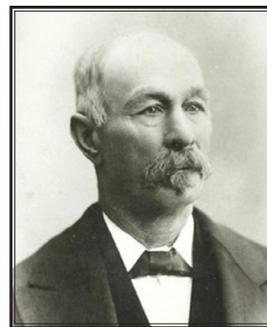


WILLIAM HENRY KIMBALL

Born: 10 April 1826 Mendon, New York
 Age: 30
 Rescuer



When William H. Kimball died in 1907, there was a lengthy newspaper article and large picture of him in the *Deseret News*. This obituary describes much of his life:

Gen. William H. Kimball died at midnight, Dec. 29, at his home in Coalville.¹ ... About a year ago one of his legs was amputated,² and while he recovered from the operation in a manner that surprised his friends, the ordeal doubtless hastened his death. Mr. Kimball was at one time one of the best known men in Utah, being active in military affairs and performing successful missionary work in behalf of the Church.

The deceased was the eldest son of President Heber C. [and Vilate Murray] Kimball. ... As a child and youth he was with the Church in Kirtland and at Nauvoo, and at 22 years of age came to Utah. ... He was proprietor of the Kimball hotel at Park City for many years.³ ...

Few men took a more prominent part in the Indian wars⁴ of Utah. He was first a lieutenant in the territorial militia and advanced rank by rank until he became a general. He was noted for fearlessness and gallantry, and at the skirmish on Battle Creek, Utah county, led a charge of cavalry that will immortalize his name. ... He is survived by 19 children.

The two-day “skirmish on Battle Creek” was in February 1850, between 50 minute men and twice that number of Ute Indians who were entrenched along the river bank and had taken possession of a “double log cabin.” These militia men, charged with protecting the settlers, were many of the same men who fearlessly went out to rescue the late immigration of 1856. Orson F. Whitney records in the *History of Utah*:⁵

Finally, in the afternoon of the second day, Capt. Grant, whose care had been to expose his men as little as possible, determined to capture the log house at all hazards. He therefore ordered Lieut. William H. Kimball with 15 picked men, to charge upon the house and take it. Among those who participated in this charge—the one daring exploit of the campaign—were Robert T. Burton, Lot Smith, James Ferguson, John R. Murdock, Ephraim K. Hanks. A. J. Pendleton, Orson K. Whitney, Barney Ward, Henry Johnson and Isham Flyn. Kimball and his men proceeded up the river until directly opposite the log house, which now intervened between them and the stream. They then turned to the left, facing the rear of the house, and the leader gave the word to charge. Dashing forward through a ravine that for some moments hid them from view, the horsemen emerged upon the flat and were within a few rods of the house, in the act of crossing a small slough, when a roaring volley from the log citadel met them. Isham Flyn was wounded and the charge was momentarily checked. Several swept on, however, and the Indians, hastily vacating the house, fled to their entrenchments. The first two troopers to gain the house were Lot Smith and Robert T. Burton, who, riding around to the front of the building, entered the passage between the two compartments. Bullets whizzed past them, splintering the wood-work all around, but both they and the horses were soon under shelter. Their companions, a moment later, gathered to the rear of the house, and none too soon, for the Indians, recovering from their surprise, began pouring their volleys into the ranks of the cavalry and upon the captured building. Half the horses were instantly killed, and the riders escaped by miracle. Between the volleys, Lieut. Kimball, Ephraim Hanks and others, darting around the corner of the house, gained the inside, while others wait[ed] until an opening had been made in the rear.

The *Salt Lake Herald* further reported⁶ that during this skirmish, “a ball fired by one of the enemy entered the horn of [William’s] dragoon saddle, penetrating it two-thirds of the diameter. Had it not been for the saddle horn intercepting the bullet, he would have been shot through the stomach. He kept the saddle until he died.”

In a series of at least four letters written to “Chairman Spencer Clawson and Commission” between April and June of 1897, William wrote about his saddle and some other artifacts that were being sought for a pioneer Jubilee celebration:

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Kimballs Park Place, Summit Co., Utah, ... Apr 4th 97, ... In case you can find [my stage] it will be at your service. Were I young it would delite me to be with it and Six fine horses but my Son, John Henry, can fill my Seat with Pride and Delite. I don't know of any other Stages in Utah. Yours &tc, Wm. H. Kimball A Pioneer Age 71. ...

[No date on copy] Spencer & Commission, Gents, I have the 25 mile spy glass that was in the Pioneer Co 1847. It was my Fathers, presented to him in England 1836. I Also have Joseph Smith's first Military Sash, on parade 1843. Wm Law gave Joseph A fine one and he, Joseph, endowed H.C. Kimball with this, as Chaplain of the Legion, and A Prediction that it Never Would be Stained With Blood by the Enemy's of the People. And Father Endowed me with it on Receiving My first military commission in 1849.⁷ I also have the first Apolets [Epauettes] worn by Genrl. Joseph Smith. They were worn by Col. Harmon in the Illinois Black Hock War. They were Handed to Harmon's Brother in Law Col. Pettagrew, from him to Joseph and Returned to Pettagrew from him to me, Col. Wm. H. Kimball. Gents, I can Loan them to the occasion, but shall require the Honor of the State [of] Utah to Return them to me in as good condition as Rec[eived] for they are more to me than the Miser's Million. Gents, if my Health Permits, I Shall be there in Person to Shake the Hand of many old and Tried friend. ...

