

## WILLIAM LAWRENCE SPICER BINDER

Born: 10 July “at three fifty-five Post Meridian” 1832 London, England

Age: 23

Martin Handcart Company



Excerpts from the autobiography, journal, and reminiscences of William Binder yield much information regarding his convictions and experiences of life in this biographical sketch. (Minimal changes in some spelling and punctuation have been made for clarity only.)

William married Eliza Camp on Christmas day 1853 at “old Church Tottenham ... which event was an important one and I felt it such, with the understanding that I now have of the principles of the everlasting gospel, looking forward with the joyful anticipation and hope to the time when our marriage vow would be administered and sealed by God’s Holy Priesthood to stand forever inasmuch as we would be faithful.” William and Eliza had become acquainted about 18 months previous to their marriage and William wrote: “My attachment for her became stronger ... and as I had been taught to acknowledge the hand of the Lord in my destiny and also to try to know his mind and will concerning all that I did, I made it a matter of prayer respecting my selection of a partner in life and in answer to my prayer, the Lord overruled circumstances and blessed me with a good girl for a wife, whom I afterwards found my wife Lizzie to be.”

From the age of four until ten, William attended an “infant school most of the time and a small portion of the time ... a free grammar school at High Cross.” At the age of ten he sought employment from home “in consequence of a large family depending upon the labors of a Mother for their support.” He worked for several bakers as well as a “Chemist & Druggist” before deciding that he really wanted his trade to be that of a joiner and carpenter. He wrote:

I expressed this wish to my parents who considered the matter and would have acceded to my wishes, but the expense of purchasing the necessary amount of tools being out of their reach, the matter, or the idea of learning this branch of mechanism had to be given up ... and I was bound apprentice to the trade [of ] bread and biscuit baker ... for the term of seven years. ... I spent a very agreeable time with Mr. Whittet and the members of his family and through a strictly moral life I secured their good feeling and kindness.

I had great occasion to be grateful to my Heavenly Father for His constant care and protection which I enjoyed through my youthful days. I had been preserved from the paths of vice and sin to a very great extent, and the teachings and early religious impressions which I had received from a kind and affectionate Mother had a wonderful influence in preserving my footsteps in the path of rectitude.

In the latter part of the summer of the same year that I was apprenticed [1849], my ears were saluted with the glorious latter-day work, being invited by a fellow-servant to read some tracts and some copies of the Latter-day-Saints Millennial Star, after which I was induced to attend the Saints meetings, all of which created in my mind a thirst for knowledge and an earnest desire to obtain the promised blessings which are the result of obedience.

Having already received a conviction of the truth of [the] Work and the divinity of the mission of Joseph Smith, I offered myself as a candidate for Baptism, fully believing that I should obtain a remission of my sins. Accordingly I was initiated a member of the Church by baptism, Elder Edward Sutherland officiating on the thirteenth day of November one thousand eight hundred and forty-nine and confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints on the ----- day of the same month and year, receiving at the same time a promise of the Holy Ghost which should be as a well of water springing up unto everlasting life upon conditions of humility and obedience.

I was associated with the Theobald’s Read Branch in the London Conference (Elder John Hyde presiding) untill March second of the following year ... when the Finsbury branch was organized with Elder David Shorten as president and I removed with several others to form the branch. Our efforts to spread the Gospel and a knowledge of its principles were not in vain for during that same year many were added to the Church and made to rejoice in its principles.

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Between January 1851 and May 1856, William was ordained to the various offices of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood, serving faithfully as a missionary and in other capacities. He was president of the Lambeth Branch from March 1855 until his emigration in May 1856.

In answer to my earnest and unceasing prayers the Lord opened my way to gather with His People to Utah. I enjoyed the confidence of the Saints of the Lambeth branch and many seasons of rejoicing while I labored there. Several of the members left and accompanied me to Utah, among them Brother Richard Collins and family who kindly assisted me with some means to emigrate. ...

