

The History of Israel Burket And His Descendants

A documented account of one of the earliest pioneers
of Somerset County, Pennsylvania

Compiled by his 6th great granddaughter, Susan Holley Jackman

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Forward

It is a fact that there are many descendants of Israel Burket who have knowledge of his existence, who know from which grandson or granddaughter they descend. However, details about that existence, and about Israel's arrival in this country, have been scarce.

Over the past 4 years, I have been tediously gathering information about Israel and his family. This quest came more out of curiosity than anything else. All of my ancestors were English, Welch and Scottish and came to this country as a result of joining the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the mid 1800's. All, that is, except for one line. My second great grandmother, Sarah Elisabeth Taylor, was the only one (out of 8 second great grandparents) that was born in America. Her Father, John Taylor, came from a long line of American Taylors (the original Taylor arriving from England in the mid 1600's and settling in Virginia). In 1834, John married Eleanor Burket who was the only one out of 16 3rd great grandparents who was of German descent. Eleanor is the great-granddaughter of Israel Burket, pioneer of Somerset County, Pennsylvania.

In this first publication, I shall not attempt to answer all the questions relating to the Israel Burket family. My main concern is to get this information out to the public and to descendants who may not have the information I have found. I welcome any corrections and/or additions to the records I have compiled and am most interested in gathering a database of descendants. I have photocopies of original documents that I would be happy to share with anyone interested.

Chapter 1 - Israel

Israel Burket (Burchart)(1) emigrated from Germany, quite probably from the Wuerttenburg area(2), in 1751 on the ship Edinburgh out of Rotterdam, Netherlands(3). The Master of the ship was James Russell, and a list of passengers was presented at the courthouse in Philadelphia on Monday, the 16th of September 1751. Those foreigners who signed the list of passengers promised their allegiance to the King of England.

There was also a Simon Burchart on board who signed his initials on the list as HSB (probably Henrich Simon Burchert). We can assume that Simon was a relative and it is possible that Simon was a younger brother. A Simon Burket married Catherine Brandt, daughter of Adam Brandt of Quitopahilla, in 1754 in Lebanon, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania(4). They show up later in 1758 in Warwick Township, Lancaster County. There is, however, no Simon Burket on the 1790 census, nor on any other of the later records associated with the family. As further research is done, their village of embarkation in Germany will show this relationship more clearly.

Also on board were several Millers, Wagners, and Groffs. This becomes important research information, helping to verify the emigration record. The Millers, Wagners and Groffs all had land next to Israel eventually in Somerset County, Pennsylvania. In fact, it was a Groff that would eventually administer Israel's will at his death. It is important to note that these people seldom emigrated alone, but always in groups; i.e. as families, friends, or as villages.

Only males age 16 and older were listed on the passenger lists at this early date. Wives and children went unaccounted. We know for a fact that Israel came over with his wife, Anna Maria Barbara, and at least one child,

Christopher (Stophel)(5), who was born in 1747(6). He would have been 4 years old at the time. Family history written by the author's fourth great grandfather, George Burket Jr.(7), suggests that George Burket Sr., another son of Israel and the author's 4th great grandfather, was also a child immigrant. However, this is not true. The history states "My Father, George Burket and my mother, Katherine Swovelin, emigrated from Germany during the Revolutionary War of 1776." George's Mother Catherine emigrated in 1774 (details discussed in a later chapter) but his father, George Sr. was born in Pennsylvania (see below). It is possible there were other small children as well. There were 7 children total born to Israel and Anna Maria. Stophel, Jacob was the second son(8), then George Sr. and the girls; Catherine, Mary, Margaret and Barbara (9)(not necessarily in that order).

In 1755 Israel acquired a warrant for land in Earl Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania.(10) In August of that same year on the 16th day in District Township (later Pike), George Sr. was born to Israel and (Anna) Maria Barbara(11). Israel shows up on all the tax records in District between 1756 and 1760 (12).

