

## Charles Henry Bassett

**C**harles Henry Bassett was born in Ossian, Allegany County, New York on March 14, 1828. Ossian is on the banks of the Erie Canal. He was the son of Elias and Matilda Salter Bassett. At the age of 14 he passed the teachers' examination before the school trustees and taught school at the age of 15 in Ossian. Part of his salary was "boarding around" with families in the district in partial payment of their children's tuition. At 17 he married Permelia Dayton, whose family had recently been converted to the LDS church. He, and the rest of his family, joined the church and together they moved to Nauvoo where they remained until the Saints were driven out. Blocks in Nauvoo were four acres square. The Bassetts had a quarter block at the corner of what is now Ripley and Warsaw just south of hwy 96 near the town center. He was a member of the Nauvoo Legion and took part in the battle of Nauvoo. Both sides used cannons and a cannon ball fired by the mob from across the river took off the head of the man standing next to him. Ammunition was scarce and a mass of iron hammered into shape and fired at the enemy was found and shot back at the Mormons. Mr. Bassett found this cannon ball and many years later presented it to the Deseret Museum.



After being forced from their home in Nauvoo, the family settled in Kaneshville (now Council Bluffs), Iowa where he employed himself in teaching and clerking in a store to earn the means for the family to migrate to Utah. Children were born during these times, the first at Montrose, Iowa in 1846 and two more at Kaneshville, Iowa in 1849 and 1851. In 1852 the family traveled to Utah from Kaneshville as part of the James McGaw Company of 239 individuals and 54 wagons. James McGaw (age 28) was married to Mary Matilda Bassett (15), the youngest sister of Charles Henry.

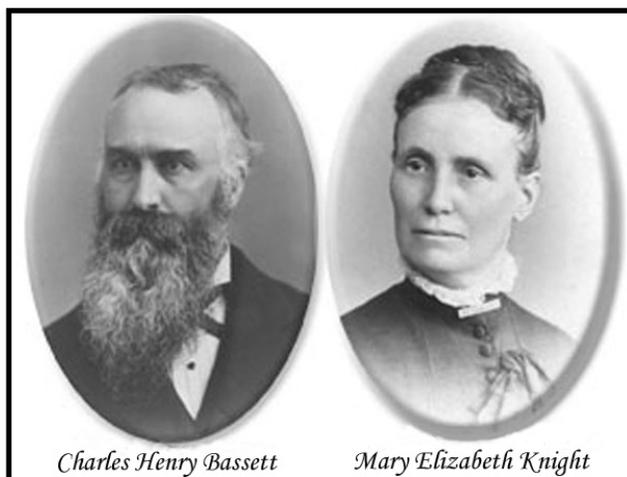
A quote from the trail journal for Thursday, June 24: "The ferriage bill paid at 12M. we again moved six miles and found a beautiful place to camp but a scarcity of water. There we must tarry Capt. (Charles Henry) Bassett having to return a yoke of cattle. The weather good all well." Another quote from the trail journal for Friday July 23: "In the morning Bro. C(harles) H(enry) Bassett rebaptized quite a number of brethren and sisters and some new ones also. Their names will appear when confirmed."

Those Bassetts listed in the company are: Charles Henry (24), his wife Permelia Mindwell Dayton (29), Charles Julius (infant), Flora Elizabeth (Florinda) (3), Helen Maria (5), and Charles Henry's parents Elias (52), and Matilda Salter (52). The train departed on 24 June 1852 and arrived in Salt Lake on 20 September 1852. Permelia Daytons parents, Hyrum (50) and Permilia Bundy (49) had traveled to Salt Lake with the Ezra T. Benson Company that left Kaneshville on 15 July 1849 and arrived 25-29 October 1849.

After arriving in Salt Lake City Charles Henry clerked at different firms.

He married a second wife, Mary Elizabeth Knight, in March of 1853 at Salt Lake City. (According to family oral history, when he came to her house he had to enter by the back porch, take a bath, and change into a complete set of clean clothes, which he left behind when leaving.)

Charles Henry was a clerk of the Twelfth Quorum of Seventies. It was customary to call missionaries from the Seventies at general conference. At the general conference of April 8, 1854, Saturday



Charles Henry Bassett

Mary Elizabeth Knight

afternoon, the old tabernacle not being large enough to accommodate those present, President Young invited all to the north side of the building where seats had been prepared for about seven thousand, and the seats and aisles were soon filled. At this conference, Charles H. Bassett, among others, was called to go on a mission to the central states. He heeded the call and, leaving his two wives and several small children, he traveled back to Missouri to preach the gospel in a hotbed of anti-Mormonism. A daughter (unknown name) writes, "My Mother had a small family of children and she kept them by making baby shoes, men's and ladies' soft slippers. She won many prizes at the state fair for her efficient work."

