

Loyalist Women: The Trek of 5 Women and 31 Children

Mr. Oscar Harvey tells of an horrific story about Benjamin Harvey and others being captured in Wyoming Valley, PA in 1781 by the British Forces and a band of Indians (page 647), put on forced marches in the snow in the dead of winter, and finally his release in Niagara because his age of 59 would not be helpful to the working prisoners in settling a new area across from Fort Niagara. He was released to return home with only the clothes on his back, a hunting knife, and a small piece of Flint. No food or money to help on his trek home. Benjamin Harvey trudged through the wildness until he found himself on the road to Plymouth, arriving there 4 July 1781. (Page 650) Plymouth being a settlement near Wilkes-Barre, PA. Source: The Harvey Book by Oscar Jewell Harvey, A. M. published Wilkesbarre, PA 1899.

This man, Benjamin Harvey, a healthy able man although his age was 59, took over 5 weeks to walk from Fort Niagara to Wyoming Valley where Philip Buck had settled with his family in 1773. Philip was taken from his home on 3 Jan 1778 and was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for a time, then sent to New York to be put on trial. The wives and children of several imprisoned men were being threatened and very poorly treated. Deciding they could no longer take the chance of staying in their homes in the area of Forty Fort in the Wyoming Valley, the five women took the chance that walking to Fort Niagara, Ontario would be safer than staying where they were. In the fall, the 5 women and 32 children (Source: from Halton Region Museum in the "Buck papers".) walked to Fort Niagara in the cold October and arriving at Fort Niagara on the 3rd of Nov. (Mrs. Elizabeth Spohn's letter) No timeline has been offered to the length, but the tired, hunger, and scared party of women and children did make their Trek. If Benjamin Harvey, took over 5 weeks, I would assume the children would have took at least as long.

Leaving everything they owned behind was a difficult task but it had to be done. In Philip Buck's claim for losses in 1783 states that all his land, household, utilities, animals etc were confiscated by the Rebel's or the Indians. He and his family were left with nothing, as well as all the families that walked to Canada.

When Philip Buck, along with Jacob Bowman and Adam Bowman were released from prison in New York, they headed back to the Forty Fort in the Wyoming Valley to find their families. On the way, Jacob and Adam Bowman were captured again, which left Philip on his own in a raw wildness that he did not know. (Mrs. Spohn's letter tells the story of her grandfather, Jacob Bowman, and how they were captured.) Discovering that the women and children had left, heading for Canada, Philip did the same. But again with no provisions for the arduous trip to Fort Niagara.

In all the recordings of these women and children, none of the women or children's given names have been mentioned. I have taken a daring step here and will offer my suspicions of these hardy and daring families.

As in all 'family lore' events change a little in each family mentioned. I have not done personal research on these families as a whole, but have tried to find the women, the children's names, and their ages, that would have been on such a trek as the lore has told us in every one of these families.

Another question is the date of the Trek . . . Most of the records or documents that I have seen states the date of 1776. Even Mrs. Spohn stated in her letter "Nov. 3rd 1776." By checking the children's birth dates, place of birth and their ages in each family, I do not see how it could have been 1776. A statement in the Harvey Book cites the capture of Philip Buck as Jan 3, 1778 at his home in Wyoming Co., PA. He was held for 18 months along with other Loyalists and released after 18 months, which would be about June 1779 as their release date. If these dates are correct, the walk to Canada had to be Sep into Nov of 1778.

Somewhere along the trip the Commander of the British forces in Niagara heard of the plight that these women and children were in while walking to Canada. Nothing has been recorded, that I can find, that will tell us just where the Scouts and Indians meet up with them on the trail. The Commander had given orders to "bring them in," and that is just what they did. It may have been Nov. 3rd and more likely in 1778.

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The 5 women were as follows:

Mrs. Buck, Mrs. Secord, Mrs. Nelles, Mrs. Bowman, and Mrs. Young.

**1. Mrs. Anna Marguerite (Margaret) Saultman wf/o Philip Buck**

- 1-1. Mary b. 1768 -age 10 years old.
- 2-2. Rosannah b. 1770 -age 8 years old.
- 3-3. Frederick b. 1772 -age 6 years old.
- 4-4. Michel b. 1774, -age 4 years old.
- 5-5. William b. 1776 -age 3 years old.
- 6-6. Elisabeth b. 1777 -age 1 year 7 months old.

On the trek to Canada, it has been stated that one child had died while on that trail of suffering. I believe the first William, born 1776 to Philip and Margaret Buck, to be that child. William #1 does not show in later records of Ontario. Most believe that there was only one William. The first William was baptized in Christ Church at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and the second William was born 1787 at Bertie, Niagara. This latter William does show in records in Ontario. I have also seen it stated "None had children as young as Mrs. Buck."

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2. Mrs. Magdalen (James) Secord

- 1. Simond. 1777
- 2. Solomon Edwin b. 1755 had joined the British forces.
- 3. Stephen b. 1757 had joined the British forces.
- 4. David b. 1759 had joined the British forces.
- 7-5. John b. 1762 -age 15
- 8-6. Magdelaine b. 1764 -age 12

- 9-7. Ester b. 1766 -age 10
- 10-8. Mary A. b. 1770 -age 8
- 11-9. James b. 1773 -age 5

BIOGRAPHY: UEL - Lt in Butler's Rangers during Rev War. Settled in Canada. 12/1/1783 listed James & family less Solomon, Stephen, John in Niagara in 1790. All the children were born in New Rochelle before family left for Canada via the Susquehanna Valley, Pennsylvania.

