

MY BURT FAMILY LOYALISTS

To write about the life and times of my numerous Loyalist ancestors would be a difficult task, as I know very little about most of them except names, dates and places, from various sources.

The exception is the Burt(t) families who came to New Brunswick after the American Revolution.

Mildred Burt, my father's mother is where my lineage starts, back to some tragic tales of very early times in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

I never knew my Grandmother Mildred (Burt) Inch, who was born in 1868 near Burtt's Corner, N.B. She died on the 31st of October 1904, when my father was 16 years old. He left New Brunswick for the West in 1911, went back to New Brunswick to be married in 1914 and was unable to visit his relatives in New Brunswick again until 1933. I met my Grandfather Inch on this occasion when I was 17 years old; once in 1919 on a trip to New Brunswick with my mother and my baby sister when I was only 4 years old, so have hardly any memory of this visit. In 1940 I had another trip East with my mother, when we had a short stay at Burtt's Corner with Grandpa Inch and his 2nd wife. That is the extent of my getting to know this grandfather.

The family of my ancestor, Henry Burt, has been documented in great detail in a book compiled by Henry M. Burt and Silas W. Burt, published in 1893 after a reunion was held in Springfield, Mass. on the 3rd of Oct. 1890, celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the settlement of the Henry Burt family from Harberton, Devonshire, England, who arrived in the Connecticut valley in 1640. 150 representatives of the family from 11 states and the District of Columbia were present. A list of those present and even a menu of the dinner is included. Speeches were given by several Burts of distinction with high offices in their part of the country, and full transcripts are in the book – "The Life and Times of Henry Burt at Springfield, Mass."

Having found on line a copy of this book – 618 pages plus 2 appendices, I studied the contents, looking for something about Seaborn Burt, whose grandson Joseph, born in 1765 in Ridgefield Connecticut, was the ancestor of Mildred, who arrived in N.B. with the Loyalists in 1783. He came with his father, Benjamin and his mother, Rebecca, 3 brothers, Benjamin Jr., Darius and Gould, 3 sisters, Rebecca, Sarah and Huldah, and his Uncle David Burt, brother of Benjamin Sr.

In a research study by Rev. Canon Gerald E. Burtt of Maine about his Loyalist ancestors, some of whom returned to the States in the 1920's, he added the following comment – "It is interesting to note that in the book, "The Life and Times of Henry Burt" by Henry Burt and Silas Burt, no mention is made of the Ridgefield Ct. Burts after the beginning of the American Revolution. The book covers most descendants of Henry (1) through 1893, but no mention is made of the Burts who became Loyalists. The American Patriot Burts may have been embarrassed about their Loyalist relatives. Whatever the reason, the authors chose not to discuss them."

Henry Burt, the immigrant, from Harberton, Devonshire, England, and his wife Eulalia Marche, had 13 children, the last four born in Springfield, Mass. He had 3 sons, Jonathan, David and Nathaniel. Christopher (born 1704) and Seaborn (born 1706) were sons of Benjamin, son of David, and are only mentioned in the context of their birth to Benjamin Burt and Sarah Belden, whose capture in the Deerfield, Mass. raid by a French and Indian expedition in February 1704 is a tragic tale of frontier life, I would like to include. This story is summarized from a chapter in "The Life and Times of Henry Burt".

Benjamin Burt (1680 – 1759) the great grandfather of Joseph, the Loyalist, had moved from Northampton, Mass. to Deerfield, an outpost settlement, and on October 19, 1702 he married Sarah Belden. On Feb. 29th 1704 an expedition from Montreal, Canada, under Major Hertel de Rouville, consisting of 200 Frenchmen and 142 Indians made a late night attack on this town, which was undefended. Many of the inhabitants were slaughtered and their homes destroyed. Benjamin Burt and his wife were among the 112 prisoners who were forced to the north of the village and from there started on their journey to Canada, up the valley of the Connecticut river, through deep snow and rugged wilderness. The conditions and suffering experienced by these unfortunate people was hard to describe, being poorly clad and shod, having had no chance to prepare for the journey. They suffered from fatigue and insufficient food, and when they lagged or were disabled, they were slain by the ruthless savages. Nineteen captives were slain, mostly pregnant women.

Mrs. Sarah Burt was in the 8th month of her first pregnancy when they started out. On March 25th the party reached Chamble about 18 miles northeast of Montreal. Here, on April 14, Mrs. Burt gave birth to her first child, a son, named Christopher. A large number of the captives were employed in a convent and Jesuit Academy near Montreal. Mr. & Mrs. Burt were among them.

Ensign John Sheldon made 4 expeditions to Canada to rescue his fellow townsmen, and on May 30th, 1706 obtained the release of about 40 of them, including Mr. Burt, his wife and child. They traveled down the St. Lawrence River, then by sea to Boston, arriving on Aug. 2nd. On the voyage Mrs. Burt bore her 2nd child, a son who was named Seaborn, from the place of his birth.

Included in the story was a letter, dated Aug. 22, 1706 written from Boston by a Mr. Sewell, to the pastor, Rev. John Williams, still in Canada, who had been with the captives and whose wife was slain by the Indians on the march north. In it he says ".....It was a great blessing to see Mr. Willard baptize Ebenezer Hinsdale and Seaborn Burt, two little sons born on the passage. The captives, most of them, began their journey home on the 12th inst."

On arriving at Deerfield Mr. Burt and his family were overwhelmed by the memories of their misfortunes, and the massacre of many near relatives in the border wars. The names of relatives who lost their lives are listed – 10 on Mr. Burt's side and 8 on Sarah's. The horrors experienced when the town was destroyed caused them to leave Deerfield. They went first to Stamford, then to Norwalk and finally settled in Ridgefield Ct. where Mr. Burt was given a grant of land with the condition that he remain as blacksmith for the town.