Apr 15th 97 ... I have the Broken up Saddle Remains of the US Dragoon Saddle that was in use during the Mexican War. The Entire outfit was presented to me by Col Thomas L. Kane at the time of the Enlistment of the Mormon Batalion. I have rode it in all of my Indian trails and Engagements, had 2 Horses Shot from under it, and the Saddle is A wreck. I have the Bullet and Breast Plate that the Saddle Rec after my horse had 6 shots in him. The Saddle was all Black with heavy Brass Stirrups and dark web yurths and A very heavy Surcingle of the Same. But nothing Remains But the tree in Part. I will say here that occurred at the Walker Provo War of 49 and 50. You can have it on that occasion if you desire. ...

June 27th 97 ... I send by my Son ... my treasures—and as you have the History of them, I will add a little in relation to the Saddle, the Plate, and the Bullet that Splintered the front of the Saddle [which] is in this note. That Shot was as my Horse fell dead from Six Shots in his Body and you will See the Saddle is, as I Stated before, in A Delap[idat]ed State. Still I hold it as A Treasure to Wm. H. Kimball and want it with the other things Returned.⁸ The Stage⁹ ... I donate to the State as [a] Keep treasure. [Light editing for readability by Jolene Allphin]

William served a mission in England from 1853 to 1856. He presided over several conferences during this time and made many friends. One African explorer by the name of Livingston especially took a liking to William, and Livingston arranged for him to visit Queen Victoria. William later named one of his daughters Victoria.

William was involved with emigration matters during his mission. He wrote: “The fire of emigration blazes throughout the Pastorate to the extent that the folks are willing to part with all their effects, and toddle off with a few things in a pocket handkerchief. ... People who once felt they would rather die than leave ‘happy England,’ ... who looked upon other countries with supreme contempt, [now] sing with joyful hearts, ‘There is a land beyond the sea / Where I should like to be, / And dearer far than all the rest, / is that bright land to me.’” (See Andrew D. Olsen, *The Price We Paid*, Deseret Book, 2006, 15.)

William completed his mission in England and started for home, but his service to the immigrating Saints would not end for many months. When he arrived in America he fulfilled assignments in outfitting the season's emigration at Iowa City and at Florence.¹⁰ When the last handcarts and wagons were on their way to Utah, William was finally able to return home himself, anxious to see his family. After being home for only two days, he answered the rescue call to go back on the trail. His 17-year-old brother, David P. Kimball, went with him. There were many sacrifices and risks that were ahead of them for the next 2 ½ months.

William was selected as an assistant captain to George D. Grant. Grant's other assistant was Robert T. Burton, William's brother-in-law.¹¹ When the Willie handcart company was finally located on October 21, William was assigned to lead them back into the valley while Grant and the majority of the rescue party continued east to find the last three companies. The first assignment William gave was to an unnamed express rider to take a message first to Redick Allred, stationed with supplies at South Pass, and then on to Salt Lake, notifying others at Ft. Bridger and along

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the way that the company had been found in a “deplorable condition” and to come to their aid as quickly as possible.¹² One of William’s first sad experiences was the burial of two people near the base of Rocky Ridge and 15 or more at Rock Creek Hollow. He must have been heartbroken as he witnessed the suffering of these people, perhaps some of his own converts from his recent mission.

When the Willie company reached Ft. Bridger on November 2, William performed a marriage ceremony for one of his traveling companions, James Barnett Cole, and Lucy Ward of the Willie company. (See Lucy Ward biography in *Tell My Story, Too.*) Two days later, William rode express to Salt Lake City to report. He returned to the Willie company on November 8, bringing more provisions, and led them into the valley the next day. Two days later, William returned to the trail. Brigham Young assigned William and others to go back and turn around those rescuers who had become fearful and were heading back to Salt Lake. William continued east for more than 200 miles, where he met Captain Grant at Redick Allred’s South Pass camp on Nov. 18. After assisting the Martin company for two days, William started on another express ride back to Salt Lake to report to Brigham Young. Captain Grant and Hosea Stout were his traveling companions on this intense ride. Stout recorded in his diary that the express riders traveled between ten and fifteen miles after dark on three different days, “facing a severe snow storm and wind and the coldest and most piercing weather” of their journey. When the springs of one of their wagons broke, they had to abandon it. Hosea said that one night “ourselves and animals were nearly over done with fatigue, hunger, and cold. For myself I could scarcely stand alone or keep awake.” For November 24, Stout recorded:

This morning George D. Grant & William H. Kimball went ahead on horse back, intending to reach the city this evening, as our animals were fast failing and one wagon broke and left here our loading now all in one wagon. We could not travel fast. The snow deepened as we travelled to day and travelling became harder.

