

MARY ADELAIDE (“ADY”) WALTERS

Born: 6 Feb 1850 Clifton, Swansea, Glamorgan, Wales

Age: 6

Hunt Wagon Company



Mary Adelaide was known as “Ady” by her family and on immigration records. She was with her parents, John and Esther Callfield Walters, and her half-sisters, Sarah Jane (26) and Elizabeth Ann (14) when her family left Wales. Sarah and Elizabeth were the daughters of John Walters and Mary Ann Fender, deceased. The Walters family’s journey to Utah chronicles broken bones, broken wagons, broken dreams and tremendous sacrifices in Ady’s young life, including the death of her mother and baby sister. The Walters family story is told in a timeline format (excerpts), and can usefully document other Hunt company families who were in similar circumstances:

April 19, 1856: The *Samuel Curling* sailed from Liverpool with the Walters family and over 700 other emigrant Saints aboard. Like the Walters family, many of these Saints were from Wales.

May 23, 1856: The immigrants arrived in Boston, then traveled to Iowa City, mostly by train.

June 23, 1856: Sarah and Elizabeth Walters continued to Utah with the Bunker handcart company. The 320 members of this company were mostly Welch immigrants. Ady and her parents remained in Iowa City. Ady’s mother was expecting a baby. Other expectant mothers in the Hunt company were Mary Penfold Goble, Lucy Ingram Holley, Maria Louisa Penn Newman, Sarah Pay, Margaret Edwards Price, and probably Margaret Giles.¹

July 10, 1856: Marinda Nancy Pay was born.

August 1, 1856: Ady and her parents left Iowa City with the Hunt wagon company.

September 4, 1856: Joseph Morris Salisbury, age 4, fell from the seat in front of the wagon. He was run over by the wagon and seriously hurt.

September 5, 1856: The Hunt company received a report that Almon Babbitt’s company, which was ahead of them, had been attacked by Indians. “The [Sioux] Indians were on the war path and very hostile. Our captain, John Hunt, had us make a dark camp. That was to stop and get our supper, then travel a few miles, and not light any fires but camp and go to bed. The men had to travel all day and guard every other night.” (Mary Goble, age 13) This same week they encountered a group of 1,000 friendly Pawnee Indians traveling east on the same trail.

September 6, 1856: Ady’s baby sister, Jane Walters, was born. “Esther Walters, wife of John Walters, from Cardiff, Wales, was delivered of a daughter at 5 o’clock a.m., and was doing well. The company resumed the journey at 8:45 a.m. Franklin D. Richards, Daniel Spencer and 12 other brethren passed the company with a mule team at 10:15 a.m. going west. After traveling 12 miles, the company rested, where these brethren waited for them. They were pleased with the manner the wagon company had proceeded on their journey, and gave the brethren every encouragement of success in their further travels. Brother Richards and company left the company and [those] which followed them, 2 hours later. Encampment was made at 6 p.m. Three miles from the Loupe fork ferry on the Platte River bottom, where the feed was good. Distance traveled, 18 miles.” (Hunt Company journal)

September 19, 1856: “In the afternoon, about 5:30, a tire came off one of the wheels of sister [Sarah] Taxford’s wagon, which detained the company a short time. The camping place being some distance away, the brethren were compelled to leave the wagon on the prairie.” (Hunt Company Journal)

September 20, 1856: “The broken wagon [left] on the prairie with the repaired wheel and the wagon was brought safely to camp. At this time several other wagons in the company had loose tires and the brethren set about to work repairing them ... no move was made that day.” (Hunt Company Journal)

September 23, 1856: “The morning was cold and frosty. The company resumed the journey at 6 o’clock a.m. An accident occurred to sister Ann Davis, whose husband died 2 days before. After crossing Skunk Creek she was in the act of getting out of the wagon when her clothes caught in the tongue, and she fell; the wheels passed over her thigh and shoulder, but luckily the road bed was soft sand and the injuries received were not so serious but that she was able to walk a few hours afterwards.” (Hunt Company Journal)

September 24, 1856: Edith Goble was born. “Sister Mary Goble, wife of William Goble of Brighton, England, was delivered of a daughter in the morning. The company started at 9 o’clock a.m., traveled until sundown and camped for the night after making a distance of 14 miles.” (Hunt Company Journal)

September 25, 1856: “The wagons arrived in camp, being detained thru the upsetting of Brother Bill’s [William Bell’s] wagon. The driver ran against the bank of a creek which the company had to cross instead of going over a steep sandy bluff. Sister Bells broke her arm in the accident. Day’s journey, 16 miles.” (Hunt Company Journal)

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October 2, 1856: Sarah and Elizabeth Walters arrived in Salt Lake City with the Bunker handcart company.

