

ELIZABETH HUMPHRYS

Born: May 2, 1844 England

Age: 12

Willie Handcart Company

Elizabeth and William J. Hill
with five of their children

Elizabeth was the fifth child in a family of nine. She was born and grew up in the small community of Cowley, Gloucestershire, England, in a very humble home. Both of her parents worked as agricultural laborers. Her father worked particularly long hours, leaving home before daylight and returning after dark. Elizabeth's father joined the Church in 1842 and her mother joined in 1843. Elizabeth was baptized by her father before leaving England. In May of 1856, Elizabeth boarded the ship *Thornton* with her parents, George Humphrys (age 45) and Harriet Harding (47), brothers Edwin (18) and James (1), and sisters Mary (14), Hannah (9), and Salina (6). A brother, George, Jr., had died as a child and an older brother, Richard, had emigrated the previous year. Richard was awaiting the family in America.

George Humphrys was appointed as one of the captains of "ten" when the Willie handcart company left Iowa City. They experienced numerous delays and setbacks and ran short of supplies. These things were usually well provided as the Church had well organized plans in place all along the route for the emigrant trains to be restocked. However, many difficulties, including the onset of winter, brought the Elizabeth's family and the Willie company to the edge of starvation.

The Humphrys family all survived their trek and arrived in Salt Lake City on November 9, 1856. All but the two youngest children had walked the entire distance across the plains. Upon arrival in Salt Lake City, the Saints took in the Humphrys family and nourished them. Elizabeth and her family had long looked forward to the time when they could get sufficient food. The first night a kind friend brought them two loaves of bread, but when they tried to eat they could take only a few mouthfuls, and many days passed before they could eat a full meal. Mary had frozen feet and was crippled the rest of her life. She married one of her rescuers, Amos Maycock, and became the mother of three children.

While in Salt Lake City, Elizabeth's family stayed in a schoolhouse. Richard Mann, a relative, later came to the city and took them to Pleasant View in Weber County. There they spent their first winter living in a tiny house with a dirt floor and only a pile of straw for beds. The following spring the children herded cows on the hot springs barren and did what they could to help the family earn a living. Elizabeth married William John Hill in 1863 and became the mother of ten children, four daughters and six sons, including a set of twin boys. She named her last two sons Joseph and Hyrum. Elizabeth had a pleasant disposition. She was very industrious, and she formed the habit in good weather of spending an hour or more before breakfast each day in the orchard and vegetable garden, or among her flowers which were well kept and beautiful. She was a good homemaker and housekeeper. It was told of her that when Elizabeth went into the bedrooms to make the beds and put the rooms in order, she always took off her kitchen apron and put on a clean one so she would not soil the bedding.

Against Harriet's wishes, she and her husband left the Church to join the Josephites, a splinter group in Kansas. George and Harriet both died there. Mary Humphrys told how she watched her parents until the last wagon was out of sight, then sat down alone to cry.

Elizabeth had an accident, followed by a stroke, about 3 years before she died. She spent most of this time in a wheelchair and was well cared for by her sons and daughters. She died at age of 54.



George and Harriet Humphrys