As Eastern Pennsylvania became more and more populated, those people wishing to spread out and have a parcel of land of their own packed their belongings and moved further west toward the foothills and into the tops of the Allegheny Mountains. There were only two main roads leading west; the Glade road and the Forbes road, (a mere horse trail at the time) cut through the trees somewhere around 1758 by the military under the direction of General Forbes. Bedford Township was a new settlement along that main road which led from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh.

In 1772, Israel was taxed in Bedford Township, Bedford County, Pennsylvania on 100 acres of land, 2 horses and 2 cows(13). 15 of those acres were 'improved', which means that he had been there long enough to clear the trees and plant 15 acres of the 100. It took about 2-3 years to clear 5-10 acres of land, so we could estimate that they came to Bedford between 1763 and 1769. At this early date, there were only three townships in the whole county of Bedford, namely; Colerain, Cumberland Valley, and Bedford. Bedford Township was huge and included northern settlements such as Frankstown and Barre which are now part of Blair County, and yet there were only around 160 people total in the township at the time(14). Just the Township of Bedford alone was larger than the whole County of Bedford is at this writing. This gives you an idea of how sparsely populated the area was.

By 1772, most of Israel's children would be in their late teens or early twenties. His son Christopher was 25; George was 17. We have to assume that Christopher (Stophel) would have been listed as a single freeman on the early tax lists had he been with his father in Bedford township. Because he was not listed, we can assume that he was still in Berks or possibly Lancaster or York County. Stophel does show up on the tax lists in Brothers Valley Township in 1775(15). This tells us that it was he who first purchased land in what would eventually become Somerset County, and in the area that his father, Israel would later settle. We cannot be sure whether Jacob was still at home with his family because we do not have a birth date for him---only that he was born between 1747 and 1755. George was probably still with his father as he was only 17.

In 1774 Israel shows up on a Bedford County Civil Court Docket for the July term. "Cornelius McAulay versus Israel Burket. Debt Sans Breve.(16)" This further substantiates the existence of Israel Burket in Bedford County at this early date. It appears that Cornelius felt Israel owed him money. Further research into the Civil records would give more detail as to the circumstances surrounding this civil case.

By the onset of the Revolutionary war Israel had traveled across the Allegheny mountains and settled near his son Christopher in what was BrothersValley Township and had now become Quemahoning Township. Israel was listed with other taxables there in 1775 with 200 acres, one horse and one cow, and again in 1776 as an inhabitant of Quemahoning(17). As the years went on, Quemahoning was divided and Israel's land was considered part of Stonycreek Township. Then Stonycreek was divided in 1816 and Israel's land became part of Shade Township. The following quote was taken from the Somerset County Outline:

"One of the first settlers of Shade Township was John Miller who lived with his family at the old breast works (Fort Dewart) on the top of the Allegheny Mountain, when the Reverends Frederick Post and John Heckewelder passed over the Forbes Road on their Indian mission in 1762.

Other early settlers were Israel Burket, Casper Statler, Christian Burket, Samuel Statler, Christian Brallier, George Lambert, Michael Wagner(18), Michael Peterman, George Fry, and Henry Stauffer.(19)"

From History of Bedford and Somerset Counties by Daniel Rupp:

"The township (Stony Creek) was settled at a very early day. If the traditions of the German Baptist Church are correct even within a couple of years, there were settlers already here before this region was open to legal settlement. In addition to the names of early settlers that have been mentioned in other chapters, Israel Burket, John Rhoads, Martin Suter and Christopher (or Christian) Yoder and his sons were here as early as 1775, or perhaps even earlier. Christopher and Abraham Miller, Godfrey Raymon, Christopher Spiker, Samuel Spiker, Jacob Smith, John Yoder, James Ross(20), James Black, Henry Hess and Jacob Lambert were all here in 1783, and in that year the families of these and others known to have been here numbered 116 persons."

