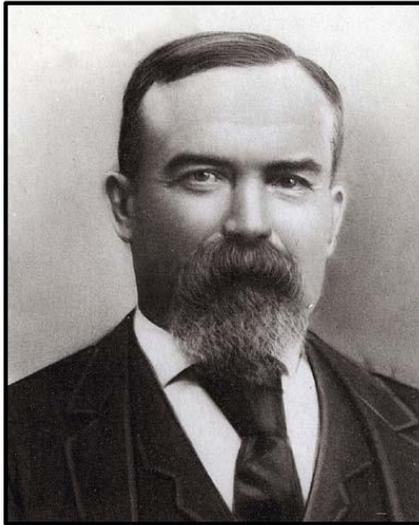


# William Page and Mary Ann Clark



## A Family History

by Shelley Dawson Davies

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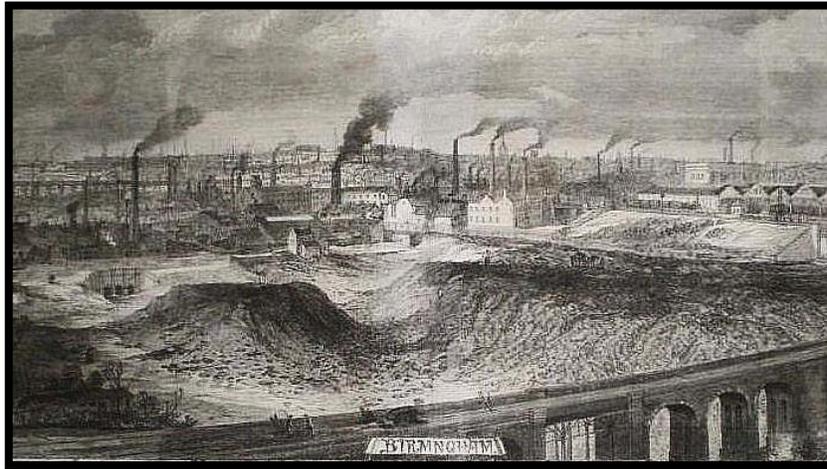
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## Chapter 1

# William

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## England and Emigration



*Industrial Birmingham near Lawley Street, where William Page was born in 1838.*

William<sup>1</sup> was a city boy, a Birmingham lad born during England's Industrial Revolution to railroad worker James Page<sup>2</sup> and his wife Louisa.<sup>3</sup> He grew up taking for granted the city's gas-lit streets and crowded urban conditions, watching as hundreds of bustling factories turned out tons of buttons, toys, jewelry, nails, nuts, bolts, pen nibs and guns that were shipped across the country by the railroad his father helped build. He didn't find it unusual when he and his younger siblings were put out to work as children, since the labor of every member of the family was required to survive; schooling was a luxury only the better off could afford. By the time he was twelve years old, William made a small wage running errands,<sup>4</sup> while his sisters Martha<sup>5</sup> and Maria<sup>6</sup> spent their day carding hooks and eyes in a nearby factory.<sup>7</sup>

The Page family necessarily moved with the railroad as it expanded across Birmingham. From Lawley Street, where William was born in 1838,<sup>8</sup> Louisa set up household in six different locations over the next twelve years,<sup>9</sup> always in dismal "back-to-backs," tenement housing so cramped that three out of four walls were shared with the neighboring building. Sanitation was limited to a communal washhouse and toilet.

Everyone made do in the close quarters as the family grew with the addition of Thomas,<sup>10</sup> Samuel,<sup>11</sup> two babies named Louisa (both who died as infants),<sup>12</sup> Hyrum,<sup>13</sup> Alma,<sup>14</sup> Cyrus,<sup>15</sup> Orson<sup>16</sup> and Lorenzo.<sup>17</sup> If life was sometimes grim under these circumstances, little more was expected in a working class family, and William eventually took his place as a full wage earner in a munitions factory without complaint.<sup>18</sup>



*Above: Back-to-back houses like these on Birmingham's Clyde Street soon became overcrowded and unsanitary slums. Below: Communal outhouses were located in courtyards, where children could be found playing near piles of garbage.*

## The Good News

There was no reason for William to imagine his life would be different than any of Birmingham's tens of thousands of low paid workers until the day his father stopped on his way home to listen to a pair of street preachers. Anyone with a voice and a point of view could sermonize from an up-ended soapbox, and James usually took little notice of those who did, but the message of the Mormon elders was something new. According to these missionaries, God had broken his long silence, revealing and restoring His gospel to a young American prophet by the name of Joseph Smith, inviting all who would receive Him to join the true church. Both James and Louisa accepted the invitation and were baptized in June, 1848, followed by William nine months later in March, 1850, at the age of twelve.<sup>19</sup>

The Page family became very active in the Birmingham Conference of the church, with James ordained as a travelling Elder who "went among the sick, blessing them under the power of God."<sup>20</sup> William's mother often provided food and lodging for missionaries who passed through Birmingham, and the entire family was not only committed to the gospel, but to the goal of eventually gathering with the rest of the Saints in Salt Lake City.<sup>21</sup> The family set aside a few coins every week toward their immigration fund and waited for the day when they could leave for Zion.

The Pages planned to travel together, but by the spring of 1856, there was a very real fear of William being conscripted into the military. With England involved in the Crimean War,<sup>22</sup> James and Louisa were anxious to send seventeen-year old William on ahead to Salt Lake City with friends Joseph and Jane Finch Argyle.<sup>23</sup> As fate would have it, this decision put William in a situation every bit as grave as if he had gone to war.

## Across the Seas

Passage across the Atlantic was expensive enough to require the Pages to take advantage of the Perpetual Emigration Fund, a program set up by the church to enable impoverished members in making the journey. As church funds were limited, members were expected to repay their passage once they were established in Utah. Requesting assistance through the PEF, as it came to be known, meant being selected according to personal worthiness and usefulness of skills, such as William's proficiency with guns. At the last minute, William was accepted as an immigrant in the place of one John Moss, who had recently apostatized from the church.<sup>24</sup>



*A typical dock side scene in the 1850s.*

Travelling with the PEF also meant accepting all possible economies, including steerage accommodations on the ship and being assigned to handcarts instead of wagons to cross the plains. Travel by handcart was a new idea, proposed by Brigham Young himself, who was seeking a way to bring poor Saints across the plains with less expense and in record time. “Start from the Missouri River with cows, handcarts, wheelbarrows, with little flour and no unnecessarys and come to this place quicker, and with less fatigue, than by following the heavy trains with their cumbrous herds which they are often obliged to drive miles to feed,” he wrote.<sup>25</sup> It seemed like a good plan, and for many of the poorest Saints like William, the only way they would be able to make the journey.

William and the Argyles were assigned to immigrate on the sailing ship *Enoch Train*,<sup>26</sup> the first shipload of Saints travelling with the PEF that season. “The day was delightfully pleasant, and all things connected with the clearing of this company seemed peculiarly auspicious,” reported *The Millennial Star* of the ship’s departure.<sup>27</sup> The group of five hundred and thirty four Saints was under the direction of James Ferguson, who helped the passengers arrange their luggage, board the ship and find their quarters. Brother Ferguson also established the daily routine, which included morning and evening prayers, a scheduled list of housekeeping duties and meals, instructive talks and schooling during the day and the occasional wedding, birth or burial at sea. Sunday meetings on deck were accompanied by a lively band.

The *Enoch Train*'s crossing was relatively routine, with mostly clear skies punctuated by a few storms and a touch of sea sickness among the passengers. Younger travelers like William were alternately bored with the daily routine aboard ship and fascinated by the wonders of the sea as porpoises and whales were occasionally spotted. "I grew to love the ocean. Each afternoon I watched the sun sink like a ball of fire beneath the waves," wrote Mary Powell, a young girl who also noted how "the ocean voyage really did get tiresome at times, although we tried to make the best of it."<sup>28</sup>

## Delays

After five weeks and five days on the sea, the *Enoch Train* docked in Boston on the first of May, 1856. The passengers were delighted to find nine omnibuses had been hired to transfer them from Constitution Warf to the nearby rail station in comfort and style. One excited passenger "hoisted a large America flag on the driver's seat at the front of the bus. Our visit to Boston seemed like a happy dream," he remembered.<sup>29</sup> The journey to the trail head at Iowa City took twelve days, where for the next month the immigrants prepared for their departure to Salt Lake City.

During this inaugural year of handcart travel, everyone was overly optimistic about the plan. Five handcart companies were organized to depart from Iowa City with a total of 1,955 members, but preparations almost immediately bogged down due to a variety of problems. Late arrival of the companies in Iowa with more immigrants than expected put a strain on church agents assigned to ready the Saints for their journey. A long string of immigrants languished in tents pitched along the banks of the Iowa River that June while enough carts were built and supplies rounded up by church agents.

The carts themselves were made completely of wood, with hubs fashioned from "iron wood" instead of iron to keep costs down. Axles, spokes and rims were shaped from hickory, while wheel rims were fastened and covered with green hide. Hubs were buffered with leather and the carts, four feet long, three feet wide and eight inches deep, were lined with strips of bed ticking. Some carts were finished with a canvas top similar to those of a covered wagon. Seven-foot pull shafts with a connecting cross bar were added to make pushing or pulling the cart more effective. Each cart was to accommodate five people, with an allowance of seventeen pounds of clothing and bedding per person. Most carts were loaded with around two hundred and fifty pounds of baggage, once tents and cooking utensils were added. Food supplies for the company were transported by wagons, one for every hundred passengers.

The first three handcart companies were finally ready to leave in June. The Argyle family remained with the first company, under Captain Edmund Ellsworth, which departed Iowa City on the 9th of June. William was assigned to Captain James Willie's fourth company, a group of immigrants who "looked more like the population of the poor farm on a picnic than like pioneers about the cross the plains," according to Western historian Wallace Stegner. "Most of them...had never pitched a tent, slept on the ground, cooked outdoors, built a campfire. There were more women than men, more children under fifteen than either. One in every ten was past fifty, the oldest a woman of seventy-eight; there were widows and widowers with six or seven children."<sup>30</sup> William's youth and strength, if not experience, would be sorely needed along the trail.



*Handcarts resembled large wheelbarrows with two wheels five feet in diameter with pull shafts and a crossbar, allowing a man to pull up to 250 pounds of luggage and supplies.*

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> William Page (1838-1863), #KWNV-F66, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) where verification of all vital dates can be found. Also see family group sheets at [www.DaviesDawsonHistory.weebly.com](http://www.DaviesDawsonHistory.weebly.com)
- <sup>2</sup> James Page (1815-1892), #K2H3-Z9Z, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>3</sup> Louisa (Graves or Glaves) Page (1820-1864), #KWJX-56J, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>4</sup> James Page household, 1851 England census, Bordesley, Warwickshire, Aston, St. Andrew, Class: HO107; Piece: 2060; Folio: 683; Page: 9; GSU roll: 87315-87316.
- <sup>5</sup> Martha (Page) Waddoups (1849-1912), #KWJ8-DBC, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>6</sup> Maria (Page) Tingey (1842-1909), #KWV7-GKD, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>7</sup> Marilyn Austin Smith, "James Page and His Family" (typescript, 1981), page 10. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>8</sup> William Page, certified copy of entry of birth, 249256 (1838), County of Warwick, Birmingham, England.
- <sup>9</sup> Smith, "James Page and His Family," 1981.
- <sup>10</sup> Thomas John Page (1843-1912), #KWNK-R84, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>11</sup> Samuel Page (1845-1847), #LZV2-HVF, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>12</sup> Louisa Page (1847-1848) and Louisa Page (1849-1849), #L8SP-XCZ, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>13</sup> Hyrum Page (1850-1910), #KWNV-3JM, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>14</sup> Alma Page (1852-1912), #KWC5-FGQ, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>15</sup> Cyrus Page (1854-1929), #KWN2-1BH, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>16</sup> Orson Page (1856-1934), #KWJF-SZD, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>17</sup> Lorenzo Page (1858-1919), #KWJC-1WQ, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>18</sup> Smith, "James Page and His Family," 1981.
- <sup>19</sup> William was "cut off" from the church for an unspecified reason on 10 April, 1855, when he was seventeen years old, probably for a minor infraction such as neglect of duty or bad conduct. Whatever the conflict, it was resolved and Will was rebaptized two weeks later and ordained a deacon the following October. Smith, "James Page and His Family," 1981.
- <sup>20</sup> Mary Page Nelson, "Life Sketch of James Page," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>21</sup> "History of Louisa Graves Page" undated manuscript, written by an unidentified grandchild. Original held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>22</sup> From 1853 to 1856, Great Britain was allied with France, Turkey and Sardinia in a struggle against Russia's claims of guardianship over Palestinian holy places. Most of the war took place in the Crimea, located on the northern coast of the Black Sea.
- <sup>23</sup> George A Page, "The Life Story of William Page," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>24</sup> Smith, "James Page and His Family," 1981.
- <sup>25</sup> Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1981), page 223.
- <sup>26</sup> William Page entry, *Enoch Train* passenger list, Liverpool to Boston, 23 March, 1856-1 May 1856, [http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:passenger/id:46928/keywords:william+page](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:passenger/id:46928/keywords:william+page)
- <sup>27</sup> *The Millennial Star*, 18:14, 15 April, 1856, page 217-18, [http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:387](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:387)
- <sup>28</sup> Autobiography of Mary Powell Sabin, [http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:387](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:387)
- <sup>29</sup> Letter from James Ferguson, 11 May, 1856

