

THE CRANSTON LINE

Research & Verification Guide

Documenting Four Generations, 1755–1957 — with a Detailed Investigation Plan for the Champaign County, Ohio, Land of John Cranston

Prepared for Charles Cranston Jett

thecranstonline.com — Cranston Family Story Project

August 20, 2026

*Repository contact information in Section 7 was checked against official county, town, and state sources on August 20, 2026.
Entries carried forward from the source file without independent confirmation are marked accordingly.*

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1. Purpose of This Report

Your source file is a working research log — a running conversation that accumulated genealogical findings, repository names, and contact details across four generations of the Cranston line. This report reorganizes that material into a usable field guide: what is established, what still needs proof, exactly which record to request, and precisely whom to ask.

Two priorities shaped the structure. First, your stated need for vital records — birth certificates and their legitimate substitutes. Second, your need for a documented answer on the land John Cranston acquired in Champaign County, Ohio, after the 1815 migration from Rhode Island. Section 6 is the heart of the report and treats the land question in full.

A word on method. Genealogical proof for this era is rarely a single document. It is a convergence: a town register entry, a probate affidavit, a deed recital, a census age, a gravestone, and a newspaper notice that all agree. Where a single record cannot exist — and for two of these four generations it cannot — the report names the substitutes that carry equivalent weight.

2. The Line at a Glance

Gen.	Person	Dates	Principal Places
I	John Cranston	b. 3 Nov 1755, Rhode Island d. Aug 1825, Woodstock, Ohio	Foster & Rice City, RI; Wayne (later Rush) Township, Champaign Co., OH Buried: Martin Cemetery
—	Phebe Ann Edwards (wife)	m. 4 Apr 1790, Foster, RI d. after 1815	Scituate, RI; Champaign Co., OH
II	Christopher Cranston	b. 14 Nov 1803, Foster, RI d. 8 Nov 1858, Champaign Co., OH	Foster, RI; Rush Township & Woodstock, OH Probated at Urbana; estate \$8,470
III	Charles Edward Cranston	b. 19 Apr 1833, Woodstock, OH d. 4 Aug 1905, Galesburg, IL	Champaign Co., OH; Chestnut Twp. & Hermon, Knox Co., IL; 730 Pine St., Galesburg Buried: Hermon Christian Church Cemetery
IV	Christopher Charles Cranston	b. c. 1871/1876, Knox Co., IL d. 1957	Chestnut Township / Hermon, Knox Co., IL

Ancestry above Generation I. The Foster marriage record identifies the pioneer as "John Cranston, of Peleg, of Foster," placing his parents as Peleg and Sarah (Carr) Cranston. That entry is itself a record to obtain in certified form — it is the hinge between the Ohio line and colonial Rhode Island.

3. The Governing Finding on Birth Certificates

The single most important fact in this research plan is that for two of these four men, an official birth certificate cannot exist. Registration law, not lost records, is the reason. Knowing the thresholds prevents months of fruitless requests.

Jurisdiction	Registration Threshold	Consequence for This Line
Ohio	County-level birth and death registration begins 1867; statewide mandatory registration December 1908.	No birth certificate exists for Charles Edward Cranston (b. 1833). Champaign County has no official birth or death record before 1867.
Rhode Island	Statewide mandatory registration 1853 — but towns kept vital registers from the eighteenth century forward.	No state certificate for John (1755) or Christopher (1803), but Foster town registers may well hold family birth entries. This is the strongest single lead in the plan.
Illinois	Statewide mandatory registration 1916.	Christopher Charles Cranston (d. 1957) has a genuine, obtainable death certificate — the one modern vital record in the group.

3.1 The Substitute-Record Hierarchy

Where no certificate exists, these records carry proof value, roughly in descending order of authority:

- **Town vital registers (Rhode Island).** Contemporaneous, official, and often entered by the family. For Foster this is the primary target.
- **Probate affidavits and estate files.** Loose-paper probate packets name heirs, state ages, and record guardianships for minors — sworn statements made under court supervision.
- **Civil War pension files.** Pension applications routinely required affidavits establishing exact birth dates, marriages, and family structure. These are among the richest genealogical documents in American archives.
- **Family Bible registers.** Often transcribed by DAR chapters and local societies. Contemporaneous when entries were made at the time of birth.
- **Church baptismal and christening records.** For 1830s Woodstock, look to early Methodist and Universalist congregations in Rush Township.
- **Census ages, gravestone inscriptions, obituaries.** Corroborative rather than primary — useful for triangulation, not for standing alone.

