

William Phillips
and Hannah (Bagnall)
Detton Phillips



A Family History

by Shelley Dawson Davies

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Chapter 1

The Industrial Age

English Heritage



The many pottery factories in Stoke on Trent, which gave the area its nickname of “The Potteries.”

The transformation of England’s pastoral countryside into a polluted industrial sprawl known as the Black Country was already well under way by the time Hannah¹ was born in the outer regions of Dudley, Staffordshire, in 1814. Her father, John Bagnall,² had found work and lodging in the small village of Brockmoor, where a collection of quarries, collieries, glass and iron works were turning out a variety of products by mechanized mass production.

Work in the Industrial Revolution’s many factories was plentiful, but dangerous, dominated by the unforgiving pace of machinery and twelve- hour days. With no consideration taken by employers for workplace conditions, John was at risk of disfigurement or death every day he walked onto the factory floor, and once a breadwinner was put out of a job by an accident, he could expect no help from his employer; his family often descended into destitution.

One day in the autumn of 1826, the worst happened when John tumbled into a vat of boiling water and could not be rescued by his coworkers, who were forced to watch as their mate was scaled to death in front of them. The men took John's body to his home wrapped in blankets. "When his boiled body was dumped in front of his wife, the shock was too much for her and she lost her senses," according to William Bagnell, one of Hannah's great-nephews.³

Hannah, only twelve years old when her mother⁴ was placed in a nearby lunatic asylum,⁵ was too young to manage the household on her own and she and her brothers were split up to be raised by different families.⁶ Hannah eventually lost track of her brothers over the years, though she always remembered three-year old John,⁷ who had lost his right index finger in an accident.⁸

Hannah eventually reached maturity and supported herself by turning out a variety of household containers and dishes for a small earthenware manufacturer⁹ in the pottery district of Stoke on Trent.¹⁰ She boarded with her employer's family¹¹ until she was twenty-nine years old, when she met and married John Detton¹² in the summer of 1843.¹³

John Detton

John grew up on a farm in the small Shropshire village of Chelmarsh, an agricultural area where rolling acres of fertile lands were dotted with grazing cattle and herds of sheep.¹⁴ John's father, Richard,¹⁵ rented his farm from the local land owner. As the youngest of three sons, John was expected to do the worst of the work around the barnyard and fields, a situation that probably influenced his decision to later become a tailor.

John was born during a time of great change across the country, when traditional harvesting by scythe was being replaced by industrial threshing machines. Increased efficiency and profits created by mechanized farming methods caused landowners to reclaim common lands previously open to poor farmers for growing vegetable gardens, grazing and gathering firewood. Once common lands were closed off with fences, hedges or ditches, many families were forced to find factory work in the cities. Those who remained often struggled to survive, especially after angry, starving workers revolted in the early 1830s, burning crops, barns and threshing machines.

The Dettons were among the suffering families in Shropshire unable to survive solely on produce from their farm, and as an impetuous young man of twenty-one, John was determined to do something about his family's destitute situation. Poaching game from nearby forests was considered an offense serious enough to carry the penalty of hanging or transportation to a penal colony in earlier years. By 1836, punishment for a second offender or a first offender who resisted with violence was imprisonment for up to six months with a hefty fine.¹⁶ Despite the risks, John quietly sneaked past a landowner's fence one night in hopes of bagging an illegal rabbit or game bird to bring home for dinner, but was caught in the act and arrested. He was convicted for the crime and served an eight month sentence.¹⁷

Upon his release from prison, John returned to Chelmarsh, where he moved into his brother's house next door. The situation was a good fit, as both he and William¹⁸ worked as tailors. The home was large enough to accommodate the Detton's tailoring business, William's wife Sarah¹⁹ and three children, and eventually their older brother George²⁰ and two male boarders.²¹ John remained content to live with his brothers until he met Hannah.



John Detton

A Moment of Truth

John didn't have any trouble finding a home nearby after he married Hannah, who was only too happy to once again be part of a family, and the couple wasted no time becoming parents themselves. Hannah gave birth to John Junior²² eleven months after their wedding in July, 1844, followed by Mary Ann²³ in 1846. Three years later little Fanny²⁴ was born in the summer of 1849.²⁵ All of the children were baptized at St. Peter's,²⁶ the local Anglican church with a beautiful red brick tower whose bells had called the Dettons to worship for several generations.