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[http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:387](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:387)

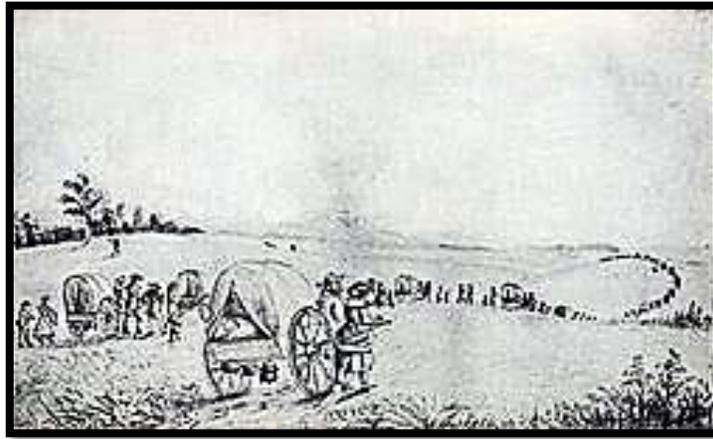
<sup>30</sup>Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail*, page 221.

## Chapter 2

# Ordeal by Handcart

## The Willie Company

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*Mormon handcart pioneers heading west.*

It would be almost another month after the third handcart company left for Salt Lake City before the last two groups were outfitted for their journey. By the time the next wave of immigrants arrived from the east, all of the available carts had been taken by the previous companies. New carts had to be built, but seasoned lumber was increasingly difficult to come by, as were all other provisions. The pioneers of the Willie and Martin companies were forced to wait four weeks in camp while over two hundred fifty handcarts could be hastily made from completely unsuitable green oak.

In the meantime, both companies were organized according to the standard church pattern. Captain Willie's five hundred men, women and children were divided into groups of one hundred, each under the direction of a sub-captain. Every group of one hundred was further separated into smaller parties of twenty, the number which could be accommodated in a communal tent. William was assigned to Tent Five in William Woodward's hundred,<sup>31</sup> where he was paired with one or more of the single women making the trek: thirty-one year old Jane Stewart; twenty-nine year old Elizabeth Panting, travelling with her two small children; and Eliza Whithorn, a forty-two year widow accompanied by her ten year old son. Other members of Tent Five included George and Harriet Humphries and their seven children,

ranging in age from two to nineteen years old; John Richins and his pregnant wife Charlotte; and elderly Chesterton J. Gillman, who in order to be accepted as an immigrant, claimed to be sixty-six years old instead of his actual age of seventy-six, an important fact to be considered since everyone except very small children was expected to walk the nearly fourteen hundred miles to Salt Lake City.

Captain Willie's company was finally ready to pull out of Iowa City on 15 July, followed by the Martin Company on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Behind both handcart companies followed two ox trains carrying supplies. As the handcart pioneers traveled across Iowa, they "presented a singular, and sometimes an affecting appearance," wrote emigrant John Chislett, one of the Willie Company's sub-captains. "The young and strong went along gaily with their carts, but the old people and little children were to be seen straggling a long distance in the rear. Sometimes, when the little folks had walked as far as they could, their fathers would take them on their carts, and thus increase the load that was already becoming too heavy as the day advanced."<sup>32</sup>



*A view of Iowa City, Iowa, in the 1850s.*

Even though the travelers were able to obtain some supplies from local farmers, food was rationed from the beginning. “Besides our flour we had occasionally a little rice, sugar, and bacon, but these items were so small and infrequent that they scarcely deserve mentioning,” recalled Chislett. “Any hearty man could eat his daily allowance for breakfast. In fact, some of our men did this, and then worked all day without dinner and went to bed supperless or begged food at farmhouses as we traveled along.”<sup>33</sup>

Good progress was made by both companies as far as Florence, Nebraska, six miles above Omaha, where preparations were made for the final push across the plains. It was here where some members questioned the wisdom of continuing, given the lateness of the season and the general condition of the group. Most of the church leaders encouraged their people to press forward, arguing that the Lord would soften the elements for their benefit. “The emigrants were entirely ignorant of the country and climate: simple, honest, eager to go to Zion at once, and obedient as little children to the ‘servants of God.’ Under these circumstances it was natural that they should leave their destinies in the hands of the elders,” said Chislett. A minority, sub-captain Levi Savage in particular, advised the Saints to winter over in a safe place, but this opinion “did not meet with general approval,” according to Chislett. Savage, whose knowledge of the country caused him to recommend the rag-tag pioneers settle into winter quarters without delay, was “rebuked by the other elders for want of faith” and out-voted by the majority. Much to his credit, Savage refused to change his opinion, but threw in his lot with the doomed companies, with the remark, “Brethren and sisters, what I have said I know to be true; but seeing you are to go forward, I will go with you, will help you all I can, will work with you, will rest with you, will suffer with you, and if necessary I will with die with you. May God in his mercy bless and preserve us.”<sup>34</sup>

## Bad Luck

When the carts of the faithful pulled out of Florence in the early morning of 18 August, they were twice as heavy as they had been before. One hundred pounds of flour had been added to each cart in an effort to lighten the load for the overburdened supply wagon teams, requiring added toil from the pioneers. At first, travel across the vast American plains was new and exciting. Emma James later remembered the joy she felt as a child with “plenty of time to see the country we were passing through, to run here and there to explore this and that. There were many things to catch the eye in this strange land....When we started out on the trail each morning there was always something new to see. Maybe it was a bird running along the

road which was chased but never did catch. There were always flowers and pretty rocks to pick. This land was so different from the one in England that it kept us interested.”<sup>35</sup> It was easy to dismiss Brother Savage’s dire predictions of oncoming trials and sing the jaunty “Handcart Song” under clear and sunny prairie skies:

*“For some must push and some must pull,  
As we go marching up the hill;  
So merrily on the way we go  
Until we reach the Valley-o!”*

It didn’t take long, however, for the novelty of the landscape to turn into frustration at the mounting and dangerous delays. Almost immediately, the green wood used in the handcarts’ construction began to dry and shrink as the pioneers moved across the more arid climate of the prairies. Dust worked its way into the wheels, sanding away the wooden axels with each turn. Both the Willie and Martin companies were plagued by constant break downs as the carts cracked under the extra weight of the flour and the heat of the prairies. Lengthy delays were required for repairs caused a further loss of precious time.

Time was not all the Saints lost. On the evening of September 4<sup>th</sup> as the company settled in for the night at Wood River, a massive herd of buffalo stampeded through their camp, almost trampling the immigrants to death and causing thirty head of cattle to scatter in terror. William was possibly among the young men immediately sent out to hunt for the cattle, which were needed to pull the supply wagons. Soon after the search party left, a storm moved in with thunder, lightning and heavy winds. “A strong wind tore the tents out of our hands and sent everything flying in all directions,” recalled Emma James. “The rain came down in torrents and in a matter of minutes. We were soaked to the skin. The men came in from the hunt empty-handed, but in time to help gather up our belongings and get ready for our meal. We all went to bed wet and cold. The cattle were never found. Even the tracks had been washed away by the rain.”<sup>36</sup>

The loss of so many cattle was to prove a serious setback for the company. With no oxen or mules to pull the wagons it was now necessary to hitch the milk cows to the wagons. It was a sorry group which started out on the trail next morning. Not only was there now no chance of the Willie Company being able to complete their journey without aid from Salt Lake, but once again, hundred pound sacks of flour were transferred from the wagons to the handcarts to lighten the load for the remaining cattle. The footsore company was still more than seven hundred miles from their destination.

The initial camaraderie felt by the immigrants in Florence was starting to unravel as their burdens increased. A council meeting was held on 7 September in which the Saints were reminded “of the absolute necessity for doing away with the spirit of grumbling, strife, pilfering and disregard of counsel which was now on the increase,” said William Woodward.<sup>37</sup> The patience and tempers of the Saints were tested further ten days later with the onset of “the first frost, which was a sever one,” according to Captain Willie. The sparse allotment of clothing the pioneers were carrying did little to shield them from the cold.

That night, having earlier become lost after straying from the main company, Jane Stewart of Tent Five found herself stranded on the open prairie. She tried her best to sleep on the frost-covered ground, but found it difficult as several wolves gradually crept within two yards of her. One wolf in particular “seemed inclined to be rather too familiar, which she instantly checked by a steady gaze, accompanied by an authoritative shake or wave of her right hand,” recorded the company journal, describing her scare.<sup>38</sup> The next morning, a small party led by Woodard found her as they searched for wood to repair handcart axles. William may have been a member of this group.

By 24 September, the long line of struggling Saints pitched camped near Chimney Rock, Nebraska, the remarkable stone pillar marking the half-way point on the Mormon Trail. It was another fifty-two miles to the supply station at Fort Laramie on the eastern edge of Wyoming, where Captain Willie planned to supplement the company’s dwindling provisions, but by the time the emigrants arrived a week later, only two barrels of crackers remained. Captain Willie immediately cut the flour ration from one pound of flour a day to three-quarters. As their rations grew smaller, the road became more difficult, the weather colder and the carts heavier. Many in the company tried to lighten their loads by throwing out unnecessary belongings, and even necessary ones, such as extra clothing and blankets.

By this time, Brigham Young had been informed of the location and condition of the Willie and Martin companies and called immediately for people to gather food and clothing for the struggling pioneers. Men, wagons and animals were organized into relief teams, and as quickly as possible they headed east.

## Staring at Starvation

In mid-October, the strength of the Willie Company began to fail with the increasing cold and hunger. What was left of their seventeen pounds of clothing and bedding was “altogether insufficient for our comfort. Nearly all suffered more or less at night from the cold,” said Chislett. “Instead of getting up in the morning strong, refreshed, vigorous and prepared for the hardships of another day of toil, the poor Saints were to be seen crawling out from their tents looking haggard, benumbed and showing an utter lack of that vitality so necessary to our success.”<sup>39</sup>

The effects of the dwindling food supply and increasing cold were taking a toll on the old and infirm and deaths began to punctuate the daily routine of breaking camp, struggling through the day, and trying to find some source of comfort for the night. “Life went out as smoothly as a lamp ceases to burn when the oil is gone. At first the deaths occurred slowly and irregularly, but in a few days at more frequent intervals, until we soon thought it unusual to leave a camp-ground without burying one or more persons,” said Chislett. “We had no materials with which to make coffins, and even if we had, we could not have spared time to make them, for it required all the efforts of the healthy few who remained to perform the ordinary camp duties and to look after the sick--the number of whom increased daily on our hands, notwithstanding so many were dying.”<sup>40</sup>

Flour was cut to ten ounces a day as the Willie Company camped at Independence Rock, Wyoming. The next morning, 14 October, the company made its first crossing of the Sweetwater River, which meandered across the plains to such an extent that travelers were forced to ford its waters seven times on their way to South Pass. The nights were turning colder as the company moved farther west and higher in elevation. In the distance they could see snow on the mountains, not just on the peaks, but almost down to the base. Rations were cut again when the company was still a week away from Pacific Springs, where they hoped to find supplies.