An article in the *Luminary* (an LDS newspaper published in St. Louis) written by Charles Henry stated the following:

"I landed in Independence, Missouri the last day of May, 1854 after a tedious journey of 1250 miles over snow covered mountains in Utah, the barren plains of Nebraska, and the fertile valleys of Kansas. After tarrying a day or two to rest from the fatigue of the journey, I bade my traveling companions farewell and left for Wayne City to await the arrival of the packet steamer for Council Bluffs. At the hotel where I stopped were several travelers also waiting for a passage up the river. One hoary headed wicked old man, who had fought in the Black Hawk War in 1812 and other frontier and Indian disturbances, brought up the subject of the Mormons. The early history, present conditions and future prospects of this peculiar people were fully discussed. The old man's crowning act of valor was reserved for the murderous warfare waged against the defenseless Mormons by the mobocrats in Missouri. His brightest laurels were won at the massacre at Haun's Mill where he and his bloodthirsty fellows inhumanely butchered some fifteen or twenty unresisting men and boys and threw their bodies into a deep well, while (to use his own words) 'some were dead and some were still kickin' . . ."

This conversation kept up for several hours, and my heart sickened within me at the recital of cruel wrongs, gross outrages and unprovoked murders exultingly boasted of by those who had played a full part in these terrible tragedies. Several years had elapsed since this cruel persecution which resulted in the expulsion of the Mormons from the state of Missouri, yet instead of manifesting any signs of remorse for the wicked deeds, the guilty perpetrators seemed to glory in their shame, and take personal pride in numbering their victims. They exhibited much apparent satisfaction in relating the bloody scenes in which they had been engaged – the murdering of men, women and children, the burning of Mormon houses, the destruction of their property and confiscation of their goods."

While on his mission he and his brother-in-law, James McGaw, were appointed to travel and preach in the Stakes of Zion, to stir up the dead branches, to reprove evil, rebuke wickedness and to effect a reformation generally, till called to further duties. In clippings from the *Deseret News* we find Bro. Bassett was at a conference held in St. Louis. He took an active part in this conference. During most of his mission, Charles Henry assisted Bro. Erastus Snow in St. Louis editing the "*Luminary*". In his scrapbook are many stories and poems he wrote showing he was of a literary turn of mind and thus of great help to Bro. Snow. Taken from the *Deseret News*, we find he also served with Bro. Franklin B. Wooley in the area around Clark county Ohio trying to stir up activity in the inactive "stakes of Zion" left behind as the main body of the church moved west.

An experience had on his way west was published in the "*St. Louis Luminary*" 24 Feb. 1855 written from Springfield, Ohio February 6, 1855 while doing missionary work there. He writes, concerning the death of Bro. Joseph Sprouse:

### DEATH AND BURIAL ON THE PLAINS

"Death is never a welcome guest, but when the grim monster serves his summons far away on the distant plains, far from the abode of civilization, where not even a rough plank can be procured of which to make a rude coffin, or the necessary material to stitch together into the ordinary habiliments of the grave, it is then we feel the blow as doubly severe. My memory still retains in sad distinctness the death and burial of poor Brother Sprouse as we were journeying over the plains to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. The shades of evening were quietly gathering around as our long train of covered wagons slowly rolled into camp on the banks of the Wood River. We had experienced a hard day's travel up the valley on the main Platte, subject to the boiling influence of the July sun. It was Friday evening, and we were to remain camp until Monday morning. We