4. Record Targets, Generation by Generation

4.1 John Cranston (1755–1825), the Pioneer

Established: born 3 November 1755 in Rhode Island, son of Peleg and Sarah (Carr) Cranston. Married Phebe Ann Edwards, "of Ephraim, of Scituate," on 4 April 1790 at Foster. In autumn 1815, at age sixty, he led a party of roughly thirty New Englanders — a daughter, five sons, and two dozen neighbors — out of Rice City, Rhode Island, over the Alleghenies to Champaign County, Ohio. Six weeks by covered wagon. He dictated his will 22 March 1823 and died at Woodstock in August 1825.

Request:

- Foster town vital register entry for his 1755 birth and the 4 April 1790 marriage return (Foster Town Clerk).
- Foster land evidence records prior to 1815 — the sale of his Rhode Island property is the financial precondition of the migration and may name the Ohio destination.
- The recorded 1823 will and the full estate file, Champaign County Probate Court, Urbana.
- All deeds recorded 1815–1826 under his name, both as grantee and grantor (see Section 6).
- Martin Cemetery burial record and stone inscription; DAR tombstone transcriptions held at the Champaign County Library.

4.2 Christopher Cranston (1803–1858)

Established: born 14 November 1803 at Foster, Providence County, Rhode Island; came west at age twelve in the 1815 migration. Married Lora Howard Parks 24 November 1830 in Champaign County — not 1832, as the old chart records. Lora died in 1835, documented by Christopher's own letter of that year, leaving Charles Edward, Mary, and Josephine. He then married Irene Ward Nott, said in period sources to be a granddaughter of Ethan Allen, and had eight more children. He died 8 November 1858; his estate, probated at Urbana with Charles Edward as administrator, was appraised at \$8,470.

Request:

- Foster town birth register entry, indexed under the father's name (John Cranston).
- The recorded 24 November 1830 marriage return, Champaign County Probate Court — this settles the 1830-versus-1832 conflict definitively.
- The complete 1858 loose-paper probate packet — not merely the journal entry. Ask for it by that name. These folders hold administrator bonds, inventories, signed heir receipts, distribution lists, and guardianship papers for the minor children.
- James N. Arnold, Vital Record of Rhode Island 1636–1850, Volume 3 (Foster) — the standard printed transcription of the town registers, held by the Rhode Island Historical Society and widely available.
- Urbana newspapers, November 1858, for the death notice (free online archive; see Section 7).

4.3 Charles Edward Cranston (1833–1905)

Established: born 19 April 1833 at Woodstock, Champaign County, Ohio. Married Keturah Taylor Parke 15 March 1860 at Milford Center, Ohio. Served as Second Corporal, Ohio Volunteer Militia. Moved to Knox County, Illinois, where Governor John M. Palmer appointed him Justice of the Peace for Chestnut Township in 1869. Retired into Galesburg about 1892 to 730 Pine Street. Died there 4 August 1905, about 3:30 a.m., of cardiac paralysis; buried 6 August at Hermon Christian Church Cemetery beside Keturah.

Request:

- No Ohio birth certificate exists. Pursue instead: Rush Township church baptismal registers for 1833; transcribed family Bible entries; and the 1858 probate file of his father, which as administrator he signed and which should recite his age or majority.
- His Ohio Volunteer Militia service record and any pension file, National Archives — the highest-value substitute for a birth record, since pension affidavits state birth dates under oath.
- The 1860 Milford Center marriage record (Union County or Champaign County, depending on jurisdiction at the date).
- Knox County, Illinois death certificate, 1905 — already cited in your file; obtain a certified copy for the archive.
- Galesburg Daily Republican Register, 3–7 August 1905, for the death notice and obituary.

4.4 Christopher Charles Cranston (c. 1871/1876–1957)

Son of Charles Edward and Keturah, born in Chestnut Township or Hermon, Knox County, Illinois, and named for his grandfather. His birth year is unsettled in your file — 1871 in one place, 1876 in another. Because he died in 1957, his Illinois death certificate exists and will state a birth date.

Request:

- Illinois death certificate, 1957 — Knox County Clerk or Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Vital Records.
- 1880, 1900, and 1910 federal census entries for Chestnut Township; the 1900 census uniquely records month and year of birth.
- Galesburg Register-Mail obituary, 1957, via the Galesburg Public Library archives.

