kenyon, 1958, *The Author's Supplement to American Kenyons and English Connections*. This is an unfinished manuscript from the estate of the author. A copy is in the collection Richard Reid Kenyon of Huntington Beach, CA (this is not the same person as Richard L. Kenyon of Irvine, CA). Howard Kenyon never acknowledged that John Kenyon did not marry Anna Mumford.

G4 William Wright, 1993, *Ancestors and Descendants of William Browning Greene*. Despite the name, the early Rhode Island Kenyon’s are included. It is thoroughly researched and sources are cited. For the Kenyon lines that it includes, it is better than *American Kenyons*. Because it was written about 10 years before the work of Parsons and Wood (J3 and J4) the account of the English ancestors and the wife of John Kenyon #1 needs correction.

Journal Articles


J3 Meredith B. Colket Jr, 1936: "The Wife of the First John Kenyon of Rhode Island," *The American Genealogist*, 13: 53-55. Published one year after *American Kenyons*, this article proves that while John Kenyon married a daughter of Thomas Mumford, her name was not Anna Mumford, as claimed in *American Kenyons*.


J4 Michael J. Wood, 2004 “Revisiting the English Origin of John and James Kenyon of Rhode Island,” *The American Genealogist* 19:207-8. This is a follow-up articles to Parsons 2003, in which additional parish records are found that prove that the James and Esther (Smith) Kenyon identified by *American Kenyons* were not the parents of John Kenyon #1 of Rhode Island. This information also modifies the conclusions of Colket 1936.