The next day, November 25, William and Captain Grant were traveling in waist-deep snow. When they reached Salt Lake, they again brought vital information to Brigham Young. William must have been more than exhausted, yet grateful to have helped his pioneer brothers and sisters. When the handcart companies had been in Florence in August, William was one who had encouraged them to continue their journey despite the lateness of the season. All six of the returning missionaries, and subsequent rescuers, who had counseled the people to continue to Utah that season,¹³ “were the ultimate example of sacrificing comfort and convenience to duty and concern for others.” (Olsen, *The Price We Paid*, 122-123.)

William’s father, Heber C. Kimball of the First Presidency, had reportedly given William and others some sobering instructions before they left Salt Lake City on this rescue: “If [you] die during the trip, [you] will die endeavoring to save [the people], and who has greater love than he that lays down his life for his friends.”¹⁴

Sources: *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1844-1889, Edited by Juanita Brooks, University of Utah Press, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, 1964 (reprint edition 2009); DUP history files for William H. Kimball (copies of handwritten letters, obituary newspaper article, a documented history by Jeanne Kimball Hill, and more are contained in this file); journal of Redick Allred, on film at Church History Library, original at DUP; familysearch.org; orsonprattbrown.com; Olsen, Andrew D., *The Price We Paid*, Deseret Book, 2006; Whitney, Orson F., *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons), 1892-1904.

(Endnotes next page)

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¹William received a reward for discovering the first coal mine within 40 miles of Salt Lake City, known as the “Sprague” mine.

²“Grandfather was getting along in years but still kept working around the ranch. One day while handling a jumpy horse he got tangled in a rope and injured the cords of his leg, so that the leg bent back at the knee and he could not straighten it. He fixed a harness with a wire that stretched from his knee to the toe of his shoe to draw the foot forward and with the use of a cane he was able to walk. With this handicap and his increasing age he decided to give up the ranch. He sold it to Bitners, the sheep people, and moved to Coalville.” William’s leg got worse and was finally amputated. “Grandfather recovered from the operation but after a year or two his health failed and he died, ... a life well spent, a Pioneer and a leader of men.” (Henry Ferguson, or Harry, Kimball)

³“As age stalked in Coalville, one of his granddaughters took him back to see the dear old ranch and hotel, driving a span of horses that her grandfather had raised. When he reached a certain spot, he extended his hand with his old pride and enthusiasm and exclaimed, ‘At one time I could stand here and say, I own this land as far as human eye can see on all sides.’ He told her he raised flax, wheat, sheep and cattle and ‘lived like a king.’” (Kimball Family News, 1863) “Jack Goodman’s Cityview: Kimball’s hotel and stage stop was one of the last in the nation.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 27, 1990, 4E.)

⁴Some of Kimball’s services included putting a stop to the Mexican slave trade of Indian children. Some Indian children who had been captured from other tribes by abusive Indian tribes were rescued by Utah’s early pioneers. “William did this for one who was reclaimed years afterward by his mother. For many years this boy was chief of the Skull Valley Indians and was always grateful to those who rescued him.” (Jeanne Kimball Hill, DUP history)

⁵As found in the *Deseret News* obituary article already mentioned. (Hill, DUP history)

⁶*Salt Lake Herald*, December 31, 1907.

⁷This implies that William was wearing this sash and protected by it when the bullet lodged in his saddle horn.

⁸See printed catalog of all artifacts displayed at www.dupinternational.org/jubilee/reliccatalog.htm. The catalog states that “The Kimball Saddle with quite a history was once an expensive thing, it was owned by Col. Thomas L. Kane, of grateful memory, ... a stray bullet flattened against the pommel of the saddle (now in an adjoining show case) tells how near this ‘Mountain Brave’ was from sharing the fate of his highly valued horses.”

⁹The Kimball ranch, including a hotel and stables, serviced passengers traveling on the Overland Stage, three of whom were Horace Greeley, Walt Whitman and Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain). Clemens said “William Kimball was one of the finest gentlemen he had ever met.”

¹⁰See Olsen, *The Price We Paid*, for more in-depth coverage of what this intense labor involved.

¹¹William married his 2nd wife, Melissa Burton Coray, widow of William Coray, in 1851. (Melissa has a mountain peak named for her in California, in honor of the journey she and other women made with the Mormon Battalion.) William and Melissa named a son Robert Taylor Kimball.

¹²Redick Allred received the message on Oct. 23 and met the Willie Company at Rock Creek the morning of October 24, with six wagonloads of provisions and more help.

¹³These six men included Captain George D. Grant, Joseph A. Young (son of Brigham Young), Cyrus Wheelock, William H. Kimball, James Ferguson, and Chauncey Webb.

¹⁴As quoted by Jeanne Kimball Hill, from “Kimball Family News,” June 1963.