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of May 1856, myself and wife and her Mother and Father [James and Sarah Pomplin Camp] and Nephew, John Isaac, met a large company of Saints at Euston Station en route for Liverpool. Here were assembled a large company consisting of Saints and the friends and relatives of those who were leaving for America. Among them were my Mother and Sisters who were very much affected by our leaving, but God had commanded and I had received a testimony of His revealed will and although it was a trial to part with dear friends, I had counted the cost and was determined to serve and follow Him for the sake of Life Eternal in the world to come. I felt to leave my blessing (though a poor one) with a kind and devoted Mother and the train left the Euston Station at Sun-rise and arrived at Liverpool at 3 p.m. ...

We beheld the fine American sailing ship *Horizon* this morning, having been informed that she was ready for the emigrants. Having been kindly helped to our berths by Pres. [Edward] Martin, we endeavored to make ourselves as comfortable as we possible could in our new town. ... The *Horizon* set sail [with] Captain William Reed commanding. While lying off the port awaiting the arrival of Captain Reed a mutiny broke out between the chief officers and seamen, on occurrence of which the chief mate telegraphed to the Captain by signals who immediately came on board and discharged all the seamen and engaged a fresh crew. The Saints were organized by appointing Captains of hundreds with Elder Edward Martin as Pres. ... There were about 1000 souls in the company exclusive of ships crew. ... The presidency of the European Mission, with a good many of the American Elders, accompanied the ship out to sea as far as the steam tug went.

I experienced some illness from sea sickness all the way. Lizzie's health was pretty good for most of the sea voyage, and I experienced much comfort from her attentions. Our vessel arrived at Boston on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June. Captain Reed was extremely kind to the Saints and he won the esteem and lasting regard of the sick especially. On our arrival Pres. Martin called a meeting of the company and an expression of the saints good feeling towards the captain was manifested in a vote of thanks. Captain Reed responded in a few remarks, thanking the company for good order and cleanliness that had been observed by them on the voyage.

[From this point, excerpts from William's journal will be included without (...) to indicate days that are not included in this biographical sketch. William's writing in its entirety will be linked to his name at the website [tellyourstory.com](http://tellyourstory.com).]

June 30<sup>th</sup>: The company passed the examination of the Government officers and medical men, who gave us credit for being "clean and healthy looking."

July 2<sup>nd</sup>: My wife's father and mother had not means sufficient to go any farther than Boston. We very much regretted to leave them behind. Our luggage being all aboard early in the morning we were ready and the train conveying us left Boston at 11 a.m. and travelling most of the night arrived at Albany at one a.m.

July 4<sup>th</sup>: At Buffalo, having arrived here at 12 noon. The City was full of life enjoying the celebration of the Nation's birthday.

July 7<sup>th</sup>: Quite a number of the enemies of the people gathered around this morning and were very liberal in circulating lies respecting the life and character of the prophet Joseph Smith and used their efforts to influence the weak and inexperienced. The brethren had several times to invite roughs to leave the building during the night, their motives being anything but pure. Sr. [Sister] [Ann Adey] Palmer was buried today in Chicago.

July 9<sup>th</sup>: Left by first train this morning having the luggage in charge for Iowa City. Large forces of armed men were here on their way to Kansas. A political trouble was disturbing the peace of the State. Lizzie was on a visit from the Camp to the City. I proceeded to the Camp ground which lay about 3 miles from the City. There were about 2000 Saints camped here awaiting for their outfit. We were detained here awaiting the completion of some hand-carts untill the last of July, during which time I assisted John Watkins to build a lime kiln for Mr. Burns who lived about 5 miles from the camp ground. I obtained \$4½ dollars for my labor which enabled me to send about fifty pounds of freight to Salt Lake City. Most of our clothing we had to give away here for the want of means to pay the freight on it to Utah. We experienced several severe thunder storms while we were camped here.