Mr. Burt died at Ridgefield, Ct. 20 May 1759, leaving 5 sons and 3 daughters. One large branch of the family settled at Warwick, New York. A letter is included, dated 13 May 1753, from Benjamin Burt Sr. to his son Benjamin in Warwick requesting him to help his brother Christopher, who had apparently not prospered.

As previously mentioned there is nothing recorded in this book about Seaborn's descendants who were Loyalists. Later research reveals that he married Susannah Lobdell at Ridgefield. Two of his sons were Loyalists, Benjamin, born 1741, an ex Queen's Ranger from Connecticut received a land grant at Burton, N.B., and died shortly after in 1785, leaving a wife, Rebecca and 7 children. David, born 1750, also an ex Queen's Ranger was first at Gagetown, N.B. (after the Revolution), and then settled at Keswick in York Co. N.B.

Gerald Burt's research on his New Brunswick Loyalist connections carried on from the Loyalist Benjamin Burt, born 1741, who died shortly after arriving in New Brunswick and applying for and receiving the grant of land at Burton, N.B. His wife, Rebecca, submitted a claim for the land to be given to her. Joseph and the oldest son, Benjamin, signed this claim for Lot #25 at Burton to be turned over to her, and this was done, as recorded on the back of a copy I have of the document. Joseph's name also appears on other Memorials/Claims for compensation for losses suffered after refusing to join the Rebels. Their land and possessions were confiscated or left behind when they fled. Joseph had a grant of land #49 at Maquapit Lake, Sunbury Co., before moving to York Co.

Joseph married in New Brunswick, Elizabeth Burnett and had 11 children, the 5th being Benjamin Burt, born in 1799, an early settler in the Burt's Corner area. As recorded by Gerald Burt, Joseph died in 1859 in Douglas Parish, York Co. N.B., but the place of burial is not known. In the 1851 census of Douglas Parish he was 84 years old and living with his son Jeremiah.

Joseph's son, Benjamin, died in 1879 of accidental poisoning and is buried in the Burt's Corner Cemetery. He married Elizabeth Crouse in 1819 and they had 13 children. The 9th child was Israel (1834 – 1922), who married Anstis Boone in 1859. Israel and Anstis had 11 children and lived on a farm near Burt's Corner. The 5th was Mildred, born 22 Sept. 1868 and died 31 Oct. 1904. Mildred married Charles E. Inch on the 28th Sept. 1887. Charles was exactly 4 years older than Mildred. He died at Burt's Corner in 1953, and both are buried in the Burt's Corner Cemetery. Lucy Burt (1870 – 1891), a sister of Mildred, was married the same day as Mildred, to Ed Lawrence. She had a daughter, Tillie/Matilda, the same day as my father was born on the 30th August 1888. Lucy died at age 20.

Charles and Mildred lived on a farm on the Tripp Settlement road on the other side of Burt's Corner from the Burt farm. Old maps show the location of these farms in Douglas Parish, York Co. N.B. They had 6 children, one died as an infant; two sons were killed in WWI and one son was a bachelor; a daughter, Lucy, married John Bliss and lived in Massachusetts for the rest of her life.

My father, James Allison Inch, the oldest, was born 30th Aug. 1888 and died 31 March 1990 at Moose Jaw, Sask. After working in Manitoba and briefly in Saskatchewan from 1911 to 1914, he returned to N.B. early in 1914 to marry Lulu Yerxa (also a Loyalist descendant), the girl he had sent a diamond engagement ring to at Christmas in a box of chocolates. On March 28th, 1914, they were married at her mother's home in Fredericton and left immediately to come to Saskatchewan. They made their home in several towns and cities as he pursued his career in the telephone business. James Allison Inch and Lulu Bernadette Yerxa had two daughters who were born in Saskatchewan, Charlotte (the writer) in 1915 and Roma in 1918.

The stories he wrote about his life and early days in New Brunswick before he came West make interesting reading, as he tells about life on the farm in the early 1900's. His research on the farm where he was born takes one back to the Loyalist, Lt. Andrew Husband, who was the original grantee on Lot #5, Block 3 in York County. He also recorded the story of his career as a "Telephone Man".

Thus my story takes me back to the early days of settlement in America and my Loyalist ancestors, Joseph Burt and his father and mother, Benjamin and Rebecca, who arrived in New Brunswick in 1783, after the American Revolution.

The tale of families divided by their conflicting beliefs in loyalty to the British crown or to the "Patriots" who believed in a separate country is a sad one. For some people, depending on where they lived and how radical their neighbors were about separating from British rule, the hostility they encountered often forced them to leave.

At a recent meeting of the UELAC in Regina, Sask. we were presented with a replica of the pine-tar and feathers ball that was given to people suspected of being "Tories". It indicated they should get out of town or expect dire consequences, such as "tar and feathering", sometimes used to punish them or persuade those not agreeing to take part in the Revolution to change their loyalty.

It has been a fascinating journey to discover the circumstances under which my ancestors lived in early American settlements and how the numerous progeny spread throughout North America. The Loyalist story is also an amazing story of courage in very difficult times when family relationships were severed and neighbors were alienated by divided loyalties.

*"The coming of the Loyalists was the pivotal event in Canadian history...
Today some 3.5 million Canadians are descendants of the original Loyalists".*

Quote from True Blue, a book by Walter Stewart

Charlotte Ayers
Regina, Sask.
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