4.5 Collateral Lines Worth Pursuing

Three collateral files are likely to contain direct evidence about the main line and are worth ordering for that reason alone:

- **Captain William Wallace Cranston (1838–1907).** Half-brother of Charles Edward; Union officer and Medal of Honor recipient. Your file attributes the award to Chancellorsville with the 60th Ohio Infantry — confirm the unit and citation against the official Medal of Honor roll before publishing.
- **Christopher C. Cranston Jr. (c. 1842/1845–1862).** Killed in action 6 April 1862, the opening day of Shiloh. Order his Compiled Military Service Record from the National Archives.

- **Irene Ward Nott Cranston (c. 1813–1886).** She applied for a dependent mother's pension after her son's death at Shiloh. That file is likely the richest single document available on Christopher Sr.'s household — it would have required sworn testimony on the family structure, the marriage, and the children's birth dates.

5. Correction Carried Forward: The 1818 Monroe Patent

Your file contains a transcription of an original War of 1812 military bounty land patent bearing the signature of President James Monroe, dated January 1818, with the engraved vignette by Alexander Anderson and the motto MILITI FORTI ET FIDELI. It is a magnificent document. It is not, however, a record of Cranston land in Ohio, and the report flags this so the distinction is preserved in the archive.

Point	Finding
Land granted	160 acres — the northeast quarter of Section 1, Township 10 North, Range 2 East, Fourth Principal Meridian: present-day Haw Creek Township, Knox County, Illinois.
Legal basis	Military Bounty Act of 6 May 1812, which set aside bounty lands in Illinois, Missouri, and Arkansas — expressly not in Ohio.
Patentee	A soldier of the 2nd U.S. Infantry, Captain Gray's company; surname badly faded. Warrant No. 13,472 (reading of the digits uncertain).
Territorial status	Issued while Illinois was still a territory; statehood followed 3 December 1818.
Relation to the family	Geographic, not proprietary. The tract lies just northeast of Chestnut Township, where Charles Edward Cranston settled a generation later — an intriguing coincidence, and possibly more than one, but the patent does not itself document Cranston ownership.

To resolve the faded name:

- Search the BLM General Land Office database (glorecords.blm.gov), filtering Illinois, Knox County, T10N, R2E, Section 1 — the master index will supply the fully transcribed surname.
- Order the War of 1812 Bounty Land Warrant Application File for Warrant No. 13,472 from the National Archives (Record Groups 15 and 49), which contains the discharge certificate and application papers.
- Search the earliest Knox County, Illinois deed books: most bounty warrants were sold to eastern speculators, so the first grantor deed for that quarter section will state the soldier's full name.

6. John Cranston's Champaign County Land

This is the central investigation, and it requires a specific approach because of where the land sits.

6.1 Geography and Jurisdiction

- **Township shift.** In 1823 John Cranston resided in Wayne Township. In 1828 the northern portion of Wayne was split off to form Rush Township. His land around Woodstock and along Treacle Creek therefore lies in present-day Rush Township, near the Logan and Union County lines. Search under both township names, and be alert to boundary-era record transfers.
- **The watercourse.** The will refers to labor performed at "Treckles Creek" — Treacle Creek, which runs through Rush Township near Woodstock, flowing south toward the Darby Creek watershed. The creek is the fixed landmark that anchors every metes-and-bounds description you will encounter.
- **Land system.** Eastern Champaign County lies within the Virginia Military District. This changes the entire research method, as described next.

6.2 Why the Virginia Military District Changes the Method

Most of Ohio was surveyed on the rectangular grid — range, township, section. The Virginia Military District was not. Land there was reserved to compensate Virginia's Revolutionary War veterans, laid out by metes and bounds, and identified not by section number but by a Virginia Military Survey (VMS) number assigned to each irregular parcel. Descriptions read in compass bearings and natural monuments: so many poles north, so many degrees east, to a sugar tree, to a stone.

Three practical consequences follow, and they matter:

1. The VMS survey number, not a section number, is the key that unlocks everything. Once you have it, every subsequent record can be retrieved. Getting it is the first objective.
2. John Cranston will almost certainly not appear as a patentee. He was a Rhode Island farmer arriving in 1815, not a Virginia veteran. The federal patent for his tract was issued years earlier to a warrantee or an assignee — commonly a speculator such as Duncan McArthur or Nathaniel Massie. John bought from a chain of private owners. His name will therefore appear in county deed books, not in the federal patent index.
3. The original VMD entry and survey books were kept by the Ohio Auditor of State and are now held by the Ohio History Connection. That is where a survey number is translated into an original description and a chain of title reaching back to the warrant.

