Mary Potter & Burr Frost

Clan Lizzie

Puritans turned polygamists!

Mary Elizabeth Potter and Burr Frost married as teens in 1835 in Connecticut. Just seven years later, the couple was baptized in the growing church of the Latter Day Saints, led by Joseph Smith. It had been just six years since the Book of Mormon was written. The Frosts moved west first to Nauvoo, Illinois. Joseph Smith and his followers had originally gone to Missouri but were ejected by the State of Missouri. In 1844, Smith and his brother were later to be tried for treason in Missouri, so turned themselves in only to be killed by a mob at the jail. There was a power vaccuum, but it appeared that Brigham Young would be taking the lead. He organized the first Mormon Vanguard Company.



In 1847, 14 groups of nine-14 people were assigned to a leader, an ox, and a wagon. They walked or rode over 1,000 miles to the Salt Lake valley in what is now Utah. Burr was included in this first set of settlers in Group Seven, led by James Case. Amazingly, the group arrived safely in July of 1847. It was some time before Burr brought his wife and kids out.

Though the Mormons were split as to whether polygamy should be allowed, Burr dipped his toe into the multiple-marriage pool by marrying Eliza Morris in 1852, the first year polygamy was out in the open. She was also still married to her first husband, Isaac Nash, with whom she had four children. She and Burr had no children together. However, that changed when Burr married 22-year-old Caroline Triplett in 1864. They had at least eight children together.

Burr was a reliable and hard-working member of the LDS church. He was an effective proselytizer who was called upon to do mission work as far away as Hawaii and Australia.

Burr died in March of 1878. At the time of his death he was one of the Presidents of the Seventy, a significant leadership position. All of his wives outlived him. His first wife, Mary Elizabeth, outlived the younger wives, dying in 1904. Polygamy was banned by the church in 1890.

Thomas Munson > Samuel Munson > Theophilus Munson >**Elizabeth Munson Minor** > Martha Minor Ray > Caleb Ray > Elizabeth Ray Potter > **Mary Elizabeth Potter and Burr Frost**

Family slave owners in New England

Revelations out of Yale relatively recently brought the public's attention to the fact that slaves contributed to the building of several early Yale buildings (1747-1752). Called out specifically was "Dick" the slave of Captain Theophilus Munson. He provided significant labor in building, courtesy of the Captain.

The last slave in New Haven was sold on the New Haven Green on March 8, 1825. This despite many other New England states having abolished slavery, some states even before they became states. There was a policy of gradual release of slaves, so the last New Haven slaves were not freed until 1848, just 13 years before the Civil War. In fact, abolition in most northern states had gradual release rules, or the inhabitants just didn't follow the laws of the land at all. New Jersey, a bastion of Munson progeny, never abolished slavery until the end of the Civil War.

Joseph Tuttle (b. 1692), grandson of Thomas Munson's daughter Hannah, was also a slave owner with eight slaves.

Deacon Captain Stephen Munson (b. abt. 1733), who was joined to the 1st Church at Hanover, New Jersey, was named "ruling elder" in 1765 and later, "deacon."

1st Church published a series of *Rules for the Regulation of Families* in 1782, of which Stephen was the second signer. One of those rules:

13. As we suppose all human creatures have a natural right to freedom, so when they have done nothing that forfeits their liberty, and when they do not voluntarily submit to bondage, we cannot but look upon their being held in slavery, as an unnatural evil and one of the greatest injuries to mankind. Therefore we will not use this slavery ourselves, and will prudently endeavor to prevent it in others.

Despite Stephen's apparent endorsement of these principles, he owned a slave named "Ceasar." The Munsons, like so many families, must wrangle with our flawed history.

Published 01 Dec 2024