

Christian Burgess

A curious entry in the records for Norton, Massachusetts lists an attempt by John Watters or Watterman to marry Hannah Newland. This John Watterman was most likely a Hessian mercenary. How he was recruited is not known, but he defected early upon arriving in the new world. The first German troupes arrived mid-1776 and we find him trying to get married to Hannah Newland as early as February in 1777.

*48 John Wattersmann and Hannah Newland Both Norton
residing in Norton
Entered February 15th 1777 and cryed one time and
forbid by the select meen -*

It appears that at first the record read, "John Watterman and Hannah Newland, Both Norton, Entered February 15th, 1777 and cryed one time and forbid by the select meen." Then the record was changed so that now John Watterman only resided at Norton while Hannah Newland was of Norton. Why was it changed? Probably because John Watterman was a Hessian. The Colonists were not impressed by the German mercenaries.

Some of the German soldiers viewed the fighting in America as a means to get to the new land. They saw it as an opportunity to start a new life in a land where there was still space to grow. They had to sail with the troops, but many deserted as soon as they arrived.

Hannah Newland was expecting and she was not

married. John Watterman was most likely the father. The Select men, or councilmen, of the city forbid this marriage after it was announced by the town cryer. It is not clear why. Whether it was because of Hannah's condition or the questionable status of John Watterman we do not know. We do know that Hannah Newland gave birth six months later. Hannah Newland gave birth to an illegitimate son at Norton, Bristol, Massachusetts on August 14, 1777. This son was named Benjamin Newland. The question arises whether she tried to marry John Watterman six months earlier because she was expecting and John Watterman was the father. In those days the honorable thing to do was to marry, or try to marry, a woman that was expecting the child of the father.

Several years passed before Hannah Newland married Christian Burgess and took her son Benjamin with her into that marriage. The rest of this chapter documents Christian Burgess.

Hannah Newland was christened on May 10, 1758 at Norton, Bristol, Massachusetts the daughter of Antony and Patience Woodward Newland. The christening record can be found in the vital records of Norton.

Maye Turner, daughter of Effie Mariah Burgess Kone and my father's first cousin, sent me a copy of the Revolutionary Service record of Christian Burgess. The record gives the service of Christian Burgess when he enlisted in the campaign of 1782 for Rhode Island. It does not give any information about his prior service when he enlisted in Germany to fight for the other side. Also missing is the account of how he changed his name from a German name to an Americanized name because it was not convenient to have a German name.

Revolutionary Service of Christian Burgess

A weaver; born in Germany: Residing in North Providence, Rhode Island; enlisted as a private, for North Providence, On March 19, 1782; James Angell's class; Campaign of 1782; age twenty-six years. (Military papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Volume 5, page 69).

Private, Captain Humphery's Company; Enlisted by Rhode Island for campaign of 1782; received clothing April 2nd, 1782 (Military papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Volume 5, page 690).

Served in Rhode Island Regiment, campaign of 1782; discharged December 19th, 1782 (Regimental Book, State Archives, page 82).

Private Third Company, Rhode Island Regiment of foot; on master roll from May 1st, 1782 to January 1st, 1783; enlisted March 19th; discharged December 19th. (September 1782, on command with ye Quarter Master General), (U.S. War Department record. Washington, D.C.).

Of the late Rhode Island Continental Regiment; served nine months in campaign of 1782; received certificate for service in regiment dated December 19, 1782; certificate in possession of C. Burgess. (Military Returns, S.A., page 140).

Christian and Hannah Burgess lived near Dresden, Lake George, New York in the 1790s. Christian served in this area during his Revolutionary War assignment.