6.3 The 1823 Will as a Land Document

The will, dictated 22 March 1823 by a man describing himself as "in an advanced age but of a Sound mind and memory," states its own purpose plainly: to "order my business So as to prevent trouble among my Children after my disease." It is, above all, a map of land and lineage. The distribution accounts for at least 500 acres of contiguous and semi-contiguous farmland along Treacle Creek.

Heir	Acreage and Terms	Boundary Clues from the Will
Stephen Cranston	100 acres by deed of gift prior to 1823, counted as "part of their heirship," plus \$100 in additional land value	At Treacle Creek. The extra grant is expressly a reward for his labor clearing and developing the land — a rare, concrete acknowledgment of a son's work.
John B. Cranston	100 acres by deed of gift prior to 1823, likewise counted against his share	Adjoins the 200-acre tract given jointly to Christopher and Edward.
Christopher and Edward Cranston	200 acres jointly, together with the farming utensils	Bounded on John B. Cranston's land, running along Samuel Rice's line and Gifford's line. The utensils suggest this was the home farm.
Ephraim Cranston	100 acres	Directly adjoins the Christopher and Edward tract.
Phebe A. Savage (daughter)	An equal share of the unmentioned property, or \$100 paid jointly by her five brothers — "Left at her option"	No specific parcel named. If she elected land, a post-1825 partition deed should record it.

Two further details reward attention. The farming utensils were set aside specifically for Christopher and Edward, while the remaining personal property was divided equally among all the children — a practical arrangement that likely reflects who was actually working the home place. And John appointed his sons Stephen and John as executors, keeping administration inside the family.

A note on the manuscript: the transcription preserves John's phonetic spelling exactly — "boddy," "utentials," and, most strikingly, "disease" used throughout to mean decease. The witness lines stand blank with no subscribers entered, which identifies this as a recorded copy rather than the signed original. Ask the Probate Court whether the original signed instrument survives in the loose files.

6.4 The Neighbors Are Search Keys

- **Samuel Rice.** The reference to "Samuel Rice's line" ties directly to the 1815 migration party assembled at Rice City, Rhode Island. He was a fellow Rhode Island emigrant who settled adjacent to the Cranstons on Treacle Creek. If the Cranston deed cannot be located, the Rice deed will describe the Cranston boundary from the other side — and will cite the same VMS survey.
- **Gifford.** Another early New England pioneer family in Rush Township, adjoining the Cranston farm on the opposite boundary. The same reciprocal technique applies.

This reciprocal method is worth stressing. In metes-and-bounds country, a neighbor's deed is very nearly as good as your own ancestor's, because every description names its abutters.

6.5 The Research Sequence

Work these steps in order. Each one supplies information the next step needs.

Step A — Grantee Index, Champaign County Recorder (1815–1826)

- Request a search of the Grantee Index for "John Cranston," with secondary entries under Christopher Cranston and Edward (or Edwards) Cranston.
- Specify the location context: Rush Township, formerly part of Wayne Township prior to 1828, along Treacle Creek near Woodstock, within the Virginia Military Survey.
- What you are after: the original deed showing from whom John purchased on arriving from Rhode Island in 1815, together with the deed book volume and page — and, critically, the VMS survey number recited in the description.

Step B — Grantor Index, Champaign County Recorder (1815–1825)

- Search under John Cranston as grantor to locate the two deeds of gift of 100 acres each to Stephen and John B. Cranston, both made before March 1823.
- These will carry full surveyor's compass bearings and monument calls, and because they are carved out of the parent tract, they help reconstruct the whole.

Step C — Champaign County Probate Court, Urbana

- The recorded 1823 will (Will Book volume and page) and the complete estate file following his August 1825 death.
- Ask specifically for loose-paper probate records, including any inventory, appraisal, or partition proceedings — a 500-acre estate divided among six children frequently generated a partition suit.
- While there, order the 1858 Christopher Cranston probate packet (Section 4.2). One visit, two generations.

Step D — Ohio History Connection, Archives & Library, Columbus

- Once you have a VMS survey number, request the corresponding entry and survey book records — the Ohio Auditor of State originals for the Virginia Military District, 1787–1851, comprising tract books, abstracts, entry books, survey books, warrant lists, and indexes.
- Consult Federal Land Series, Volume 4: Grants in the Virginia Military District of Ohio, Parts 1 and 2 — the standard printed key connecting warrant number to survey number to county and township.
- Note the practical constraints on this repository: limited reading-room hours, unmonitored phone lines, and several research services suspended as of this writing. Email first, and plan an appointment.

