



Putnam Burdick

An Island Enigma – Was His Real Name “James”?

“The name doesn't make the man; the man makes the name.”
– Brandon Novak 2005

Putnam and Melissa Burdick came to South Manitou Island in the early 1850's, coming with their four children; Almira, Jane, Andrew and George. They came from the town of Erin, in Macomb County, where they had operated a boarding house.¹

Roots

Like other early islanders, Putnam Burdick's ancestors had been in America for several generations. His Burdick ancestry traces back to Robert Burdick, born in 1633 at Devonshire, England. Robert arrived in Newport, Rhode Island in 1651, when just eighteen-years old. Originally thought to be a “Burdett” of English parentage, recent DNA evidence suggests that Robert was actually born a “Burdick” of German ancestry, perhaps the son of Calvinist refugees from the Rhine area, in Westphalia and Oldenburg.² Known as “Robert the Emigrant,” he was the first Burdick of record in America. Four years after his arrival, he married 15-year old Ruth Hubbard of Agawam, Massachusetts.³

Putnam Burdick's mother was Phebe Putnam Spaulding, first wife of Sheffield Burdick. Her ancestry in America began with John Putnam, who came to Salem, Massachusetts from Aston Abbots, Buckinghamshire, England in 1634. According to some historical accounts, her Puritan ancestry is somewhat besmirched; some of the people in her line having been zealously involved in the infamous Salem witch hysteria⁴, and her great-grandfather fined in town of Wilton for his refusal to participate in the rebellion against the British in 1776.⁵ Not all those in the Putnam clan were as reluctant to distinguish themselves as patriots, including General Israel Putnam, who was in command of all the forces at the famous battle of Bunker Hill in June of 1775, thereafter officially receiving his commission as Major General from George Washington personally.⁶ The Putnam's were apparently a wealthy family, with several prominent members. Phebe's grandfather, for one, was the notable Congregational minister, Rev. Sewall Goodrich, who became a very highly respected figure in colonial Massachusetts. In 1766 he turned down repeated invitations to become the first minister of the first church ever organized at Princeton, Massachusetts (the now-historic First Congregational Church,) evidently because he considered the compensation offered to be insufficient.⁷

Westward and Into the Northwest

Putnam Burdick was born to Sheffield and Phebe Burdick on December 2, 1814 at Gainesville, in Wyoming County, New York (50-miles SW of Buffalo). The town of Gainesville was said to consist mostly of poor people with small farms. Since

the Burdicks were given no mention as noteworthy settlers or early residents, they were presumably part of that "poor, small farm" class.⁸ Nevertheless, Sheffield and Phebe were involved with others in the 1818 organization of Gainesville's second church.⁹ Putnam was the third of five children: Nelson, Betsey Ann, himself, Susan and Winslow Page Burdick. His father was a farmer and school teacher, a Presbyterian deacon, and held a number of town offices.¹⁰ Unhappily, his mother died two years after the birth of her last child, with Putnam then being just six days shy of seven years old. Three months later his father, then thirty-five, married the nineteen year old Clarissa Keys Winslow Taintor.

This second marriage added two more daughters to the family: Harriet and Fanny. Sheffield died just seven weeks after Fanny was born, on Oct 19, 1829. Putnam was then fourteen years old. His step-mother Clarissa remarried about a year later, wedding her third husband, David Silliman, in Gainesville on September 2, 1830. There, a little over a year later (November 12, 1831), her last child was born, whom she named Sheffield David Silliman.¹¹ Shortly after his birth, the family moved to nearby Wheathersfield, New York. Putnam's older brother Nelson had married Almira Mason and moved to Syracuse, so it seems likely that his older sister Betsey Ann and her husband Elijah Burk were left on the old home place, with sixteen-year old Putnam to help out.

Late in 1833, Betsey and Elijah left Gainesville, moving to a farm in Armada, Michigan near the place where Elijah's brother Norman had settled two years before. It was said of Elijah Burk...

“... (he) was forward in all that would benefit the new settlement; the first religious services were held at his house and he was a willing helper in the Sabbath school and other means of moral growth - always a strong temperance man and a Whig in politics. Mr. Burk is remembered with great affection by the old settlers of Armada, for his house often sheltered them till one could be built for them. Though poor himself, he would always divide with those more needy; a neighbor lost a cow; Mr. B. gave him the use of one of his cows till the loss could be repaired; his team was freely used by any who needed it, and people said: “If all men were like Mr. Burk, much of the hardship of settling a new country would not be felt.”¹²

When Betsey and Elijah went to Armada, Putnam was probably with them. In 1839 he returned to Gainesville and married Melissa Therese Hipp, an immigrant from Baden, Germany. She had come to America just five years before, a sixteen-year old girl sailing with her family from Le Havre, France aboard the ship *Charlemagne*, which arrived in New York on the 6th of September in 1834.¹³ From there the family moved west, eventually settling, by the late 1840's, in Peru Township, Huron County, Ohio.^{14, 15}



After their marriage in Gainesville, Putnam and Melissa apparently returned to the farm in Armada, since their first two children were born there; Anna Elmira in 1842, and Mary Jane, who was usually called “Jane,” in November of 1843. The preceding description of Elijah Burk as a “poor” man seems to have been a little wide of the mark because, in fact, his was by far one of the larger farms in the area. He died in September of 1848, leaving Betsey at the head of a farm worth some \$8,000, which would amount to over \$212,000 in today’s dollars.¹⁶ Obviously, there would have been enough room and work on the Burk farm to accommodate her brother Putnam and his new wife, and they evidently remained there for the next four or five years.