Everyone’s clothing had been reduced to rags, their shoes torn and falling apart. Hunger pains were so severe people chewed on pieces of rawhide stripped from the cart wheels. John Oborn recalled, “Our scant rations had reached the point where the assigned amount was consumed in one meal and had to suffice for the day. From here on it is beyond my power of description. God only can understand and realize the torture, privation, exposure and starvation that we went through. We had resorted to eating anything that could be chewed, bark and leaves, from trees. We young ate the raw hide from our boots.”<sup>41</sup>

William often recounted years later how he had dug around in the deep snow to find edible roots and peeled the bark from trees to make a meal. His hunger became so intense at one point that he stole back a pair of buffalo hide moccasins he had made earlier for a woman whose shoes had worn out. He soaked the moccasins in water, removed the hair, boiled them and drank the broth.<sup>42</sup> Another account of this event has him cutting the leather into strips and cooking it over the campfire.<sup>43</sup> William also told of giving his ration of flour to an older woman who shared his cart, who may have been Eliza Whithorn.

The pioneers were in desperate condition as they passed near the present site of Martin's Cove, a little less than half way across Wyoming. It was in this area where Elizabeth Panting, resident of Tent Five, was gathering fuel for the noon fire when she saw a man approaching her out of the wilderness. He led her to a cave where he filled her apron with strips of dried buffalo meat. She left the cave with gratefulness in her heart, but as she turned to thank the man, both he and the cave had disappeared. Elizabeth returned to camp, where she shared the meat with fellow immigrants, probably those travelling with her in the same tent, including William.<sup>44</sup>



*Near South Pass, Wyoming, where the Willie Company huddled in the snow, waiting for rescue teams from Salt Lake City.*

## Snow and Ice

Forging ahead across the plains required continued crossings of the Sweetwater, which became more difficult each time the party pulled its carts through the icy water. “The water was beautiful to the eye, as it rolled over its rocky bed as clear as crystal; but when we waded it time after time at each ford to get the carts, the women, and the children over, the beautiful stream, with its romantic surroundings...lost to us its beauty, and the chill which it sent through our systems drove out from our minds all holy and devout aspirations, and left a void, a sadness, and in some cases, doubts as to the justice of an overruling Providence,” said Chislett.<sup>45</sup> At least one or two people died every day as their strength and will gave out. The company was being followed by wolves as they “traveled on in misery and sorrow, day after day, sometimes going quite a distance, and other times we were only able to walk a few miles.”<sup>46</sup>

The first heavy storm of the season struck on the night of 19 October, covering the ground with almost a foot of snow. “It was a sorry sight, over four hundred people with hand carts, short of bedding, and to sleep on the cold ground. One thought is enough for a lifetime,” said William Woodward.<sup>47</sup> Five people died that day, more than at any one time before, but the next day brought a ray of hope as church emissaries Joseph A. Young and Stephen Taylor rode into the company’s noon camp with news of relief trains on the way from Salt Lake. “More welcome messengers never came from the courts of glory than these two young men were to us,” recalled Chislett. “They lost no time after encouraging us all they could to press forward, but sped on further east to convey their glad news to Edward Martin and the fifth handcart company.”<sup>48</sup>

The last flour ration was issued, along with a barrel of hard bread from Fort Laramie, and two cattle were killed to feed the survivors. “We killed more cattle and issued the meat, but eating it without bread did not satisfy hunger, and to those who were suffering from dysentery it did more harm than good. This terrible disease increased rapidly amongst us during these three days, and several died from exhaustion,” said Chislett. “Before we renewed our journey the camp became so offensive and filthy that words would fail to describe its condition, and even common decency forbids the attempt.... During that time I visited the sick, the widows whose husbands died in serving them, and the aged who could not help themselves, to know for myself where to dispense the few articles that had been placed in my charge for distribution Such craving hunger I never saw before, and may God in his mercy spare me the sight again.”<sup>49</sup>

Since moving ahead was now beyond anyone's ability, it was decided to remain in camp until the coming supply train from Salt Lake met the failing company. The people huddled together in their tents, waiting for deliverance while Captain Willie and two of his men left in search of the relief party. That evening, the "wind howling frightfully and the snow eddying around us in fitful gusts," the Saints found a "good camp among the willows and after warming and partially drying ourselves before good fires, we ate our scanty fare, paid our usual devotions to the Deity and retired to rest with hopes of coming aid."<sup>50</sup>

## Help Arrives

Captain Willie and his companions soon stumbled upon the relief train, directing the men back to the stranded pioneers. They arrived at sunset on the third day, after pulling fourteen fully loaded wagons for miles through the deep snow. "Just as the sun was sinking beautifully behind the distant hills, on an eminence immediately west of our camp several covered wagons, each drawn by four horses, were seen coming towards us. The news ran through the camp like wildfire, and all who were able to leave their beds turned out enmasse to see them. Shouts of joy rent the air; strong men wept till tears ran freely down their furrowed and sun-burnt cheeks," said Chislett<sup>51</sup>

Flour, potatoes, onions and some warm clothing was distributed among the camp. William recalled watching as a driver throw out some old hotcakes which he and another man recovered and ate. "That evening, for the first time in quite a period, the songs of Zion were to be heard in camp, and peals of laughter issued from the little knots of people as they chatted around the fires," said Chislett. "With the cravings of hunger satisfied, and with hearts filled with gratitude to God and our good brethren, we all united in prayer, and then retired to rest."<sup>52</sup>

Their strength and hope renewed, the camp rolled out the next morning on their way to the sixth crossing of the Sweetwater and the ascent at Rock Ridge. "This was a severe day. The wind blew hard and cold," remembered Levi Savage. "The ascent was some five miles long and some places steep and covered with deep snow. We became weary, set down to rest, and some became chilled and commenced to freeze." That night in camp along Strawberry Creek, the men were so exhausted they were unable to pitch the tents, and "men, women and children sat shivering with cold around their small fires," said Savage.<sup>53</sup> Many of the company suffered from feet frozen so badly they were no longer able to walk. Others had frozen fingers and ears, while one woman had lost her sight due to snow blindness. The stricken Saints wrapped themselves closely in whatever was left of the blankets to keep from freezing while they slept.



*William was among the men tasked with burying thirteen fellow pioneers at Rock Creek, Wyoming.*

## Mass Grave

The morning of 23 October dawned on what would become the most tragic day of the journey. The company packed up and prepared to ascend Rocky Ridge, a steep, snow-covered rise where the wind easily sliced through what little protective clothing the people still had. It took most of the day for the faltering pioneers to make it to camp at Rock Creek that night. Chislett was among those assigned to make certain any stragglers were not left behind. "I stopped to speak to each one, cautioning them all against resting, as they would surely freeze to death," he said. "The night was very severe and many of the emigrants were frozen." Chesterton Gillman, the oldest occupant of Tent Five, was one of those who died that night.

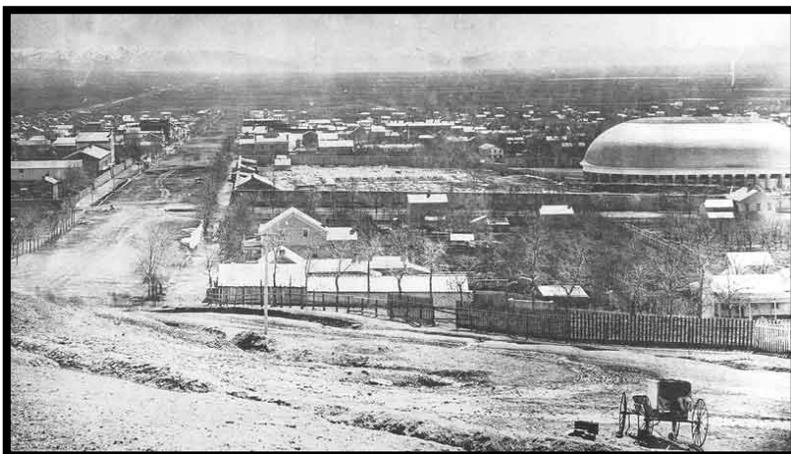
More dead were found the next morning. The day of 24 October was spent resting and burying the dead at Rock Creek. John Chislett, accompanied by two young men, one of whom was William, collected thirteen corpses, "all stiffly frozen. We had a large square hole dug in which we buried these thirteen people, three or four abreast and three deep. When they did not fit in, we put one or two crosswise at the head or feet of the others. We covered them with willows and then with the earth," said Chislett. William recalled two of the men who helped dig the mass grave soon afterwards died themselves, and were buried nearby in a single grave.<sup>54</sup> The scanty

covering of willows and dirt did little to protect the bodies. “I learned afterwards from men who passed that way the next summer, that the wolves had exhumed the bodies and their bones were scattered thickly around the vicinity,” said Chislett<sup>55</sup>

With their dead buried, the Willie Company made ready for their last crossing of the Sweetwater on 26 October. “The day we reached the last crossing of the Sweetwater River I will never forget as long as I live,” said William James. “It was a bitter cold morning... We had forded this river many times but it never seemed so far across. It was about forty feet to the other bank. The water was icy and soon our clothing was frozen to our bodies. Our feet were frozen numb. Cold and miserable, we reached the other bank, put on dry clothing and joined the rest of the company.”<sup>56</sup>

Death didn’t stop with the arrival of the relief trains. Just the opposite was true as the already frozen and starving pioneers spent their last bit of strength pulling themselves and their carts toward Zion. John Chislett reported two or three people dying daily as they followed the last miles of the trail. With little more than ten hours of sunlight a day, travel time was short, even as the weather improved somewhat. The emigrants met with more and more wagons sent from the valley, with most going on toward the Martin Company. With every new rescue wagon, more people were able to ride. Both spirits and health began to improve.

Arriving at Fort Bridger on 2 November, the Willie Company “found a great many teams that had come to our help. The noble fellows who came to our assistance...did all in their power to alleviate our sufferings,” said Chislett.<sup>57</sup> Everyone was able to ride from Fort Bridger onward, although some pioneers continued to pull their meager possessions behind them in carts.



*Overlooking the temple foundation and tabernacle around 1860.*

## Safe in the Valley

It was snowing again by the time the emigrants reached Echo Canyon a few days later. “I remember the rest of the journey as being terrible with the cold and snow, but we did have food and some hope of getting to Zion,” said Emma James.<sup>58</sup> Their hopes were finally realized on Sunday morning, 9 November, as the first wagons rolled into the Salt Lake Valley under bright, sunny skies. They had been on the plains for nearly five months.

The people were weak, frozen, dirty and covered with lice, but overjoyed to be numbered with the Saints. The residents of Salt Lake wasted no time in taking them under their wing. “As soon the company arrived in the City of Great Salt Lake, the bishops of the different wards took every person that was not provided for a home and put them into comfortable quarters,” said Captain Willie. “Hundreds of persons were round the wagons on our way through the city welcoming the company safely home.”