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> July: Our company was fully and completely organized with Elder Edward Martin as captain and

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Daniel Tyler his assistant and several men appointed as captains of hundreds. Our travelling accomodation were one tent and three hand carts for every fifteen persons. Our tent which was the 2<sup>nd</sup> was occupied by Bro. Richard Collins and family, Bro John Watkins and family, Sr. Patching, Sr. White, and myself and wife Lizzie. We were pleased with the arrangement seeing that we had all been long acquainted with each other. Today being Sunday we held meeting and much good instruction was given by Elder Martin.

July 31: Did 6 hours guard duty last night, or went on guard with that understanding, but no relief coming I stood guard all night.

August 1<sup>st</sup>: Travelled 6 miles today. Wheather intensely hot.

August 2<sup>nd</sup>: Made 10 miles today. Wheather cloudy and cool which was preceeded by a heavy thunder storm lasting about 2 hours. Arrived in camp at 7 p.m. and immediately afterwards went on guard and remained there all night. Wheather very cold and chilly all night.

Aug. 3: Travelled 7 miles today. Soon after we had started from camp we saw a bright luminary descend very rapidly and when within about 50 feet of the surface of the earth it suddenly disappeared. The object was seen by all the camp. The wheather was very hot.

Sunday August 10<sup>th</sup>: We did not travel today. Pres. Martin called the Saints together in the afternoon and held Meeting. Elder Daniel Tyler addressed the Saints upon the subject of the gathering. Bro. Norminton's child died today from diareaha.

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup>: Passed through Fort Des Moine today about 10 a.m. This is a small town on the Des Moines River, while crossing the river the inhabitants ridiculed our mode of travel and made some very unkind remarks about us, but we gave them to understand that we were fulfilling the commandments of God and while they scoffed the Saints rejoiced. Travelled 14 miles today.

Throughout the month of August, William's writings reflect awe and respect in contemplating the history of those Saints who traversed the trail before him, particularly the Nauvoo exiles and the Mormon Battalion. From Iowa City to Florence, the Martin Company was split into two companies, the advance company being led by Jesse Haven. When the companies were combined at Florence, William says the number in the Martin company was now doubled and "numbered nearly 700 souls, which made an immense string of handcarts when they were travelling." With 1,000 miles left to traverse, the sheer size of this handcart company would be one of the major factors in their delay. Captain Martin made a difficult decision on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October:

Friday Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>: Travelled about 5 miles when we arrived at a good camping place. At this place the authorities of the camp deeming it advisable to lighten up our luggage issued orders to emigrants to reduce the amount of their personal luggage to 10 lbs. per head; this action of the Elders in charge seemed to us a terrible hardship, as we were only very scantily provided with clothes and bedding and to stand by and see our bits of clothing and bedding burned on the spot, caused anything but a good feeling to exist in our hearts towards our leaders. Already the snow clouds were making their appearance on the Black Hills.

Saturday Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>: I did not record the number of miles done by the company today, wheather colder.

Sunday Oct. 19<sup>th</sup>: We travelled along the South side of the Platte for a number of miles, and Captain Hunt's company immediately behind ours. About noon we commenced to cross the Platte River, at the point known as the "Upper Crossing" in the Emigrant's guide. Bro. William Spicer, an acquaintance of some years standing, came up to us from Hunt's company, to the crossing and very kindly assisted a number of women and children by carrying them across the river on his back and among the number was my dear wife, Lizzie, and for which token of respect and friendship we were very grateful. On this occasion I drew the handcart through the stream by myself, heretofore Lizzie had invariably been by my side and assisted. I experienced the water was very cold and the "Black Hills" presented a threatening appearance with the black storm clouds. Lizzie had reached the north side of the stream.

William's daily writing in his journal apparently ended at this point of severe hardship, as the first winter storm descended on the Martin company the day of this last crossing of the Platte River. However, he recorded these events by date later in his journal - excerpts as follows:

Oct 20<sup>th</sup> Bro A[aron] Jackson died from exhaustion early this morning. To our great surprise when camp was aroused some 3 - 4 inches of snow had fallen on the ground, which, add to the intense cold morning had a very discouraging effect upon us. Bro Stone, an aged gentleman who crossed the River on the Bridge to avoid wading, was benighted and supposed lost his way as he never came into camp again but this morning an English boot with a human foot in it was brought to camp by Bro Jos McMurran which were identified as all that was left of Bro Stone.