Step E — Champaign County Engineer / Auditor, Tax Map Department

- Request the Virginia Military Survey tract plat maps for Rush Township, and ask staff to locate the survey number on the modern parcel base.
- This is the step that converts an 1815 metes-and-bounds description into ground you can stand on today — the 200 acres left jointly to Christopher and Edward along Treacle Creek.

Step F — Caldwell's 1874 Atlas of Champaign County

- View the Rush Township plate, which shows VMS survey outlines, Treacle Creek, Woodstock, and the names of landholders in 1874 — by which date Cranston descendants may still appear on the original family tracts.
- Held at the Champaign County Library, Genealogy Department, and at the County Engineer's Tax Map Department.

Step G — The Newspaper Archive

- Urbana-area newspapers from 1822 forward are digitized and searchable free of charge at champaigncounty.advantage-preservation.com. This is an underused resource and it is free.
- Search for estate notices following John's 1825 death, sheriff's and partition sale notices, and the 1858 probate advertisements. Estate notices frequently print the land description in full.

6.6 What a Complete Answer Looks Like

You will know the land question is closed when you can state, with a citation for each:

1. The Virginia Military Survey number (or numbers) covering the Cranston tracts.
2. The original warrantee and patentee of that survey, and the date of the federal patent.
3. The deed by which John Cranston acquired the land — grantor, date, consideration, deed book and page.
4. The total acreage and the metes-and-bounds description, tied to Treacle Creek and to the Rice and Gifford boundaries.
5. The two pre-1823 deeds of gift to Stephen and John B. Cranston, with their descriptions.
6. The disposition of the estate after August 1825 — partition, sale, or continued family occupancy — and the modern parcel location.

7. Repository Directory

Entries marked Verified were checked against official county, town, or state sources on 20 August 2026. Entries marked Confirm before use are carried forward from your source file and should be reconfirmed before you mail a request or a fee.

7.1 Champaign County, Ohio

Champaign County Recorder — Land Records

Address: 1512 S. US Highway 68, Suite B-200, Urbana, OH 43078

Phone: (937) 484-1630

Fax: (937) 484-1628

Email: recorder@co.champaign.oh.us

Online search: countyfusion9.kofiletech.us (CountyFusion / Kofile — Champaign OH)

Hours: Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Copy fee: \$2.00 per page if made by staff; \$0.25 if made by the public

Ask for: Grantee Index 1815–1826 and Grantor Index 1815–1825, John Cranston; deed book volume and page; VMS survey number

Status: Verified 20 Aug 2026

Champaign County Probate Court (Family Court, Probate Division)

Address: Champaign County Courthouse, 200 N. Main Street, 3rd Floor, Urbana, OH 43078

Phone: (937) 484-1028 (Probate Division); (937) 484-1027 also published

Website: ccfamct.us

Hours: Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., closed holidays

Ask for: John Cranston will (1823) and estate file (1825); Christopher Cranston loose-paper probate packet (1858); marriage return of Christopher Cranston and Lora Howard Parks, 24 Nov 1830

Status: Verified 20 Aug 2026

Champaign County Public Library — Genealogy & Local History

Address: 1060 Scioto Street, Urbana, OH 43078 (Attn: Genealogy Department)

Phone: (937) 653-3811

Fax: (937) 653-5679

Email: reference@champaigncountylibrary.org

Website: champaigncountylibrary.org/genealogy

Hours: Monday–Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.; closed Sunday

Fees: No charge for material scanned and emailed. Microfilm copies 25¢ each. Mailed printouts carry copy and postage fees.

Holdings: Urbana-area newspapers on microfilm from the 1820s; Champaign County census 1820–1930; Probate Court birth and death records 1867–1909; DAR pre-1900 tombstone transcriptions; early land and probate indexes; pioneer family vertical files; Caldwell's 1874 Atlas

Free online: champaigncounty.advantage-preservation.com — Urbana newspapers 1822–2024, full-text searchable

Please note: Staff provide general assistance with the collection but do not trace complete family histories or conduct in-depth research for patrons. Frame requests narrowly and specifically.