Wagon loads of emigrants straggled into the valley until the end of November. William was among the last, arriving on Thanksgiving Day “almost starved to death,” according to his daughter Annie Colbert.<sup>59</sup> “Henry W. Lawrence took father home with him and Thanksgiving dinner was on the table. Due to Father’s starved condition, the food on the table would probably have killed him, so he wisely took Father through the dining room into a bedroom where he laid down. Slowly he fed Father a portion of a glass of milk and continued to feed him back to life with small quantities until it was safe for him to eat normal food again.”<sup>60</sup> William gradually recovered

his physical strength under the watchful care of Mrs. Lawrence, who fed him bread and molasses for his Christmas dinner and saw to it that he had chores to keep him busy. He was eventually well enough to take over a sheep herd on the flats west of Salt Lake City that winter.<sup>61</sup>

William had not only survived his handcart journey to Zion, but was transformed by it. Almost five months on such a trail of trials removed from him any city habits or dependencies, and honed not only his will to live, but to live the gospel. His testimony was burnished brighter after being tested to the limit. He remained faithful in the face of suffering, despite the assurances by some that “the storms would spare them.” Not all the members of the Willie Company came through their ordeal unscathed. Sub-captain John Chislett became bitter and apostatized from the church. George and Harriet Humphries, William’s companions in Tent Five, also left the church some years later, leaving Utah for Kansas, where they both died.<sup>62</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>31</sup> William Woodward, “History of William Woodward, 1833-1908,” <http://handcart.byu.edu/Sources/WilliamWoodward.aspx>
- <sup>32</sup> John Chislett, “The Tragedy of the Willie Handcart Company in 1856,” <http://user.xmission.com/~nelsonb/willie.htm>
- <sup>33</sup> Chislett, “The Tragedy of the Willie Handcart Company in 1856,” <http://user.xmission.com/~nelsonb/willie.htm>
- <sup>34</sup> Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1981), page 240.
- <sup>35</sup> Loleta Wiscombe Dixon, “Willie Handcart Company and William James,” <http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&sourceId=7434>
- <sup>36</sup> Dixon, “Willie Handcart Company and William James,” <http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&sourceId=7434>
- <sup>37</sup> Woodward, “History of William Woodward, 1833-1908,” <http://handcart.byu.edu/Sources/WilliamWoodward.aspx>
- <sup>38</sup> “Jane Ann Stewart, Willie Handcart Company,” <http://trek.csnorth.org/PioneerAccounts/TellMyStory,Too/WillieHandcartCompany/JaneAnnStewart.pdf>
- <sup>39</sup> Chislett, “The Tragedy of the Willie Handcart Company in 1856,” <http://user.xmission.com/~nelsonb/willie.htm>
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> “The Travels of the Willie Handcart Company,” <http://handcart.byu.edu/>
- <sup>42</sup> George A Page, “The Life Story of William Page,” undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

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- 43 Mary Ann (Page) Colbert, "The History of William Page," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- 44 Elizabeth Crook Panting,  
<http://trek.csnorth.org/PioneerAccounts/TellMyStory,Too/WillieHandcartCompany/ElizabethCrookPanting.pdf>
- 45 David Barkdull, "Timeline of the Willie, Martin Hodgett and Hunt Companies and their Utah Rescuers,"  
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<http://trek.csnorth.org/WillieAndMartinHandcartCompanies/WillieMartinHandcartTimelineOverview.pdf>
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- 58 Dixon, "Willie Handcart Company and William James,"  
<http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&sourceId=7434>
- 59 Mary Ann "Annie" (Page) Colbert (1877-1961).
- 60 Colbert, "The History of William Page," undated typescript.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 All but one of the Humphries children remained in Utah. "Elizabeth Humphries,"  
<http://trek.csnorth.org/PioneerAccounts/TellMyStory,Too/WillieHandcartCompany/ElizabethHumphrys.pdf>

## Chapter 3

# Frontier Life

## Conflict and Courage

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*The broad streets and neat houses of Salt Lake City.*

**B**y the spring of 1857, William had become rugged and hardened, completely transformed from factory worker to frontiersman, willing and ready to build a new life in the desert. Joseph Noble, a bishop and dedicated member of the church, saw to it that William had an opportunity to acquire the farming skills needed to prosper in the territory. Joseph offered William room, board and work with the Noble family, who lived eleven miles north of Salt Lake City in the town of Bountiful.<sup>63</sup>

Although William was ready to settle into a quiet life as a member of Bountiful's rural community, trouble was brewing on a national level which would take him in a different direction. It all began with a series of misunderstandings transforming a simple decision to give Utah Territory a new governor into a year-long string of defensive measures on the part of the Saints as they moved to protect their hard-won homes in the land of promise.

Newly elected president of the United States, James Buchanan, was anxious to take a stand against what the nation saw as “twin relics of barbarism: polygamy and slavery” when he decided to replace Brigham Young with a non-Mormon governor for Utah early in 1857. Believing the population of the state, as well as Young himself, would resist a “Gentile” replacement, Buchanan ordered The Utah Expedition, a military unit commanded by Col. Albert Sidney Johnston, to accompany Alfred Cumming to his new post as governor in Great Salt Lake City.

The news of an occupying army marching toward Salt Lake spurred Governor Young to declare martial law and deploy the local militia to delay and harass the troops, including burning three supply trains and driving hundreds of government cattle to the Salt Lake Valley. These actions forced Johnston’s Army to hole up in rudimentary winter quarters near Fort Bridger, Wyoming, already burned to the ground by Mormon scouts.



*Remnants of a fortification built in Echo Canyon to defend the Saints against Johnston’s approaching army in 1857.*

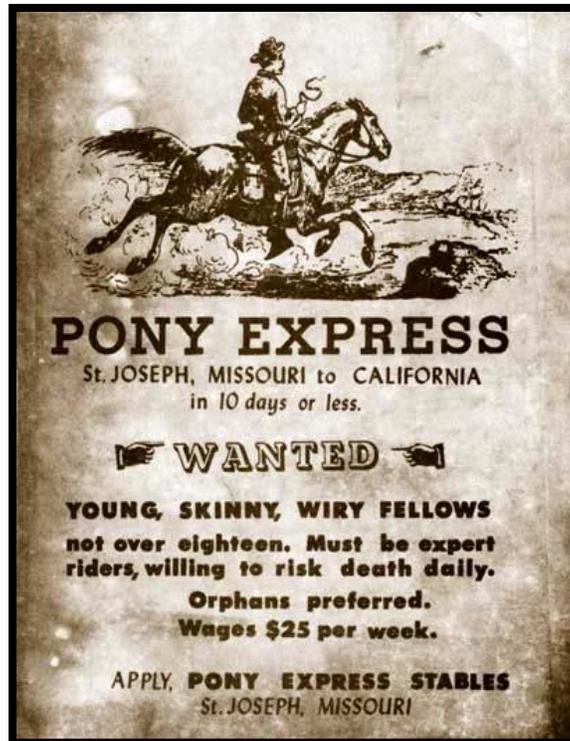
In the meantime, communities across the Wasatch front were called to equip a thousand men for defense across the one hundred miles of mountains separating Johnston's Army from the Salt Lake Valley. William was initially assigned to repair guns in Salt Lake City's Public Workshop, but later that winter he accepted a call to serve under Daniel H. Wells' defensive force in Echo Canyon. William had no soldiering experience, but he knew guns and was ready to protect the people of Zion. He spent the winter camping out along the canyon walls, taking part in the delightfully deceptive scheme of giving Johnston's Army a grossly inflated perception of Mormon forces by peppering the canyon with a series of small rock defenses and glowing campfires.<sup>64</sup>

The need for a militia evaporated later that spring when a series of compromises established a wary peace between the U.S. government and the Saints. Johnston marched his troops forty miles south of the city and eventually withdrew. William and the other defenders returned to their homes.

## Pony Rider

America's large expanse of frontier was shrinking by 1860 as more and more settlers moved west of the Missouri River, but it still took almost three weeks for communications to travel by Wells Fargo coach from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California. Something had to be done to speed things along. The Pony Express was the answer. Under the direction of the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company, an ad was published in newspapers across the west that read, "Wanted-young, skinny, wiry fellows, not over twenty. Must be expert riders, and are willing to risk their lives for the job. Orphans preferred. Wages twenty five dollars a week."

William was one of the wiry young men who answered the ad in Salt Lake City. He was older than many of the riders at twenty-two years of age, but he met the qualifications of "bravery [and] capacity for deprivation and horsemanship" after working on the Noble farm for several years. More than ordinary horsemanship was required to become an Express rider. The Pony Express office in Salt Lake kept an especially wild horse used to test any and all applicants, an animal reportedly so fearsome that "many got faint-hearted when they heard of the horse and didn't try for the job."<sup>65</sup>



Like all Express riders, William was issued a gun, a sheath knife and a Bible. Riders chose their own dress, which usually consisted of “a buckskin shirt, ordinary trousers tucked into high boots, and a slouch hat or cap.”<sup>66</sup> Each rider traveled about one hundred miles night and day at top speed, stopping at a station every twenty-five miles for a fresh horse. At the end of his run, another man was ready to pick up the mail bag, tie it on his horse and start off on the next leg of the journey.

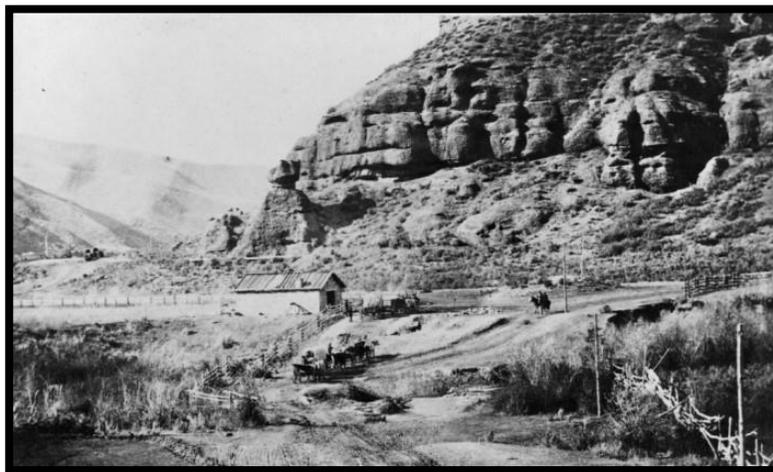
William was also issued a small brass horn to alert station attendants of his impending arrival, but it didn’t take long for William and other riders to substitute instead an unmistakable whoop when they were within hearing distance. “Eep! E-ee-yeep! Yeek!’ rang out in a succession of fierce articulations, what seemed indeed the yells of the Shoshone upon my track!” wrote one observer in 1860.<sup>67</sup>

The pay was only fifty dollars a month, but the adventure alone made the job worthwhile. William was assigned to ride the one hundred fifteen mile run between Salt Lake and Fort Bridger, Wyoming, a route he knew well after his handcart and Utah War experiences. Still, treacherous mountains, barren deserts and hostile Indians added danger and excitement to every ride. During one trip he was followed by an Indian the entire way, who was hoping to acquire William’s new martingale, a harness used to steady a horse’s head. William

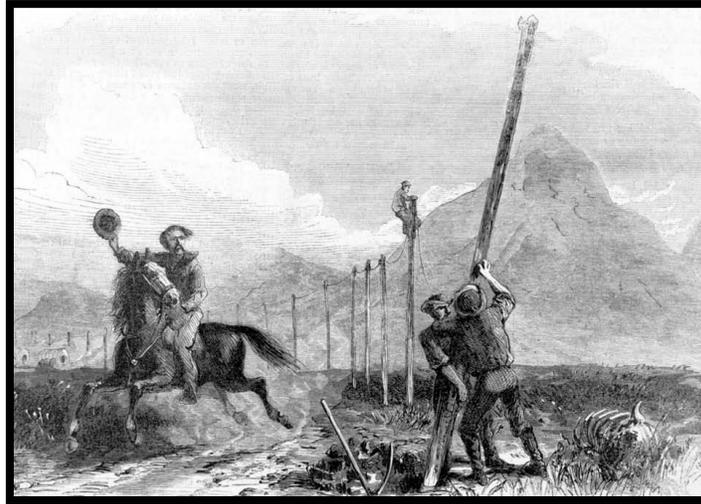
somehow managed to fall behind the native, then “pressed the Indian and horse against the rocks, holding his own horse close to the Indian’s horse. This is the way he rode to the station,” according to his son George.<sup>68</sup> On another day William was chased for several miles by three Indians, who were likely more interested in obtaining his horse as opposed to the mail, but since Express horses were far superior to Indian ponies, William eventually out distanced them.<sup>69</sup>

