

WILLIAM WIGNALL

Born: 1823 England

Age: 33

Martin Handcart Company



William and Grace Slater Wignall

William recorded in his journal that there was nothing of importance that happened in his life until 1838, when the gospel first saluted his ears. He wrote, "Its sound was sweet to me." He was baptized in 1840. He married Grace Slater in 1844. Grace had been baptized in 1839 in the River Ribble by William Clayton, composer of the hymn "Come, Come Ye Saints." William lived in Lancashire and worked for the railroad. He did extensive missionary work throughout the area and served as the branch president. During the time of William's service, the Saints were asked to contribute to the Church temple fund, immigration fund and book debt.

Grace and William and their six children, Joseph (age 11), Mary (9), James (7), Jane (4), Grace (2), and William (three months), left Liverpool May 25, 1856, on the ship *Horizon*. William was a counselor to the bishop of the Fourth Ward aboard the ship. He was also a leader in the Martin handcart company at the outfitting camp in Iowa City and on the trail.

When the Martin company reached the last crossing of the North Platte River on October 19, it was extremely cold and it began to snow. William and others from the Martin, Hodgett and Hunt companies helped carry their wives and others across this river. They also had to drag their handcarts through the swift and icy current. They were able to move only a short distance after this crossing when the snow became so deep and their remaining cattle were so weak that they were forced to stop and wait out the storm. (See Red Buttes camp quotes and timeline at front of Martin company section of *Tell My Story, Too*.) Grace told of a remarkable manifestation she had:

On the 28th [19th] of October, Sunday afternoon, we crossed the Platt River for the last time. That evening the snow fell about 18 inches deep. ... The camp moved about nine miles to a bluff, called by us, the Red Point. We were there 9 days; the snow was then about two feet deep. We had only one-fourth of a lb. of flour per day to eat. My husband was taken sick. I called in the Elders to administer to him, and he was healed immediately. I went to bed and a Heavenly Messenger came to my bed-side and said, "Cheer up, Sister Wignall, there are mule teams, horse teams, and ox teams coming to meet you with provisions and clothing from the valley and tomorrow morning when Mary Ann (Riley) is combing your hair, there will be a man with two pack mules come into camp." Sure enough, just as she was combing my hair about 9 a.m. (there was a great shout). Joseph A. Young and a man who now lives in Provo, I have forgotten his name, rode into camp just as I had been told."

The company soon got moving again. William recorded that two days later "the boys from the valley met [them] about 12 miles from Devil's Gate." At Devil's Gate another severe storm came. The Martin company crossed the icy Sweetwater River with help from the rescuers and went into a nearby cove for shelter on November 4. Here they waited for the weather to moderate and hoped that more rescuer wagons were on their way from the Valley. Food rationing began again. After five days at the cove, they continued their journey on November 9.

The Wignall family moved to Payson, Utah, after their arrival. They lived in the fort that the winter and built the first home in Payson the following Spring, on the corner of 400 North and 100 East. They grew mulberry trees and raised silk worms as part of their livelihood. William was also appointed as foreman of the public works. They were blessed with two more children. As seen in the picture above, Grace lost her hair as a result of the cold.



James Wignall



Jane Wignall

Joseph Smith
Wignall

Mary Wignall

William Henry
Wignall

Sources: "Autobiography of William Wignall," Daughters of Utah Pioneer history files; Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website; letter from Grace Wignall to Oliver B. Huntington, Dec. 22, 1881, in Oliver B. Huntington, Daughters of Utah Pioneer history files; family histories and some photos courtesy Carole Reynolds-McKee, and Cindy Wood.