Those required to serve in the Revolutionary war were all able bodied men between the ages of 16 and 45. Israel was apparently too old. Christopher enlisted in the Bedford County Militia on the 20th of July, 1776. He served in Captain Kilgore's Company as a private for 53 months and 27 days, being released on 27 January, 1781(21). Whether George and Jacob served is more difficult to tell because there were cousins living in the same area with the same names who served (see footnote #2).

A Jacob and a John, both born in Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania, settled in the Somerset area after the Revolutionary War. John was born in 1756 and Jacob in 1758. Both fought in the war. There were also two or even three George's in the area; one from St. Clair Township, Bedford County; one found through military pension records who claims to have settled 'in the top of the Alleghenies' in the year 1785, and the author's fourth great grandfather born in 1788 in Bedford Township.

There is a George who was a private in Captain Pat Hainey's Bedford County Militia and also served in Captain William McCall's Company, Third Battalion(22). It is not really clear which George these records are referring to.

In the year 1783, Israel is on the Federal Supply tax list for Quemahoning Township with 100 acres of land. In 1784 he is listed as a taxable in Quemahoning with 5 in his family. By 1785 he has acquired 250 acres there. He is deeded 200 acres plus improvements from James Wells in 1788.

1790 marked the year of the first Federal census in the United States of America. Israel was enumerated in Bedford County as having 6 people in his household, one of which was under the age of 16. Israel was somewhere between 60 and 70 years old by now.

In the year 1795 on Christmas Day, Israel bought land from James Wells. Perhaps as a gift for one of his sons? Perhaps it was the same 200 acres that had been deeded to him back in 1788.

In 1804, on the 12th of February, mixed in with the deeds for Somerset County, we find a 'Bequeath' from Israel Burket to his great-granddaughter, Mary Leech; one black cow. The court records specifically mention that Mary's parents are not to touch the cow until she is of legal age. This is the last legal document we have concerning Israel while he is alive. The following year, 1805, his intestate papers are recorded in probate for Somerset County, Pennsylvania. Somewhere between 12 February 1804 and 19 February 1805, Israel passed away (See footnote #9).

Israel Burket was buried along side his wife in the Daly Cemetery in Shade Township (then Stonycreek), Somerset County(23). The cemetery is also called Potts Cemetery named after Jephtha Potts who was the Minister of the Church just outside Daly in the mid to late 1800's. The location of the cemetery is 4 ½ miles east of Central City, which is just a few miles east of Israel's farm. Also buried in the cemetery are Christopher Burket (Israel's oldest son), and a much later Israel Burket (born 20 April 1816 died 24 December 1866) who is the grandson of Christopher and great-grandson of Israel Burket(24).

Chapter 2 - Christopher

Christopher Burket, the oldest son of Israel Burket of Somerset County, Pennsylvania, was born in the year 1747. This age was calculated from his age (93) on the Pennsylvania 1840 census of Revolutionary War Veterans (see footnote #6). He was four years old when his parents Israel and Anna Maria Barbara came over from Wuerttenburg,

Germany.

He lived with his family in the Philadelphia area as a young child, and when he was 8 years old, his family moved to District Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania (for details see chapter one).

In the year 1775 at the age of 28, Christopher was taxed in Brothers Valley Township, then Bedford County, Pennsylvania on Fourty acres of land.

On 20 July 1776 Christopher enlisted at age 29 in Revolutionary War serving in the Bedford County Militia. He served in Captain Kilgore's Company as a private for 53 months and 27 days, being released on 27 January, 1781.

In the year 1783 he was listed as an inhabitant of Quemahoning and a single freeman on the Bedford County tax lists. Single freeman meaning not yet married. Again in 1784 he is listed. He would have been 36 years of age.

