

**Context:**

Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) is a patriotic society for men who can prove descent, according to high genealogical standards, from a soldier of the Revolutionary War. This is an adaptation of a proof argument which demonstrates that William Ellis Lathrop, who had no birth or death certificate, was a son of Azel Lathrop and Susan Ellis (a militiaman's daughter), making his descendant eligible for SAR membership. This took some work.

**Problem:**

Is William Ellis Lathrop the son of Azel Lathrop, Sr. and Susan Ellis?

**Summary:**

The evidence that William Ellis Lathrop is the son of Azel Lathrop, Sr. and Susan Ellis is "of sufficient power to convince a reasonable, unbiased person." Though he has no surviving birth certificate, and was not named in any surviving probate record or death certificate, there is a great body of evidence to demonstrate either that William Ellis is the son of Azel Sr. or the brother of his known son, Azel Jr. This amounts to the same thing.

**Facts:**

A marriage certificate states that Azel Lathrop Sr. married Susan Ellis, a militiaman's daughter, on May 12, 1816 in Chelsea, Orange, Vermont.

At a time when people rarely committed their birth dates to memory, William Ellis Lathrop gave birthdates of 1816-20 in censuses taken throughout his life. He claimed on official documents, including a pension application, to be from Chelsea, Vermont. This could make him Azel and Susan's firstborn son.

The 1830 Census for Chelsea, Orange, Vermont listed a free, white male aged 10 to 14 living with Azel Lathrop Sr. There were three Lathrop families in Chelsea in 1830. Only the family of Azel Lathrop Sr. had at least one male in the correct age range for William Ellis. Therefore, only Azel Sr. could be the father of any Lathrop boy, in this age range, who lived in Chelsea. In this household, there were also three males in the correct age range for his younger brother, Azel Lathrop Jr., who was born in 1823.

The 1840 Census in Black Brook, Clinton, New York also lists free white men of William Ellis' and Azel Junior's ages living with an Azel Lathrop Sr. There was no other Lathrop family in this location, where William Ellis' future wife, Jane Esther Corbin, also lived. This census lists one of the older Lathrop boys as a farmer, and the other as a tradesman. This must be the same Lathrop family because William Ellis was a farmer and Azel Jr. was an ironmonger.

The 1850 Census for nearby Franklin, Franklin, New York, records that a William E. Lathrop of Vermont lived with a Jane E. of New York, as well as children Harriet, Andrew and Clarissa. Again, because no other Lathrop family is known to have had contact with Jane Esther Corbin by this time, this William E. Lathrop must be the unnamed oldest son of Azel Lathrop Sr. and Susan Ellis from the previous censuses.

The Census of 1850 in the neighboring town, St. Armand, Essex, New York, also lists William Ellis and his family on the top of page 177a. The bottom of page 176b names Azel Sr. and Susan. Thus, they not only used the same spelling of the same surname, but were also neighbors. This is a staggering coincidence unless they are related. This makes sense because both censuses were enumerated on the same day, September 5<sup>th</sup>, by different men, in a frontier area where the boundaries between towns would have been unclear.

Because the towns of Franklin and St. Armand sit right next to each other on the shared border of Franklin and Essex Counties in New York, counting William Ellis' family twice was a reasonable mistake. Further, Azel Jr. and Susan lived in nearby Essex, Essex, New York in 1850.

According to her gravestone in Pierrepont, St. Lawrence, New York, Jane Esther died on July 27, 1859. In the Census of 1860, a William Ellis appeared in nearby St. Lawrence, with children Andrew, Frances and Harriet, but without Jane. Azel Sr. and Susan continued to live in St. Armand. Azel Jr. appeared for the first time in Marquette, Marquette, Michigan.

According to a newspaper article in the *Escanaba Daily Press*, May 19, 1962, p. 3, Azel Lathrop Jr., an ironmonger from Vermont, left Marquette County, Michigan to found the nearby town of Centerville, Delta County, in 1866. This must be one and the same Azel Jr. A gravestone in Centerville shows that Azel Sr. died on August 30, 1868 and was buried in the family plot there.

The Census of 1870 records that William Ellis lived in Chillicothe, Livingston, Missouri, with a new family by a woman named Sarah. An 1874 pension application record from Chillicothe, complete with witness statements and a doctor's note, states that William Ellis, suffering from a heart condition then called "dropsy" and unable to work, filed for a pension equal to the money which his son, Union soldier Andrew G. Lathrop, used to send to him before he was killed in the Battle of Cold Harbor at age 16. His age makes him the same Andrew who lived with William Ellis in 1850 and 1860.

For some reason, Andrew's sisters Clara and Frances never stated that William Ellis was their father in the attached witness statement. Instead, they recorded that they were "well acquainted with William E. Lathrop formerly of St. Lawrence County, State of New York and for some years past of Chillicothe, Livingston County, Missouri and acquainted with his family for the last twenty

five years and knew his son Andrew Lathrop." Nevertheless, their death certificates verify that they were William Ellis' daughters.

The Census of 1880 shows that William Ellis and his second wife had moved to Chocolay, Marquette, Michigan, near Azel Jr. Further, this census states that William Ellis' daughter, Clara, lived in Centerville, which was re-named Lathrop in honor of Azel Jr.

Clara Lathrop married Hugh McFarland. He is buried in the Lathrop family cemetery in Centerville. Clara long outlived her husband, and was buried in California. If Clara (Lathrop) McFarland's husband is buried in Azel Jr.'s family plot, then Clara, the daughter of William Ellis, must have been the niece of Azel Jr. Thus, Clara's father, William Ellis, was the brother of Azel Jr. and the son of Azel Sr. and his wife, Susan Ellis.

There can be no other explanation for an outsider buried in a family graveyard.

According to the Delta County Genealogical Society, W.E. Lathrop died on July 31, 1888 and was buried beside Sarah Lathrop in Lakeview Cemetery in Escanaba, Delta, Michigan. No other Lathrops are buried in any local cemetery, which makes it certain that they are William Ellis and his second wife.

Finally, according to a letter written by Lathrop descendant Mellicent Molloy Stegath:

"Susan Ellis married the first Azel, + my grandfather was named after him... Mrs. [Effie] Preston of Glendale... is the same relation to Susan Ellis that I am, our grandfathers [William Ellis and Azel Jr.] being brothers, and it is from her mother [Clara Lathrop McFarland] that I have received much of my data..."

Clara, William Ellis' daughter who lived near Azel Jr., can be relied on to know who her father and uncle were.