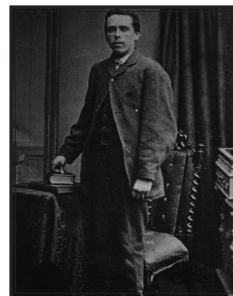


WILLIAM BENJAMIN HODGETT (or
HODGETTS)

Born: 13 May 1831, England

Age: 25

Captain of the Hodgett Wagon Company



William Benjamin
Hodgett(s)



Emily Teressa
Hodgett (Lowder)

William Benjamin Hodgett(s), known as Ben, was from a well-to-do family. About 1849, all of the Hodgett family, except Ben's father, Joseph Hodgett, joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Ben first went to Utah in 1852, then returned to England on a mission. He had a serious illness while on his mission. Ben's mother decided it would be best for the family to emigrate to Utah. After they started, Ben's father went after them and brought back all but two sisters, Emily and Maria. Emily later wrote about what happened to her family:

We went to Liverpool, expecting to sail on Wednesday on the steamer but the elders advised mother to wait and go on the sailing vessel. We stayed there from Wednesday until Saturday morning, then crossed the Mersey River. We stayed at a wonderful hotel. From there we were taken at twelve o'clock at night in a lifeboat to the vessel. The sailors carried us from the boat aboard the Enoch Train, March 18, 1856. There were six hundred and ninety Latter-day Saints aboard this vessel, among them were three girls whose transportation to Utah, mother had paid. I also remember Mrs. Catherine Bell. When father received the news he hastened to Liverpool with the officers. He followed us, and we were still in the Irish Channel and not yet on the open sea. Father paid the captain of the vessel one hundred sovereigns to cast anchor for one hour. We all hid. His time was about expired when mother finally gave herself up. He did not force mother to go back but, through kind persuasion, telling her that he would sell out and come to Utah, she went home with him. I was fifteen and my sister, Maria, was seventeen. We came on alone to Boston. We landed after a voyage of six weeks and three days. William Ben left England two weeks after we did on a fast steamer and when we reached Boston he came out in a little boat to meet us, having reached Boston two weeks ahead of us. William Ben brought a letter from mother telling us what to do. This letter I kept until it fell to pieces, reading it often and crying, as did my husband. In the letter she said, "Maria, come home and take care of your mother in the hour of trial, my days are short. Emmie, my loved one, go to Utah with your brother and keep faithful, work in the house of the Lord. William Ben, be a guide and protection to your sister, tenderly watch her footsteps." Maria stayed in Boston two weeks then returned to England. My brother and I came on to Utah. Mother only lived a few months after Maria's return home.

Andrew Smith, another passenger on board the ship, also wrote an account of what happened, and added a few more details:

Sunday, 23rd [March 1856] - Weighed anchor about 8 a.m. Wind north northeast. Weather fair. Was towed down the river by the steamtug "Independence." About 9 a.m. a muster took place to seek for stowaways. While the inspection was going on a steamer came alongside with a Mr. Hodgetts and some detective officers to search the ship for the former's family. Mrs. Hodgetts did not wish to go back, although Mr. H. promised to sell his property, and go to Zion with them. But by the persuasion of Elder [Cyrus] Wheelock, [James] Ferguson, and others, she was persuaded to do so, taking with her 2 girls and a boy and left 2 girls to proceed on their journey.

After arriving in Iowa City, Iowa, a wagon company was organized under Ben's direction. As his mother requested, Ben took responsibility for his 15-year-old sister, Emily. She later wrote: "I did not walk across the plains. I rode a horse and a good animal it was."

Emily's autobiography tells more of their journey and Ben's life: William Ben was put in charge of the immigrants to Iowa camp grounds. There were forty-nine wagons, ours being the first. We camped in these camp grounds twenty-one weeks. I was very much upset over the separation in our family and my health was poor, so my brother put me in a boarding house for twelve weeks. During this time he was in Missouri for the Church. Miss Birchley [Caroline Birchley, age 24, traveling with Wiseman family in Hunt Wagon Company], Squire Tennant and his mother bought two hundred heifers, which were afterwards used in helping to feed the handcart company." [Thomas Tenant, age 46, and Isabella Ayrtton, age 54, who was actually brother Tenant's mother-in-law, were both traveling with the Hodgett Company. Thomas and Isabella were wealthy benefactors of the Saints. They both died before reaching Utah.] ... Then we came on, my brother being appointed captain ... Nathan Porter was his assistant.

