

JAMES HURREN

Born: 1827 England

Age: 29

Willie Handcart Company

James was traveling with his wife, Eliza Reeder Hurren, and their four daughters: Mary (7), Emma (4), and Sarah (2). Their youngest daughter, Selena, was born on July 14, 1856 at Iowa City. She lived only 2 weeks and died at Cherry Creek, along the trail in Iowa. They were also accompanied by Eliza's father, David Reeder, and Eliza's sister, Caroline Reeder, who both died on the trail, and Eliza's brother, Robert Reeder.

James had a strong testimony of the Gospel and was willing to do whatever the Lord asked of him. In 1852, he wrote, "The prayer of my soul is to my Lord and my God that we may all be Thine for ever and ever."

James was very strong and healthy. He was considered the strongest man in his company and was always willing to do more than his share. In addition to the family baggage and cooking utensils, he put as many as five extra sacks of flour (which weighed 100 pounds each) on his cart when the emigrants were asked to add the flour to their loads. Many complained about carrying even one sack. He also gave rides to two little girls who were not able to walk. The physically capable men stood guard duty at night, and in this, too, James far exceeded his quota of hours. Eliza worried that he would ruin his health, but Captain Willie promised him that if only one man in the company reached the Valley, it would be James.

James did retain his health but two of his daughters were very sick, and they missed their Aunt Caroline, who was 17 years old. She had died on the trail, just before they had reached Independence Rock.

One day, while James was gathering sage brush to make a fire, he found some pieces of rawhide which he took back to camp with him. He made his fire, cleaned and scraped the old hide and boiled it. His daughter, Emma, who was four, remembered all her life how good the "soup" from that rawhide tasted, and what a treat it had been to chew the softened leather.

Conditions reached the point that only two of the men in their "hundred," James and a Brother Gardner, were well enough to care for the rest of them. In spite of the strains and weariness, everyone tried to be cheerful and encouraging. James was especially valiant, and tried to see the humor in the situations that arose, and make others smile and laugh. This helped morale a great deal.

During the bleakest periods, James retained his hope and faith. He encouraged those around him to do their best to weather the adverse circumstances, to think of the opportunities ahead in Zion and the blessings in store if they endured and tried to be of service.

The weather grew colder each day, and Mary's feet eventually froze. When the family finally arrived in the Valley, their first concern was little Mary's frozen feet. They took her to a doctor and he said her legs would have to be amputated or she would die. Her father protested, "This little girl didn't walk a thousand miles to have her legs cut off. If she dies, she will die with her legs on."

The family moved to Brigham City to make their home and an elderly lady, Mrs. Snider, told them to get some fresh steak and wrap her feet in it and call her after three days. Fresh meat was not available where they lived, so Mary's father walked 20 miles to Ogden, got a steak, and walked back. When the beefsteak was removed after three days, Mrs. Snider applied homemade ointment on Mary's legs and feet. Within a few days the rotten flesh dropped off. Mary was able to walk again in two years. Her feet hurt her all her life, but she became the mother of thirteen children. She also took in a ten-year-old orphan girl with tuberculosis and cared for her until she died four years later.

After they arrived in the Valley, James and Eliza were asked how they felt about their ordeal. They were quick to reply, "With all our trials, our weary traveling, burying our dear ones, piling our clothing and bedding by the wayside and setting fire to them, we have never once felt to murmur or complain or regret the steps we have taken."