The family was tied to the church by both time and tradition, so it came as a shock when Hannah returned home one day with reports of a new religion that claimed God had once again opened His heavens to a prophet. John was horrified at his wife's interest in what was being reported in the British press as "a pitiable superstitious delusion," and "the absurdity of seeing visions in the age of railways."²⁷

Despite the objections of almost everyone she knew, Hannah was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint a year after Fanny's birth, in July, 1850.²⁸ Not long after Hannah abandoned the traditions of the Church of England, John abandoned her and the children for a new life in Australia. He sent a photograph of himself from Melbourne to the Dettons back in England, but was never heard from again.²⁹

Hannah was left alone to support her three small children, ages six, four and one year old. She found a position as a laundress twenty miles away in the village of Dawley Brook, Staffordshire, where she lived with John and Fanny,³⁰ but allowed Mary Ann to remain in Chelmarsh with William and Sarah Detton.³¹



The Crossings at Kingswinford, Staffordshire.

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- ⁵ Maria Bagnall entry, 1841 England census, schedule for public institutions, Kingsland Lunatic Asylum, Civil Parish: Meole Brace; County: Shropshire; Class: HO107; Piece: 925; Book: 6; Folio: 10; Page: 4; Line: 5; GSU roll: 474590, www.ancestry.com
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- ¹⁶ The fine, classed as a level four, would be roughly equivalent to \$3,700.00 in 2014. See Shropshire Routes to Roots, http://www3.shropshire-cc.gov.uk/roots/packages/cr/cr_s3b1.htm and Nicola Turner, "Games Laws," *Modern Gamekeeping*, 29 August, 2012, <http://www.moderngamekeeping.com/2012/08/29/game-laws/>
- ¹⁷ 18 March, 1836. England & Wales Criminal Registers, 1791-1892, location of trial: Shropshire. Class: HO 27; Piece: 52; Page: 135, www.ancestry.com
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- ¹⁹ Sarah () Detton (-). www.familysearch.org incorrectly shows William married to his sister Sarah, #K*Z1-78P.
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- ²² John Detton (1844-1904), #KWCT-2S4, www.familysearch.org
- ²³ Mary Ann (Detton) Smith (1846-1910), #KC37-KZG, www.familysearch.org
- ²⁴ Francis "Fanny" (Detton) Elcock (1849-1915), #KGCH-NCX, www.familysearch.org
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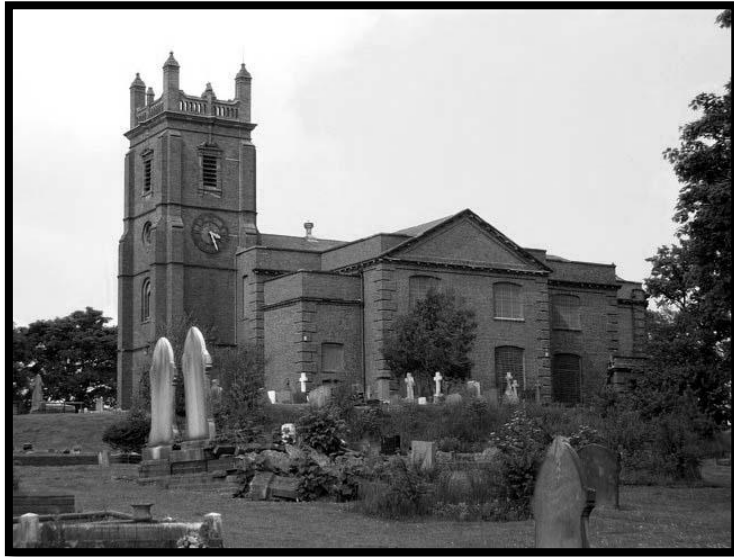
³⁰ Hannah Dutton household, 1851 England census, St. Mary, Kingswinford, Staffordshire. Class: HO107; Piece: 2036; Folio: 156; Page: 37; GSU roll: 87443-87444.