Although Melissa’s people were farmers, Putnam’s heart apparently was not in it, and around 1844 they left the Burk farm and moved due south about 25-miles to Erin Township, probably to what is today’s Roseville. Roseville was at the beginning of a rapid development, and the young Burdicks went into the “hotel” business, hotels of that day often actually being boarding houses. By 1850, they had added two more children to their family, George Sheffield Burdick in 1847 and Andrew Putnam Burdick two years later. Their business worth had also grown to some \$2,000 (a little over \$53,000 in today’s money.)

The Island

In the early 1950’s, Putnam and Melissa decided to pull up stakes in Erin Township and go to South Manitou Island, leaving the growing community on the shores of Lake St. Clare for an outpost in northern Lake Michigan. Their reason(s) for relocating are, as yet, unknown, so one can only speculate.

Perhaps it was because South Manitou Island was rapidly becoming an important port of call for Great Lakes maritime traffic, especially for the “newfangled” steamboats, while Erin Township, on the western shore of Lake St. Clare, was somewhat off the beaten path for through boats. The heavy traffic in the Manitou Passage and the growth going on at the island would surely have suggested that the long-term business prospects there were excellent. There is some reason to think that the Burdicks might have moved their business to Burton’s Wharf, becoming the operators of a hotel/boarding house near the old dock at the east end of what today is called “Chicago Road.”¹⁷

Or perhaps it was because Putnam, whose family was of the Calvinist persuasion¹⁸, had made the grievous mistake of marrying a German Catholic immigrant.¹⁹ From the mid-1840’s through the 1850’s, the “Know-Nothing” movement was a secretive (hence the name “know-nothings”) but noisy force in American politics. Eventually becoming officially constituted as the *American Party*, it was based upon fear and bigotry narrowly directed toward Irish and German Catholic immigrants, endeavoring to block further immigration from such regions and supporting the restriction of rights for those who were already here. The know-nothings asserted that Pope Pius IX was trying to take over America by filling the country

with poor, illiterate Catholics. For his part, the Pope didn’t help matters much by calling upon “all men of goodwill” to support the Church in Rome financially, and by insisting upon conservative rules that seemed to set Catholics apart from others, such as those respecting mixed marriages, which required an agreement by both parties that any children resulting from such unions would be given up to the Catholic Church (baptized, educated and raised in the Catholic faith.) Clashes, mainly around election times, resulted in numerous deaths and injuries, especially in the northern areas of the country. Putnam and Melissa might have elected to eschew the contemporary prejudice against German Catholics, and escape the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church, by moving their family to the island, where there were no churches, and no formally organized political or religious factions.

Or, perhaps they were influenced by friends. It is interesting to note that the then recently-married Slyfields of St. Clair, who were, more or less, neighbors to people in Armada, came to the island at about the same time as the Burdicks. As the published story goes, Alonzo J. Slyfield was actually a medical doctor, who fell quite ill shortly after his marriage. That prompted the couple to seek greater peace and quiet after his recovery. Beginning with William N. Burton, there had been a frequent turn-over of lightkeepers at South Manitou, which was described at the time as being “a very rickety, poor concern.”²⁰ With the most recent keeper having abruptly resigned, Alonzo applied for the position, and was hired in 1852 on an interim basis by the Lighthouse Board’s Superintendent. He took over the light in June, was quickly appointed “Keeper” and served until he resigned in May of 1859. Whether the Slyfields and the Burdicks were already acquainted, or became so on the island, it is quite clear from a memoir written by one of the Slyfields’ sons that they, at some point, had become very good friends.²¹ In times of need and in times of grief, the Slyfields evidently knew they could depend on Putnam Burdick.

Whatever their reasons for coming, the Slyfields and the Burdicks were on South Manitou Island in the early 1850’s. For their part, Putnam and Melissa Burdick had two more children there: Frank, born in June of 1853, and Fanny R. in 1859. According to a note in an old family bible,²² Putnam was “a ship fueler and farmer,” and sadly, that “Anna drowned in Lake Michigan.”