hardly had time to dispose of our hurriedly prepared supper, before the sable curtains of night closed around us. A guard was detailed, and we retired to rest. Saturday was a pleasant day, and all were early engaged. About the middle of the afternoon Bro. Joseph Sprouse was violently attacked with that dreadful scourge, cholera. I was immediately sent for, and myself and others administered in the name of the Lord, but it seemed to do no good. He was certain he would not recover and didn't seem to care. He died that night. A grave was prepared beneath the shade of a wide spreading oak that grew on a small natural mound near the bank of the river. About ten o'clock the camp assembled to pay their last respects to the remains of the deceased brother. A rude bier was formed by placing on the ground two tent poles about three feet apart and parallel with each other. Across these were laid small rods, cut out of a proper length, and over all were placed willow boughs. The corpse was brot(sic) from the tent and placed on the bier and slowly born to the grave, followed by a procession of sorrowing saints. A large tree had been felled and cut the proper length, and the bark peeled off both halves. One half was placed in the bottom of the grave, forming a sort of trough, over which was spread a nice new blanket. The corpse was next lowered and the blanket carefully wrapped around it. The remaining half of the bark was placed over his body, forming an arching lid to this crude coffin. The green branches that had covered the rustic bier were thrown into the grave which was now filled with the dark mould, hiding from our sight all that was left of a fond brother, a kind husband, and devoted saint. A benediction was pronounced and we returned sorrowing into camp. The next morning before we broke up camp I placed at the head of the grave a rough wooden slab, with this inscription cut with my pocket knife, 'J.S. 1852'. We moved early, and the heart broken widow of the deceased lingered a few sad moments near the grave of her dead husband and then turned her back upon the sacred spot forever."

Charlie  
Springfield, O, Feb 6, 1855

On July 24, 1855 as Brothers Snow and Bassett were preparing to return to Salt Lake a farewell party was held at Mormon Grove, St. Louis and toasts were made to the departing missionaries. A Bro. J. M. Coombs gave one to Bro. Bassett as follows: "Elder Charles H. Bassett, the ladies favorite. Bro. Charles need only to be known to be loved." Elder Orson Spencer wrote as follows from Mormon Grove Aug. 4, 1855, "Pres. Snow gave us a parting hand yesterday at 4 p.m. In company with C. H. Bassett. They were in a high carriage drawn by four mules."

Arriving back in Utah in the fall of 1855 he became employed as a clerk at different prominent Salt Lake City firms. In the early sixties he formed a partnership with Boliver Roberts in a general merchandizing business under the name of Bassett and Roberts. The store was built in 1864 on Main Street immediately south of the Utah State National Bank. He went out of business some years after Z.C.M.I commenced business next to them. He then opened a hardware store in a building south of the old Orpheum Theatre. Later he moved to Camp Floyd at the time of Johnston's Army and operated a business under the name of Bassett and Hoffman.



On one occasion he made a trip by team via Los Angeles to San Francisco to purchase goods. On his return he brought a branch of an orange tree with the ripe fruit, the first oranges to come to Utah.

In the early days of Utah before the advent of the railroad, merchants wanting goods from eastern markets were obliged to make the journey as far east as the Missouri River by stagecoach. It was a long tedious and expensive trip. It was customary for one to make the journey and do the purchasing for several merchants. On one such occasion Mr. Bassett was selected. He

was entrusted with \$25,000 - \$30,000 in gold to make the purchases. This amount, together with \$5,000 of his own money was packed in a small wooden box, then in a larger box, nailed up tightly and carried in the boot of the stagecoach with the luggage. Quilted vests of fancy pattern were much in vogue at the time. In addition to the boxed money he carried a considerable amount on his person in \$20 gold pieces quilted into the vest. The weight of the gold in the vest became an almost unbearable burden before the journey ended. The route passed through a section of the west infested with outlaws and marauding bands of Indians. On this trip, when the stage arrived at one station they found it in smoldering ruins. The station keeper had been killed and the horses stolen. A lady who was a fellow passenger on the stage enroute to St. Louis was so overcome and shocked at what had happened that she begged Mr. Bassett to promise he would shoot her rather than let her fall into the hands of the Indians should they be attacked by them during the rest of the journey.

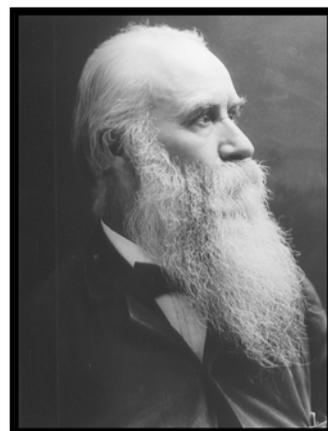
Finally they reached the Missouri River at a small town with a branch railroad line connecting to St. Louis. Arriving in early morning, Mr. Bassett repaired to a small hotel with the box of gold and his hand luggage to wait for the train that was to pass through about midnight. The proprietor of the hotel persuaded him to lie down on a sofa in the hotel parlor, assuring him he would have ample time to get to the station because the train crew usually stopped long enough to eat supper. He removed his coat and boots and went to sleep. The proprietor awakened him later telling him the train crew had decided not to stop for supper. He pulled on his boots, picked up his luggage, and followed after the porter who had rushed ahead shouldering the box of gold. He arrived at the station just in time to see the porter throw the box of gold on the rear platform of the last car as the train pulled out of town. He was afraid to tell anyone that the box contained gold. He immediately telegraphed to the next station to put the box off and he would follow. He assumed an air of indifference and awaited the train the next day. He found the box at the next station tumbled among all of the other freight. With some profound relief he went to the express office and had it shipped to New York, rather than taking another chance of losing it.