October 4, 1856: Franklin D. Richards and his group arrived in Salt Lake City and reported that the last four immigrating companies were on the plains. “Marinda [Marietta] Nancy Pay, daughter of Richard and Sarah Pay, died of diarrhea, just before midnight. She was 10 weeks old. Day’s journey, 13 miles.” (Hunt Company Journal)

October 5, 1856: Brigham Young suspended some business of the General Conference which was scheduled to begin on Monday, October 6. He made the first of many rescue calls for the companies still on the plains.

October 6, 1856: A baby was born that evidence strongly suggests was Elizabeth Giles. (See endnote 1.) The Hunt Company Journal states: “Ruth Jones born.” The only Jones family known to travel with the Hunt Company already had a five-year-old living daughter named Ruth. Jones’ family histories do not indicate the birth of another baby.

October 7, 1856: Ady Walter’s mother died this day. “The company resumed the journey at 7 o’clock a.m. An ox belonging to Brother Richard Griffiths gave out. The dead ox was unhitched from its mate and the journey continued with one yoke of oxen. The loose pair of oxen was left for Brother Samuel Evans to drive, and while driving them, one of the bow keys broke, by which means the oxen became separated and the one that had the yoke hanging to its neck ran off and so frightened some of the other oxen that it caused them to leave the track and go at high speed, wagon after wagon. Soon, however, they were going at a terrible speed in different directions, causing a general consternation. The last half of the train was exposed to great danger of being knocked down, or crushed between the wagons. In a few minutes, however, the cattle were brought to a standstill, after some ten or 12 wagons had left the road. During the stampede, Sister Esther Walters from Wales was knocked down and so badly injured that she expired in a few minutes afterwards, leaving a babe four weeks old, which at the time was in the wagon. The remains of Sister Walters were interred in the evening at 5 o’clock. She was 39 years old. After Brother Goble’s wagon, which was broken in the stampede, was repaired, the company traveled on about one mile farther and camped at 6 p.m. Day’s journey, 13 miles.” (Hunt Company journal)

Although the company journal does not mention it, the wagon belonging to Hans Bryner was also tipped over in this stampede. Alowis Bauer, the teamster for Brother Bryner, suffered a broken arm. An unnamed “old woman” was riding in the wagon, sitting on a stove and holding 5-year-old Mary Magdalena (Maria) Bryner on her lap. “When the wagon tipped over it put Maria on the bottom, then the old lady, then the stove and lastly the wagon. The old lady braced herself up on her arms to protect the child from the heavy weight. She was so badly hurt that she died from the injury but it saved the child’s life. ... Hans [Bryner] said, ‘We called the elders and they administered to my child; they promised that the Lord would not take my child for she should be my guide.’ ... The ‘old lady’ died a little while later.” (Bryner histories quoted in *Tell My Story, Too*)²

Robert T. Burton, clerk of the first rescue party, logged in the company journal: “Left G.S.L. City, going east, to meet the emigrating companies. Camped tonight at the foot of the Big Mountain.”

