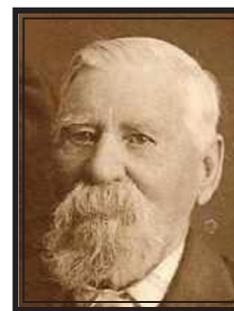


## ELIJAH HIETT MAXFIELD

Born: 5 November 1832 in Bideque, Prince Edward Island, Canada

Age: 23

Rescuer



Elijah married Helen Alcy Tanner on August 24, 1856, but he didn't have much time to spend with his new bride, as he went out on the pioneer trail one month before the October 5, 1856, rescue call to bring in the Martin and Willie handcart companies. He didn't make it back to Salt Lake until November. Elijah's family also participated in the rescue. His mother and sisters baked sweet crackers or cookies to send with other things. His father and brothers loaded big sleighs with straw and warm rocks and quilts and brought Mary Clifton and her two daughters, ages 6 and 12, to their home to recover. Mary's husband Robert Clifton had just died in November in their travels with the Martin handcart company. Elijah's brother, 19-year-old James Maxfield, carried little Ann into the house, placed her on a table and asked her to sing for the family, then remarked that Ann was the girl he wanted to marry. After the death of James's first wife, he did marry Ann Clifton.

When Elijah was 73 years old, he told his rescue story in a letter he wrote to Samuel S. Jones, a member of the Martin handcart company. This letter<sup>1</sup> was in response to an invitation to the first Handcart Veterans Association Reunion in 1906:

Lyman, Utah 9-28-6  
S.S. Jones  
Provo, Utah

Dear Sir

While attending Encampment of Black Hawk Reunion at Fort Ephraim, I saw [Thomas] Dobson<sup>2</sup>, a dear old friend whom I have traveled many miles with and stood many nights guard. He extended an invitation to the hand cart Reunion. I supposed I would be able to attend [but] on account [of] so much Rain and Snow, my grain is in such a condition, it will be impossible to leave home, which [information] if you [will] please give in a Report, as there will be many expect[ing] to see me there. Two weeks after my marriage I left SLCity on the 7th of Sept 1856 in company with two old Batchelors (namely Bennet from Mill Creek & Talent from Sugar House Ward). We each had two yoke Oxen. We left a month before the Big rush. Was loaded with flour to help the hand Cart Companies. We met Capt Elsworth, Bunker & Mc[Arthur]. Went on to meet more. Went down on the Sweet water. Heard nothing of the Companies. We returned to Ft. Bridger. We met the big rush. I left my Oxen with Lewis Robison<sup>3</sup>, left my Bachelor company. Went back with the boys to help pull the carts. Capt AO Smoot and three others were bringing the Church [wagon] train. Smoot came for me to help them as they ware worn out. I went to their assistance on East Canyon Creek. The four Capt went home. I had charge of the train, when within two miles of the top of the Big Mountain, we swamped in the biggest storm I was ever inn.<sup>4</sup> We chained the cattle to the trees. They were soon covered. Over twenty five men and teams ware coming to meet us. The[y] came over the little mountain and ware obliged to retreat. At 10 Oclock that night, I went on foot to SLCity, arriving there [at] 3 Oclock AM. At 8 OClock [I] had 80 Bush[els] [of] corn on the Road. I was back to the train just as they started down the Big mountain. I was five days getting in the City. The hand cart Companies caught us and we all went in the same time. I left home to be gone two weeks, but was gone nine [weeks] that winter. I shed most [of] my finger & toe nails.<sup>5</sup> Excuse me, Dear Bro, but I would like to tell it all, hoping you may have a good time.

With kind regards  
I Remain  
Elijah H Maxfield

Elijah died at Lyman, Utah, in 1925 at the age of 93. His sweetheart died ten years earlier.

Sources: "Handcart Veterans Association Scrapbook, 1906-1914," Fd 2, pg 12, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU, Provo, Utah, copy in files of Jolene Allphin; *Deseret News*, September 1, 1906; familysearch.org; <http://heartsofthechildren.blogspot.com>.

<sup>1</sup>This letter has been lightly edited for readability by Jolene Allphin.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Dobson had been an 18-year-old boy in the Martin handcart company. A *Deseret News* article dated September 1, 1906, states, "For 30 years prior to 1903, Thomas [Dobson] was a nightwatchman in this city, and few men in Salt Lake were more extensively known."

<sup>3</sup>Lewis Robison purchased Ft. Bridger in 1855. He was also in the mission presidency of the Shoshone Mission.

<sup>4</sup>For context, see John Riggs Murdock's biography in Allphin, *Tell My Story, Too*.

<sup>5</sup>Fellow rescuer, Redick Allred, also recorded, "As well as I was provided, I even lost my toenails from frost."