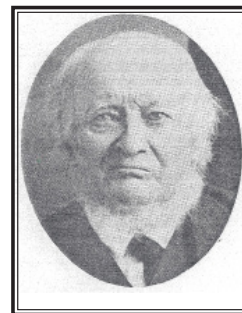


DAVID P. BOWEN

Born: Aug 11, 1823, Llanelly, Carmarthenshire, S. Wales

Age: 32

Hunt Wagon Company



David Bowen came from a fairly prosperous family. He received a good education and also learned the trade of chain-and-anchor maker. David had a natural gift for mathematics and mechanics. A grandchild wrote that “when he was 15 years old, he and his brother, John, 2 years younger, built a small steam engine about 3 feet long and proportionately wide and high. It was accurate and complete in construction and was operated by the steam from a teakettle. It was used by the family to do washing and churning. The steam engine was brought to America. I remember my father had it for a time, but I can’t locate it now.”

This same grandchild quoted David, and remarked that he was frank in telling of his early manhood years: “I was born and confirmed a member of the Episcopal Church, but the chief thing regarding religion that interested me was the pretty girls who attended services. With a crowd of boys, I was always on hand when Church let out—my object being to watch the girls when they came down the steps. I was not content to visit my own Church, but went to neighboring towns to be on hand when the services were dismissed. While several other boys and I were watching the crowd descend the steps at a church in Dowlas, Glamorganshire, South Wales, one young lady attracted my gaze. It was a case of love at first sight and I involuntarily remarked, ‘Boys, that’s my wife.’ From that time on I became a frequent visitor to Dowlas, and eagerly sought an opportunity to meet this young lady, [Jane Foster], which was in due time afforded me. A friendship sprang up between us that ripened into courtship and finally, one glorious autumn day in 1844, I became the husband of one of the finest girls in the land.”

David continued to advance in his employment until he was the foreman of a large mint, in which he supervised 150 men and boys and drew a generous salary. He enjoyed his employment very much, but it did not last. He was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in October 1848 and soon began to feel the displeasure and ridicule of relatives and friends. He also began to make emigration plans.

David Bowen first brought his family to America in 1855 on the ship *Chimborazo*. He had planned to cross the plains to Utah that year but was prevented from doing so because he accidentally dropped the pouch containing all his money overboard the ship. After arriving in America, David found work in Pennsylvania, where the family remained until they saved enough money to purchase their outfit. By July 1856, the Bowens were in Iowa City, prepared to travel across the plains with the Hunt wagon company. It was the last of the 1856 migration. David and Jane (35) had four children: William Parry (11), George Foster (7), Eleanor Jane (4), and John Evans, their baby who was born in Minersville, Pennsylvania.

The Hunt company traveled closely with the Martin handcart company across the plains and experienced the same difficulties with the weather and short rations. Especially worrisome was the loss of their cattle. When they reached the last crossing of the North Platte River on October 19, they assisted the handcart people across the river, but they were unable to take their wagons across that day because of the lack of cattle and the winter storm. They stayed near the river crossing for ten days. The men had to cut down cottonwood trees for the cattle to eat.

The first rescuers reached the Hunt company on October 28, and they were soon able to start moving again. By the time they reached Devil’s Gate, the Bowens had only one ox left alive from the four they started with. Their friends, the John Lewis family, had lost five of their six oxen. The two families hitched the surviving oxen to the Lewis’s wagon until they met some extra teams sent out from Fort Supply to help them in. More rescuers sent by Brigham Young met them at Fort Bridger, and David left his worn-out ox there. It somehow survived the winter and was found the next spring. David gave it to a man in settlement of a debt.

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The Bowen family arrived in the Valley on December 22, 1856. They were taken in by kind friends in Salt Lake and Lehi, then went to the home of Morgan Hughes in Spanish Fork on Christmas Eve. Spanish Fork, Utah became their permanent home.

At a pioneer reunion in 1922, David's son, William Bowen, gave an account of his family's immigration experience:

With John Hunt's Company, I crossed the plains in 1856. The feature of the trip that impressed me most was the arrival of the Relief Company from Salt Lake City which met us near South Pass. Brother David T. Davis and I were driving the worn out cattle in advance of the teams. I was then a boy, eleven years old. We were very cold and tired when we met the first team of the Relief Company. The outfit belonged to Bishop Archie Gardner and was driven by Fred Hansen, late of Lake Shore. The gentleman called out to me, "Don't you want to ride, little boy?" I didn't wait for a second call but got into his wagon as fast as I could. How grateful I felt!

Mr. Hansen turned around and started back to Salt Lake City. We met other teams which picked up the following Company. There were men from the Relief Company stationed along the road to prepare camps for the oncoming pioneers. When we stopped for the night there was a fine fire ready for us which was very much appreciated for it was a very cold and stormy day.

The next thing of note that I remember was crossing what was then known as "The Little and Big Mountains." The men had to break the road through the snow which was a very hard and tedious task. Two men would take hold of hands and trample down the snow until they were tired when two others would take their place and the first two would drop behind the double row of men. This they continued until there was a wall of snow each side of the road higher than the tops of the covered wagons.

Previous to this my father's team of four oxen had been reduced to one ox. Father's friend, John Lewis, had lost five oxen out of his team of six. The two families were put into one wagon hauled by the two remaining oxen and with the help of another team from Fort Supply we were able to make the trip to Fort Bridger. We reached Salt Lake City about December 22nd. Here we were met by a party who took us to a house where we were greeted by a good fire and supper. The Lewis family remained in Salt Lake City, but Father's family stopped here just one night and in the morning Mr. Harvey brought us to Lehi to the home of Abel Evans where we spent the next night. From Lehi, George Sevey and John Mott brought us to Spanish Fork. We reached here Christmas Eve and went to the home of Morgan Hughes where we lived the rest of the winter.

I would like to pay a tribute to those brave and hardy men who came out from Utah to meet us, and who broke the road through the snow. They did not seem to mind the trials and hardships that they had to pass through in order to save our lives which they surely did. They were jovial and good natured at night as if they were at a picnic, which disposition seems to have been transmitted to many of their descendents up to the present times.

David Bowen's family became a great asset to their community. He took up blacksmithing and gun repairing. He made the machinery for the first sawmill and also the first molasses mill in the Spanish Fork area. He planted the first apricot trees, hauled the first alfalfa hay, and pioneered the honey industry in Spanish Fork. An unknown grandchild wrote: "When I was quite young I helped him extract honey from the comb. Children came from far and near to get the cappings when he was extracting honey."

David Bowen was known for his generosity and donated liberally to the needy, especially new immigrants, and the Church. He served a mission to Great Britain when he was 57 years old. One of his grandchildren wrote of him: "He enjoyed going to Conference and always visited at my home when he came to Salt Lake City. I was happy to have him with me. It was then that I became more intimately acquainted with this dear old man and discovered his real worth. He was jovial and ever ready with a good story to suit most every occasion. He had a keen sense of humor and appreciated a good clean joke. It was a delight to accompany him when he went to visit his old Welch friends and to hear them tell tales of their younger years. Some of these stories I shall never forget. Grandfather was dignified and pure minded. I never knew him to profane or use slang. He kept the Word of Wisdom consistently."



George Foster Bowen

Sources: "Biography of David Bowen" written by unknown grandchild, and "George Foster Bowen" by daughter, Jane Boyack, in files of Jolene Allphin; History of William Parry Bowen given at a pioneer reunion, January 1922, Spanish Fork, Utah, available at welshmormon.byu.edu.