October 19, 1856: Lucy Belinda Holley was born. (Of the 7 baby girls born to mothers in the Hunt Company, Lucy was the only one who survived.) The first winter storms began. The Hodgett and Hunt wagon companies and the Martin handcart company arrived at the last crossing of the Platte River. The Hunt company did all they could to assist the Martin company at this difficult time: “Some of our men went through the river seventy-five times. ... Our company assisted them all they could, but there does not seem to be any account of our assistance in their history.” (Elizabeth White, age 18) “We traveled on till we got to the Platte River. That was the last walk I ever had with my mother. We caught up with the [Martin] handcart companies that day. We watched them cross the river. There were great lumps of ice floating down the river. It was bitter cold. The next morning there were fourteen dead in camp through the cold. We went back to camp and went to prayers. They sang, ‘Come, Come, Ye Saints, No Toil Nor Labor Fear.’” (Mary Goble) “The journey was continued at 7:30 a.m., and Capt. Edward Martin’s handcart company was passed just as it was ready to start. ... Many of the handcart people pulled their carts alongside of the wagons. ... We passed Fort Bridge³ about noon and camped at 2 o’clock p.m. on the fording place on the Platte River, after traveling 14 miles. Capt. Hodgetts wagon company had just forded when we arrived, and the handcart company crossed directly afterwards.” (Hunt Company Journal) Bereft of their mother and wife, and with a little baby to care for, Ady and her father did the best they could. The Hunt Company did not cross the Platte until three days later. They had been stranded by deep snow and missing cattle. After the missing cattle were found and the river forded, other cattle died or were slaughtered due to their weakened condition.

October 22, 1856: “The fording of the Platte river was commenced at 1 o’clock p.m. by doubling teams. The brethren cut down cottonwood trees to feed the cattle. (Hunt Company Journal)

October 23, 1856: “The weather was very cold and frosty. ... The camp was detained because of snow. By this time several of the cattle had died.” (Hunt Company Journal)

October 24, 1856: “A very cold north-west wind was blowing, and the snow was quite deep, almost as deep as when it first fell. More timber was cut down to feed the cattle. One ox was found dead, and two more were not being able to stand the weather were slaughtered.” (Hunt Company Journal)

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October 25, 1856: “The snow drifted by the effect of a cold and strong wind so that the ground became bare in some places, thus enabling the cattle to get a little grass.” (Hunt Company Journal)

October 26, 1856: “There was a slight thaw during the day and the cattle looked much better. Capt. Hunt went to Fort Bridge to see about trading for cattle to replace those that had died.” (Hunt Company Journal)

October 27, 1856: “The snow melted gradually. Fourteen head of cattle were brought from the fort in the evening and more could be had on the morrow.” (Hunt Company Journal)

October 28, 1856: “The weather continued cold. Brothers Joseph Young and two other brethren [Abel Garr and Dan Jones] arrived in camp in the evening from the Valley. This caused rejoicing generally throughout the camp, though the tidings of the snow extending westward for forty or fifty miles was not encouraging.” (Hunt Company Journal)

October 29, 1856: “The three brethren, who had arrived in the camp from the Valley the day before, left the company on their return, expecting to be back with help in ten days. The company resumed the journey at 2 o’clock p.m. leaving one old wagon belonging to Brother Walters who had joined Brother Farmer in bringing their teams together and making one wagon serve for both families. After traveling 3 miles a new encampment was made at 3:30 p.m., at a place where the feed was scarce.” (Hunt Company Journal) The Farmer family had three daughters, ages 8, 10 and 12. It was probably comforting to Ady at this time to have these new “sisters” and the assistance of the Farmer family in caring for her baby sister. The girls’ grandmother Farmer had died in Chicago in June, and their 9-month-old brother, Willard Farmer, had died in Iowa in July, so there would have been a great deal of empathy for the Walters.

October 30, 1856: “The company resumed the journey at 9 o’clock a.m., the weather being fine, but the roads heavy, leading over high hills and wet, sandy ground. After traveling 7 miles, the company went into camp at 2 p.m., near the Platte River, where the feed was scarce. Margaret Price, wife of John Price of Pembrokehire, Wales, was delivered of a daughter.” (Hunt Company Journal) They named the baby Elizabeth.

October 31, 1856: “The company remained in camp all day. The brethren who had received fresh cattle from the traders at Fort Bridge upon a draft of Brigham Young held by Brother Thomas Thomas (who kindly proffered it for the use of the camp) signed bonds, giving as security to him of their oxen and wagons.” (Hunt Company Journal)

November 1, 1856: “The company resumed the journey at 11:15 a.m., but traveled only a short distance when a snowstorm came on, accompanied by rain, making the ground very wet and muddy. All the emigrants were cautioned not to let the cattle drink, as the road led through poisonous creeks of water. After traveling 12 miles, encampment was made at 7 o’clock p.m., where there was no wood nor water. The company was met during the day by Brothers Cyrus H. Wheelock and William Broomhead from the Valley. ...” (Hunt Company Journal) Although the company journal does not mention it, 2-day-old Elizabeth Price died on this day.