“This town, the seventh in size and ranking next to the lowest in population. . . is situated in the northern part of the county, between Lake Champlain and South Bay on the east and Lake George on the west. It is

bounded north by Putnam and south by Fort Ann. Its average length is ten miles, and its average breadth is five and a half miles . . . the best obtainable sketch of the families in the order of their settlement: Joseph Phippeny, Ebenezar Chapman, ---- Boggs, Daniel Ruff, Roger Barrett, James Snody, Palmer Blunt, Abraham Clemons, Daty Allen, Orrin Brewster, Israel Woodcock, John Burgess. . . .”¹

And on the following page:

“John Burgess was the first owner of the place now occupied by Mr. Hiram Vowers, at the foot of Elephant Mountain. He had eleven children, none of whom now reside in Dresden. . . .”²

Christian Burgis shows up in the 1800 census for Bolton, Washington County, New York with a family composed as follows:

3 males under age 10
1 male from age 10 to 16
1 male from age 16 to 26
1 male from age 26 to 45
2 females under age 10
1 female from age 10 to 16
1 female from age 26 to 45

That would approximate the birth years for this family as follows:

Father:	born between 1755 to 1774
Mother:	born between 1755 to 1774
Son:	born between 1774 to 1784
Son:	born between 1784 to 1790

Daughter: born between 1784 to 1790
Son: born between 1790 to 1800
Son: born between 1790 to 1800
Son: born between 1790 to 1800
Daughter: born between 1790 to 1800
Daughter: born between 1790 to 1800

Three children are missing from the census account. They must have been old enough not to live at home when the 1800 census was taken, died young and were not alive at the time of the census, or they were not yet born. Since Christian and Hannah Burgess were married several years after 1777, it is most likely that a birth occurred every two years from that time and hence there should be more older children enumerated in the census. Therefore, it is my belief that some of their family had already matured and left home by the time the 1800 census was taken.

One of the children of Christian and Hannah Burgess was William Burgess. William Burgess married Violate Stockwell and raised a large family in the Lake George, New York area. William Burgess was one of the chief carpenters in erecting the temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at Kirtland, Ohio. He laid out the roofing timbers. One of their sons was William Burgess, my great-great grandfather. William Burgess wrote a sketch of his life which follows.

“I was born March first, 1822 in the township of Putnam, Washington County, New York. When I was ten years old my father and most of his family joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This was December second, 1832. The next August we started to move to Jackson County,

Missouri. We arrived in Kirtland, Ohio the first part of September. The Prophet Joseph Smith advised us to stop there and help build the temple. The walls were about four feet above the ground.

“That fall (1833) the church was driven out of Jackson County by the mob. In February 1835 I was baptized by my brother Harrison Burgess and confirmed by the Prophet Joseph Smith, under the following circumstances. There had been about thirty-five baptized during the week and all went to church on Sunday to be confirmed. We sat on the three front rows of seats and I was on the third one. Jared Carter and Elder Cahoon were doing the confirming. After they had confirmed all on the first row, the Prophet held up his hand for them to stop, and came to where I was and confirmed me, then went back to the stand and told the brethren to go on with the confirming.

“I lived in the Smith family for two years, and learned much of the gospel hearing the prophet talk. I helped build the Kirtland Temple and was at the dedication. We passed through the persecution with the saints and were driven out. We then moved to Caldwell County, Missouri in August of 1838. The prophet counseled us to go to Daviess County. We arrived at Adam-ondi-ahman about the twentieth of August, 1838. The mob spirit was raging and all the old settlers but two moved away in order to have their families safe while they were fighting. For about three months I didn't undress only to wash and change clothes, and no one except those that passed through it knows the tribulation and Missouri, Caldwell County privations that we had to endure. As it was for the gospel's sake, we endured cheerfully. I was taken

prisoner by the mob and abused terribly. But we depended on the Lord and He delivered us from them. We went to Caldwell County in December and in the spring we were put in prison and the church was driven from the state.

“We next went to Adams County, Illinois. We were driven out of Missouri leaving our homes and all we had, but we were thankful for our lives that we were spared.

“On September 17, 1840 I married Mariah Pulsipher, daughter of Zerah Pulsipher and Mary Brown, near Lima, Adams County, Illinois.