Being a “ship fueler” probably meant that he worked for the Burtons, who operated a wooding station for steamboats in the bay at Burton’s Wharf, the enterprise that put South Manitou Island “on the map,” as it were, and the only one ever operated from South Manitou Island. If the Burdicks were indeed operating a boarding house at the little settlement near the dock, it would make perfect sense that Putnam would also be involved with the Burtons, with whom he shared ancestral connections that went all the way back to Agawam (Springfield,) Massachusetts in the seventeenth century.²³ Perhaps Putnam helped out as a dock manager during the shipping season, and even a “wood chopper” during the winter



months. Island people typically did whatever they needed to do to support themselves, and it was not at all unusual for a man to be a “jack of all trades.”

Farming on the island also became a profitable enterprise, especially for those who produced fresh vegetables and fruit, since Milwaukee and Chicago were ready markets for fresh produce, and the daily presence of boats headed in those directions made shipping economical and easy. The Burtons established a small orchard in 1852 and Putnam Burdick in 1858.²⁴ If not farming on that level, island families were obliged to at least maintain a garden and a few fruit trees for their own personal use, most having root cellars well stocked before the winters came. There is also some other evidence that Putnam Burdick did at least a little farming.²⁵

Alonzo Slyfield decided he'd had enough of the island and the Lighthouse Establishment in 1859, and resigned in the spring of that year. In January of that year, he had purchased 154-acrea on the mainland, just south of the Sleeping Bear Dune, around North Bar Lake, a little lake with a shallow channel draining into Lake Michigan.²⁶ Crossing the passage to the mainland, he began to clear land and build a farm there. A frequent help during that time was his friend Putnam Burdick, then in his mid-40's, and the owner of a Mackinaw boat, therefore being able to provide transportation between the island and the mainland farm. Having resigned from the lighthouse service, the Slyfield family was obliged to move out of the keepers' quarters, and until a cabin was ready for them at the Sleeping Bear farm, they boarded at the Burdicks' place. The Slyfield family moved over to the new farm in July of that year, coming over in Putnam's Mackinaw boat, with their larger possessions and livestock brought over to Glen Arbor aboard a schooner. As it turned out, because of poor soil, bad weather and a weak market during its first two years, the farm proved a failure, and in July of 1861 Alonzo returned to his career as a lightkeeper, this time at the new (1858) Point Betsie Light Station, some 23-road miles south of the farm, or 14-miles across the water and visible from the farm on clear nights. Here he remained for the next 21-years.^{27, 28}

Not long after his family came over from the island, Alonzo left for a brief trip back to St. Clare. Putnam and his daughter Jane, then just sixteen, came over to be with the family; Putnam continuing with the task of clearing land, and Jane helping Mrs. Slyfield with the children and chores. Within a day or so after her father's leaving, little three-year old Mary Slyfield died of dysentery.²⁹ Putnam built a small coffin for the child, and she was laid to rest on a hillside overlooking the little lake in the presence of her mother and siblings, their nearest neighbors, the John LaRue family, and family-friend Putnam Burdick with his daughter Mary Jane.³⁰

Squire Burdick

Late in the summer of 1847, Deputy Surveyor Orange Risdon and his survey crew arrived at Burton's Wharf to perform the first survey of South Manitou Island. The survey was completed late that fall, and was registered several months

thereafter, finally making land on the island available for purchase and homesteading. The first claims, cash-entry sales of land adjacent to the bay, were filed about two years later by William Burton. In November of 1862 Putnam Burdick began to purchase land on the island; some 1,005-acres of it using military bounty land warrants, and a final 150-acres paid for in cash. Owning some 1,150 of the island's 5,401-acres by the middle of 1865 ... over 1/5th of the island ... he was by far South Manitou's largest landowner, William Burton being a distant second, with some 517-acres. The location of the Burdick farm has not been definitively documented, but it seems likely to have been the 80-acres in the south half of the northeast quarter of Section 34, which lies just north on the William Burton claims at the northwest shore of the bay.³¹ His other holdings were widely distributed over the island, so it would appear that he, like many others, was probably caught up in the land speculation fervor of that period.³²

There's no telling what he might have paid for the land warrants he purchase from others. The Federal government established a practice of exchanging public land in the Northwest Territory for goods and services as far back at 1785. Never averse to conflict, the United States was involved in one war after another from the time of the Revolutionary War until the Civil War, with soldiers often settling for land warrants as pay in lieu of cash. After the government finally declared these warrants transferable in the mid-1800's, a lively trade in military bounty land warrants arose, and by that time these warrants were often held by veterans, widows of veterans, and their heirs, to whom they actually had little real value, and who were therefore often willing to sell them for much less than the price of the land they were good for. That opened great opportunities for anyone with a little money, and most of the land patents obtained through scrip/warrant transactions (upwards of 85%) went to speculators.

The government's standard price for land had been \$1.25 per acre for many years, but legislation in 1854 modified that to permit some adjustment, based upon the desirability of particular parcels. Assuming that the government's price for acreage on South Manitou Island was still \$1.25, Putnam Burdick's 1,005-acres would have been worth just over \$1,250 which in today's dollars would amount to over \$3/4-million. On the other hand, when the market for land warrants crashed, their price dropped as low as 12-1/2¢ per acre, and by that measure, he might have been able to acquire his lands for as little as \$125, but that's still upwards of \$80,000 in today's money. By either measure, it would appear that Putnam Burdick was not a poor man.