November 3, 1856: “The company started at 10:30 a.m., the weather being very cold. Fourteen or fifteen oxen were left on the road. The night encampment was formed on Greasewood Creek, half a mile from the crossing, at 8 p.m., after traveling 11 miles, during the day. The infant child of William Goble died at 9 o’clock.” (Hunt Company Journal) “We traveled in the snow from the last crossing of the Platte River. ... We began to get short of food; our cattle gave out. We could only travel a few miles a day. ... My baby sister died. [She was born] the 23rd of September. We named her Edith, and she lived six weeks and died for want of nourishment. When my little sister died ... Brother [Richard] Pay helped my father when she was buried by the roadside.”

November 5, 1856: “Jane Walters, daughter of John Walters, died at 9:30 a.m., aged 8 weeks. The company started at 11 o’clock a.m., passed Independence Rock at 2 p.m. and arrived at the log house at Devil’s Gate at 8 p.m. ... A meeting was called which was addressed by Brothers Grant, Cyrus H. Wheelock and Burton. Brother Grant informed the emigrants that they would have to leave their goods at this place until they could be sent for such as stoves, boxes of tools, clothing, etc., and only take along sufficient clothing to keep them warm, with their bedding. He wanted four or five wagons and teams to assist the handcart companies and he expected them to take only about half the number of wagons along. All present expressed their willingness to do whatever was expected of them.” (Hunt Company Journal) “Capt. Hunts Com[pany] arrived here [Devil’s Gate] at 8 Oclock P M.” (Rescuer Company Journal)

November 6, 1856: “The weather was intensely cold and stormy and the snow drifted very much. The brethren commenced to unpack their wagons and store the goods in a log house. ...” (Hunt Company Journal) “Colder than ever. Thermometer 11 Deg’s below Zero. Stowed away the goods of Capt Hunts Train. None of the Camps moved. So cold the People Could not travel.” (Rescue Company Journal) Although the Hunt Company Journal does not record it, James Goble, age 4, died during the night. James was the third child of the Goble family who died on the journey.

November 6-8, 1856: “To give any just description of the 6th, 7th and 8th of November, the times we stayed at [Devil’s Gate], would be impossible. It was a combination of wind, hail, snow, and cold in terrible reality. Many of the remaining cattle died, and our traveling power fell so short that it was deemed adviseable to leave one half the wagons behind and all the freight and take nothing except our food and clothing.” (James Cantwell) The immigrants left their belongings at Devil’s Gate to be guarded through the winter by rescuer Dan W. Jones and a group of 19 other men.

“That a proper understanding may be had, I will say that these goods were the luggage of a season’s emigration that these two wagon trains had contracted to freight, and it was being taken through as well as the luggage of the people present. Leaving these goods meant to abandon all that many poor families had upon earth. So it was different from common merchandise. ... [The] unloading occupied three days. The handcart people were notified to abandon most of their carts. Teams were hitched up and the sick and feeble loaded in with such light weight as) allowed. All became common property.” (Daniel W. Jones, rescuer)

November 9, 1856: The weather being a little milder, the company resumed the journey at 12 o’clock noon, crossing the Sweetwater and camped at 4 p.m., having traveled 6 miles.” (Hunt Company Journal)

November 13, 1856: No entries were made in the Hunt Company Journal on this day. Maria Newman gave birth to a baby girl and named her Hannah. Hannah died the same day. The following scene is described one night, when more rescuers met the Hunt Company: “About midnight that night all the camp had retired, and we were awakened with a noise and thought it was the yelling of Indians ... but to our great surprise the noise was caused by the teamsters of a relief team, and some of the camp shouted for joy. They were loaded with all kinds of provisions: flour, bread, butter, meat of all kinds, but all frozen so hard. ... I remember we had to cut everything with the hatchet, but oh how thankful we all were that the Lord had answered our prayers and saved us all from starvation.” (Elizabeth White, age 18)

November 30, 1856: The Martin handcart company arrived in Salt Lake City on this day. The Hodgett and Hunt wagon companies were still in the mountains, struggling to reach Utah. Hundreds of rescuers were with them. Brigham Young gave a rousing call from the pulpit this day: “The two wagon companies still out we are sending for, and will send flour to such as may have to tarry at Forts Bridger and Supply. We do not calculate to have the winter blast stop us. It cannot stop the Mormon Elders for they have faith, wisdom and courage. They can perform that which no other men on the earth can perform.” (The last of the Hunt company finally reached Salt Lake City on December 15, 1856.)