Status: Verified 20 Aug 2026

Champaign County Historical Society & Museum

Address: 809 East Lawn Avenue, Urbana, OH 43078 (mailing: P.O. Box 65, Urbana, OH 43078)

Phone: (937) 653-6721

Email: champhistmus@ctcn.net

Ask for: Manuscript collections and pioneer files; assistance identifying active 1830s congregations in the Woodstock and Rush Township area for baptismal records; Champaign County Civil War rosters

Status: Address and phone verified 20 Aug 2026; email carried forward — confirm before use

Champaign County Engineer / Auditor — Tax Map Department

Address: 1512 S. US Highway 68, Urbana, OH 43078

Phone: (937) 484-1600 (main county line; ask for the Tax Map Department)

Ask for: Virginia Military Survey tract plat maps for Rush Township; overlay of the historic survey on modern parcels along Treacle Creek

Status: Confirm the direct departmental number before calling

A Note on the County Genealogical Society

Status: The Champaign County Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society is listed as disbanded on the county library's own contacts page. Its holdings were placed on loan to the St. Paris Public Library, 127 E. Main Street, St. Paris, OH 43072, (937) 663-4349. Do not send research requests to the chapter.

7.2 State of Ohio

Ohio History Connection — Archives & Library

Address: 800 East 17th Avenue, Columbus, OH 43211-2474

Phone: (614) 297-2510 — voicemail only; returns take one to two weeks

Email: reference@ohiohistory.org (faster than telephone)

Website: ohiohistory.org/research/archives-library

Reading room: Wednesday 12:30–3:00 p.m.; Thursday and Friday 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. Appointments recommended; paging occurs only 11:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays

Ask for: Ohio Land Office records relating to Virginia Military District lands, 1787–1851 (Ohio Auditor of State originals); VMD entry and survey books; Federal Land Series, Volume 4; unmicrofilmed Champaign County manuscripts; early militia rosters

Please note: Several research and scanning services were temporarily suspended as of this writing. Email before planning a visit or a request.

Status: Verified 20 Aug 2026 — note this corrects the older 1982 Velma Avenue address

7.3 Rhode Island

Foster Town Clerk — Susan M. Dillon

Address: Foster Town Hall, 181 Howard Hill Road, Foster, RI 02825 (Attn: Town Clerk)

Phone: (401) 392-9200 main; (401) 392-9201 Town Clerk direct

Fax: (401) 397-9736 (an alternate, (401) 702-5010, is also published)

Email: sdillon@townoffoster.com

Website: townoffoster.com/town-clerk

Hours: Monday–Thursday, 8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.; closed Friday

Fees: Vital records more than 100 years old: \$2.00 per copy

Ask for: Early town vital registers, incorporation 1781 forward: birth entry for Christopher Cranston, 14 Nov 1803; birth entry for John Cranston, 3 Nov 1755; marriage return of John Cranston and Phebe Ann Edwards, 4 Apr 1790; land evidence records under John Cranston before 1815

Please note: Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope with mailed requests. The office also holds land evidence and probate records, so a single well-framed letter can cover several needs.

Status: Verified 20 Aug 2026

Rhode Island State Archives

Address: 33 Broad Street, Providence, RI 02903

Phone: (401) 222-2353

Email: statearchives@sos.ri.gov

Website: sos.ri.gov/divisions/state-archives

Digital archive: sosri.access.preservica.com

Ask for: Early state census records, tax lists, and Providence County land deeds confirming the family's presence before the 1815 migration; vital entries over 100 years old that the town cannot supply

Status: Verified 20 Aug 2026

Rhode Island Historical Society — Research Library

Location: Providence, Rhode Island

Ask for: James N. Arnold, Vital Record of Rhode Island 1636–1850, Volume 3 (Foster) — the standard transcription of the early town registers, and the fastest cross-reference for Cranston entries

Status: Confirm current address, hours, and appointment policy at rihs.org before visiting

7.4 Knox County, Illinois

Knox County Clerk — Vital Records

Location: Galesburg, Illinois

Ask for: Death certificate of Christopher Charles Cranston, 1957; certified copy of the 1905 death certificate of Charles Edward Cranston; the 1902 death record of Keturah Taylor Parke Cranston

Alternative: Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Vital Records, Springfield, for post-1916 statewide records

Status: Confirm current address, phone, and fees before use

Knox County Recorder of Deeds

Location: Galesburg, Illinois

Ask for: Earliest Military Tract patent records and Deed Book A; the first grantor deed for T10N R2E, Section 1, NE¼ — which will state the full name of the soldier named in the 1818 Monroe patent