Land speculation became a competitive activity in the mid-1800's, with buy and sell offers commonly appearing in newspaper ads at the time. Since Putnam Burdick evidently wasn't keenly interested in farming, it makes sense to assume that he was acquiring land as an investment. When the Burdicks arrived on South Manitou Island, the place was thriving as an important participant in Great Lakes maritime activity, and it continued to grow and prosper all during their



early years there. It would make sense that Putnam would foresee land values on the island escalating handsomely from that point on. Unfortunately, that was not to be. The island's fortunes were tied directly to early wood-burning steamboats, and when the steamers grew in size, enjoyed advances in safety and efficiency, and began burning coal instead of wood ... a trend that began about the time Putnam Burdick began to acquire his property ... the decline of South Manitou Island began. Putnam lived only thirteen more years. After his death, most of his holdings were sold off to the Garden City Sand Company, of Chicago, for sand and gravel mining.³³ GCSC also had the idea of ultimately developing the island as a resort destination, and after the turn of the century platted two subdivisions on former Burton properties; one on the bay and a second on the island's south shore.³⁴ That was the first of such ventures. The last was an attempt by Burdick descendant Fred William Burdick, in the 1960's to establish a small resort near the southeast shore of Lake Florence, and sell log homes nearby as vacation properties. All such ventures failed, with the island eventually acquired by the Federal government in the early 1970's.

Their Last Years

As the summer of 1870 faded into fall, Putnam and Melissa were still living on their island farm. Except for Frank and Fanny, their surviving children had grown up, married, and had places of their own.

All records agree that Putnam passed away in his 61st year, on September 2, 1875. The records also indicate that he died at Traverse City, and perhaps he did, since seriously ailing islanders were usually taken there, the closest hospital, for treatment and care. In fact, he was probably still living on the island when taken ill. No actual death or burial record can be found for Putnam Burdick, but strangely there is a lone grave for "James Putnam Burdick" in the Mount Hazel Cemetery, near Redford in Wayne County. The date of death on the headstone is "Sep 2, 1875" and the age is shown as "60 yrs, 9 mos" which corresponds exactly to Putnam's birth date, which was December 2, 1814.³⁵ This might have been passed over as merely a very unique coincidence, were it not for Mary Jane (Burdick) Smith's death record, which officially gives the name of her father as "James Putnam Burdick." Moreover, in *The Descendants of Robert Burdick of Rhode Island*, the very comprehensive Burdick genealogy study prepared by Nellie W. Johnson, there is no other "Putnam Burdick" or "James Putnam Burdick" that might correlate with this lonely grave. In generations to follow, the full name would be repeated twice; for one of Putnam's grandsons, and then again for a great-grandson. Thus it seems quite safe to conclude that the "Putnam Burdick" of South Manitou Island was actually "James Putnam Burdick." Thus far, the Redford Township burial place remains unexplained.

After Putnam's death, Melissa left the farm, moving to the mainland with her youngest children, Frank and Fanny, and resettling at Glen Haven.³⁶ Fred eventually married and moved on. According to Nellie W. Johnson's source, Melissa died on

the 25th of May in 1885. Again, the place of death is listed as Traverse City, Michigan, but that is probably not definitive, as explained above. Internet searches for death or burial records, and headstones in all the Leelanau County cemeteries and elsewhere, were fruitless. Nor is there any further information about her daughter, Fanny.

The Kids Who Grew Up On South Manitou Island

Putnam and Melissa Burdick were thirty-eight and thirty-four years old, respectively, when they arrived at South Manitou Island in 1852. They brought four children; ten year old Anna Elmira, nine year old Mary Jane, George Sheffield, who was five, and three-year old Andrew Putnam. At the island they would have their last two children; Frank in June of the following year (1853,) and Fanny R. six years later. All of their children would grow to adulthood on the island.

Unhappily, **Anna Elmira Burdick's** life ended at age twenty-one, when she drowned in Lake Michigan. The circumstances of that tragic end of the Burdick's eldest child are not known.³⁷

Mary Jane Burdick married William Moore Smith³⁸ on South Manitou Island in the summer of 1866.³⁹ They had two children, both born on the island: Kate in the spring of 1868, and George F. in the fall of 1871. For a few years, they farmed on the island, and then they moved across to the mainland, apparently to what has become known at the "Schmidt/Hayms Farm" at Port Oneida.⁴⁰ In 1893, son George, then a painter by profession, married Orra Haskell⁴¹ and took up residence on Washington Street in Traverse City. Soon thereafter, his parents, then in their early 50's with William now working as a carpenter, moved to a home next door.⁴² William and Mary Jane died in Traverse City in 1905, passing within a week of each other in April. The unusual circumstance of their deaths is, thus far, unexplained.⁴³

George Sheffield Burdick married Sarah Jane Spece in 1870 at Monroe, Wisconsin. The wedding may have been somewhat belated; perhaps the culmination of a rather turbulent love affair.