The weather could be even more life-threatening than hostile Indians. William recalled riding through the mountains once when he encountered a downpour so violent it caused him to lose the trail for a time, but he was determined to uphold the Pony Express motto, “The mail must go through.” He eventually recovered his bearings and drove on to the station. Winter riding brought the risk of blinding snow and subzero temperatures. William arrived at Fort Bridger one day with his clothes completely frozen to his body. Both the station keeper and relief rider were forced to cut the clothes right off of him, then thawed his frosted body by rubbing him with snow before helping him change into warm, dry clothes.<sup>70</sup>

The first letter carried by Pony Express took only ten days to deliver from the office of President Buchanan to the governor of California in Sacramento, a distance of over eighteen hundred miles. Soon saddle bags full of important letters wrapped in oil skin were being raced from coast to coast, including important news such as Abraham Lincoln’s 1860 election to the presidency of the United States. William often told his children of carrying President Lincoln’s inaugural speech west in January of 1861.<sup>71</sup>



*The Echo Canyon Pony Express station, one of the stops on William’s assigned mail route.*



## End of the Trail

*The Pony Express was disbanded only a year and a half after it had begun. While the service was popular with its customers, carrying a total of 34,753 letters over 650,000 miles, the Express was never financially successful for its owners. More importantly, technology surpassed the Express. The transcontinental telegraph from east to west met in Salt Lake City on 16 October, 1861. The Pony Express was no longer needed when information could be sent instantly across the country, but the drama and adventure of the Pony Express made it part of the legend of the American West.*

## “Down and Back” Teamster

The romantic image of the Pony Express was not enough to ensure its survival. Technology promised to outrun even the fastest of riders, and by early 1861, lines for the transcontinental telegraph were already being strung across America’s desert. It was at this same moment when LDS leaders were forced to reconsider their methods of gathering the poor Saints to Utah. With the Perpetual Emigration Fund exhausted and the proven unfeasibility of handcart transportation, alternate means had to be found. “Down and Back” wagon trains were the solution, organized with donated vehicles, teams and supplies sent from Salt Lake City to the trail head in Florence to transport needy emigrants across the west.

Four church trains were ready to leave by the spring of 1861, staffed by trail veterans and volunteer drivers who agreed to make the six-month round trip as part of service to the church. William left the Pony Express to accept a calling as one of the “Utah Boys,” as the teamsters were known, with Captain Joseph Horn’s company. By happy coincidence, this was the same wagon train which would be bringing his parents and siblings to Salt Lake that very summer.<sup>72</sup>

The Horn Company started up Parley’s Canyon 20 April, so early in the season that the sixty-two wagons “traveled over solid snow over the tops of quaking aspen trees without any serious accident,” said fellow driver James Olson.<sup>73</sup> The wagons made good time, averaging eighteen miles a day, arriving in Florence on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. By then, over four thousand hopeful emigrants had converged at the trail head, where they set about organizing themselves for the western trek.

It was a joyful reunion when William finally located his family among the string of wagons and tents. His parents were no doubt surprised at the changes in their son, now a competent frontiersman who set about helping them prepare for the thousand mile walk that lay ahead. While William’s brother Thomas remembered the journey as “tedious,”<sup>74</sup> there was much to interest the European Saints, who were intrigued by a visiting band of Sioux “dressed in war paint and feathers,”<sup>75</sup> and the changing landscape they passed through. What emotions William must have had as he crossed the same trail where he had endured so much suffering five years earlier. Now, full of health and strength, he made the most of the experience. When the company reached Chimney Rock, William joined two other young men in a five mile hike to explore the landmark up close. “We clambered to the top of the ledge and carved our names on the rock and gathered some wild flowers, with three cheers for Brigham and the pioneers and a narrow escape from tumbling rocks,” said Thomas Griggs.<sup>76</sup>

After an encounter with rattle snakes, a few thunderstorms and occasional accidents among the emigrants, the Horne Company pulled into Salt Lake City on 13 September, 1861. The donated wagons and teams were returned to their owners and the Utah Boys, William included, resumed their more routine work of building the kingdom in the valley. For the James Page family, this meant finding temporary housing with the Muir family in Bountiful, where William went back to working on the thrashing machine. It was during the fall harvest that he met the pretty young woman who would become his wife.<sup>77</sup>



*A typical train of pioneers on the western train.*

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>63</sup> Mary Ann (Page) Colbert, “The History of William Page,” undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>64</sup> George A Page, “The Life Story of William Page,” undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>65</sup> Page, “The Life Story of William Page,” undated typescript.

<sup>66</sup> Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, *Riders of the Pony Express* (Salt Lake City, 1947), page 8.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, page 43.

<sup>68</sup> George Albert Page (1875-1935), #KWCZ-MYZ, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org); Page, “The Life Story of William Page,” undated typescript.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Colbert, “The History of William Page,” undated typescript.

<sup>71</sup> Page, “The Life Story of William Page,” undated typescript.

<sup>72</sup> According to William’s son George Albert Page, William “met his parents and returned to Utah with them.” Page, “The Life Story of William Page,” undated typescript. The James Page family is not officially recorded as emigrating with the Joseph Horn Company in 1861, but son Thomas John Page noted the family’s arrival with this wagon train. Thomas John Page, “History of Thomas John Page and His Father, James Page,” undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>73</sup> James Olson, “Autobiographical Sketch,”

<http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=158&sourceId=17524>

<sup>74</sup> Page, “History of Thomas John Page and His Father, James Page,” undated typescript.

<sup>75</sup> Eliza Seamons England, “Pioneer Sketch” (Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Salt Lake City, Utah),

<http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=158&sourceId=21188>

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Cott Griggs, “Journals, 1861-1903,”

<http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=158&sourceId=5369>

<sup>77</sup> Page, “The Life Story of William Page,” undated typescript.

## Chapter 4

# Mary Ann

## On Her Own

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*Leamington Spa was a beautiful and popular resort town favored by the upper classes of Victorian England.*

**M**ary Ann Clark<sup>78</sup> grew up in the in the popular resort town of Royal Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, where several large and ornate spas were frequented by England’s well-to-do, including at one point, Queen Victoria herself. “Taking the waters” in Leamington attracted not only the fashionable and elite by the time Mary Ann was born there in 1841, but the custom led to a growing number of middle class residents, all who required the services of the laboring class.

Mary Ann’s father, James,<sup>79</sup> found work among the city’s many construction projects as a bricklayer and plasterer, while her mother Hannah<sup>80</sup> often took in laundry to make ends meet.<sup>81</sup> Even though the Clark family lived along King Street in the cramped and dirty back-to-back buildings constructed especially to house the poor,<sup>82</sup> they somehow managed to earn enough income to educate their children. Mary Ann was an especially good student who received many prizes for work well done at a Baptist school where she and her younger

siblings Caroline,<sup>83</sup> James,<sup>84</sup> George<sup>85</sup> and Henry<sup>86</sup> were enrolled.<sup>87</sup> Of course, Mary Ann was also taught the traditional homemaking skills of cooking, sewing and keeping house. “She was an excellent seamstress and I can well remember many of the good dishes she would cook for us, especially her Yorkshire pudding. She could make a very tasty meal out of leftovers,” recalled her daughter, Annie.<sup>88</sup>

The Clark’s were faithful and firm in their religion,<sup>89</sup> but Mary Ann began to question the Anglican church at an early age. One day, she accepted the invitation of a friend to hear a lecture by missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mary Ann was immediately struck by the truth of their message and was baptized soon afterwards.<sup>90</sup>

Her parents were so horrified when Mary Ann told them of her conversion they turned their daughter out of their home. Her father, who was especially fond of Mary Ann,<sup>91</sup> tried to persuade her to reconsider her decision, offering her the choice of joining any church except the Mormons, but she refused. Soon after Mary Ann found room, board and a small income ironing clothing for wealthy spa patrons, her mother begged her to come home on the condition that she would “be quite about Mormonism,” but Mary Ann’s mind was made up.<sup>92</sup> She was also committed to joining the rest of the “Saints” in Utah, and Mary Ann looked forward to the day when she could be included in one of the Mormon companies headed for Salt Lake City.



*Mary Ann’s parents James and Hannah Clark*



*Mary Ann Clark*

Mary Ann was just twenty years old when she was assigned to sail with a group of eight hundred LDS immigrants on the *William Tapscott* from Liverpool to New York in May, 1861.<sup>93</sup> She was leaving behind her family and her country, both of which she remembered with fondness the rest of her life,<sup>94</sup> but she may have felt like one of the other young women on the voyage, who said, “I remember leaving father, mother, brothers and sisters. Did I cry? No. I was going to Zion.”<sup>95</sup> The songs of Zion filled the air as the ship pulled away from its dock. “Hundreds of voices—men, women and children—began to sing, ‘Come, Come Ye Saints,’ then ‘Cheer, Saints, Cheer, we are bound for peaceful Zion, Cheer, Saints, cheer, for the free and happy land;’ then ‘Oh, Ye Mountain High in the Clear Blue Sky,’” recalled passenger Isabelle Kunkel. “It was one of the nights I have never forgotten.”<sup>96</sup>

After the initial surge of joy at being on their way, most of the passengers spent the first few days on board trying to find their sea legs. “The first day out was rather rough and the second day rougher, and all the people were seasick,” said fellow immigrant Ebenezer Farnes. “After the fourth day out things on board ship went smooth and some of the people came on deck, other lay in their berths afraid they would die, and others afraid they wouldn’t die.”<sup>97</sup> Soon, however, everyone settled into a routine of cooking meals with rations that included sea biscuits, salt beef, pork, rice, split peas, oatmeal, vinegar, mustard, black tea and brown sugar,<sup>98</sup> followed by meetings and prayers held under the direction of church leaders.

The Saints' prayers became more fervent than ever when the ship passed through a raging storm the third week out that "tore everything down that could be broken," said Ebenezer Farnes. "So bad was the storm that the people had to stay in their beds for three days, the hatchway being closed most of the time, the water being one foot on the first and second decks, washing from one end of the ship to the other and side to side as the ship tossed and rolled."<sup>99</sup> Down below, Mary Ann was among those who wondered if the ship would survive such a tempest. "The waves were mountain high," recalled Isabelle Kunkel. "It was the grandest sight I ever saw, beautiful, but awful in its grandeur. But the havoc in the steerage and in our quarters, too. The buckets, grips, pans and all kinds of cooking utensils and trunks were skating all over the place. A great many of the women and children were frightened nearly to death."<sup>100</sup> The aging ship sprung a leak that required pumping the rest of the way to New York, prompting the captain to remark "that if he had known the condition of the ship he would not have sailed on her but consoled himself that he had a load of Mormons on board and he would get through all right as there had never been a ship lost that was carrying Mormons."<sup>101</sup>

The *William Tapscott* finally sailed into New York harbor on 15 June, after four wearisome weeks at sea. Everyone was required to pass the medical inspection at Castle Garden before boarding a train west to the trail head at Florence, Nebraska, where another long journey awaited them.



*Mary Ann and her fellow immigrants passed inspection upon arrival at New York City's Castle Garden.*



*A Mormon wagon train as it neared the Salt Lake Valley.*

## Setting Out for Utah

Mary Ann was assigned a place in the Horton D. Haight Company,<sup>102</sup> one of the church wagon trains sent from Utah to bring the emigrants to the Salt Lake Valley. Unfortunately, the church trains didn't arrive until four weeks after the emigrants pulled into Florence, so Mary Ann and the other newcomers were forced to wait four weeks in camp until the wagons pulled in. By the time the wagons were prepared to leave, it was already 10 August, a little late in the season, and with more emigrants than had been expected, people were crowded together fifteen to each wagon and twelve to a tent.