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Chapter 2

Starting Over

New Beginnings



St. Michael's church in Brierley Hill, Staffordshire.

Hannah was once again on her own, but found friendship and acceptance from her fellow Mormons, among them a recent convert to the church from Wales, William Phillips.³² Hannah and William became close over the next few years, close enough for Hannah to have William's child, a son they named Joseph,³³ in August, 1853. It would be a two and a half years before William and Hannah were married, in January, 1856.³⁴

The church in England was strong in the 1860s, but members were still encouraged to join with the Saints in America. William and Hannah were committed to the gospel and with little to keep them in England, they made plans to immigrate. William left first in order to establish himself in Utah and earn enough money for his family's passage.³⁵ He departed Liverpool in the spring of 1857 with a large group of Saints headed for Boston on the *George Washington*.³⁶ Which wagon company he travelled with to the Salt Lake Valley has not been determined, but he was settled in Summit County by 1864, when he was finally able to send for Hannah and the children.

It may have been too difficult for Hannah to support both herself and her children after William's departure. John was able to find work as a blacksmith,³⁷ but Fanny joined Mary Ann at the William Detton home in Chelmarsh sometime before 1861.³⁸ Hannah saved every extra penny she earned for the next few years, and with John's salary and funds sent by William, she and the boys were finally able to purchase passage in 1864. Both Mary Ann and Fanny remained behind in England, where they later married and raised families.³⁹

The Phillips travelled to London, where they joined a group of eight hundred sixty-three Saints aboard the *Hudson*, which left port 3 June.⁴⁰ There were mixed emotions from all of the passengers as the ship pulled away from the dock and made its way down the River Thames. "Some were crying, some were laughing and others fainting at the thoughts of leaving their loved ones, never to see them again," according to fellow passenger James Sutton.⁴¹

The *Hudson* was six weeks on the ocean, during which there was an onboard fire, several deaths due to a measles outbreak, a violent storm ("Indeed, what would a sea voyage be without one?" mused fellow passenger Mary Ann Aveson),⁴² and the "coarse but substantial" fare of "fat beef, pork, beans and rice" eventually ran out, forcing passengers to subsist on hard tack for a few weeks. Of all the adventures experienced by the immigrants, perhaps the most worrisome was the approach of the Civil War ship *Alabama*, which "pulled alongside our ship to determine what kind of freight was aboard," recalled James Sutton. "The sailors cried out to us, 'Say your prayers, you Mormons, you are all going down!' But we were spared. We were all immigrants from other countries and they dared not sink us."⁴³

After passing inspection and customs in New York City, the immigrants were exposed to even more unsettling experiences as they traveled through the war zone by rail. "We saw quite a bit of action by the soldiers and by the Indians," said James Sutton. "They were, of course, all on the warpath. Many times we saw smoke signals from the tops of the mountains. One of the railroad bridges was destroyed and we had to unload all the luggage, take it down through the creek, up the other side and into some cattle cars that were handy there—dirty or clean it made no difference. The next station we came to was burned to the ground. The train was fired at by soldiers and one of the cars was afire as a result. Often at night officers came through the train searching for deserters. At times the engine and tender were alive with soldiers shooting at rebels tearing up the track. Of course, fear and horror were experienced by all of us, but we would not have turned back had we been given the chance. We finally reached the end of the railroad tracks and had to prepare ourselves for the journey across the plains."⁴⁴

It was at the edge of Nebraska's vast prairie where the English immigrants were met by wagons, teams of oxen and "the Mormon boys," volunteers from Utah who were charged with leading their fellow members to Zion. Several days were spent preparing for the 1,100 mile trek by acquiring supplies, making tents, loading wagons and learning how to drive the oxen.

Captain Joseph S. Rawlins was in charge of the company,⁴⁵ which consisted of sixty-six wagons drawn by oxen, three or four yoke to each wagon. After their unsettling encounters with soldiers and Indians on their way to the trail head, everyone was wary when Captain Rawlins "said that the Indians were on the war path and ordered us to keep close by or we might all be killed," according to Martha Featherstone,⁴⁶ but gifts of sugar to any natives met along the trails kept the peace and the Rawlins Company made the journey safely, arriving in Salt Lake on 20 September, 1864.