“In the spring of 1841 we moved to Nauvoo, Illinois. I was elected Captain of the Third Company, Fifth Regiment of the Nauvoo Legion. I passed through the trials and privations with the saints there and assisted in building the temple. On October 18, 1844 I was ordained a seventy by Daniel J. Mills. We completed the temple for ordinance work and on January 7, 1846 we received our endowments in the House of the Lord.

“I left Nauvoo on February 10, 1846 with the pioneers, but came back the last of March, fixed up the best my wife and I could and started on May twenty-third for Council Bluffs. I stopped in Iowa and worked. We arrived in Winter Quarters on September 16, 1846. We passed through that sickness that took so many lives and left Winter Quarters in May 1848 for the west. After four months we arrived in the Salt Lake valley on September 22, 1848. We wintered in what was called the old Fort in the Sixth Ward. The country was new and there was not a house on the city plot except the Fort. It commenced to snow the fifth of December. We had a long hard winter. The ground

was covered with snow until April.

“In the spring of 1849 the militia was organized and I was elected Captain of the Fifth Company of the First Regiment. In 1853 I was elected Colonel of the Second Regiment. I was also ordained a President of the Ninth Quorum of Seventies. In May 1855 I was called to go on a mission to the Indians on the Salmon River. My nephew, Baldy Watts, and J. Kress went with me. We were there more than a year.

“After we came home I put up my saw mill in Parley's Canyon. We made lumber for shingles and sawed timber to help build the old Fort and some of the first homes in the city. We were allotted ten acres of land. (The Denver and Rio Grande Depot is now on this spot). My father, William Burgess Sr., and brothers, Harrison, Horace and Melanchton worked with me.

“In the fall of 1862 I was called to go to southern Utah and take my saw mill to Pine Valley to saw timber for the pipe organ. That was the first saw mill in that part of the state. There was extra good timber in the Pine Valley mountains. Some of the timber was sent to help with the tabernacle in Salt Lake. We were called by President Young. We lived in Pine Valley about twenty years, meanwhile building the first grist mill. Some time in 1882 we moved to Thurber, Wayne County, with a few settlers to open up that part of the state for new homes as population was increasing all the time. We farmed and raised cattle for a livelihood.

“In 1885 I took my family and moved to Huntington, Emery County, where my wife's folks had settled. The Pulsiphers had a saw mill in



The William Burgess Family

Back row: William Harrison, Juliett, Mary Harriet,
Vilate and Annette
Front row: William Sr., Wilmer, James and Mariah
Pulsipher Burgess

Huntington canyon. I went into the bee business and also bought into the Co-op Mercantile Company. (One of the principal stockholders, he served as president for seven years). I made this town my home the rest of my life. We had a family of nine children, five girls and four boys. My wife passed away on December 26, 1892. She was seventy years, six months and nine days old. She was buried at the Huntington Cemetery.

William Burgess Jr. passed away on September 26,

1904 at the age of eighty-one years. He was buried near his wife in the Huntington Cemetery.

Harrison Burgess, the older brother of William Burgess, kept a life journal and from it the following story unfolds.

“I was born September third, 1814 in the town of Putnam, Washington County, State of New York. I lived with my parents until I was fourteen years and a part of the time afterward, and being the eldest of my father's family, I was kept constantly at work and had but little opportunity of acquiring an education.

“My father made no profession of religion but led a moral and virtuous life.

“My childhood was not marked with any crime, although I paid but little or no attention to religion until the seventeenth year of my age. In July, 1832, when I first heard the fullness of the gospel proclaimed by Elder Simeon Carter, I was convinced that the scriptures were true and that the Book of Mormon was a divine revelation from heaven. I was baptized and spent the following winter in going to school, working for my board and in meeting with the saints. In the spring of 1833 I started in company with Brother John S. Carter to the state of Vermont where we labored about two months and then returned to New York state.

