

Hillary Herbert Steele

Hillary Herbert Steele was born 17 April 1857 in Claiborne, Monroe, Alabama.¹ He was the first son of Lafayette DeKalb Steele and Cornelia Almira Herbert. The family was living in Butler, Alabama in 1860² and in Monroe, Alabama in 1870.³ In 1877, Herbert is listed as immigrating from the United States to New York.⁴ It was this move that seemed to take him away from his family, who all stayed in Alabama.

In 1880, Herbert was a compositor (typesetter) in Sacramento, Sacramento, California.⁵ This was the beginning of his participation as a “tramp printer”. Tramp printing began during the California Gold Rush. These unique individuals were a breed of wanderers, more literate than those they lived with, and were proud craftsmen who drank and chewed tobacco to excess. One of the best known groups was the Missouri River Pirates, who set type and drank whiskey in river towns up and down the banks of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers.⁶

When a union compositor (typesetter) couldn't get a day's work, he could “pass” his union card to printers who were working, who would put some money on the card and pass it along for more contributions. Herbert is recorded several times passing, depositing, or withdrawing his card.⁷

At some point Herbert was a pioneer journalist at the *Herald*,⁸ a weekly newspaper in Silver City, Grant, New Mexico. Herbert came from Nevada⁹ to Silver Reef, Washington, Utah, about 1881, when brothers Edward and John Pike sold the *Silver Reef Miner* to James N. Louder and H.H. Steele. Herbert served as senior editor.¹⁰ The *Miner* slowed to a weekly that year, then a semi-weekly in 1882 and then probably died that year.¹¹

Herbert was described in a Salt Lake newspaper as “a man of good appearance, being above the medium height, well formed, dark complexioned, and with a decidedly prepossessing countenance”.¹² It continued, “he is somewhat informed on public matters and a good printer, he was well fitted for his duties at the Reef, but was too convivial in his habits to be depended upon at all times, and to this, doubtless, more than anything else, is traceable the act which places him in the dark and dismal category of murderers. Socially, he is entertaining and intelligent; but his appetite has proved too much for him.”¹³ Another Salt Lake newspaper called him a “desperate character, having been a leading actor, it is said, in other shooting scrapes, one of which occurred not long ago at Cherry Creek¹⁴, Nevada and resulting in the death of a prominent citizen of that place”.¹⁵ Herbert was called “brilliant” but a “dope fiend”.¹⁶

¹ Illinois Deaths and Stillbirths, 1916-1947.

² United States Census, 1860.

³ United States Census, 1870.

⁴ New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1891.

⁵ United States Census, 1880.

⁶ Tramp Printers, by John M. Howells and Marion Dearman, 1996, pp. 123-6.

⁷ For example, see Typographical Journal, 1915, Vol 47, p. 265.

⁸ The *Grant County Herald* was only published between 1877-1881.

⁹ *Salt Lake Herald*, 15 February 1882, p. 16.

¹⁰ *Silver, Sinners and Saints*, by Paul Dean Proctor and Morris A. Shirts, pp. 105, 144.

¹¹ *Southern Utah Memories: Newspapers of Washington County, Utah, 1864-1994*.

¹² *Salt Lake Herald*, 15 February 1882, p. 16.

¹³ *Salt Lake Herald*, 15 February 1882, p. 16.

¹⁴ Cherry Creek was a historic mining town in White Pine County, Nevada.

¹⁵ *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

¹⁶ *Memories of Silver Reef*, in *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 1930, Vol 3, No 4, p. 108.