Around 1788 Stophel married Mary Ann Ross, daughter of Lieutenant Colonel James Ross and Mary Sabina Kuhn, and Granddaughter of George Ross, signer of the Constitution of the United States. Mary Ann was born in 1754 (age 96 on the 1850 census for Shade Township, Somerset County, Pennsylvania)

In 1789 a son, Jacob, is born to Stophel and Mary Ann and in 1790 the three of them show up on the census in Quemahoning Township.

In 1791 another son, Israel was born to this union. Then yet another, Samuel, in 1796 The christenings of these first three children appear in the German Reformed and Evangelical church records of Berlin, Somerset County, Pennsylvania.

Five more children were born to Christopher and Mary Ann. The christening of these children is found on the Stoyestown Church records. In 1798 Maria Barbara, in 1806 Elisabeth, in 1808 John, in 1810 Isaac and in ??? Abraham. There is some question about the spread of years in the children. If the information is correct, and if the recorded age for Mary Ann Burket taken from the 1850 census is correct, she would be 56 when her last child was born. Because the births are split between two churches, one could assume these were two separate families. But one of the sponsors (Ludwig Kopp) of the Berlin births is also a sponsor for one of the Stoyestown births. He was a close friend of the family and probable relative who followed the family from the Reading area of Berks County to Somerset County, and whose farm in Somerset was next door to Israel. Also, there was no church in Stoyestown before 1798 so the family traveled to Berlin for the earlier christenings.

In 1797 Christopher is noted as having land bordering the road from Bedford to Pittsburgh. He is mentioned in the deed of ??????. That same parcel of land is marked as "Burket" on a map printed in that same year and published in the Pennsylvania Archives.

Christopher is listed on the 1840 census as a veteran receiving pension from the Revolutionary War at the age of 93 years. There is no further record. He died between 1840 and 1850. His widow, Mary Ann, appears on the Shade Township Census returns in 1850 living with a Jane Lessinger age 46, most likely a granddaughter.

Of all the children born to Christopher and Mary Ann, we have descendency for their son Israel who married a Catharine and had a son Israel born in 1816 on the Stoyestown records who was buried in 1866 in the Daly Cemetery with his Grandfather, Israel. Israel and Catherine had Noah (1839) and Daniel (1841) christened in Berlin and Ellen (1847) christened in Stoyestown.

Chapter 3 - Jacob

Jacob, the second son, was born about 1750. It is not known if he was born in Germany right before the family emigrated, or in the Philadelphia area, soon after they arrived. We do not know how many of his 4 sisters were older, and how many were younger.

In 1779 and again in 1781 Jacob appears as a single freeman in the Bedford township tax lists. In 1785, a relatively distant cousin with the same name came from Reading, Berks County and settled in the tops of the Alleghenny

mountains in what would later become Allegheny township. At this point it is difficult to distinguish the records of one from the other. We can only assume that one remained in the Allegheny area and the other in Bedford Township. In 1785 there is a Jacob on the tax lists in Bedford Township valued at 3 pounds. In 1786 a Jacob Burket is on the tax lists as a farmer in Bedford Township with one horse and one cow.

By 1790 when the first federal census was taken, there was only one Jacob on the census in Bedford county. There was no township listed. This Jacob had 3 boys living in his household under the age of 16. If this was our Jacob he was about 40 years old at the time.

In 1795 Bedford County split and the area west of the Alleghennies became Somerset County. At this point, there seems to be only one Jacob in the Somerset area on any tax lists.

In 1814, nine years after the death of his father, Israel, the court records show Jacob's successful attempt to gain control as administrator of Israel's estate. Jacob was approximately 64 years old at the time. Apparently, Christopher, the oldest son was not available and did not appear at the court. At his death in 1805, for reasons unknown, Israel's estate was left in the hands of friends of the family (George Michael Groff and Jacob Moses) instead of family members.