In July of that year, George, then 21, was working as a hired hand on the John V. Roberts farm at Cadiz, Wisconsin, near the middle of the Wisconsin-Illinois border. John Roberts, originally from Ohio, was prosperous, reporting a net worth of some \$12,000 (about \$195,000 by today's standards.) The neighboring farm, a much less successful operation, was William Spece's place, on which lived his large family, including eldest daughter Sarah Jane Spece, then 25-years old, and her youngest "sister," 2-year old Ava Ann Spece.⁴⁴ Whatever the situation was between George and Sarah Jane, it might have become untenable during the summer of 1870, since a month later, in August, George is found working as a hired hand for a young George Hildreth on a farm at St. Ansgar, Iowa, about 170-miles northwest of Cadiz.⁴⁵

The Burdicks were well established in that area of northern Iowa, the Hildreth farm being in the vicinity of farms owned by George's Uncle Nelson Burdick, his Uncle Winslow Burdick,



and his Uncle H.T. Maltby, who had married his Aunt Susan. They were also well-known and respected. Nelson was a farmer, who also served as an elected county officer.⁴⁶ He and his wife Almira (Mason) Burdick had six sons, all of whom served in the Civil War. Four of the six were lost; Augustus, Gerry, Nelson B. and their youngest, 16-year old James.⁴⁷ Two survived. Theodore Weld Burdick, a former school teacher (Decorah, Iowa's first school teacher) returned as a Captain, going on after the war to become a willing public servant, a prominent banker, a State Representative and member of the U.S. House of Representatives.⁴⁸ Of Charles, the second surviving son, it was written...

"C. W. Burdick was promoted first lieutenant, to fill the vacancy caused by Lieutenant McMurtrie's death, which post of duty he held from that time until his three years enlistment had expired. At this time Lieutenant Burdick was the only commissioned officer in the company. During three years' service, Lieutenant Burdick was off duty but twelve days. He took an active part in every skirmish and battle in which his company was engaged, and was never touched by an enemy's fire. Few men, and I doubt if any, in Iowa can show a better record than this."⁴⁹

Later that year, George went back to Cadiz, married Sarah Jane, and brought she and her daughter (perhaps "their daughter") Ava Ann back to Iowa. Ava Ann's name then changed from "Spece" to Burdick.⁵⁰ They settled on a farm in Buchanan County's Sumner Township, near Rowley, where heartache and disappointment would be a frequent visitor. Sarah had her second child there in the fall of the next year, 1871, a son she named Willie. He died the following month, barely 8-weeks old. In September of 1872 little Mary Burdick was born. She lived only 11-months.⁵¹ Then came daughter Nellie in 1873⁵², Arthur in 1875⁵³ and Thomas in 1878⁵⁴, all of whom prospered. Amos came in August of 1881, but died 20-months later in April of 1883.⁵⁵ Sarah Jane's last child was Elizabeth, born in June of 1886.⁵⁶ She would never know her father. George died a month before her birth.⁵⁷ He was 61. Thomas and his family then took over the farm. Sarah Jane lived another 43-years, and never remarried. She died in 1929 at the age of 84,⁵⁸ and was laid to rest next to her husband in the Rowley Cemetery, near their farm.⁵⁹

Andrew Putnam Burdick remained on the island, helping on the farm, and working as a U.S.L.S.S. Surfman. When he was twenty-five, he married Sarah Ellen Kitchen, the seventeen-year old daughter of Mary Kitchen and the late Thomas Kitchen.

Thomas had filed a homestead claim for SE1/4 of Sec 33 in January of 1862, but died shortly thereafter, so his widow Mary Kitchen filed the final proof of claim, and that 160-acre parcel was then registered to her. She then married Thomas Price, so the place became the "Thomas and Mary Price" farm.

Mary's daughter, Sarah Ellen Kitchen, eventually married Putnam and Malissa Burdick's son, Andrew Putnam Burdick,

and they bought the top 40-acres of that quarter-section (N1/4 of SE1/4 of Sec33). That then became the Andrew and Sarah Burdick farm. In 1903 Price sold the top north-east acre of their remaining 120-acres to the island community for use as a cemetery, which remains today, being preserved as the island's main cemetery. Nine years later, in 1912, Captain Charles Anderson, a Lake Michigan sailor, bought the remaining 119-acres from Price, moving his family in the next year. So the cemetery sits in the very north-east corner of what became the Anderson farm, and just below the south-east corner of what was the Andrew and Sarah Burdick farm.^{60, 61}

Andrew and Sarah had several children; Sarah Ellen was born in approx 1875 and died in infancy, James Putnam in February of 1877, Anna E. in November of 1882, Carrie J. in February of 1884, William H. in March of 1886, and finally Andrew T. in November of 1890. All three boys; James, William and Andrew, grew up to be lightkeepers, perhaps having been influenced to make that career choice as a result of their grandparents' long-time friendship with the Slyfields.