“On the third Sabbath in May while speaking to a congregation, I declared that I knew the Book of Mormon was true, the work of God. The next day while I was laboring, something seemed to whisper to me, "Do you know the Book of Mormon is true?" My mind became perplexed and darkened and I was so tormented in spirit that I left my work and

retired into the woods in misery and distress and therein cannot be described.

“I resolved to know whether I had proclaimed the truth or not, and commenced praying to the God of Heaven, for a testimony of these things, when all at once the vision of my mind was opened, and a glorious personage clothed in white stood before me and exhibited to my view the plates from which the Book of Mormon was taken.

“In September, 1834 I started with my father's family for Kirtland, Ohio, as it was necessary for him to stay (behind) to transact some business. On my journey I accidentally met with the Prophet Joseph Smith in Springfield, Pennsylvania. I there saw him for the first time and heard him preach. I arrived in Kirtland and tarried there during the winter during which Brother Joseph received a revelation calling for the strength of the Lord's House to go to Jackson County, Missouri for the redemption of Zion. I was one among the rest that volunteered to go and fulfill this commandment.

“I started in March, 1834, in company with Joseph Smith and others. We had a long and tedious journey and arrived in Missouri on the last of June. While the camp tarried there, Brother Joseph received the word of the Lord by revelation, relative to the camp, informing us that we were not to fight at that time, that Zion could not be redeemed then, and that He had required us to come thus far as a trial of our faith, and that He had accepted of our offering. Some individuals of the camp fell to murmur at this decree and wanted to fight the enemies of God. Brother Joseph said that the Lord would send in a scourge upon us in consequence of this murmuring. The cholera was

upon us in a few hours after this prediction and some eighteen of our brethren fell victims to its grasp. Among the number that I attended upon, and helped to bury, was my beloved Brother John S. Carter. My feelings on this occasion can never be described. At length I was violently seized with it myself, but through faith in God and the kind assistance of Brother Zerah H. Cole I was rescued from the grasp of death.

“When the camp broke up I received an honorable discharge from Lyman Wight our Commander in Chief. After this I started for home in company with Heber C. Kimball, and arriving at Kirtland, Ohio about the last of July I found my friends well and the saints were exerting themselves to the utmost in their poverty to build the temple. I received my endowments there in the spring of 1835. The Lord blessed His people abundantly in that temple with the spirit of prophecy, the ministering of angels, and visions. I will here relate a vision which was shown to me.

“It was near the close of the endowments – I was in a meeting for instruction in the upper part of the temple with about a hundred of the high priests, seventies and elders. The saints fell to shout "Hosanna" and the Spirit of God rested upon me in mighty power and I beheld the room lighted up with a peculiar light such as I had never seen before. The room looked to me as though it had neither roof nor floor to the building and I beheld Joseph and Hyrum Smith and Roger Orton enveloped in the light. Joseph exclaimed aloud, "I behold the Savior, the Son of God." Hyrum exclaimed, "I behold the angels of Heaven." Brother Orton exclaimed, "I behold the chariots of Israel."

All who were in the room felt the power of God to that degree that many prophesied and the power of God was made manifest, the remembrance of which I shall never forget while I live upon the earth.

“The winter of 1836 I attended a high school together with Brothers Joseph and Hyrum and most of the heads of the church. It was a fine opportunity for instruction. The evenings were mostly spent in meetings for instruction in the principles of our faith and religion. It was then and there that the lectures in the forepart of the book of Doctrine and Covenants were given. During this winter and spring members of Zion's Camp were called together to receive an especial blessing, according to a promise which had been made in the before mentioned revelation. Out of this number most of the Twelve were selected, and also the first Seventy, of whom I was one.

“We had a meeting every Saturday to bless and ordain such as had been called. I was blessed and ordained under the hands of Joseph Smith Jr., Joseph Smith Sr. and Sydney Rigdon.

