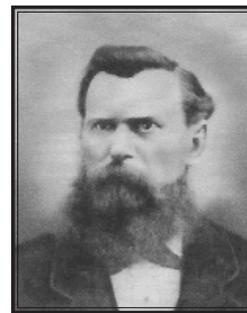


## BENJAMIN WOODBURY DRIGGS

Born: 1837 Ohio

Age: 19

Rescuer



Benjamin's parents gathered with the Saints at Nauvoo, Illinois, when he was a young boy. His father, Shadrach Ford Driggs, was a wagon maker by trade and built in his shop most of the wagons that were used by the first exiles to leave Nauvoo for the Rocky Mountains in 1846. Ben loved his father's wagon shop on Mulholland Street and yearned to build his own wagon. His father often gave him some boards and a few tools and a place out of the way of the workmen where Ben could hammer to his heart's content. One day, Shadrach finally promised his son he would build him a small wagon for his birthday, exactly like the big ones. He did this after work hours with a promise from Ben not to pester him or the workers during the day.

The little wagon received its final coat of paint the day before Ben's seventh birthday and Ben awoke the next morning to find the wagon in his living room. Ben ran up and down the street showing all his friends his new wagon. He then trained his dog, Bones, to pull the wagon and Ben and his dog became a familiar sight around the streets of Nauvoo as Ben took his little brother for rides and brought things home from Parley P. Pratt's store for his mother. Ben was careful to not let Bones get away and spill the molasses and other goods.

One day as Ben was on his way home from the store, he stopped to watch intently as the workmen at the temple were carving the stones. Two of the workmen were also looking intently—at Ben's wagon—and finally one of them said to Ben, "Sonny, how would you like to let us have your wagon to help build the temple?" Ben was horrified and told the men he couldn't let them take it, then hurried home and tearfully pleaded with his mother to not let them take his precious wagon.

When Ben's father came home from work, the two men were with him and Ben heard one of them say, "It would be a great help, Brother Driggs, to keep some of our best tools together and move things around from place to place." Shadrach replied, "Well, let me talk it over with the boy. He is mighty proud of that little wagon; but perhaps he will give his consent if he sees things as we do." That night, Ben's parents talked to him about the sacrifices everyone was making to build the temple. They told him he would not be forced to donate his wagon, but that he should consider it and pray about it and decide if even a little boy such as he could help.

The next morning the little boy, drawing his wagon and followed by his faithful dog, made his way down Mullholland Street and over to the temple lot. Walking up to the man who seemed to be foreman, he said simply, "I've brought you my wagon to help the men build the temple." Looking into Ben's frank face, the kindly man replied, "God bless you, boy. I know what this means to you. No one has made a greater sacrifice to help build the Nauvoo Temple." Ben bravely held back his tears as he walked home with Bones by his side. Thus, Ben was well acquainted with sacrifice as he headed out from Salt Lake City with other rescuers in the fall of 1856. Ben's father, the wagon maker, helped provide the outfit for this service. Loaded with food, warm clothing and bedding, Ben said he "went as far as Ft. Bridger and had a very hard trip, deep snows and much privation and exposure." Ben wrote the following in a letter to the *Deseret Evening News* in 1913:

"Concerning the pioneer trail experiences of Bishop John A. Hunt, deceased, [Captain of Hunt wagon company] and others." Prest. Brigham Young made an urgent call for volunteers to go out to their rescue. Men and teams were gathered in the different settlements and they soon started for Fort Bridger, where many of the members of Capt. Hunt's "Independent" company and hand cart people were found bivouacked in some log stable near the fort.

## (Benjamin Driggs - Page 2)

Ten men with five four horse teams were found at Pleasant Grove (myself one of the number). We left Salt Lake City Dec. 2, 1856, and loaded up the “starving” emigrants at Fort Bridger and hurried them in to the city over roads of snow from two to ten feet deep. I cannot recall one of the party that I was with being now alive. We had no gum boots or other warm clothing like we have today “but we got there all the same.” Capt. Hunt was on the ground and did his part nobly. We overtook John Van Cott’s ox train on east Canyon creek. A party of men were on the Big Mountain trying to maintain a trail over the divide. To say the journey was a hard one is putting it mildly.

In another account, Ben’s son, Howard Driggs, wrote: “Father often told how he at nineteen and Ben Hawley, about the same age, got together a team of four stout horses and joined the group of other Mormon boys, likewise equipped, to bring several hundred fathers, mothers and children out of the snow-covered Wyoming highlands. At the top of Big Mountain ... drifts ... were broken through and kept open by using oxen dragging pine trees back and forth along the trail. “Way up near the South Pass,” said Father, “we began to meet the straggling, half-starved folk. Into our wagons, under quilts and buffalo robes we had brought along, we gathered them until with the wagon well loaded we turned about and hurried back to the warmer valleys. At night we would gather sagebrush, make big fires and get the frozen folk to dance and sing the blood back into their veins.”

Ben married the Nauvoo storekeeper’s daughter, Olivia Pratt, two months after his return. They became the parents of 12 children. Ben also married Rosalia Cox and had 9 more children. Benjamin is the ancestor of the well-known musicians, the King Sisters and the deAzevedo family. Benjamin and Oliva’s son, Don Carlos Driggs, moved to the Teton Valley in Idaho, where the town is now named for him. It is rated by National Geographic Magazine as one of the 10 best outdoor recreation destinations in the U.S.

Ben’s younger sister, Eliza, later married Robert Loader of the Martin Handcart Company, a young man that her brother had helped to rescue.

Ben served in the Utah War in 1857-58 and the Utah Indian Wars. He helped to build the railroad in Utah. He served a mission to England from 1870 to 1872, which included service as President of the Birmingham Conference. His career was mostly in the mercantile and merchandising business in Pleasant Grove, although he also was a traveling salesman. Ben was a tender-hearted man. At the death of his first wife, his son tells of “seeing his father kneeling before an old trunk containing his wife’s finery of bygone days and weeping copious tears as he lifted forth the gowns and keepsakes.”

Ben spent many afternoons napping on a couch in the months before his death in 1913. With a sense of humor and a knowledge of Ute Indian language and traditions at the death of a loved one, Ben spoke these words to his wife as she approached the couch: “Ishkapoo,” meaning “not dead yet.”

Two general authorities of the Church, Seymour B. Young and Andrew Jensen, spoke at Ben’s funeral. Brother Jensen, a noted historian, “paid a grateful tribute to Brother Driggs as his friend and protector when as a little tow-headed Danish boy he was subjected to the jests and torments of the local town bullies.”

## Sources:

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