

ELIZABETH MURDOCK STEWART

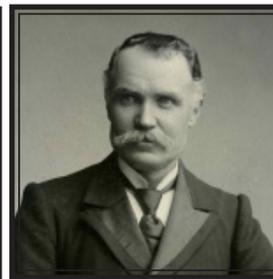
Born: 1822 Scotland (Died Nov. 23, 1856)

Age: 33

Hodgett Wagon Company



James Murdoch Stewart



Neil Murdoch Stewart

Elizabeth married William Stewart in 1850 in Scotland. Having been converted to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, they responded to the Elders' suggestions to gather with the Saints in Zion. They left Edinburgh in January of 1851, visited with relatives in Glasgow, then sailed from Liverpool, England, that month. William Stewart recorded in his diary on January 11 that when the ship left the dock, they "Sung a farewell hymn and gave three cheers for leaving babylon."

They had a windy and stormy voyage to New Orleans, then settled in Peoria, Illinois, for a few years. Elizabeth was expecting their first son, who was born that September. They named him James. They had two more sons, William and Neil, and Elizabeth was expecting again before the Spring of 1856, when they were ready to go west with the Saints. Unfortunately, young William had died and they did not want to leave his remains behind. They put his little body in a sealed, metallic coffin, and carried it along with them.

William was a finish carpenter. Church leaders had asked him to remain in Council Bluffs to repair wagons and handcarts. By the time the last handcart company was ready to leave, the Stewart family had joined with these emigrants. They purchased their own team and wagon and traveled with the Hodgett wagon company. They felt they would rather endure the hardship of crossing the Plains than wait through another winter on the eastern end of the Plains.

Because of slow progress caused by many delays and severe weather, the provisions ran low and the people were hungry and cold. Elizabeth became weak and sickly. On October 23rd, she gave birth to a baby daughter, Elizabeth, in the covered wagon during a snow storm. From the journal of Jesse Haven of the Hodgett company, we read: "23 October 1856: Cold last night- Bro- Upton died this morning about 10 o'clock. . . . Snow melting some. The Hand-cart Company came up to us to night and camped near us.- many dying in that company."

Little Elizabeth died three days later as the Hodgett and Martin companies were stranded at Red Buttes on the Platte River. The metallic coffin was opened and Elizabeth's body was placed by her brother's side. The Stewarts buried these children along the trail.

Elizabeth was devastated, but she tried her best to rally. On November 2, they arrived at the abandoned fort at Devil's Gate. The Martin handcart company was also there, making conditions extremely crowded. The handcart company soon moved to a ravine in the mountain, since known as Martin's Cove. The Hodgett wagons began unloading and caching their freight, with plans to soon carry some of the handcart people who were unable to walk. With food supplies still short and the weather severe, Elizabeth could not regain her strength and her condition steadily worsened.

On November 23, just one month after the birth of her baby girl, Elizabeth died. She was buried five miles east of Green River crossing in a shallow grave, as the ground was too frozen to dig very deep. The bereft husband and sons of Elizabeth Stewart continued their journey until December 15, 1856, when they arrived in Salt Lake City.

William Stewart and his sons remained faithful to Elizabeth's dreams and to the Church. William served in the Blackhawk Indian War and worked on the St. George Temple. James served as a High Councilor in the Church. Neil, who had been about 18 months old when his mother died, served as a High Councilor, President of the YMMIA, Bishop, and Millard County Selectman. Neil's autobiography states: "We arrived in Salt Lake City about the middle of December 1856, cold and hungry. Father placed us boys with a widow, Ruth Teasdale, and afterward married her and she was a good mother to us boys."



William Stewart

Sources: Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; *Pioneers and Prominent Men*, by Frank Esshom, 1913; family histories in files of Jolene Allphin; "A Biography of James Murdoch Stewart," by his daughter, Mary E. Beckstrand, in *Charity: The Pure Love of Christ: The Family History of George Lyle Stewart and Clara May Walker Stewart*; "Diary of William Stewart," familysearch.org; Jesse Haven diary, MS 890, Church History Library.