“I started the eighteenth of April on a mission to New York and Vermont and returned home September twentieth. Nothing of importance transpired with me in 1837. In the winter of 1837 I took a short mission in Ohio in company with Lucious N. Scovil. While upon this mission, we heard persecution had been raised against the church in the burning of the printing office and the church was leaving for Far West, Missouri. We returned home immediately and I made preparations and started west with my family on the twenty-sixth of March in company with several

other families among whom was Brother Hyrum Smith. We had an exceedingly hard journey in consequence of a great deal of rain and mud. Arrived at Far West on the twenty-seventh of May, 1837.

“The next day I went to Daviess County with Joseph and Hyrum Smith and some others to look out a new location. I remained there nine days and helped survey the site for a city. As a reward for rendering this assistance at that time, Brother Joseph selected me a very fine city lot.

“I removed my family to Daviess County and in a short time my wife was taken sick with the chills and fever which rendered her nearly helpless for about six months, during which also the terrible tragedies of persecution were enacted in Missouri. Daniel Carter, and some of his family, were sick and on my hands to provide for. Thus, surrounded by affliction, I, with my brethren, were compelled to remove our sick family to Caldwell County. We tarried there till the next March and were then obliged to leave the state. In addition to removing my own family, I made two or three trips with my team to assist in “the removing of the destitute. I removed to Nauvoo in April, 1840. I remained during the summer and in the fall I took a mission to the east in company with Daniel Carter. We took our families, and by request of Hyrum Smith moved into his large and commodious house in Kirtland to which was attached a most beautiful orchard. We then proceeded farther east on our mission as we were authorized to visit the branches of the church and gather up means for the Nauvoo Temple. I was gone two years when I returned to Nauvoo.

“In June of 1844 the storm of persecution arose

against the leaders of the church, which terminated in the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. During this scene I had the command of one of the companies of the Nauvoo Legion and I was on duty about three weeks. I saw Joseph and Hyrum's dead bodies and was called on to act as one of the guards at the burial.

“At the organization of the seventies I was appointed one of the Presidents over the Second Quorum and was ordained to that office under the hands of Elder Orson Pratt. During the spring and summer I assisted in ordaining several hundreds of the seventies and organizing them into quorums.

“In the fall of 1845 the mob spirit revived and after due reflection and counsel the church as a body concluded to leave the states and seek a home in the wilderness.

“Every possible exertion was then made to hasten the completion of the temple, that the saints might therein receive their anticipated blessings and endowments before their departure. The temple was dedicated and the giving of endowments commenced.

“After receiving our blessings in the temple, my family made all preparations for our wilderness journey and crossed the Mississippi River on the last day of May in 1846. We had a prosperous journey, overtook the camp at Council Bluffs, crossed the Missouri River in July, and in concert with the spirit of the camp made preparations for Winter Quarters.

“My wife Sophia was sick most of the ensuing winter but through the mercy of God her life was spared. Her disease was the scurvy; quite a number died with it. At the organization of the

camp I was appointed a Captain of Fifty in Brother Kimball's division, but in consequence of sickness in my family I could not obtain the necessary outfit to go on in the spring.

“During the year 1847 I labored very hard to obtain the things necessary for my expected trip to the valleys of Utah and my arrangements were nearly complete to go in the spring of 1848 when a call came for me to go on a mission to England. I felt as ever to respond to the call but the idea of leaving my family to make their way to Utah without my company or assistance was not very pleasant. My family, however, chose to undertake the enterprise rather than to have me fail to complete my mission. I accordingly turned my whole attention to prepare everything in my power as comfortable and convenient as I could for my family's expedition and resolved to see them across the Elkhorn River myself. My team consisted of a good strong wagon, two yoke of first rate oxen and a yoke of cows. I got a boy to drive the team.

“We left Winter Quarters on the twentieth of May, 1848, had a good journey to the river and crossed over it in safety. The people who were going to perform the journey had been gathering there for some time and forming an encampment awaiting the arrival of the others who were to go. The two large camps would have covered some acres. One was formed in a square with a hollow in the center. The other in an oblong. Here the camps were organized for traveling with the captains of hundreds, fifties, and tens, with good instruction from Brother Brigham and others as to our everyday duties. A number of the twelve and many of the friends and relatives of the camp had come over to

visit their friends and see them start. The business having been accomplished, the visitors and myself left for Nauvoo on the morning of the third of June.

