

The Third Wife of the Rev. George Burroughs

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The most prominent victim of the 1692 witchcraft trials was the Rev. George Burroughs, who was hanged at Salem on 19 Aug. 1692. His English origin was discovered by Henry F. Waters (*Genealogical Gleanings in England*, 1:515 f. and 737; see also 2:1308 f.), and the basic outline of his life is in several sources, including a genealogical summary in *Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire* (GDMNH), p. 122. Surprisingly little is known – or at least is in print – about the wives of so important a man. So far as I am aware, his first wife, Hannah, is known only by her first name. She died in Salem Village, now Danvers, in Sept. 1681, and her husband had two gallons of wine brought from Salem at her funeral (*Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts*, 9:48). By 1683, he had married Sarah Ruck, widow of Capt. William Hathorne. GDMNH, p. 122, indicates that she became George Burroughs' widow as well, and married thirdly, Boston, 21 April 1698, Mr John Brown of Salem, a statement corrected in part in "Additions and Corrections", p. 783: "Cancel 3rd marriage to Mr John Brown, who m, Sarah dau. Of Mr Francis Burroughs of Boston ..." The present paper will show that Sarah (Ruck) (Hathorne) Burroughs died several years before her husband's execution, since he was survived by a widow named Mary, who had had time to present him with a daughter. The later history of the widow Mary (___) Burroughs is recounted in "Mary (Burroughs) (Homer) (Hall) Tiffany" (TAG 48:140-146), a well researched and argued article which, unfortunately, conflates her and her daughter, Mary (Burroughs) Tiffany.

That George Burroughs was married three times is stated implicitly or explicitly in testimony against him in the preliminary testimony and hearings that ultimately charged him with witchcraft. On 20 April 1692, Ann Putnam, one of the "afflicted girls," deposed that an apparition of a minister had appeared to her and "he tould me that his name was George Burroughs and that he had had three wives: and that he had bewitched the Two first of them to death ..." (Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692* [New York 1977], 1:164). On 5 May, she deposed that his "Two first wives" had appeared to her and said that their husband had murdered them (*ibid.* p. 166), and at the Examination of Geo: Burrough, 9 May 1692, Susan Sheldon testified the "Burroughs two wives appeared in their winding sheets, & said that man killed them: (*ibid.* p. 171). One is inclined to suspect the testimony of apparitions and of those who see them, but we must also remember that the facts of Burroughs' marriages must have been known to the community and, as we shall see, later material supports the conclusion that he had had at least three wives.

Public opinion was soon revulsed by the events of 1692, and finally in 1711, the General Court awarded compensation to the survivors of some of the victims. George Burroughs' widow and children received £50. Some of the children were displeased by the division of the money and made two petitions that prove that his widow was not Sarah Ruck and that his widow had but one child:

Boston, Decem'r:16th. 1712. To the Honorable Gentlemen Appointed for A Committee Relateing To the affairs of Witchcraft In the yere 1692.

Gentlemen We The Subscribers and Children of Mr George Burrough - late of wells, who suffered att Salem - in the Trouble There Humbly offer for your Honours Consideration A few Lines Relateing our Case and Circumstances upon Acco'tt. of Our Mother in Laws Conduct and Carriage Towards us, after Our Father was Apprehended and Taken Away Our Mother in Law Laide hands upon all that she Could secure (the Children were Generally unable to shift for Themselves) and what she Could Lay hands on was her Own without Any Person but her own Daught'r to share with her, whom she Says Was to bring up but may it Please your Honour to Consider there was Seaven Children more besides That that were to bring up the Eldest of which was but Sixteen years old att That Time; but instead of shareing in what our father Left and she had Secur'd were Turn'd out to shift for Our Selves without Any Thing for So much as A Remembrance of Our father. Tho Som of us Can Remember of Considerable in the House, besides his Libery which she Sold and Rec'd the money for; then Lett it out att Intrest and was afterward Rec'd by another Husband; and not one farthing bestowed upon any Child but her own: This being matter of fact we Humbly Leave it with your Honours to Consider wheather of what The Honourable Generall Court allow'd &c she have not allredy Rec'd To much And the Children To Little. We subscribe Our Selves your Honours Humble Ser'tts.

Signed by rebaker fowl, the mark of Eliz. Thomas, Jeremi Burrough, Charles Burrough and hannah fox.

The endorsement suggests that the petition was presented by their brother George Burroughs (*ibid.* 3:1040 f.). On 8 April 1713, a similar petition was presented by Peter Thomas and Jabez Fox in behalf of their wives. It adds that the widow's next husband was her second husband and that "som of us" were "So young that we Can give no Acco'tt of particular CirComstances of the family." They made their representative "Our brother George Burrough" (*ibid.* pp. 1042 f.). In the meantime on 3 Jan 1612 [sic in the printed transcript: 1712/1713 is intended], the Committee appointed by the General Court had agreed "that the widow had most or all of the personal Estate" and that the Rev. Mr. Burroughs' children "by his former *wives* [my emphasis] should have £6 6d divided among them in equal shares (*ibid.* p. 1022).

The petitions cited above prove that George Burroughs' widow had but one Burroughs child, a daughter, and that his widow was the step-mother ("Mother in Law") of all involved with the petitions, including "our brother," George Burroughs. GDMNH identifies Rebecca (who m. 1st 1698 Isaac Fowle), Hannah (who m. 8 March 1705, Jabez Fox) and Elizabeth (who m. 2 Nov 1704 Peter Thomas) as children of the first wife; and Charles, George and Jeremiah as children of the second wife, Sarah (Ruck) Hathorne, who thus could not have been George Burroughs' widow. The remaining surviving child, Mary (Burroughs) Tiffany, must have been George Burroughs' only child by this third wife and widow.

The TAG article cited above states that the daughter Mary married, 1st, Boston 13 July 1693, Michael Homer; 2nd, Cambridge, 5 Feb 1699/1700, Christopher Hall, Jr.; and 3rd, by 9 June 1735, Joseph Tiffany of Norton. The evidence adduced that the first two marriages belong to the daughter of George Burroughs is the receipt signed on 22 March 1711/1712 by Mary, widow of George Burroughs, who married Michael Homer and Christopher Hall and that her daughter Mary was still unmarried on 22 March 1711/1712. A summary of "Receipts of the relations &c of the Suffereres in the year 1692 taken February 19th, 1712" (*Witchcraft Papers*, 3:1038)"

Mr Burroughs family

Widow
Charles Burroughs
Jeremiah Burroughs
Rebecca Fowle alias Burrougs
Hannah Fox alias Burrougs
Elizabeth Thomas
Mary Burroughs

From "Attel borow" on 14 March 1711/1712, Mary Burros wrote a letter to her "Loving brother" (not named) asking that her share be sent "by my mother which will take som care about it" (*ibid.* p. 1040), and eight days later, her mother signed the following receipts (*ibid.* p. 1036):

March 22 Received for my daughter Mary Burroughs four pounds 2. s in full for her share. Mary [mark] Hall alias Burroughs
March 22, 1711-12 Received for my selfe Ten poundes Mary [mark] Hall alias Burroughs

Thus George Burroughs' widow, not his daughter, was "Mary Hall alias Burroughs" and the daughter was unmarried on 22 March 1711/12. The children of Mary (____) Burroughs by Michael Homer and Christopher Hall, Jr., are shown in TAG 48:144. They are *not* Burroughs descendants. The same article provides evidence for the marriage of the daughter Mary Burroughs, to Joseph Tiffany. Since some of Mary's half-siblings were "So young" when their father was executed, Mary must have been in her infancy. She was probably born about 1690-92.