

JOHN BAILEY

Born: 7 April 1804 (Died upon arriving in Salt Lake, Nov. 9, 1856)

Age: 51

Willie Handcart Company



Mary Elizabeth (Betsy)
Bailey (Steed)

John Bailey was traveling with his wife, Elizabeth (age 50), his daughter, Mary Elizabeth (17), Sarah Steed (20), Ellen Jones (6), and possibly Jacob Jones (13). Elizabeth Bailey died on October 23/24 and was buried in the common grave at Rock Creek.

Sarah Steed's uncle, Thomas Steed, who had been a friend of the Bailey family in England, had sent for her. Thomas was one of the valiant men who came to their rescue. Thomas wrote:

"In the latter part of October, 1856, with a number of others, I started on the road to meet the handcart Companies. It was late in the season and we had a pretty rough time. We met the first Company [Willie] one day's drive east of Ft. Bridger; the sight I shall never forget: they looked like Indians from afar. They had encountered a severe snowstorm down on the Sweet Water, a most bitter cold to endure; in consequence a great many laid down their bodies to rest in death, worn out with the toils and hardships of the journey and many others were frost bitten very bad. I could not refrain from tears when I beheld the scene that surrounded me.

Here I met my niece, Sarah E. Steed, my brother John's only child; I had sent for her from England. Thanks to the mercy of Providence she was in good health, although a lame girl, aged about 20 years. With them was also Brother John Bailey whom I had known in England, and his daughter, Mary Elizabeth, who later became my second wife. Brother Bailey was so severely frost bitten that his daughter had to carry him. I calculated to return with these to the Valley. I had come for that very purpose; but there was another Company farther back and Brother Wm. Kimball, who was in charge of the teams, wished me to let others take care of my friends and accompany the teamsters who went after the last Company.¹ We wept together when I had to tell them of that decision. My poor friend [John] Bailey died in arriving to Salt Lake.

We traveled on until we came to the last crossing of the Big Sandy, going East, but could not see nor hear from them. Here we had a very severe snow storm and concluded to send two men down to the Sweet Water to see if any intelligence could be obtained; but the storm was so violent that the two men returned at night to us. Capt. Amussen concluded to fall back unto Green River where about 50 teams were stopping. In the morning [John] Van Cott and C[laudius V.] Spencer started back for the Valley; the rest followed until we got as far as Fort Bridger and here halted for a few days, waiting to see if we could hear from the Company. In four days an express arrived, telling that those people were down at the Sweet Water. We harnessed up and started and met them about ten miles East of the Pacific Springs. They were in a very sad condition; a great many badly frozen. We used all the care and attention we could to make them as comfortable as possible. My only blanket I gave to a sick girl to keep her warm. We made good headway towards the Valley and arrived on the 30th of November, thankful that the Lord had brought us safely through the cold and snow to our families. ... I became acquainted with ... Elizabeth Bailey [and she was] sealed to me in the End[owment] House, on the 27th of March, 1857. ... John Bailey, father of Betsy, was born 7th April, 1804, in Eng., and died of the hardships endured in the Hand Cart Company, on his arrival in Salt Lake the 9th Nov., 1856.

Mary Elizabeth gave birth to her only child, a son named James John Steed, on May 31, 1862. In May 1876, Mary Elizabeth passed away at 37 years of age. She is buried in Farmington, Utah. Thomas was serving a mission in New Zealand at the time of her death.

Sources: Daughters of Utah Pioneer history files, Salt Lake City, Utah; Farmington History Museum, Farmington, Utah; familysearch.org; *The Life of Thomas Steed, from his own diary, 1826-1910*, pgs. 22-24. (This book was presented to the Church Historian's office August 12, 1935, by M. Cecilia G. Steed. This diary transcription regarding the rescue differs slightly from the way it was recorded in Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 30 Nov. 1856, 58-59.)

¹William H. Kimball was with the first group of rescuers that met the Willie Company on October 21. He then took over as captain of the Willie Company back to Salt Lake City. He met Thomas Steed near Fort Bridger and asked him to continue east to meet the Martin, Hodgett and Hunt companies.