Most of the immigrants for Utah outfitted at Iona, Illinois where there was an abundance of walnut trees. Wagon boxes and equipment were made from these trees then abandoned in Salt Lake. Mr. Bassett had a fine set of furniture made from these pieces by Henry Dinwoody including hand carving, finishing and upholstering. He bought a Chickering Square piano, very large and heavy, and had it shipped by wagon across the plains from the Missouri River, one of the first pianos to come to Utah.

He built a home south on South Temple and First Street. He later lived at Sixth South and Fourth West Street. His eldest son, Charles Julian, was playing on the streets one evening when some Indians stole him. A piece of buckskin was bound tightly over his mouth and he was picked up and carried between two Indians concealed under their blankets. After about a block some men noticed something struggling under the blankets and rescued him.

He was a large man, height 5 ' 10 ½ ", dark hair, and blue eyes. In his late years he had a large flowing white beard. He was very dignified, was of a jovial disposition, stern when necessary, but full of jokes and stories, the life of any party he attended, was a great favorite of all; liberal in disposition, very honest in his dealings with his fellow man; thought all men honest, and trusted them to his detriment.

During the latter part of his life he acted as a confidential clerk and bookkeeper for a number of businessmen, among them S. P. Teasdale. He was bookkeeper at the Bishop's General Storehouse, the Tithing House, for twenty years. In all of his business relationships he was scrupulously exact and honest and thoroughly reliable, and his gentlemanly and refined bearing attracted and retained a host of friends. In church work he was active and earnest. For many years he was in the Twelfth Quorum of Seventies, and the last two years of his life he was a high priest of the Liberty Stake of Zion. He was a captain of the Nauvoo Legion in Utah. He was a consistent Latter Day Saint.



He died Feb. 26, 1907 at the age of seventy-nine, true to the faith for which he had endured and sacrificed. In his last days Mary Elizabeth, his second wife, cared him for. He died in her home, shown on the right.



He came to Utah in 1852 and throughout all of his life was devoted to the interests of the community and gave his service unstintingly to the up building of this section. They, his family and his numerous friends hold the heritage of a good name, which he left behind, in high esteem. Pres. Joseph F. Smith spoke at his funeral. His experiences were many and varied and helpful. Sorrows, joys, sacrifices and want, all have been in the making of a long useful life and a true Latter Day Saint.

Five of his oldest sons left Utah to enter into ranching, business and politics in Idaho: William Henry, son of Mary Elizabeth Knight and Julian, Charles Henry II, Fred and Frank, sons of Permelia Dayton.

He was married to the following:

Permelia Mindwell Dayton - 7 children

Mary Elizabeth Knight - 9 children

Sarah Stageman - 2 children

Manda M. Wright - 7 children

Permelia Francelia Phippen - 7 children (Picture right)



Information sources and notes are as follows:

1. A history written by his daughter, Lois Knight Bassett Gatrell, that is quoted and referred to.
2. A history written by his grand daughter, Diantha Glines Bender, that refers to the above.
3. A history written by his great grandson, William (Bill) Bassett, who quotes from the above and other sources.
4. Family oral histories. There are other stories but they have questionable roots. They may be substantiated and added later.
5. Articles from the Deseret News and Luminary that are quoted or simply referred to.
6. [www.LDS.org](http://www.LDS.org) at FamilySearch by name and family.
7. Information about the James McGaw Company was obtained from <http://www.lds.org/churchhistory/library/pioneercompanysources/0,16272,4019-1-201,00.html> Church History Library and Archives, Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel, 1847-1868.
8. The pictures are from family records. There are other known albums whose locations are unknown.
9. He supposedly kept a diary but, if so, the whereabouts are unknown.
10. The locations of the scrapbooks cited are also unknown.
11. The locations of the Dinwoody furniture and the Chickering square piano are unknown.

This history was compiled and entered into digital form by his great grandson Stanley D. Hansen February 2007.