Having no family with her, Mary Ann was soon introduced to two other young ladies who became her daily companions. They were placed under the care of sub-captain Israel Barlow, who gave them the task of gathering buffalo chips and other chores to help pay for their food. "Mother often told us the hardest thing she had to do was gather buffalo chips in her dress skirt," said Annie. "One day while the girls were gathering chips far away and unnoticed by the camp, the company moved on without them. At some point, Brother Barlow discovered their absence and hurried back as soon as possible, taking them safely back to the company."<sup>103</sup>

Most of the time along the trail passed with the tedium of daily routines, but occasionally there would be an evening dance in camp after the cooking and cleaning up had been completed. Every so often the company stopped for a day or so near a river where "a general washing and baking day" was declared.<sup>104</sup>



*Great herds of buffalo often cross the Mormon Trail, sometimes causing pioneer stock to scatter and stampede.*

The wild and wide open countryside was astonishing enough for the former city-dwellers, but the appearance of massive buffalo herds on the plains was an experience none of the emigrants ever forgot. “One day as we were travelling along, we stopped to rest,” recalled Christina Marshall. “Captain Haight’s ear caught an unusual sound. He told us to listen. Coming from the west towards us, we could hear a rumbling sound. A buffalo stampede, he explained. He commanded the men to form a circle with the wagons close together. The oxen were put in the center with the men to guard and control them. The women and children were told to huddle on the opposite side of the encampment. Then he rode out on his horse toward the on-rushing rumble. The buffalo were bellowing as they ran, adding to the terror of the situation. The captain shot dead the leader of the herd. The obstruction of this huge body and the sound of the gun caused the herd to divide, part of them going to the right and the rest going to an angle to the left. By the time they reached the encampment, the two herds were far enough apart not to endanger the company... All fully appreciated the bravery of Captain Haight, and often told of it to each other.”<sup>105</sup>

Roving bands of Indians often crossed the trail as the train moved westward, intriguing the pioneers with their “picturesque and interesting costume, together with their bands of various colored ponies, and the squaws bringing up the rear with the lodge poles, tents and camping equipage.”<sup>106</sup> Although the natives did not bother the Mormon trains, the Haight Company saw several places where other less fortunate emigrants had been attacked. “There were stacks of ashes and pieces of wagons, spokes of wheels lying among half-burned and blackened cooking utensils,” said Isabelle Kunkel.<sup>107</sup>

The weather was every bit as formidable as the other dangers encountered on the plains. From scorching summer temperatures to a dusting of snow as they neared the mountains, the emigrants experienced “all kinds of weather—hot, cold and warm; wind, rain, snow and frost.”<sup>108</sup> Walking over so many miles led to “much distress and suffering among the Saints,” said Joseph Yates, who remembered women and children trudging “many wear miles every day, without much rest, under the blazing hot sun, and through the blistering sand, causing the feet of these pilgrims to chafe and bleed and blister. To add to their suffering most of the Saints wore heavy shoes, with very stout soles, filled with large hobnails.”<sup>109</sup>

## Hobbled by Hobnails

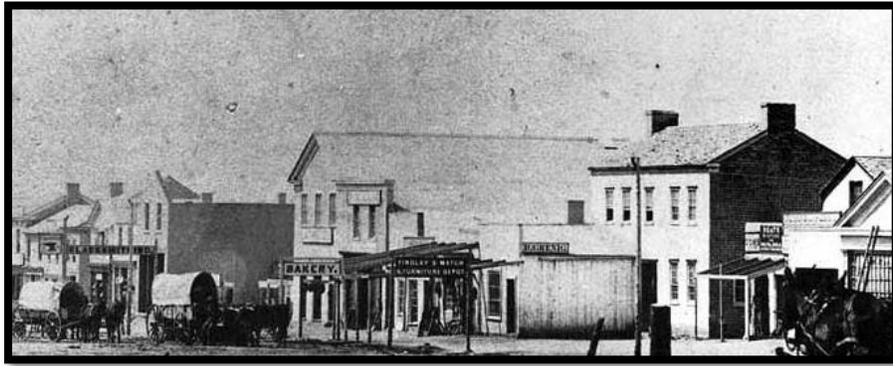
*Many people prolonged the life of their shoes and boots by installing short, thick nails in regular patterns over the soles. Sometimes these hobnails were teamed with horseshoe shaped heel and toe pieces made of iron. While these additions increased the traction and durability of leather footwear, they also added a considerable amount of weight to each step.*



## Arriving in Salt Lake City

The company of six hundred and five Saints finally arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on 19 October, 1862, five months after leaving England. The wagons were pulled to the center of the city where emigrants were either met by family members or assigned to an already established household. Mary Ann was driven north seventeen miles to the small village of Farmington, where she was welcomed into the home of President John W. Hess.

It was dark by the time Mary Ann arrived. She was stunned by the primitive living conditions she found herself in. The Hess cabin had a dirt floor, a dirt roof and only a few primitive furnishings. A dry goods box had been turned over for use as a table, surrounded by tree stumps for the chairs. The bed had been made by putting in a post and using the corner of the house for the other legs. Raw hide was stretched over and across for springs, with only a straw tick mattress for comfort. Mary Ann resigned herself to staying over for the night, thinking that in the morning she would find a better situation. The next morning she woke up early and went out doors. “To her surprise, all the homes were like the one she was in, and she couldn’t help crying,” said Annie. “President Hess came out and comforted her and blessed her and promised her she would never regret coming to America.”<sup>110</sup>



*Covered wagons roll down Salt Lake City's Main Street in 1862.*

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>78</sup> Mary Ann (Clark) Page (1841-1925), #KWNV-F6X, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>79</sup> James Clark (1820-1878), #LCZJ-PKV, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>80</sup> Hannah (Tustin) Clark (1818-1890), #LCXB-G9N, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>81</sup> James Clark household, 1851 England census, Leamington, Warwickshire, St. Mary, Class: *HO107*; Piece: 2072; Folio: 610; Page: 30; GSU roll: 87337-87338. See also: James Clark household, 1861 England census, Leamington, Warwickshire, St. Mary, Class: *RG 9*; Piece: 2223; Folio: 38; Page: 22; GSU roll: 542938.
- <sup>82</sup> James Clark is shown living at numbers 18, 63 and 66 King Street between 1851 and 1878. See James Clark household, 1851 England census, Leamington, Warwickshire, St. Mary, Class: *HO107*; Piece: 2072; Folio: 610; Page: 30; GSU roll: 87337-87338. See also James Clark household, 1861 England census, Leamington, Warwickshire, St. Mary, Class: *RG* and James Clark entry, England and Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966. [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)
- <sup>83</sup> Caroline (Clark) Herritage (1844-1927), #KWNV-F6X, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>84</sup> James Clark (1847-1923), #LH^H-4L8, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>85</sup> George Clark (1849-1915), #LC6B-6XP, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>86</sup> Henry Clark (1854-1929), #KCGX-82M, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>87</sup> Mary Ann (Page) Colbert, "The History of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies. See also James Clark household, 1851 England census, Leamington, Warwickshire, St. Mary, Class: *HO107*; Piece: 2072; Folio: 610; Page: 30; GSU roll: 87337-87338.
- <sup>88</sup> Colbert, "The History of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>89</sup> Sarah Page Kissell, "Life of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>90</sup> The date given on the James Clark family group sheet is 3 July, 1852, which would mean Mary Ann was baptized two days before her eleventh birthday. A more likely date is 4 July, 1860, given by Mary Ann's daughter. Colbert, "The History of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>92</sup> Kissell, "Life of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>93</sup> Mary Ann Clark, *William Tabscott*, Liverpool to New York, 14 May-15 June, 1842, passenger list, [http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:voyage/id:435/keywords:mary+ann+clark](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:voyage/id:435/keywords:mary+ann+clark)
- <sup>94</sup> Colbert, "The History of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>95</sup> Autobiography of Caroline E.W.W. Larrabee, [http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:1288/keywords:mary+ann+clark](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:1288/keywords:mary+ann+clark)
- <sup>96</sup> Letter from Isabelle Price Kunkel to her daughter, [http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:1287/keywords:mary+ann+clark](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:1287/keywords:mary+ann+clark)
- <sup>97</sup> Reminiscences of Ebenezer Farnes [http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:1283/keywords:mary+ann+clark](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:1283/keywords:mary+ann+clark)
- <sup>98</sup> Autobiography of Caroline E.W.W. Larrabee [http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:1288/keywords:mary+ann+clark](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:1288/keywords:mary+ann+clark)
- <sup>99</sup> Reminiscences of Ebenezer Farnes

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[http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:1283/keywords:mary+ann+clark](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:1283/keywords:mary+ann+clark)

<sup>100</sup> Letter from Isabelle Price Kunkel to her daughter,

[http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:1287/keywords:mary+ann+clark](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:1287/keywords:mary+ann+clark)

<sup>101</sup> Reminiscences of Ebenezer Farnes

[http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:1283/keywords:mary+ann+clark](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:1283/keywords:mary+ann+clark)

<sup>102</sup> Mary Ann Clark, The Horton. D. Haight Company, 10 August-19 October, 1862, passenger list, <http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/companyPioneers?lang=eng&companyId=134>

<sup>103</sup> Colbert, "The History of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.

<sup>104</sup> Isabelle Price Kunkel, "To My Dear Nellie May, 6 February, 1922,"

<http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=134&sourceId=19098>

<sup>105</sup> Christina Burt Marshall, "Reminiscences,"

<http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=134&sourceId=24636>

<sup>106</sup> Joseph Yates, "Autobiographical Sketch and Genealogy, 1911,"

<http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=134&sourceId=17898>

<sup>107</sup> Isabelle Price Kunkel, "To My Dear Nellie May, 6 February, 1922,"

<http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=134&sourceId=19098>

<sup>108</sup> Ann Sharp Galbraith, "Ann Sharp Galbraith, Pioneer of 1862, Autobiography,"

<http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=134&sourceId=18738>

<sup>109</sup> Joseph Yates, "Autobiographical Sketch and Genealogy, 1911,"

<http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=134&sourceId=17898>

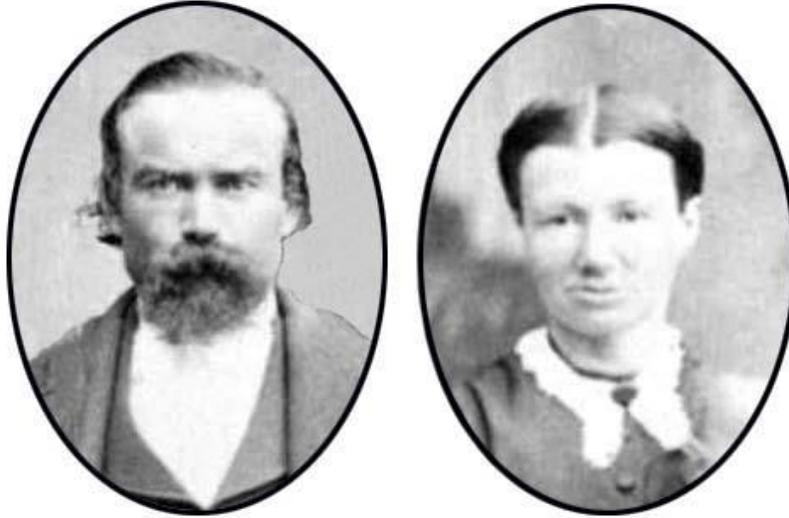
<sup>110</sup> Colbert, "The History of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.