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It is supposed that being very fatigued had lain himself down to rest and was attacked and eaten by wolves. Near the middle of the day our camp was moved to a locality where we would be nearer the River and where also we could be then better sheltered from the piercing winds. We arrived at the Red Buttes at the close of day meeting (the whole of our days march a bitterly keen wind and drifting snow) Before we could pitch our tents we had to remove several inches of snow which labour took a long time to perform on account principally of a scarcity of spades and shovels in the company.

At this camp we remained until the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup> instant. During our sojourn at this camp we were placed under very trying circumstances; being reduced to very low rations of flour; a scanty supply of clothing and in addition to these evils, it became our painful duty to bury very many of our friends and traveling companions, also to see our cattle perish from our view through starvation every day.

During the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup> our Captain had rallied the camp as was our custom every day to meet for general prayers, and while there he made known to the Saints the startling fact that our provisions had nearly exhausted. He informed us that if we were willing to reduce our amount of flour to one half of what it then was, there would be enough to last us two days which he proposed we do. We accepted the proposition not knowing where or when we should have another supply. A few minutes after the meeting was dispersed, our hearts were made glad with the appearance of three brethren who had come as an express from the relief company who were stationed at Devil's Gate. It is impossible to describe the joy and gratitude that filled every heart upon the arrival of such messengers of salvation.

On the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup> we broke camp and travelled westward to meet our Valley friends and remained for the night at Rocky Avenue.

On the night of the 30<sup>th</sup> we camped at the Willow Springs and on the 31<sup>st</sup> we met our relief at Grease Wood Creek. We received some articles of clothing, some vegetables and a little flour. Many of our company travelled barefooted through the mud and slush in moving from Greasewood Creek to the Sweetwater where we reached on the evening of the Nov 1<sup>st</sup>.

Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> Was out in the surrounding country looking up our scattered stock and while absent a meeting of the camp was convened. I returned in time (about midday) to hear the closing remarks of Bro Geo D. Grant. We left this camp about noon and travelled to the Fort which was situated immediately West of Devil's Gate where we arrived in a very cold and almost perished condition. A part of the log houses was torn down to furnish fuels for the company. We remained at the Fort three days.

Nov 6<sup>th</sup> [4th] We moved from the Fort and located the camp in a small ravine on the North Side of the Sweetwater. We experienced a good deal of difficulty in crossing the River it being most intensely cold. After I had crossed I again went in the stream and assisted Bros SS and Albert Jones out of the water, they being fast in the bed of the River and perfectly discouraged so that they could not pull an ounce. Several of the Valley brethren whose names I did not know labored dilligently for hours in carrying the women and children over the stream. After we had got to camp Captain Martin sent me and another brother back to the River with a message to the brethren on which occasion through my clothes being so wet I got severely frozen. While at this Camp our rations were reduced to 4 ounces of flour per day.

William's last entry reflects the time spent in what is now known as Martin's Cove. It was the second time that rations were so severely reduced. This time, however, the rescuers were on reduced rations with the handcart pioneers. This period of time when William was so ill may also be the setting for the story told in John Watkins's account wherein Lizzie, John Watkins, and a Brother Hunter, snuck out of camp in the night to retrieve a dying ox. (See story in John Watkins, Martin section of *Tell My Story, Too*.)



Eliza Camp Binder  
"Lizzie"

William Binder's desire to live a virtuous and moral life from boyhood is reflected in the words of Albert Jones: "Our old time friend Wm. L. Binder, a man of unbounded charity and a lovable disposition ... carried me across the Sweetwater when it was freezing terribly hard."

Sources: "Biography and Journal of William Lawrence S. Binder," copied from original on August 13, 1947. Original in the hands of Mrs. R.S. Schimke, Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; Binder, William Lawrence Spicer, "Papers," (MS2941) and "Reminiscences," (MS14688) Church history library.