

## BETSY MEE

Born: March 4, 1842 Coalville, Leicestershire, England

Age: 14

Martin Handcart Company



Betsy was the youngest of nine children born to William Mee and Rose Hallam. Her mother died in 1848, three years after her father had died, leaving Betsy an orphan at only six years of age.

In 1847, as the first group of Saints were entering the Salt Lake Valley, Betsy's sister, Charlotte, was baptized a member of the Church. Betsy's oldest sister, Sarah, also got married in October of this year to Thomas Wright. Sarah and Thomas soon joined the westward movement of the Saints. Their first baby was born in St. Louis, Missouri. By 1856, they had five children and were living in Nephi, Utah. Betsy and Charlotte were finally ready to join them in Zion. They boarded the ship *Horizon* under the leadership of Edward Martin, and later made a start from Iowa City, Iowa, with the Martin handcart company.

Betsy's sister, Charlotte, who was 20 years old, had been crippled from an accident three years earlier. Charlotte wrote: "I sprained or broke some of the ligaments in my ankle and the doctor said I must lose my leg, but I refused to have it amputated. I was forced to use crutches for nearly four years."

Charlotte had to rely on the kindness of her sister as well as the others close to her in the company. Both girls mention the Bailey family among others. No doubt Betsy assisted her sister many times as Charlotte states: "Part of the way I walked, and part of the way I was hauled in a wagon or handcart. One day I walked and crawled eight miles, and my knees finally bled. We had a very hard trip." Charlotte had surgery on her ankle shortly after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley.

Betsy and her sister were finally reunited with their sister in Nephi. Soon, however, Betsy learned that there was domestic help needed in Ephraim. Betsy worked there in the home of Peter Greaves. Here she met a very tall young man by the name of Henry Green, ten years her senior. Betsy and Henry were married shortly after Betsy's 18th birthday.

Betsy was a very petite woman, her full height reaching only to Henry's shoulder. Peter Greaves praised her as a "good-looking" woman with dark brown curls and blue eyes, always neat and trim. In her humble pioneer home in Ephraim at 1st South and Main Street, Betsy gave birth to 10 children. When one of her babies was born in the lean-to bedroom, the temperature was such that a thin layer of ice froze during the night over a barrel of water at the foot of the bed.

Their large property became known as "Green's Corner" and was near the tabernacle, the dance hall, and the stores. The corner was a favorite gathering place for the Ephraim's young people, who met there to talk, sing, and carve their names and initials in the poles of the fence. The family later moved to a home 1 block South of their pioneer home.

Betsy's granddaughter, Leda Thompson Jensen, wrote a loving tribute to Betsy which includes these excerpts:

"Grandmother told me stories and read to me [and] taught me nursery rhymes. . . . My most unforgettable picture of my grandmother is seeing her sitting in her rocker at one end of the kitchen range, reading her Bible or Book of Mormon or knitting. She knit socks for all of her grandchildren. When it was bedtime, she greased my chappy hands with mutton tallow, helped me with my prayer, and put me in bed with the soft warm feather bed to sink into and a warm brick at my feet. The door would be left open a crack until she knew I was asleep. . . . It was fun to have

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a bath at grandma's house because the bath tub was built in. It was long enough so we could stretch out our legs and there was cold running water. . . . Quilting bees were annual affairs at grandma's, and while aunties and neighbors sat around the quilt, I well remember playing under the quilt and lying on my back watching the designs grow on the underside of the quilt.

"Grandma always took care of the chickens. I helped her feed them and gather the eggs. Whenever she went into the chicken yard, she picked up the lower corners of her long waist apron, and together we'd pick up the fluffy clean feathers the chickens had shed and put them into the apron. They were put away in clean flour sacks and before long there were enough to make a pillow. Feathers plucked from the chickens killed for food, which weren't so fluffy after the chickens had been scalded so feathers could be plucked, went into feather beds. Sunday eggs were gathered and set aside for temple donations.

"She did a great deal of reading—the Deseret News, the Woman's Exponent, . . . the Young Woman's Journal, . . . the Era, . . . the Contributor. . . . She had saved these magazines for years, and I read from them when I spent time with her. . . .

"Sorrow came into her life too often. Six of her ten children [and her husband] preceded her in death. [When] I was twelve years of age, I remember so well on our return from the cemetery [after Uncle Will was buried], as we walked through the front gate leading up to the house, of hearing grandma say, 'I have to be the next one. I can't go through this again.'

"She died May 17, 1916. . . . My first reaction to her passing was, 'She got her wish to go before she had to part with any more of her family.' I am glad she was my grandmother. She was a great soul. I am looking forward with fond anticipation to seeing her again."

Sources: "Life Sketch of Charlotte Mee Beal," autobiography, Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; email from Pamela Gassman, Tacoma Washington, May 12, 2010, to Jolene Allphin; photo of "Betsy Mee courtesy of Pamela Gassman; *Beneath the casing rock: the George Smith Rust family*, by Ethel R. Jensen, available at Family History Library; "My memories of My Maternal Grandmother, Betsy Mee Green," by Leda Thompson Jensen, sent from Melisa Clark, Tooele, Utah.