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### 3. Mrs. Pricilla (Henry) Nelles

There is some question as to which Mrs. Nelles walked to Canada. The first Mrs. Nelles died in PA before the time of the trek and Henry's 2nd wife was:

" MRS. PRICILLA NELLES, (second wife) widow of the late Major H. Wm. Nelles, U. E., came into this country during the American War, by John Warren, J. P. and Sam'l Street, J. P., Newark, 13 Oct. 1796."

Source: The Ontario Register page 6 Return of persons under the description of Loyalists in the Indian Department, Niagara, December 1, 1783

- 1. Robert was already in Ontario.
  - 12-2. Peter b. 1763 -age 15 at time of Trek
  - 13-3. John b. 1765 -age 13 at time of Trek
  - 14-4. Mary b. 1763 -age 15 at time of Trek
  - 15-5. Henry b. 1767 -age 11 at time of Trek
  - 16-6. Johann William b. 1769 -age 9 at time of Trek
  - 17-7. Johann Warner b. 1771 -age 7 at time of Trek
  - 18-8. Ann b. 1774 -age 4 at time of Trek
  - 19-9. Abraham b. 1775 -age 3 at time of Trek
  - 10. John b. 1782 Born in Ontario
- 1783 Source: The Ontario Register, Niagara Return

Elizabeth "an orphan child, that is in my house" states Henry Nelles in his will. Was she on the trek also?

Henry Nelles first wife, Catharine, died 28 Jul 1778. Lutheran Church At The River Death Register. Old Palatine Church Records, Montgomery Co., NY. Located just off of Route 5. Also known as the Evangelical Lutheran

Thanks to the Nelles Family Association for their help. Kathleen McLaughlin and Mary Victoria McClung NELLES

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4. Mrs. Elizabeth (Jacob) Bowman

1. Adam b. 1758 -age 20 Would Adam have walked?
- 20-2. Peter b. 1762 -age 16
- 21-3. Margaret b. 1763 -age 15
- 22-4. Anna b. 1765 -age 13
- 23-5. Abraham b. 1768 -age 10
- 24-6. Elizabeth (Petty) b, 1770 -age 8
- 25-7. Mary b. 1772 -age 6
- 26-8. Cristina b. 1775 -age 3
- 27-9. Eve b. 1777 -age 1

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#### **5. Mrs. (Johan Adam) Young**

"ADAM YOUNG, late of New York:

He was confined in different gaols (jail's)- at last sent to Norwich gaol in Connecticut. When the Rebellion broke out joined Col. Butler at Oswego in 1778-he had been imprisoned for 11 months for refusing to take an oath to the States."

"Soon after he (Adam Young) returned home from 11 months imprisonment, his buildings were burned and effects taken by the Patriot supporters."

"Adam's buildings were destroyed on the order of Rev. Daniel Gros (Bellinger, Mohawk Valley Bellingers, p. 24) 18 July 1778, in retaliation for the burning of Andrustown by Capt. Joseph Brant (CAY; Testimony of a participant, John Frank, in William L. Stone, Life of Joseph Brant, Vol. 1, Albany N.Y.: Munsell, 1865, pp. 362-363)."

Adam "Young was enrolled in the 6th Company of this unit, (Butler's Rangers), as of 1 Aug. 1778. Adam returned to avenge of his burned property 17 September 1778, at 6 o'clock in the morning, Captains Joseph Brant and Gilbert Tice, and William Caldwell, with 300 Rangers and 152 Indians swooped down on the German Flatts settlement."

"After her house was burned, (18 July 1778) and her husband Adam and sons David and Henry escaped to join the Loyalist forces at Oswego, Catharine Elizabeth (Schremling) Young was captured by the Rebels and confined to Tice's Tavern in Johnstown, New York. She remained there with her daughter-in-law Catharine (son John's wife) and her grandchildren until they and others were involved in an exchange of prisoners sometime before 1780."

"Adam's widow Catharine Elizabeth "was supported by her son Daniel Young for a considerable time and until her death - that she was blind for some years before her death "Catharine Elizabeth died 1798"

Please visit David Faux.org for history of Adam Young and family. This site is interesting and very well sourced. Thanks David! (davidfaux.org)

If Catharine was "detained" after 18 July 1778 and she was not released until "sometime before 1780," who walked with her Children and where was she staying until she returned from Johnstown, New York? Was she released in 1778 a few months after she was confined, when the exchange of pensioners started? Her children do not appear to be confined with her.

All 5 of these families were friends before the Revolutionary War and had intermarried while in Ontario, so it would not be a big stretch to say that the children were staying with 'relatives.' Would one of the friends or relatives be Mrs. Nelles? Their families did intermarry in Ontario but if so, who was the "Mrs. Young" that is referred to in all the tales of the Trek?

1. David
2. Frederick
3. John b. 1742
4. Elisabeth b. 1746
5. John b. 1747
6. Daniel b. 1749
7. Johan Nicolas b. 17 Jun 1750
- 28-8. Abraham b. 17 Aug 1762 -age 16
- 29-9. Hendrick b. 17 Aug 1762 -age 16
- 30-10. Mary b. 1763 -age 15

"Adam Young had an Indian or French mistress, Polly Crain (reported in YF, p. 125), by whom he had a son Jacob A. Young (b. 6 Apr. 1755), is not supported by documentary evidence." Jacob would have been too old to be considered a child.

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After the women and children arrived at Niagara, they were taken by boat to Sorel, (near Montreal) and were protected there. In time their husbands arrived and were granted land by King George III, for their patriotism to the Crown, and were given the designation as United Empire Loyalists.