December 11, 1856: Although the Hunt Company journal does not record it, Mary Penfold Goble died on this day. “When we got to the foot of the big mountain, the snow was so deep ... and drifted, but they told us when we got to the top we would see Salt Lake City. We were so thankful and delighted that it seemed to renew our strength and energy. It was the hardest part of my journey, but the thought of being nearly at our journey’s end after six months traveling and camping was cheering. (Elizabeth White)

Mary Adelaide married Levi Minnerly in the Endowment House on September 6, 1869. Levi’s ancestors were of Dutch and Native American lineage from Long Island, New York. Levi descended from the marriage of Jan Von Thessel and Princess Catarona, the daughter of Indian Chief Wyandance. John Walters’ three known daughters raised their families mostly in Cache County, Utah. Elizabeth married Barnard White, who also traveled in the Hunt company. Ady lived to be 87 years old. She died in Brigham City at the home of a granddaughter on October 26, 1937, and is buried in Wellsville. Levi died on April 10, 1888, in Idaho, at the age of 61. Ady had been a widow for almost 50 years at the time of her death. She was a hard worker who continued to operate their boarding house, the “Pioneer Hotel” in Wellsville after Levi died. One of her jobs was baking twelve loaves of bread every other day. One granddaughter wrote: “[She] was a very patient and dear person. . . . [she] got up one night and fell over a trunk and broke her back, she had trouble all the time after that. She would sit behind the old black coal stove where it was warm and hold her big cat on her lap and wait for the girls to come home when they was out at night. We as girls remember her sitting in her rocking chair, and she always had an apron on, and always had pink peppermints in one pocket. Grandma was blind as long as I knew her.”

Sources: Hunt Company Journal; reminiscences and family histories of those quoted in this sketch; familysearch.org; Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website; *Windows of Wellsville 1856-1984*, compiled for Wellsville history; extensive research on the Giles family by Laura K. Anderson.

¹A baby girl was born October 6, near Fort Laramie, to a mother in the Hunt company. Margaret Giles gave birth to a baby girl, Elizabeth, “near Laramie,” as reported by her husband, Thomas Giles, when he had Margaret and Elizabeth sealed to him in the Logan Temple. Proxy for Margaret Giles was Hannah Evans of the Hunt company. Thomas and Margaret Giles’s sons, Hyrum (6) and Joseph (7), were also in the Hunt company. Hannah Evans cared for them after their mother died. Hannah Evans’s married daughter, Ann Bowen Dee, gave birth to a baby on the ship *Samuel Curling*. Thomas Giles continued from Iowa City with the Bunker Handcart Company. At some point, either in Iowa City or Florence, Margaret Giles and her two sons did not continue with Thomas. Some family accounts state that Margaret was concerned about the amount of lice bothering the immigrants in the Bunker Company, and she did not wish to give birth to her baby under those conditions. She traveled with either the Martin handcart company or the Hunt wagon company. According to Thomas and Hannah, Margaret Giles died on “October 15, 1856, near the last crossing of the Platte,” and her baby, Elizabeth, died “in October.” Hyrum and Joseph continued to Utah in the care of Hannah Evans, who later married their father. Thomas Giles became known as “The Blind Harpist of Utah.”

²When Hans Bryner’s parents emigrated in 1857, they also suffered the effects of an oxen stampede. Hans’s mother and his son, Gottfried (whom Hans had left in Switzerland in 1856 with his parents), were in the wagon. Hans’s father was knocked down and thought to be dead but was brought back to consciousness. His arm was broken and his back badly hurt.

³“Fort Bridge” was a trading post at Richard’s Bridge, about 5 miles east of the last crossing of the Platte.