Herbert had retired to Capital Saloon¹⁷ for a night of drinking, about eleven-thirty¹⁸ on 4 February 1882. The bar tender, Johnny Quillen¹⁹, refused to extend him credit for a drink.²⁰ Herbert was quarrelsome and “heaped considerable abuse on him” until Quillen struck him in the face.²¹

Quillen’s version of the incident stated, “I called Steele back and told him we were not in the habit of keeping accounts and that we did not do a credit business. He then told me he did not owe me more than a half dollar; some words passed between us, and he said that I had acted the ... with him about that fifty cents – this was repeated three or four times. I finally told him I think I am pretty near as good a man as you are. He said, that may be, but you treated me like a I then struck him in the face, he kind of staggered back, and I was following him up when I heard the report of a pistol. I rushed in on him and tried to get the pistol from him, and several of the boys got around him.”²²

Bar tender “William Rafferty, who was nearby, told Herbert to put up his gun, and remarked that he wouldn’t shoot anybody. Steele replied, “The hell I wouldn’t.” and pointing the pistol at Rafferty, fired. The ball entered in front of the right shoulder and ranged towards the heart, causing death in a few minutes. Quillen would have shot Herbert on the spot, but was prevented by one of the bystanders grasping his pistol”.²³

Rafferty died within a few minutes.²⁴ Herbert was immediately seized and jailed, and strongly guarded for the dual purpose of preventing his escape and protecting him from the fury of the excited citizens.²⁵ News of the murder was widely reported, including Rafferty’s wife’s family in Salt Lake City.²⁶

Excitement was high and there was talk of lynching.²⁷ “James Lynch stood on an improvised platform on the running gears of a wagon. He called to mind the many murders that had been committed and that the courts and jurors had failed to give justice, that the time had come when the people must take the law in their own hands if justice was to prevail. The crowd had become a mob crying, "Hang him! Hang him!" when Capt. Henry Lubbeck, general manager of the Christy Mining and Milling Co., dashed up on his pacer. The crowd parted and Capt. Lubbeck sprang from his horse to the platform and faced Lynch. Silence reigned. Capt. Lubbeck, an aristocrat of the South, faced a younger and much larger man, but Lynch blanched under the Captain's piercing gaze and sat down on the coil of rope without a word when Capt. Lubbeck shouted, "Sit down!" The captain, in a few short ringing sentences, urged the people to commit no rash act that would disgrace them and the camp, but to stand for law and order. Father Galligan then jumped to the platform. He was tall, slender, and bent. His eyes flashed as he spoke with impassioned eloquence, urging the people to do no murder. As the crowd was melting away John Fortmann led out toward the jail, calling out, "All in favor of hanging come this way!" But less than a score followed him.²⁸

¹⁷ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8.

¹⁸ *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

¹⁹ John P Quillen was born 1857 in California; of Irish descent.

²⁰ *The Montana Standard*, 8 February 1882, p. 7; *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8.

²¹ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8.

²² *Silver Reef Miner*, 4 February 1882.

²³ *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

²⁴ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8

²⁵ *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

²⁶ *Oakland Tribune*, 4 February 1882, p. 2; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 Feb 1882, p. 4-5; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Vol 14, No 142, 4 February 1882.

²⁷ *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

²⁸ *Memories of Silver Reef*, in *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 1930, Vol 3, No 4, p. 108; see also *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8; *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

Herbert was tried for murder in the second district court in Beaver, Utah. Gibson Clark²⁹ was his defending attorney. Herbert testified that he drew his pistol while staggering back from the attack by Quillen and it accidentally discharged.³⁰ It appears he shot at Quillen and then turned and mortally wounded Rafferty.³¹ The jury found him guilty of voluntary manslaughter. The motion for a new trial was denied.³² He was sentenced to prison for four years by Judge Stephen P. Twiss³³ He served his time in prison in Beaver, Utah.³⁴

William Rafferty, the deceased, had been a saloon keeper in Silver Reef for years, and was a peaceful, inoffensive man who had the respect of all who knew him. He left a widow and three little children.³⁵ Funeral services were held three days later at the Catholic Church in Silver Reef.³⁶

Information about Herbert Steele after prison is not certain. There are records of a Herbert Steele serving as president of the Seattle Typographical Union in 1885,³⁷ but that is before he would have completed his four-year sentence. In 1888, a Herbert Steele secured a judgment in court against Vining & Booth of the *Frisco Signal* newspaper for wages due him as editor of that paper. This Herbert Steele came to Flagstaff from San Francisco.³⁸

It is certain that in 1889, Herbert's father, Lafayette DeKalb Steele, from Mt Pleasant, Monroe, Alabama, posted an inquiry for his son "who not been heard of at home since July 1884" in a New Mexico newspaper.³⁹ Again in 1893, his father posts another inquiry in the *Typographical Journal*, about his son who was "last heard of six years ago, was then running a newspaper under the firm name of Louder & Steele, in Salt Lake City, Utah".⁴⁰

²⁹ Gibson Clark was admitted to the Utah Bar in 1880, and later served as an attorney and judge in Wyoming (*Wyoming Tribune*, 15 December 1914, pp. 1-2).