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When we reached Devil's Gate, we were called upon to go and help the handcart company, which we gladly did. It was bitter cold. We were snowed in for ten days. They camped near us then and we gave them five wagons and twenty yoke of oxen. ... We reached Salt Lake City December 15th, 1856. We left our belongings at the old Fort [at Devil's Gate]. Mother had sent means to rent a home for us for two years in the Seventeenth Ward.

William Ben went back the next spring to bring our things from the old fort, also to bring freight for the Church. He was married the first Christmas we were in Utah to Betsy Baynham [who had also traveled in the Hodgett wagon company]. It was the time of the reformation and my brother had charge of the Sixth and Tenth Wards. He would go to the one ward Sunday, the other Thursday, then change about the days. He and his wife had born to them two boys and one girl. Two died when children. Little Ben lived to young manhood, when he was killed digging gravel. It caved in, burying all of him except his feet.

Our first celebration was held at the Lion House and we had a grand time. We were having another celebration, our first 24th of July in Big Cottonwood Canyon, when Ephraim Hanks brought word that Johnston's Army was on the way to Utah. We were dancing in the bowery. I was dancing with my brother in the same set with President Brigham Young. William Ben served as a Minute Man in our army. He came back November 29th.

He died in the home Mother had rented for us in August, 1860. When he was on his deathbed (I was just nineteen years and four months), he called me to him and said, "Emmie, I won't leave you alone, I want you to marry," which I did at his request. I had always boarded at Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas's and remained there until I was married to John Lowder May 26, 1860. The first baby came to our home April 6, 1861, which added greatly to our happiness. As time went on, eight more children were born to us, making five boys and four girls in the family. All are still living, married and members of the Latter-day Saints Church, which is a great comfort to me. We lived in Salt Lake for some time where my husband had good work with Walker Brothers, but Grandfather and Grandmother Lowder, who were in Parowan, they were ready to go to Panguitch to help in the settlement there, so we went with them. After we had been in Panguitch about one year the Indians became very hostile. On March 18, 1866, General George A. Smith came to Panguitch. He made my husband, John, captain of the Minute Men. He went to Fort Sanford, or Lowder Springs as it was then called, to receive orders. Soon after he reached the place an Indian scout shot a white man. John spoke the language of the Indians fluently. John was told by Silas S. Smith, who was in charge of Fort Sanford, to take the Indians prisoners. He asked the Indians to give up their arms. One Indian came forward as if to give up his arms, then aimed as if to fire; as he did, Jim Butler shot the Indian, then Doctor Bill, an Indian, shot an arrow into Jim Butler. My husband, with help, finally brought the Indians to town. I prepared their meals each day and nursed Jim Butler back to health. We were very thankful when the Saints were ordered to leave Panguitch, May 28, 1866.

The Lowders moved to Paragonah and eventually back to Parowan, where they were somewhat more fortunate than their neighbors because Grandfather Hodgett, as long as he lived, sent money twice each year to help out. The Hodgett family stopped writing soon after his death. Emily was known for her compassion for little children and for nursing the sick in her community. She was a skilled horsewoman. The following tribute was paid by the editor of a local newspaper on a Mother's Day:

We take real pleasure in stopping the dull grind for the moment to pay our respects to honored, advanced youth. The years have dealt no more kindly to anyone we know than they have to Mrs. Emily Lowder, whose youthfulness at the age of eighty-three, causes us to pay our respect. In a youthful old age indeed is this remarkable woman, who is now eighty-three years young; she reads without glasses, she is spry, she works and her intellect is keen. What is more fitting than to pause in the daily grind and lift one's hat courteously (in print) to the lady as she goes calmly, serenely living in the present, though of the past, gently borne by the years to the quiet she has earned. What a fitting day is Mother's Day! And what more fitting than to pay tribute to this mother?

Emily passed away on January 26, 1943, at the age of 103 years. Ben fulfilled his mother's wishes in being "a guide and protection to [his] sister, tenderly watch[ing] her footsteps" as long as he lived. Emily also met her mother's expectations in Zion as she remembered her mother's words to "keep faithful [and] work in the house of the Lord."

Sources: BYU Mormon Migration website; Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website; family histories in files of Jolene Allphin.