## Chapter 5

# Family Life

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### Building the Kingdom



*William and Mary Ann Page*

**M**ary Ann lived with the Hess family for three weeks until she was offered more permanent lodging in the Bountiful home of the Roberts family, where she soon went to work sewing for the Roberts, Muir, Marshall and Noble households. One day as she was working at the Muir home, Mary Ann noticed as a tall young man with sandy hair and blue eyes entered the room, covered from head to toe with straw and dust. Not only was he dirty, but very rough and unshaven. There was something familiar about this man. Even though she had never met William Page, she had seen someone just like him several years before in the “peep stone” of a fortune teller back in England. Mary Ann and a girlfriend, wanting to know who their future husbands would be, were instructed by the fortune teller to gaze into the peep stone to find the answer. Mary Ann was horrified to see the image of a rough and unshaven man, covered with straw and dust. She vowed indignantly that she would never marry such a man, and put the image out of her mind.<sup>111</sup>

But now, here was the very man, standing right in front of her. Not only was William rumped and dirty, he couldn't even read or write. It didn't take long for William to overcome this unfortunate first impression, however, and soon Mary Ann was happily instructing her future husband in his letters by the light of a sagebrush fire.<sup>112</sup> Six months after their first meeting, William and Mary Ann were married in Bountiful, on 24 March, 1863.



*The small house where Louisa (Graves) Page died and Louisa Clark Page was born during the same night.*

## Settling In

William and Mary Ann decided to join William's parents a few weeks later in moving to a small settlement forty miles farther north in Box Elder County. Three Mile Creek<sup>113</sup> was little more than a collection of log cabins and farmer's fields nestled against the foothills of the towering Wasatch Mountains. The village was small for good reasons: repeated Indian unrest, unpredictable weather and a lack of irrigation water contributed to the pioneer's problems.<sup>114</sup> After only a few months trying to establish themselves at Three Mile Creek, the Page clan returned to Bountiful that fall, walking the entire way.<sup>115</sup>

The coming winter proved to be a difficult one. William, Mary Ann, James, Louisa and their eight remaining children, ranging in age from eighteen months to twenty years old, somehow crowded together in a one room house.<sup>116</sup> Mary Ann found the next few months particularly trying, as she was not only pregnant with her first child, but tended both to the household duties and her gravely ill mother-in-law, who had come down with "black canker," as diphtheria was then known. Louisa, whose health had been broken since the birth of her fourteenth child almost two years before, was quickly overcome by a

high fever and difficulty in breathing. She died during the night of 22 March, 1863, while Mary Ann was struggling with labor pains in the opposite corner of the room. Mary Ann gave birth the next morning to a baby the family named Louisa,<sup>117</sup> after the infant's grandmother.

William worked all that winter to build a log cabin, and soon his little family had a home of their own. It was there where Mary Ann gave birth to her second daughter, Caroline,<sup>118</sup> in early February, 1866. It wasn't uncommon for leaks to appear in the dirt roof of any log cabin, so when Mary Ann felt water dripping on her the morning after Caroline was born, the midwife simply set out pots and pans around the bed to catch the running snowmelt. Suddenly, the women heard the rafters crack under weight of the snow and knew disaster wasn't far off. Mary Ann sent for William, who was in the process of setting a brace under the roof when it caved in entirely.<sup>119</sup> Fortunately, no one was hurt, but the young family was forced to relocate until repairs were made. Two more little girls, Martha<sup>120</sup> and Avildia,<sup>121</sup> later joined the family under the stronger new roof.

A new house was what the Page family really needed, and by 1871, William was finally able to purchase a six-acre parcel of land at Fifth South and Fifth West in Bountiful<sup>122</sup> where he built a four-room adobe home.<sup>123</sup> With the birth her fifth child, Rose,<sup>124</sup> Mary Ann was looking forward to having the stability of a fine new home, but just after settling in, William was called on a mission for the church.

## Invasion

*1867 was a bad year for the settlers. In addition to the usual struggle against weather and lack of water, Utah farmers were faced with a disastrous grasshopper plague. Neighbors banded together in a desperate attempt to defeat the insects by dragging brush and other objects through the fields in hopes of destroying them. Only burning and beating them proved effective. By July, winds blew most of the insects into the Great Salt Lake, but the damage was already done. Harvests were light and winter food supplies sparse. "That winter was a very hard one and they lived on dry bread with two small onions to rub on the bread for flavor," said Mary Annie. William was seen to "pick up his little Louise and tell her she would not starve." Seeing hunger in his small children's eyes must have been particularly painful for William, whose memory of wasting away on the plains was still strong.*



*Mary Ann standing in front of the new brick home William built for her on Fifth South and Fifth West in Bountiful.*

## Mission to Arizona

Brigham Young's plans for colonizing Arizona had been limited to sending small exploratory parties to the territory in search of possible town sites until 1873, when the first effort at large scale permanent settlement was organized. William was selected as one of the two hundred men called by the church to join Horton D. Haight's company, with the goal of "settling the land, sending for their wives and children as soon as they had shelter for them," said George.<sup>125</sup>

Accepting such a call meant great sacrifice for William and Mary Ann, who now had five little girls to care for as well as a new farm. Not only would William be leaving Mary Ann to manage their family and farm by herself, but to do so without a wagon and team, as each man was required to provide his own transportation. How Mary Ann was going to cope, she wasn't sure, but both husband and wife agreed to rely upon the Lord to provide. Mary Ann didn't know it, but she was pregnant with her sixth child by the time William left for Arizona that March. Thanks to the "kindness of the church and her neighbors and the help of her little girls, Mother managed the farm,"<sup>126</sup> said Annie.

The Haight Company met with little success in Arizona. After crossing the Colorado River at Lee's Ferry, nine miles south of the Utah border, the party continued across the vast, dry plateau. Instead of finding potential spots for settlement, they encountered only a

surprising barrenness of land with little water. One member of summarized the region as “no place fit for a human being to dwell upon...the most desert lukkin place that I ever saw, Amen.”<sup>127</sup> The company abandoned the expedition after nine months. William was home in time for the birth of his first son, William James,<sup>128</sup> in January, 1874.



*The Page family in 1878 (left to right): Avildia, Mary Ann holding Mary, Martha, William holding George, Caroline, William James, Louisa, Rose Ellen.*

## Valiant in the Work

Five more children were born to the Pages over the next ten years: George, Mary Annie, Agnes,<sup>129</sup> Mabel<sup>130</sup> and John.<sup>131</sup> Both Mary Ann and William took on extra work to support their growing family. Mary Ann churned butter and prepared surplus produce from her garden for sale in Salt Lake City. She spent many hours gathering vegetables, eggs and chickens, then loaded them into the wagon, and peddled the produce from house to house.<sup>132</sup>

William opened an adobe yard in South Bountiful where he found enough good quality clay to make bricks for quite a few years to come. He installed a large wooden auger over a shallow pit in which he mixed chopped straw and water, shaping the mud into bricks with wooden forms. Once dried in the hot sun, adobe bricks were excellent building material for a number of homes and public buildings around town. William was known to accept produce for payment, due to the

scarcity of cash, some of which was added to Mary Ann's peddling wagon.<sup>133</sup> He also donated his labor and bricks toward the building of Bountiful's beautiful tabernacle on Main Street.<sup>134</sup>

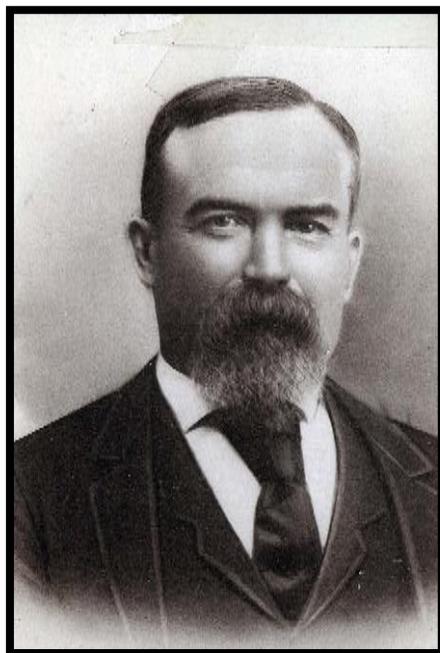
Several years later when the Bountiful LDS ward was divided, William was called as assistant superintendent of the new Sunday school, an office he held as long as he lived. He also served as a home missionary for many years,<sup>135</sup> and was an assistant in the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association.<sup>136</sup> Although William was never a polygamist, he supported plural families during the 1870s and 1880s when U.S. federal agents were sent to Utah to arrest practicing polygamists for "unlawful cohabitation." William was called to visit the imprisoned men, relaying food, clothing and personal messages to them. "This brought much comfort to both them and their wives," said George.<sup>137</sup>

Mary Ann also accepted church callings throughout her life. She became a Relief Society visiting teacher soon after the birth of her first child,<sup>138</sup> later taking the office of secretary of the women's organization. She spent many years as Relief Society president, a time-consuming position requiring her to spearhead dances, fund-raising bazaars, and projects such as producing hand-made rag carpeting.<sup>139</sup> Mary Ann was also on call to sit with sick members and prepare bodies of the dead for burial.<sup>140</sup>

## Indulgence

*Even though he was never wealthy, William was a loving father who wanted the best for his children.*

*Mabel Benson Peterson recalled a story her mother, Mable Page, told about a shopping trip to Salt Lake City "where she saw a little pair of red shoes. She thought they were the cutest things in the world and her dad [William] bought them for her, but they were too small for her. She said, 'I never would have told him that because I wanted them so badly.'"*



*William Page*

## Just the Ticket

As if raising her children, marketing produce and serving in the church wasn't enough, Mary Ann took on civic responsibilities, as well. Because she was fortunate enough to have been educated as a child, she felt strongly about giving her own children the same opportunity. In addition to working with them directly on their studies, she was eventually elected school trustee for District One, the first female school board member in Davis County, a position she held for seven years.<sup>141</sup>

Politics were also of great importance to Mary Ann and she did much to promote the cause of Woman's Suffrage.<sup>142</sup> Utah was ahead of its time in granting women the right vote. Only women in the territory of Wyoming were allowed at the ballot box by the time Utah's legislature signed its own bill in 1870. Unfortunately, that right was revoked by Congress in 1887 as part of the Edmunds Tucker Act and the national effort to eliminate polygamy. Restoring the right to vote required a forceful campaign, one organized and directed mostly through local Relief Society chapters and Woman's Suffrage Associations. Already heavily involved with the Relief Society, Mary Ann became an executive member of Bountiful's Woman's Suffrage Association in February, 1892.<sup>143</sup> Progress was stalled until 1890, when the Manifesto officially ended plural marriage, paving the way

for statehood. Mary Ann contributed a great deal of time and work to ensure the vote was included in Utah's new constitution. Lengthy debates and arguments ensued for months, but women's suffrage was finally approved in 1895.

At the same time his wife was politically active, William was repeatedly elected as a Davis County judge,<sup>144</sup> and as a long-term school trustee, was involved in constructing a new building.<sup>145</sup> William was a member of an executive committee formed in 1893 to encourage manufacturing businesses, including a copper smelter, to locate in Bountiful.<sup>146</sup> William and Mary Ann worked on a committee assigned to prepare an exhibit from Davis County for the World's Fair of 1900,<sup>147</sup> and both husband and wife served on the Davis County Democratic Committee, of which William was chairman.<sup>148</sup> At one point, William even had a position as district coroner.<sup>149</sup>

William took it upon himself to initiate Old Folk's Day parties in Bountiful and Mary Ann joined him on the planning committee, working to "make the aged enjoy themselves once a year," said George.<sup>150</sup> Old Folk's Day, a popular state-wide annual holiday set aside to honor the elderly, required "great preparations and meticulous arrangements" each year. "Old Folk's Choirs" were assembled to entertain them on their excursions. Donations of funds, food, and prizes were solicited from local organizations. The Bountiful committee collected thirty-two prizes for the 1893 celebration, "consisting of hats, shawls, dress patterns, hoods and gloves," according to *The Davis County Clipper*. "The prizes were all numbered, mixed and then drawn by both ladies and gentlemen. This made lots of fun as sometimes the ladies would get hats or suspenders, and the gentlemen dress patterns, hoods, etc."<sup>151</sup> A dinner, dance and "amusing exercises" were also part of the evening.