Status: Confirm current address and phone before use

Galesburg Public Library — Archives & Special Collections

Location: Galesburg, Illinois

Ask for: Galesburg Register-Mail and Daily Republican-Register microfilm: 1902 and 1905 obituaries for Keturah and Charles Edward Cranston; 1957 obituary for Christopher Charles Cranston; city directories confirming 730 Pine Street; Knox County historical files

Status: Confirm current address and hours before use

7.5 Federal

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

Ordering: Military service and pension records are ordered online through [archives.gov](https://www.archives.gov); confirm the current ordering path and fee schedule before submitting

Ask for: Compiled Military Service Record and pension file, Charles Edward Cranston, Ohio Volunteer Militia; CMSR of Christopher C. Cranston Jr., killed at Shiloh 6 Apr 1862; dependent mother's pension file of Irene Ward Nott Cranston; service and pension file of Capt. William Wallace Cranston; War of 1812 Bounty Land Warrant Application File, Warrant No. 13,472 (Record Groups 15 and 49)

Why it matters: Pension files are the single richest substitute for pre-registration birth records, because applicants had to establish birth dates, marriages, and family composition by sworn affidavit.

Status: Confirm current ordering procedure at [archives.gov](https://www.archives.gov)

Bureau of Land Management — General Land Office Records

Website: glorerecords.blm.gov

Cost: Free

Ask for: Illinois, Knox County, T10N R2E Section 1 — to resolve the faded patentee name on the 1818 Monroe patent

Important caveat: Do not expect to find John Cranston in the Ohio patent index. Virginia Military District patents were issued to Revolutionary War warrantees and their assignees, years before his 1815 arrival. His acquisition was a private purchase recorded at the county, not a federal patent.

Status: Verified 20 Aug 2026

Shiloh National Military Park & National Cemetery

Ask for: Casualty rosters, grave markers, and memorial listings for Union troops fallen 6–7 April 1862 — for Christopher C. Cranston Jr.

Status: Confirm current research contact at nps.gov/shil

8. Priority Action Sequence

Ordered by expected return on effort. The first three cost almost nothing and can go out this week.

#	Action	Contact	Expected Yield
1	Email a Grantee and Grantor Index search request, John Cranston, 1815–1826	Champaign County Recorder	The VMS survey number — the key to everything downstream
2	Email a request for the early town vital register entries and the 1790 marriage return	Foster Town Clerk	Birth entries for John and Christopher; confirmation of the Peleg Cranston parentage
3	Search the free Urbana newspaper archive, 1822 forward	champaigncounty.advantage-preservation.com	Estate notices, land sale advertisements, death notices — often with full land descriptions
4	Request the 1823 will, 1825 estate file, and the 1858 loose-paper probate packet	Champaign County Probate Court	Heir lists, ages, sworn affidavits, land distributions
5	Order the Civil War pension files	National Archives	Sworn birth dates for Charles Edward and for Christopher Sr.'s household
6	Email the Archives & Library with the survey number once obtained	Ohio History Connection	Original VMD entry and survey books; the metes-and-bounds description
7	Request the Rush Township VMS plat and modern parcel overlay	Champaign County Engineer, Tax Map Dept.	The land located on the ground today
8	Order the 1957 Illinois death certificate	Knox County Clerk / IDPH	A firm birth date for Christopher Charles Cranston

9. Discrepancies and Open Questions

These are the points where your file contains internal conflict or an unsupported claim. Each is resolvable, and each should be resolved before publication.

Item	The Conflict	How to Resolve
John Cranston, date of death	Given variously as August 1825 and as circa 1825/1828 elsewhere in the file.	Probate filing date and Martin Cemetery stone. The estate file will fix it.
John Cranston, middle name	A Find a Grave entry supplies "Douglass." No record supports it.	Leave it out of the published line unless a contemporaneous record surfaces. Note the claim and its absence of support.
Marriage year, John and Phebe	Foster record gives 4 April 1790; the old family chart gives 1791.	The town return governs. Obtain the certified copy.
"Edward" versus "Edwards"	The will names Edward Cranston; one passage in the file reads "Christopher and Edwards."	The recorded will and the deed indexes will settle the spelling. Search both.
Christopher Cranston Jr., birth year	Given as c. 1842 in one passage, c. 1845 in another.	Compiled Military Service Record and the mother's pension file.
Christopher Charles Cranston, birth year	c. 1871 in one passage, c. 1876 in another.	1957 Illinois death certificate plus the 1900 census, which records month and year of birth.
Irene Ward Nott as Ethan Allen's granddaughter	A period claim, repeated in secondary sources, not yet documented.	Trace the Nott line independently. Period biographies frequently inflated such connections; this one needs primary evidence before it goes on the site.
William Wallace Cranston, Medal of Honor	Your file gives the 60th Ohio Infantry and cites Chancellorsville.	Verify unit and citation against the official Medal of Honor roll and his service record. A Medal of Honor claim invites scrutiny.
Keturah's surname	Appears as Parke, Park, and Parks across the file; her father is given as David Park.	Adopt the spelling used in the 1860 marriage return and note the variants once, in a footnote.
Estate valuation, \$8,470	Converted in the file to "roughly \$200,000 today."	State the 1858 figure as recorded and cite the conversion method and index year, or omit the conversion. Different indices give materially different answers.