Burchart is the spelling used by scribe who took the Ship's passenger list upon arrival to the United States. Israel then added his mark, which in this case was just an X. In all the records of Bedford and Somerset County, Pennsylvania, which is where he finally settled around 1770, the spelling is Burket. Burket, Burchert, Burkhard, Burkhart and other variations translate from German as 'hard or firm mountain' and are, for the most part, synonymous.

There are two mainstream Burket families; two brothers, who settled in the same areas of Bedford and Somerset County Pennsylvania as Israel and his family and in about the same time frame. Jacob Burket, born 1708 and John Jacob born 1712, both born in Herbrechtingen, Heidenheimer, Wuttenburg Germany. Jacob is the father of John Dedrick and Grandfather of Jacob Burket born 1740 who married Barbara Fisher in Philadelphia and settled in Greenfield, Bedford County, Pennsylvania. John Jacob is the father of Jacob(1758) and John (1756) Burket who were born in Reading and both served in the Revolutionary War, settling afterward in Allegheny Township, Bedford (soon to be Somerset County), Pennsylvania. This latter family the author found intermixed with Israel's family in the Berlin and Stoyestown church records in Somerset County even though there was an established church in Allegheny where they lived. The families witnessed the births of each other's children and were listed as sponsors for each other. All this has led the author to believe the families are related and from the same area in Germany. See "Burket Tales and Trails" by Nina Deter Ellis and Arnold Wayne Burket.

Pennsylvania German Pioneers, Volume I, Page 462

Sowers Newspaper, Lancaster County, PA.

In Germany Stophel is a mother's endearing nick-name for her 'small' Christopher. Records in the Somerset County area for Christopher are found under either name.

History of Bedford, Somerset and Fulton Counties, Waterman & Watkins & Co., published 1884, page 97, (FHLC # 974.87H2w). 1840 Shade Township List of Revolutionary War Pensioners. Christopher Burket, Age 93.

History of George Burket Jr. 1788 (FHLC #0564127;item #4)

Somerset Past, 974.879 H25s, Volume 6, #1, Page 5; Orphans Court Abstracts of Somerset County, Docket 2; August 31, 1814. "...and the second son, Jacob, appeared in open court and prayed the court to assign to him all the real estate of said deceased at the evaluation thereof. The eldest son not appearing, the court assigns to Jacob Burket the real estate of the deceased.....

Laurel Messenger, Volume 16, page 26, 'Some estates recorded in county', No. 6 of 1805, Israel Burket;

names wife and seven children.

Original Warrants Berks County FHLC Film # 1003195, page 4, Number 64. Apparently, in this instance, Israel did not continue the processing required to receive a patent for this piece of property. The patent went to a man named Tobias Shall.

Berks County Church Records of the 18th Century; Volume 2, page 2

FHLC# 0385040

History of Bedford, Somerset and Fulton Counties, Waterman & Watkins & Co., published 1884, page 67. (FHLC# 974.87H2w)

History of Bedford and Somerset Counties, Daniel Rupp, Chapter 5

Bedford County Tax lists

Saint Clair's Bedford, Volume IV, page 13 (FHLC#974.871H25s).

Somerset County Outline, Page 133 (FHLC# 974.879H2c)

These two men are mentioned in Israel's Estate records at his death and were close friends of the family.

Ditto, Page 217.

Father-in-law of Christopher Burket

Bedford County in the American Revolution, James Biser Whisker, Page 128 (FHLC# 974.871 M2w}

Ditto, Page 67 (There are some Family History sources that attribute these service records for George to a different George who also served in the Lancaster County Militia. This is entirely possible as George married Catherine Schwabenland (Swoveland, Swovelin), who has Amish Mennonites in the family, and therefore may not have served due to the Mennonite's stand on serving in the Military. Many Amish Mennonite left the faith upon arrival to America and joined with the Lutheran or Reformed faith).

Baldwin's 200 years in Shade Township; page 105

FHLC #974.897V3fd Tombstone Inscriptions of Cemeteries in Somerset County, Pa

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