*An Old Folk's Day celebration at Farmington's Lagoon Amusement Park.*



*Back row, left to right: Avildia, George, Rose Ellen, Mary Annie, Martha, William James, Caroline. Front: William, John, Agnes, Louisa, Mabel and Mary Ann.*

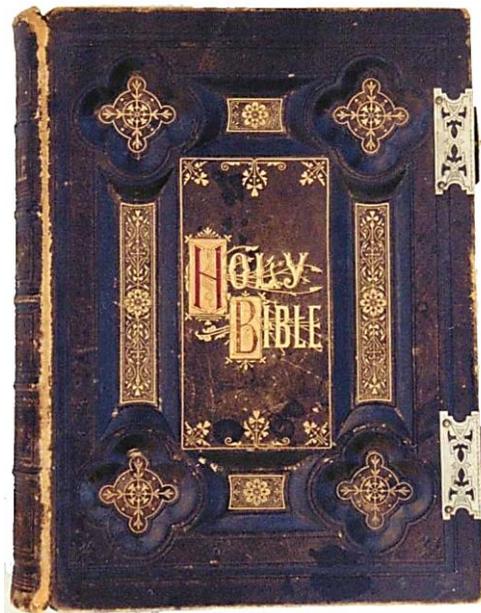
## Water Master

Of all the positions William held over the years, the most important and most difficult was his appointment in 1879 as Water Master on the Mill Creek South Fork.<sup>152</sup> Control and distribution of water in Utah's semi-arid climate was vital for every farmer along the Wasatch front. The limited water supply was necessarily rationed and assigned by turns, which might come at any time, day or night. It was not uncommon for farmers to circumvent the system, sometimes redirecting irrigation flow in the middle of the night. It was up to William as Water Master to referee any disputes in the daily management of the system, something he was skilled at, thanks to his reputation for honesty.<sup>153</sup> Still, any disagreement was known to result in strong emotions and raised voices.

William had been reelected water master for fourteen years by the early summer of 1893. At the age of fifty-five, he was not considered old, but his heart had been giving him trouble "for some weeks past," reported the local newspaper, which noted William had "apparently passed out of danger and was so far recovered as to attend to his usual duties" in the late afternoon of 28 May, when he accompanied Mary Ann on a buggy ride. As the Pages passed one of the streams under William's charge, he noticed a farmer "turning the stream out of its proper channel, and got out of his buggy to correct the man." Enough strong words were exchanged to draw a small crowd, and as William

returned to his buggy, he suddenly fell to ground. Horrified onlookers tried to revive him, but William had “breathed his last. The coroner was sent for immediately, but it was not necessary to hold an inquest, as he had been under medical treatment for heart disease and been cautioned to avoid excitement.”<sup>154</sup>

William’s funeral service four days later was widely attended. The entire Sunday school marched in front of the horse-drawn hearse all the way from his home to the South Bountiful meeting house. Noted LDS author and church leader B.H. Roberts was the principle speaker during the services. “He paid my father many compliments, among them one of which I often think, ‘He was indeed a diamond in the rough.’ He was much loved by all who knew him and was especially a favorite among the young people. He has left a heritage that will long be remembered,” said Annie.<sup>155</sup> A cortege of eight-five buggies and wagons following his remains to the Bountiful cemetery, where little Mable “was allowed to put a fuchsia blossom on his lapel.”<sup>156</sup>



*The Page family Bible, in which Mary Ann recorded births and deaths.*



*Mary Ann (Clark) Page*

## Posterity

Mary Ann was stunned at the sudden death of her husband. At the age of only fifty-two, she was left a widow with eight children still at home: Louisa, twenty-nine; Rose, twenty-one; William, nineteen; George, eighteen; Annie, sixteen; Agnes, fourteen; Mable, ten; and John, nine.<sup>157</sup> She had no choice now but to run the farm and finish raising the children by herself. One of the first details the newly widowed mother attended to was making sure the five older children gathered around an altar in the Salt Lake Temple, where they were sealed to their parents five months to the day after William's death.<sup>158</sup>

While shepherding her children into adulthood wasn't easy, Mary Ann was eventually blessed to see them leave home for lives of their own. Will married Rowena Hepworth<sup>159</sup> in 1902, followed by a flurry of four marriages in a little over a year, with three members of the Page family married three siblings from the Colbert family: Mary Annie was wed to James Colbert,<sup>160</sup> 19 April, 1905; George to Mary Ann Colbert,<sup>161</sup> 19 August, 1905; and Agnes to John Colbert,<sup>162</sup> 14 June, 1906. Mabel married John Benson<sup>163</sup> 24 May 1905; John, the youngest, married Mary Bingham<sup>164</sup> in 1918.



*Mary Ann in her later years.*



*Four generations: Mary Ann with one of her daughters, granddaughters and great granddaughters.*

At the age of sixty-four, Mary Ann was ready to retire from the farm altogether, selling it George the year he was married.<sup>165</sup> Only Rose remained at home to care for her mother as she gradually lost her strength with age. Seven years later Mary Ann suffered a stroke paralyzing her right side.<sup>166</sup> “She had always made such beautiful pieces of embroidery such as the old-fashioned Battenberg pillow tops and table scarves. After her stroke, her arm lay useless in her lap. When she walked, she dragged her right leg,” said granddaughter Sarah Kissell.<sup>167</sup> It wasn’t too long before Mary Ann was confined to a wheelchair,<sup>168</sup> where she continued to rely on Rose to take care of her. Rose, who was also a practical nurse,<sup>169</sup> spent “many long hours reading books, poetry and newspapers to her,” said Sarah.<sup>170</sup>

Mary Ann’s eightieth birthday was celebrated by eighty of her descendants at a party held in her honor at Salt Lake City’s Liberty Park in July, 1921.<sup>171</sup> Mary Ann delighted in her fifty-four grandchildren, and they loved her in return. “As a child of about eight years old, I remember lying on her couch, telling her stories in which I was always the princess or the hero,” said Sarah. “One day, she asked me if I knew what telling untruths was. I was stopped in my daydreams long enough to tell her, yes, what happened was the truth, but what I told as stories was made up. She was so kind to me. I will never forget her.”<sup>172</sup>

Mary Ann’s health gradually faded as she approached her eighty-fourth year, until death took her with a final stroke on 11 Jun, 1925.<sup>173</sup> She was buried next to her husband in the Bountiful City Cemetery.



*William and Mary Ann’s grave in the Bountiful City Cemetery (B-8-31-3).*

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>111</sup> Sarah Page Kissell, "Life of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>112</sup> Mary Ann (Page) Colbert, "The History of William Page," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>113</sup> The name of Three Mile Creek was changed to Perry in 1898.
- <sup>114</sup> Frederick M. Huchel, *A History of Box Elder County* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1999), page 373.
- <sup>115</sup> George A Page, "The Life Story of William Page," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>116</sup> Colbert, "The History of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>117</sup> Louisa Clark (Page) Bartlett (1864-1921), #KWVS-RR1, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>118</sup> Caroline Hannah (Page) Knapton (1866-1928), #KWCS-Y3C, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>119</sup> Colbert, "The History of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>120</sup> Martha Jane (Page) Simpson (1867-1942), #KWNZ-KYK, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>121</sup> Avildia Lucina (Page) Odd (1870-1955), #KWJP-4YX, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>122</sup> Arlene H. Eakle, *Wood Cross: Patterns and Profiles of a City* (Woods Cross City Council, Peter J. Rabe Graphic and Photo Art, Salt Lake City, Utah 1976), end map.
- <sup>123</sup> The house stood at 520 South 5th West. Page, "The Life Story of William Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>124</sup> Rose Ellen (Page) Bryson (1872-1948), #KWJJ-K8G, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>125</sup> Page, "The Life Story of William Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>126</sup> Colbert, "The History of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>127</sup> H. Dean Garrett, "The Honeymoon Trail," <http://www.stgeorgetemplevisitorscenter.info/temple/honeymoon.html>
- <sup>128</sup> William James Page (1874-1921), #KWCF-YQG, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>129</sup> Agnes Amelia (Page) Colbert (1879-1906), #KW8W-VZH, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>130</sup> Mabel (Page) Benson (1882-1905), #KWC8-MFG, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>131</sup> John Henry Page (1884-1943), #KW8S-6KQ, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>132</sup> According to granddaughter Sara Kissell, "When Mary Ann retired, one customer remarked that she had traded with Mary Ann for twenty-five years." Kissell, "Life of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>133</sup> Annie Call Carr, editor, *East of Antelope Island* (Salt Lake City: Publisher's Press, 1948), page 402.
- <sup>134</sup> Colbert, "The History of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>136</sup> Carr, *East of Antelope Island*, page 170.
- <sup>137</sup> Page, "The Life Story of William Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>138</sup> Kissell, "Life of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>140</sup> Colbert, "The History of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>141</sup> Mabel Benson Peterson, "Life Sketch of Mary Ann Clark Page," May, 1992. Copy held Shelley Dawson Davies. See also: Kissell, "Life of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>142</sup> Mary Ann Clark was listed in the "Woods Cross Hall of Fame, 1880," for receiving a special award for women's rights. Arlene H. Eakle, *Wood Cross: Patterns and Profiles of a City* (Woods Cross City Council, Peter J. Rabe Graphic and Photo Art, Salt Lake City, Utah 1976), page 33.
- <sup>143</sup> Eakle, *Wood Cross: Patterns and Profiles of a City*, page 38.

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- <sup>144</sup> *The Deseret News*, 16 July, 1891; 18 August, 1880; 28 July, 1886; 29 May, 1893.
- <sup>145</sup> *The Davis County Clipper*, 20 May, 1892.
- <sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, 2 March, 1893.
- <sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, 22 December, 1892.
- <sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, 16 April, 1892. See also: Colbert, "The History of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>149</sup> *The Davis County Clipper*, 1 June, 1893.
- <sup>150</sup> Page, "The Life Story of William Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>151</sup> *The Davis County Clipper*, 2 March, 1893.
- <sup>152</sup> William received ten cents per acre for his services. Carr, editor, *East of Antelope Island*, page 159.
- <sup>153</sup> Page, "The Life Story of William Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>154</sup> *The Davis County Clipper*, 1 June, 1893.
- <sup>155</sup> Colbert, "The History of William Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>156</sup> Interview, Mabel Benson Peterson by Janice (Page) Dawson and Marilyn (Page) Bennett, 19 September, 2003.
- <sup>157</sup> Caroline was married six years earlier in 1887; Avildia and Martha were both married in 1890.
- <sup>158</sup> 28 September, 1893. William and Mary Ann were sealed 24 March, 1873. Their last five children were born in the covenant. "William Page-Mary Anne Clark family group sheet," supplied in 1979 by Cleo (Hales) Page. This sheet offers list of well researched original documents.
- <sup>159</sup> Rowena (Hepworth) Page (1877-1930), ##KWCF-YQP, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>160</sup> James Jennings Colbert (1880-1939), #KWCD-5NF, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>161</sup> Mary Ann (Colbert) Page (1878-1957), #KWCZ-MY8, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>162</sup> John Henry Colbert (1882-1947), #KWJ5-4PW, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>163</sup> John Perry Benson (1883-1956), #KWC8-MF2, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>164</sup> Mary Lucinda (Bingham) Page (1883-1940), #KW8S-6KS, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>165</sup> The price was one third of all of his profits. Kissell, "Life of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>166</sup> Peterson, "Life Sketch of Mary Ann Clark Page," May, 1992.
- <sup>167</sup> Sarah (Page) Kissell (1907-1997), #KWCV-73T, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org). Sarah was the daughter of George Albert Page. Kissell, "Life of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>168</sup> Interview, Mabel Benson Peterson by Janice (Page) Dawson and Marilyn (Page) Bennett, 19 September, 2003.
- <sup>169</sup> Janice Page Dawson, "Notes from the William Page-Mary Ann Clark Family Group Sheet," undated typescript. Held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>170</sup> Kissell, "Life of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>171</sup> *The Davis County Clipper*, 8 July, 1921.
- <sup>172</sup> Kissell, "Life of Mary Ann Clark Page," undated typescript.
- <sup>173</sup> Mary Ann Clark Page, death certificate no. 200 (Davis County, 1925), Utah Department of Health, Salt Lake City.

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