“While we were waiting for the boat to take us across the river, Brother Kimball came and took me by the hand, blessed me, and prophesied many good things on my head. He said I should perform a good mission and return with much honor to Zion. He then blessed my wives and said they should both be blessed and prospered in my absence and that we should all meet again. This prophecy was fulfilled.

“I was from the third of June until the twenty-seventh of July getting to New York. At Saint Louis I met Brother Joseph Clements who was also going to England and we agreed to travel together. We took the Highland and Mary on the Ohio River. While on this boat we were attacked by a gang of thieves and robbers who intended to kill and throw us into the river, but through the mercy of God they did not kill us, though my head was severely injured by their blows. We could get no protection from the officers of the boat, but had to hire a state room and shut ourselves up. The boat was burned on her return trip.

“At one time I gave out a notice that I would preach in a certain large town in Glasgow. The people said I should not preach Mormonism in that place and if I attempted to do so they would tar and feather me and give me a free ticket out of their town on a rail. I was apprised of the threats they had made and the brethren begged me not to go to fulfill the appointment, but I told them I had never failed to perform my duty in this respect yet and I had faith that the Lord would help me through this

to the end. I went, trusting in the Lord and preached to the people in great plainness. They had all their preparations made and calculated to put their threats into execution as soon as the meeting closed. When I had finished they put out all the lights but one, which I suppose they saved for their own use. As they began to leave the house I reached up and extinguished the other light, which left us all in the dark, so they could not tell one from another, and I passed out in the crowd and walked away at my leisure.

“I was released from my mission in January of 1850. By the request of president Pratt I left Liverpool about two weeks sooner than I had intended as he wished me to sail on a certain boat and take charge of a large box containing money and goods which were to be sent to the presidency of the church in Salt Lake.”

Harrison Burgess left a detailed account of his mission to England which I have not included here. He returned to his family in Utah and helped establish the family saw mill in Parley's Canyon. His story continues.

“I labored very hard for about two years, had got my mill to running and was getting along first rate when word was sent to me that I was one among many that was appointed to take our families and go to southern Utah, or what was usually termed Dixie, to build up St. George and the surrounding settlements. Brother Brigham counseled me to settle up my business and take along mill irons and in connection with my father and brothers to build a mill the next year, 1863, in Pine Valley, thirty-five miles from St. George, which

would help supply St. George and vicinity with lumber for building purposes.

“Accordingly I took up my journey to St. George late in the fall and stayed there the balance of the winter taking care of my family and stock. Early in the spring we moved to Pine Valley and commenced building our saw mill. We got it completed as soon as possible and we commenced logging and sawing out lumber. I labored in this way during a number of the first years we lived in Pine Valley and we enjoyed ourselves first rate.

“I lived in Pine Valley some over twenty years. I was blessed and prospered in my family and also in my labors till near the close of the time. I was getting so I was hardly able to act much in a public capacity, though I was, however, able with the help of my sons to carry on my farming. I was making a comfortable living when some sudden, and unexpected, waves of affliction rolled over me.

“The first was the death of my youngest son, Philip John with measles. This was the first death that occurred in my family. He was a very interesting, promising child. The next was the death of my oldest daughter, Mary Almeda, after a long and distressing illness. In one month from her death my son Jacob Leander died. The circumstances of his death were painful. He was accidentally shot in the breast and lived only two days after the accident. Myself and his four brothers were all away from home at the time and did not return till he had been dead a few hours. We had the privilege of attending his burial. He was a large promising youth on whom I had depended.

Harrison Burgess, his parents and many of his family can be found in the peaceful quiet cemetery at Pine Valley. A monument to the saw mill erected by the Burgess family can be found a short distance up the canyon.

1. *History of Washington County, New York*, (Philadelphia: Everts and Ensign, 1878), p. 283.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 284.