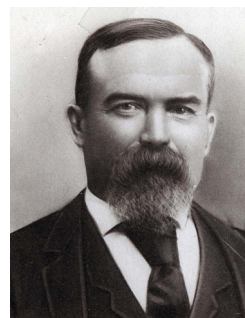


WILLIAM PAGE

Born: 4 August 1838 Birmingham, England

Age: 17

Willie Handcart Company



William's parents, James and Louisa Graves Page, were baptized members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1848 in Birmingham, England. Two years later, when William was 12, he was also baptized. William was the oldest of fourteen children. His father worked as a railroad engineer and his mother made jewelry and watch chains to supplement the family income. The family did much to help the missionaries and to spread the gospel in Birmingham.

When William was seventeen years old he set sail on the ship *Enoch Train* for America. His parents were concerned that William would be required to fight in the Crimean War when he turned eighteen, so they sent him to Utah ahead of the rest of the family. The *Enoch Train* passenger list noted William's name with an asterisk and a note which read, "go direct to west."

After arriving in Boston, William traveled mostly by rail to the end of the line at Iowa City. This is one of several places where the Church had a campground and immigration agents outfitting the companies going to Utah. Many of the other immigrant Saints on the *Enoch Train* joined with the first three handcart companies of 1856. William and others stayed in Iowa City longer, probably to assist in building handcarts, and caring for the cattle needed to pull the provision and freight wagons. William finally joined with the Willie handcart company and was assigned to a handcart with an older woman, noted as a widow in family histories. In John's 20-person tent group, there were only two single women: Jane Ann Stewart, age 31, and Elizabeth Panting, age 29, with her two small children. It is possible these are the women William assisted.

As the early storms came and the company was delayed with other difficulties, rations also had to be reduced to severely low levels. William had previously made a pair of buckskin moccasins for a girl whose shoes had worn out, but he became so starved that while he was on guard duty one night, he took the moccasins and boiled them in melted snow. He then drank the broth to fill his stomach. William had also resorted to eating the bark from trees and digging roots to eat to keep himself alive.

Rescue finally came from Salt Lake and William was helped into the Valley. Before he left England, he had been promised in a blessing that he would not enter the Salt Lake Valley hungry. He was actually eating some scraps of biscuits from the supply wagon as he entered the Valley. A brother Henry W. Lawrence took William to his home for several months and nursed him back to health. He was fed small amounts of milk and food until he was able to eat normally.

William worked at various jobs and then was hired as a Pony Express rider between Omaha, Nebraska, and Salt Lake City. William had become more than an ordinary horseman in order to procure this job. The Pony Express Company in Salt Lake kept an especially wild horse which William had to ride for a test when he applied. Others with less courage changed their minds about applying when they learned of this wild horse. William had many thrilling and sometimes dangerous experiences. On one of his trips, it was raining through the mountains and by the time he got to Ft. Bridger, his clothes were frozen and the station keeper had to cut them off from him. Once, an Indian demanded William's surcingle, a small leather carrying bag given to him by his father. William refused and the Indian gave chase. William circled into the forest and got behind the Indian, taking him by surprise and pinning him between William's horse and the wall of a mountain.

In his short experience with the mail, William had the wonderful privilege of carrying Abraham Lincoln's inaugural speech to the West.

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William's parents left England in 1860 on the *S.S. William Tapscott* with their eight children. His mother, Louisa, gave birth to a baby girl on board ship when they were only four days out. They arrived at Castle Garden in June and then sailed up the Hudson River to Albany, New York. Here, the Page family was asked by immigration agents to remain for a time. It seems that Louisa had naturally quite dark skin and eyes and black hair. It was feared that she might be mistaken for being part Negro and it might cause trouble as they traveled. The Civil War was going on and runaway slaves were being returned to the South. The family remained in New York for about a year, then came West where they were met by William at Fort Laramie.

William married Mary Anne Clark of Bountiful, Utah, in March 1863. Mary was also a convert from England, but her parents had disowned her when she joined the Church. Mary was very well educated and taught William to read and write. William benefitted greatly from this tutoring throughout his life as he was called to serve in many important positions in the Church and government. He was elected to four terms as Justice of the Peace, and was a School Trustee, Chairman of the Democratic Committee of Davis County, Watermaster, and Assistant Superintendent of the Sunday School from 1877 until his death. William began an "Old Folks Committee," and helped to build the East Bountiful tabernacle. He was the first "Home Missionary" in the Davis Stake. He also served a mission to Arizona in 1872, leaving Mary Anne and five little girls home.

William and Mary Anne eventually had eight daughters and three sons. William's mother, Louisa, died at his home on March 22, 1864. Mary Anne gave birth the next day in that same room to their first daughter, whom they named Louisa.

William was out walking with Mary Anne on May 28, 1893, when he had a sudden heart attack and died. He was only 55 years old. B.H. Roberts, who was a General Authority of the Church at the time, was one of the speakers at William's funeral. He lauded William's achievements and remarked that William Page was "indeed a diamond in the rough."

Sources: Obituary of William Page, *Davis County Clipper*, 1 June 1893; "They'll Enact Roles of Seventy-Five Years Ago," August 13, 1935, newspaper article showing "Lawrence Page and Merritt Egan, descendants of original Pony Express riders, who will ride in the re running of the Pony Express in Salt Lake City; numerous articles from other newspapers regarding the reenactment; "William Page," timeline by Stanley Page; "History of William Page," by Mary Lou F. Tripp; "William Page," by Adell Barlett; "William Page," by Mary Anne Page Colbert; "William Page: A Pioneer of the West," by LeAnne Davis; interview with Sarah Page Kissell on November 25, 1988; email from Rob Page July 3, 2011; email from Matthew Page, August 2011; family photo from newspaper article "Early resident survived handcart diaster," by *Clipper* Staff Writer, Adam C. Olson; Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website.



William and Mary Anne Page family
Home at 200 North and 100 West in Bountiful