³⁰ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8; *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

³¹ Memories of Silver Reef, in *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 1930, Vol 3, No 4, p. 108.

³² *Deseret News*, 24 May 1882.

³³ Stephen P Twiss was an associate justice of the second district in Utah in 1882 (*History of the Bench and Bar of Utah*, 1913, p. 65). An interesting note is that around the same time, Judge Twiss was supportive of the movement to have women vote in Utah.

³⁴ *Southern Utah Memories: Newspapers of Washington County, Utah, 1864-1994*.

³⁵ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8; *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8

³⁶ *Salt Lake Herald*, 10 February 1882, p. 8.

³⁷ Report of Proceedings of the 33rd session of the International Typographical Union, June 1885, p. 283.

³⁸ *The Arizona Champion*, 21 January 1888, p. 3; 21 July 1888, p. 3.

³⁹ *Western Liberal*, 24 May 1889, p. 3.

⁴⁰ *Typographical Journal*, 1893, Vol 5, p. 162.

OTHER POSSIBLE HERBERT STEELES

There is a Herbert Steele working as a printer at the *Republican*, a newspaper in Denver, Colorado.⁴¹ He and other newspaper workmen were given a train tour to Aspen.⁴² He continued to work as a printer at the *Republican* and the *Colorado Sun* until 1893.⁴³ He married Rose McCauley about 1892.⁴⁴ By 1900, Herbert and Rose are living in Albany, New York. They had no children.

In 1908, this Herbert Steele is the editor and publisher of the *Breeze*, an independent newspaper published on Thursdays in Johnstown, Weld, Colorado.⁴⁵ In 1909 he is in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, as a proofreader. He “made many friends while in this place and left a favorable impression upon all with whom he became acquainted”.⁴⁶ After six months, he returned to Denver, Colorado. In 1910, the Typographical Union represented him in a suit against the New-Times Publishing Company over the matter of two months’ pay.⁴⁷ He is elected to serve as an officer on the executive committee of the Denver Typographical Union Athletic Association.⁴⁸

Between 1911 and 1915, a Herbert Steele showed up in the Salt Lake City, Utah, directory as a compositor and proofreader for the *Salt Lake Tribune* and the *Herald Republic*.⁴⁹

From 1915, there is a possible leap to a H. Herbert Steele, a 59-year old roomer, born in Alabama, who is married and works as a newspaper printer. He is living in the home of Joe and Clara Miller in Chicago, Cook, Illinois.⁵⁰

Another possibility is the Herbert H, Steele, printer, who died 28 April 1939 in Chicago, Cook, Illinois. He was buried in Elmwood Cemetery, River Grove, Cook, Illinois.⁵¹ Further research is needed to determine if these various Herbert Steeles are indeed the same man who committed murder in Silver Reef in 1882, or what happened to him otherwise.

⁴¹ Denver, Colorado, City Directory, 1889.

⁴² *Aspen Evening Chronicle*, 12 June 1889.

⁴³ Denver, Colorado, City Directory, 1889-1893

⁴⁴ United States Census, 1900.

⁴⁵ Ayer Directory of Publications, 1908, p. 88

⁴⁶ Typographical Journal, 1909, Vol 35, p. 321.

⁴⁷ The Typographical Journal, 1910. Vol 37, p. 88.

⁴⁸ Inland Printer/American Lithographer, 1910, Vol 45, p. 105.

⁴⁹ Salt Lake City, Utah, City Directories, 1911-1915.

⁵⁰ United States Census, 1920.

⁵¹ Cook County, Illinois Death Index, 1908-1988; Illinois, Deaths and Stillbirths Index, 1916-1947.