A Home in the West

The immigrants were met at the mouth of Parley's Canyon by well-wishers who brought them bushels of fresh fruit⁴⁷ and overjoyed family and friends who welcomed them to Zion. No one was more grateful to be reunited than William and Hannah, who had not seen each other for four long years, and they wasted no time settling into the home William had built on his farm in Wanship.

John set up a smithy shop and found immediate work as local farmers brought in their equipment to be repaired and their horses to be shod. With a growing number of settlers moving up from Salt Lake City, there was never a shortage of work and after a few years William was able to move his family from the primitive log cabin he initially built to a larger, more comfortable home on the same property.

The Phillips lived productive, quiet lives over the next few years, welcoming John's new bride Weighty,⁴⁸ in 1866 and Joseph's wife Sarah⁴⁹ ten years later. In addition to farming, William earned cash as a surveyor and assessor. He also opened up a small store in Wanship and served as postmaster for some time,⁵⁰ while Hannah tended to her household duties and took pleasure in the numerous grandchildren who were added to the family.

One summer day Hannah happened to be chatting with a woman from nearby Coalville and was astonished when the visitor identified herself as the wife of John Bagnall, an English immigrant who had

come to Utah with his family in 1873. “That is my brother!” Hannah exclaimed when she was discovered John was missing his right index finger. “This incident led to the reunion of a brother and sister that had been separated in England, and by coincidence met after coming to the United States,” said William Bagnell, John’s grandson. “They lived only eight miles apart for [many] years⁵¹ and didn’t know it.”⁵²

William and Hannah were content to spend the last years of their lives surrounded by their family and the beautiful Wasatch Mountains. When William died in November, 1881, Hannah was left alone in her home, but found comfort with her sons and grandchildren. She carried on for another eleven years, until she died at the age of seventy-eight in July, 1892. William and Hannah are buried at the hillside cemetery in Wanship,⁵³ overlooking Silver Creek as it runs through the verdant valley.



Looking toward the mountains in Wanship, Utah.

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- ³³ Joseph Phillips (1853-1907), #KWCX-MVQ, www.familysearch.org
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- ³⁵ "Short History of Hannah Bagnall Detton Phillips, 1814-1892," www.ancestry.com
- ³⁶ William Phillips entry, Mormon Migration Index, <http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/searchAll/keywords:william+phillips>
- ³⁷ Mormon Immigration Index, CD-ROM (Salt Lake City, Utah: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), John Phillips entry.
- ³⁸ William Detton household, 1861 England census, Chelmarsh, Shropshire, Class: RG 9; Piece: 1848; Folio: 69; Page: 14; GSU roll: 542877, www.ancestry.com
- ³⁹ Ship records show Hannah was travelling with sons John, Joseph and fourteen year-old Fanny Phillips. There is no record of Fanny's arrival in Utah with her mother, and no record of her return to England. Fanny was residing with her aunt Sarah Detton in Chelmarsh in the 1871 England census. Sarah Detton household, 1871 England census, Chelmarsh, Shropshire, Class: RG10; Piece: 2740; Folio: 65; Page: 8; GSU roll: 835394, www.ancestry.com
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- ⁴⁵ Hannah Phillips entry, Joseph S. Rawlins Company, Wyoming, Nebraska to Salt Lake City, Utah, 15 July-19 September, 1864, <http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/companyPioneers?lang=eng&companyId=245>
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- ⁴⁹ Sarah Lovisa (Roundy) Phillips (1858-1941), #KWCX-MV7, www.familysearch.org
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- ⁵¹ William states that Hannah and her brother John lived near each other for twenty five years, but it was no more than nineteen years, as John immigrated to Utah in 1873 and Hannah died in 1892.
- ⁵² William Elmen Bagnell, "An Incident that happened in the lives of John and HannahBagnall," undated www.ancestry.com
- ⁵³ To date, no grave markers are present.

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