Their youngest son Andrew T. Burdick, was drafted into the WW-I army as a "doughboy," and became involved in the fated misadventure familiarly known as "the Polar Bear Expedition" (officially, the *American North Russian Expeditionary Force*).⁶² He died at Archangel, Russia on September 19th of 1918, a victim of an influenza epidemic among the 5,500 troops, most of whom were from northern Michigan. His remains were returned to the island for burial in the Burdick family plot in the main cemetery.⁶³

The father never knew of his namesake's death, Andrew having died the year before⁶⁴ at age 70. Sarah, then 60, continued on the farm for twelve more years before she passed away. After their mother's death, the sisters Anna and Carrie worked the place until the late 1920's, when it was apparently abandoned.⁶⁵

Frank Burdick, Andrew's younger brother, remained with his mother and sister as they left the island, moving to a farm on the mainland. In March of 1881 he married Mary Elizabeth Kregor, eldest daughter of farmer Frederick ("Fritz") Kreiger of Empire. Frank was 27, she 19. They acquired a farm near Cedar, Michigan, and there had two children; a daughter Flora, who died when just 18-months old, and an adopted daughter Lenora. Mary Elizabeth died in March of 1898,⁶⁶ and a year later Frank married Mary Jennie McQueer. Frank and Mary had two daughters; Cora in 1901 and Fanny in 1903, before moving to Parma, Michigan some time after 1910. Parma was a small agricultural community along the Michigan Central Railroad, midway between Albion and Jackson. Frank died there in 1915, and Jennie following him in death the next year.

Fanny R. Burdick, the last child of Putnam and Melissa, also moved from the island to the mainland with her mother, and brother Frank. As mentioned above, she, her mother, and brother Frank lived on a farm at, or near, Glen Haven. Frank married and moved on in the spring of 1881, presumably leaving his mother and sister on the farm, with their boarder



John Blanchfield, a U.S.L.S.S. Surfman, who might also have been helping out as their hired man. A vigorous search of Internet data sources failed to reveal anything more.⁶⁷

Burdickville, East of the Glen Lake Narrows

A discussion about the Burdicks of South Manitou Island often brings up the question of Burdickville, which was once a small village on the south side of Glen Lake about a two-miles east of “the narrows.” Were these the same Burdicks?

William Dowson Burdick, considered the founder of Burdickville, came to that place with his older brother Austin Burdick in 1864, and built a saw mill and a grist mill. A village then began to develop there, which soon included a general store, tailor and shoe shop, post office, newspaper, and regular cross-lake boat service. After years of slow decline, all that remains of the once thriving village are a few quiet residences and a couple of seasonal restaurants.

In fact, William and Austin Burdick were younger distant cousins of South Manitou’s Putnam Burdick, through their common ancestor Robert Burdick of Rhode Island. But otherwise, there is no connection, and no indication that the distantly related families ever knew each other or interacted in any way.



Editors Note: This essay is a compilation of information from a variety of historic texts and Internet resources. While information from these sources is not always in agreement, the information contained in this work represents an earnest attempt to remain faithful to the facts, or what was probable given the times and the circumstances of the events.

Copies of the items referenced below are available at www.manitousislandarchives.org