10. Appendix: Draft Requests

These are written to be sent as they stand. Each is deliberately narrow — county and town staff respond far better to a specific record request than to an open genealogical inquiry.

A. To the Champaign County Recorder

To: recorder@co.champaign.oh.us

Subject: Deed index search request — John Cranston, 1815–1826, Wayne/Rush Township

Dear Recorder's Office,

I am researching a documented family history and would like to request a search of your early deed indexes for the following.

Subject: John Cranston, who arrived in Champaign County from Foster, Rhode Island, in the autumn of 1815 and died at Woodstock in August 1825. He resided in Wayne Township, the northern portion of which became Rush Township in 1828. His land lay along Treacle Creek near Woodstock, within the Virginia Military Survey.

I would be grateful for:

- Grantee Index entries, 1815–1826, for John Cranston — with the deed book volume and page for his original purchase.
- Grantor Index entries, 1815–1825, for John Cranston — I am specifically seeking two deeds of gift of 100 acres each, made before March 1823 to his sons Stephen Cranston and John B. Cranston.
- Any entries under Christopher Cranston or Edward (Edwards) Cranston in the same period; his 1823 will devised 200 acres to them jointly, bounded by John B. Cranston's land and running along the lines of Samuel Rice and Gifford.
- The Virginia Military Survey number recited in any of these descriptions, and copies of the deeds themselves.

I understand copies are \$2.00 per page when made by your staff, and I am glad to remit that fee on your instruction, by check or by whatever method you prefer. I can also supply a transcript of the 1823 will if it would assist the search.

Thank you for your time.

Charles Cranston Jett

[address, telephone, email]

B. To the Foster Town Clerk

To: sdillon@townoffoster.com

Subject: Historic vital record request — Cranston family, 1755–1815

Dear Ms. Dillon,

I am researching the Cranston family of Foster and would like to request copies of the following entries from the early town vital registers. I understand records more than one hundred years old are \$2.00 per copy, and I will remit whatever the total comes to on your instruction.

- Birth entry for John Cranston, born 3 November 1755, son of Peleg and Sarah (Carr) Cranston.
- Marriage return for John Cranston, "of Peleg, of Foster," and Phebe Ann Edwards, "of Ephraim, of Scituate," 4 April 1790.
- Birth entry for Christopher Cranston, born 14 November 1803, son of the above John Cranston.
- Any land evidence entries under John Cranston prior to 1815, when he sold out and led a party of some thirty neighbors from Rice City to Champaign County, Ohio.

I have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope. If any of these records are not held by the town, I would be grateful simply to know that, so I may direct the inquiry to the State Archives.

With thanks for your help.

Charles Cranston Jett

[address, telephone, email]

C. To the Champaign County Library, Genealogy Department

To: reference@champaigncountylibrary.org

Subject: Rush Township / Woodstock pioneer family inquiry — Cranston, 1815–1860

Dear Reference Staff,

I understand your department provides general assistance with the genealogy collection rather than full research, so I have kept this to specific items.

- Do your pioneer family vertical files include a Cranston file? The family arrived from Rhode Island in 1815 and settled on Treacle Creek in what became Rush Township.
- Do your DAR pre-1900 tombstone transcriptions cover Martin Cemetery? I am seeking the inscription for John Cranston, died August 1825.
- Do you hold, or can you identify, transcriptions of family Bible registers or church baptismal records for Woodstock and Rush Township congregations active in the 1830s? I am attempting to document a birth of 19 April 1833 that predates county registration.
- May I have a scan of the Rush Township plate from Caldwell's 1874 Atlas of Champaign County?

I understand there is no charge for material that can be scanned and emailed, and I am glad to pay copying and postage for anything that must be mailed.

Thank you.

Charles Cranston Jett

[address, telephone, email]