

CHESTERTON JOHN GILLMAN

Born: May 10, 1780 England (Died Oct. 23/24, buried in common grave at Rock Creek)

Age: 76

Willie Handcart Company

Chesterton Gillman was a coal miner and a sailor. He joined the Church together with his wife, Mary Ann Goodrun, and at least one of their sons, James Henry Gillman. James was an expert carpenter and ship builder. He was also a serious student of the scriptures, many of which he memorized. From January 4, 1854 to June 1858, James served faithfully as President of the Royal Hill Greenwich Branch of the Church in England. In this capacity, James was given a letter of commendation for his “boldness in the cause of truth, as an able advocate in the kingdom of Christ, indoor and out, not courting the smiles, or fearing the frowns of any. Also for his strenuous exertions to carry out the instruction of those that preside over him, among those whom he presides over, by example and precept, with unity and love. Many will remember his warnings whether heeded or not. He was zealous and active in the Redeemer’s cause and his manly voice has echo’d through their Church and Chapel walls, mansions and halls; his name is one of notoriety as a public speaker among hundreds in Greenwich, in the streets and on the heath to the poor and rich, in public and private, he has sown the gospel seed faithfully; and we pray the Lord to bless his labors in sowing the seeds of eternal life, and that his successor may see the fruits of his labors springing up on the right hand and on the left and our prayers are that he our brother James Gillman may be blessed with peace of mind, health, strength and length of days to see his righteous desires fulfilled in the conversion of many souls in this branch of the Lord’s Vineyard at Greenwich.”

Less than a year after James’ call to lead the branch, on September 28, 1854, Mary Ann Gillman died. Bereft of his wife, and apparently not wanting to wait for his son to be released from his calling, Chesterton decided to go ahead and gather with the Saints. He seems a very determined man. He boarded the ship *Thornton* in Liverpool, traveling under the direction of President James G. Willie. He continued from Iowa City with Captain Willie’s handcart company of about 500 people. After traveling 300 miles through Iowa to Florence, Nebraska, 100 people in this company dropped out, but not Chesterton.

He was assigned to the group of 100 travelers with sub-captain, William Woodward. His traveling companions in his tent of twenty people were the George Humphries and John Richins families, Jane Stewart (31), William Page (21), Eliza Whithorn, widow, and her son Joseph (10), and Elizabeth Panting and her two small children, ages 5 and 1. In early October, the Willie Company members were on very short rations, hoping every day to meet rescue wagons before their provisions ran out. Elizabeth Panting went to gather buffalo chips one day and met a man who seemed to appear out of nowhere. He led her to a cave where he filled her apron with dried buffalo meat. She went back to camp and shared with the others. Chesterton Gillman would have been one of those blessed by this miracle.

Chesterton Gillman survived his journey to Zion for over a thousand miles before he succumbed to death and was buried in a common grave with 8 other adults and four children on October 24, 1856, at Rock Creek Hollow. Given his age, this is truly remarkable.

James Gillman came to Utah in 1859 where he settled in Pleasant Grove and Lindon and raised a large family. It is said that Chesterton John Gillman’s grandson, James Henry Gillman, Jr., was the first white child born in Lindon, Utah.

Sources: Family records of Jim Nerdin in history files of Jolene S. Allphin; *They Will Not Depart From It*, by James T. Nerdin, 2007.