References

- ¹ 1850 U.S. Census - Erin, Macomb County, MI, pg 185
- ² Burdick Family Association, *Burdick Newsletter*, May/June 2001, and Winter 2011, Howard E. Burdick, Frisco, TX
- ³ Coincidentally, Agawam (Springfield) was also the location at that time (1633-1635) of the Burt and Hubbard families, in-laws of the Burtons, so it seems likely that these families would have been acquainted.
- ⁴ Genealogical and Family History of the State of Vermont, Hiram Carlton, Vol II, pg. 137
- ⁵ Documents and Records Relating to the State of New Hampshire, 1776-1783, Vol VIII, pg. 293
- ⁶ Hudson-Mohawk Genealogical and Family Memoirs, Vol II, 1921, Cuyler Reynolds, pgs 660-661
- ⁷ *History of Princeton, Civil and Ecclesiastical*, Jeremiah Lyford Hanaford, Worcester, 1852, pg. 89. Rev. Goodrich was ultimately offered compensation of about £200, which would amount to upwards of \$104,000 in today’s dollars.
- ⁸ *History of Wyoming County, N.Y.*, “The Town of Gainesville,” F.W. Beers & Co., 1880 - pg. 190-196
- ⁹ *Ibid.* 8; pg 191, the Second Congregational Church
- ¹⁰ *Family Records of Winslows and their Descendants in America*, Vol. II, Holton & Holton, 1888, pg. 560
- ¹¹ Individual Record – Sheffield David Silliman
- ¹² *History Of Macomb County, Michigan*; M. A. Lesson & Co., Chicago, 1882 Armada Biographies, pg 691
- ¹³ New York, 1820-1850 Passenger and Immigration Lists - Andreas Hipp Family
- ¹⁴ Waber/Fritz Family Tree - Andreas Hipp Family
- ¹⁵ 1850 U.S. Census, Huron County, Ohio, pg 272
- ¹⁶ 1850 U.S. Census, Armada, Macomb County, Michigan, pg 32
- ¹⁷ *A Brief Sketch Of The Life Of Charles B. Slyfield*, May 9th, 1912, C. B. Slyfield, Frankfort, Michigan; containing a reference to boarding with “a man by the name of Putnam Burdick” who lived along the shore some two miles from the lighthouse.
- ¹⁸ The Burdicks as far back as the eighteenth century in Rhode Island were Sabbatarian Baptists, later becoming more commonly affiliated with the Congregational and Presbyterian churches.
- ¹⁹ 1818 Birth and Christening Record - Theresia Hipp. This is thought to have been Melissa Burdick, who is variously referred to as “Mellissa,” “Malissa,” and “M. Theresa Hipp,” by virtue of matching birth and immigration dates, and her claimed birthplace.
- ²⁰ *Detroit Post and Tribune*, 4 Jul 1882, “Good and Faithful Servant”
- ²¹ *Ibid.* 17
- ²² Bible owned by Mrs. J. France, Michigan Center, MI, per Howard Burdick, Burdick Family Assn.
- ²³ Both the Burtons and the Burdicks were connected through marriage to the Samuel Hubbard family, early settlers at Agawam, which eventually became Springfield, Massachusetts.
- ²⁴ Seventeenth Annual Report of the Secretary of the State Horticultural Society of Michigan, 1887, “Manitou County,” pg 395.
- ²⁵ 1870 U.S. Agricultural Census, Manitou County, Michigan
- ²⁶ Slyfield Land Patents and Plat Map, Bureau of Land Management
- ²⁷ *Ibid.* 17
- ²⁸ *Seeing the Light*, Keepers of the Point Betsie Light Station, Terry Pepper, www.terrypepper.com
- ²⁹ 1859 Death Record, Silver Lake Twp, Leelanau County, MI - Mary Slyfield
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* 17
- ³¹ Map showing probable Putnam Burdick farm location, based on *South Manitou Island, From Pioneer Community to National Park*, Myron H. Vent, pg 34, where the author asserts that the original Burdick farm “was adjacent to that of the George (Johann) Hutzlers.” Putnam Burdick never actually owned any land until some ten years after having arrived on South Manitou Island, but most islanders began as “squatters” on preempted land, which they later acquired through homestead claims or outright purchase. The only land Putnam Burdick eventually owned that was adjacent to the Hutzler farm as the 80-acres in S½NE-34/T31N,R15W (see map in [32].) That parcel was one of his last acquisitions, and was paid for in cash, rather than military bounty land warrants, as were all his other holdings. (Under preemption rules, there was no need to purchase such land until someone else made an offer to buy it.)
- ³² Putnam Burdick Land Patents and Plat Map - Bureau of Land Management http://www.manitousislandsarchives.org/archives/history/landpatents/smi/lan_dpatents-smi.html
- ³³ Plat Map of South Manitou Island, c.1900
- ³⁴ Industrial Chicago, 1891, Goodspeed Publishing Co., Chicago - pgs 784-786
- ³⁵ Burial Record for James Putnam Burdick at Wayne County’s Mount Hazel Cemetery
- ³⁶ 1880 U.S. Census for Glen Arbor Township, pg 3 – Place of residence determined on the basis of boarder John Blanchfield, a Surfman at the Glen Haven USLSS Station, and neighbors John E. Fisher, former saw mill and inn operator at Glen Haven; Bishop Tucker, John Tobin and Welby Ray, farmers and USLSS Surfmen at the Glen Haven Station.
- ³⁷ A notation in bible owned by Mrs. J. France, Michigan Center, Mich. merely states “Anna drowned in Lake Michigan.” The Burdick’s eldest child appears in the September 9, 1850 Census for Erin, Michigan as 8-year old “Alvira,” born in Michigan, and in the 1860 Census for South Manitou Island as “Ann E.” This census data corresponds with a birth date between August 1, 1841 and September 9, 1842, the median being Feb 19, 1842. The name is assumed to have been “Anna Elvira Burdick.”
- ³⁸ 1850 U.S. Census- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. William Moore Smith was apparently the youngest son of Mary Grant Smith, divorced or widowed daughter of Samuel Grant, a wealthy merchant in Philadelphia. (See also *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register - 1873*, pgs 224-225) (See also: *Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania biography*, Volume 13, John Woolf Jordan, 1921, pg 98.) According to the 1894 Michigan State Census, he was a Civil War soldier (See: *United States Soldiers of the Civil War Residing in Michigan, June 1, 1894*)
- ³⁹ Grand Traverse Herald, August 10, 1866



- ⁴⁰ 1880 U.S. Census - Glen Arbor Twp, Leelanau Co, MI - William & Jane Smith at Port Onieda
- ⁴¹ Orra Haskell birth record - born in 1870 at St. Charles, Michigan to Wellington and Estella Haskell Includes death record of Wellington Haskill (father), birth record of Wellington Haskill Jr (brother), and marriage record of Ora Haskell to George F. Smith (name variously spelled "Haskill" and "Haskall")
- ⁴² 1900 U.S. Census - Traverse City, MI, Sheet 19
- ⁴³ 1905 Death Records - William Moore Smith and Mary Jane (Burdick) Smith
- ⁴⁴ 1870 U.S. Census, Cadiz, Green County, Wisconsin - pg 2
- ⁴⁵ 1870 U.S. Census, St. Ansgar, Iowa, pg 16
- ⁴⁶ History of Winneshiek and Allamakee counties, Iowa, By W. E. Alexander, 1889, pgs 197, 199 & 202
- ⁴⁷ Civil War service records for the six sons of Nelson and Almira Burdick.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid. 46, pgs 208 and 551-553
- ⁴⁹ *Past and Present of Winneshiek County, Iowa*, Vol 2, 1913, Ch. VIII, "The Boys in Blue," pg 110
- ⁵⁰ Marriage Record for George S. Burdick and Mary Jane Spece (See also: 1880 U.S. Census, Sumner Township, Buchanan County, IA, pg 8)(See also: "Individual Records for Ava Ann Burdick")
- ⁵¹ Birth/Death record for Mary Burdick, daughter of George S. Burdick and Sarah Jane Spece
- ⁵² Birth/Marriage/Death record for Nellie Burdick, daughter of George S. Burdick and Sarah Jane Spece
- ⁵³ Birth/Death record for Arthur Burdick, son of George S. Burdick and Sarah Jane Spece. Arthur Burdick, son of George S. Burdick and Mary Jane Spece, apparently never married, and wound up in the household of, and working as a hired man for, dray line owner George Beatty in his shop at Homer, Iowa. George Beatty married George's sister, Ava Ann Burdick. (See also 1920 U.S. Census: Homer, Iowa)
- ⁵⁴ Birth/Marriage/Death record for Thomas Burdick, son of George S. Burdick and Sarah Jane Spece
- ⁵⁵ Birth/Death record for Amos Burdick, son of George S. Burdick and Sarah Jane Spece
- ⁵⁶ Birth/Marriage/Death record for Elizabeth Burdick, daughter of George S. Burdick and Sarah Jane Spece
- ⁵⁷ Birth/Marriage/Death record for George Sheffield Burdick
- ⁵⁸ Birth/Marriage/Death record for Sarah Jane Spece
- ⁵⁹ Burial Records - George S Burdick and Sarah Jane Spece
- ⁶⁰ Plat map showing locations of Andrew & Sarah Burdick farm, Thomas & Mary Price Farm, and the island cemetery.
- ⁶¹ *Coming Through With Rye, A Historic Agricultural Landscape Study of South Manitou Island at Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore, Michigan*, Brenda Wheeler Williams, et al, National Park Service, 1996, pg 136 (or Digital Edition - pg 142)
- ⁶² *The History of the American Expedition Fighting the Bolsheviks - Campaigning in North Russia 1918-1919*, Joel R. Moore, Harry H. Mead, and Lewis E. Jahns, Polar Bear Publishing, Detroit, 1920
- ⁶³ According to Charles M. Anderson, author of *Isle of View, A History of South Manitou Island*, (pg 39,) there was always some question about who is actually buried in Andrew T. Burdick's grave. The U.S. Army supposedly returned two caskets aboard the train to Traverse City, one being somewhat shorter than the other. The other soldier was the son of Dr. & Mrs. Murphy, of Maple City, who was the taller of the two young men, however the casket they received was the shorter one, leading them to believe there had been a mix-up. On informing Captain Anderson of their fear that their son having been mistakenly buried on South Manitou, he suggested that they quietly honor the grave of the soldier they had buried, and the islanders would do the same. Perhaps this is just another of the island's many "ghost stories."
- ⁶⁴ According to his headstone in the cemetery on South Manitou Island, and contrary to the date published in the Nellie Johnson family genealogy study.
- ⁶⁵ *Isle of View, A History of South Manitou Island*, Charles M. Anderson, pg 39
- ⁶⁶ Mary Elizabeth Burdick and Flora Burdick Burials at Maple Grove Cemetery in Empire Township, MI
- ⁶⁷ The absence of further records regarding Melissa Burdick and her daughter Fanny probably arises from two calamities; the loss of the 1890 U.S. Census data in January of 1921 when the Commerce Building in Washington, DC was destroyed by fire, and the burning of the old Glen Arbor Town Hall around that same time, which destroyed most of the township's records.