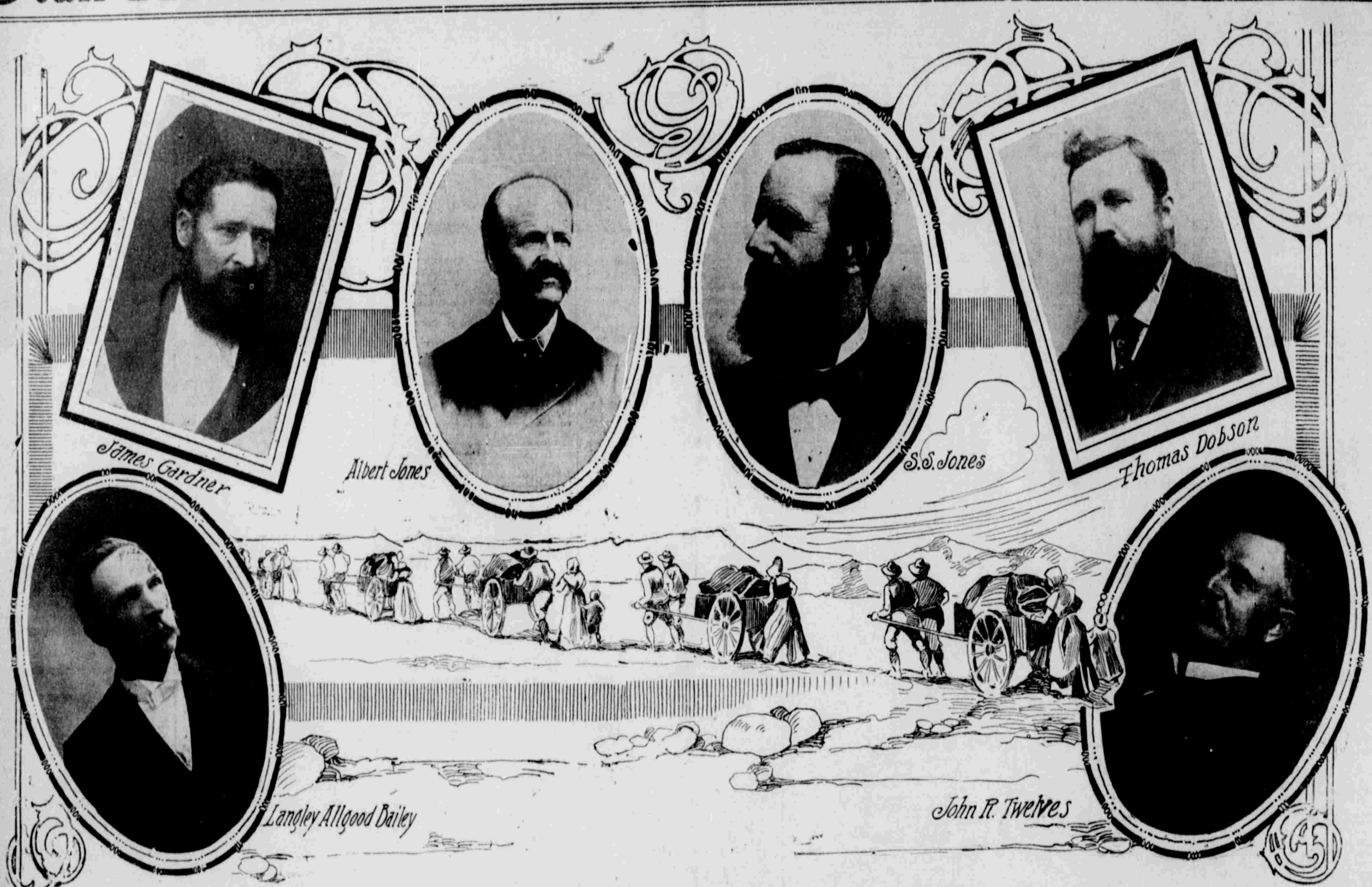


# Utah Heroes Who Pulled Their All Across the Plains.



SOME OF THE LIVING MEMBERS OF THE ILL-FATED HANDCART COMPANIES THAT CAME TO UTAH IN 1856. AFTER HARDSHIPS THAT ARE UNPARALLELED IN HISTORY.

"BEN HOLLADAY would have covered the entire distance in 36 hours." These words are put into the mouth of one of the characters in Mark Twain's "Innocents Abroad."

The story deals with the travels in foreign lands of a party of American tourists. While strolling along the southern shore of the Mediterranean, the portion of Africa that joins to Asia is in sight and the mountains rising between the valley of the Nile and the Dead Sea are in view of the passengers. One of the latter, designated as the "Oracle," expatiates upon the journeyings of the Israelites and the greatness of Moses, their leader, "Dan" and the "Doctor," as usual when the earnest person is talking, plead ignorance of the entire subject. They want to know who Israel is and who Moses was, and the "Oracle" enlightens them.

Then they inquire what things Moses accomplished that made him great, and they are told that he led the children of Israel from the Nile to within sight of the Jordan.

"How far was it?" asks "Dan," and when the distance is named—considerably less than 200 miles, in a direct line—the statement is elicited, "Ben Holladay would have covered the entire distance in 36 hours."

Oldtimers will recall that Ben Holladay had the contract for carrying the mail across the plains in early days, and the feat accomplished by himself and his riders, in the famous "pony express" days will long be remembered.

The remark was intended to cast reflection on and to belittle the achievements of the great lawgiver in that greatest of undertakings recorded in the annals of man.

It has never been paralleled and probably never will be, until that time comes when it shall no longer be said, "The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but the Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them."

**THE HANDCART BRIGADE.**  
The nearest approach to the stupendous migration of ancient Israel is perhaps found in the exile and travels of modern Israel, the Latter-day Saints. A record of the latter event, particularly that portion of it known as the "hand-cart" brigade, will be the principal feature of this writing, but for purposes of comparison brief mention will be made of the greater exodus, that had its inception at Ramesses in the land of Goshen and ended at the crossing of the Jordan.

In the Biblical account of the deliverance of the children of Israel, it is stated that there went out from the servitude of Pharaoh 600,000 men of the sons of Jacob capable of wielding the sword. Taking that number as a basis, commentators have estimated that not less than 2,000,000 persons, large and small, crossed the Red sea, in sight of the swiftly advancing Egyptians. Once beyond the neck of water, the Israelites were within 200 miles of the promised land. Why did not the great leader pursue the direct course, instead of deviating far to the south and east? The most widely accepted opinion in the matter is that Moses had the best of strategic reason for seeking an untraveled way, for seeking an untraveled way, and separated from him by only a narrow sea, were millions of Egyptian foes, while in front were leaping herds of barbarous tribes, to menace every advancing step of the exiles.

**STILL STRONGER REASON.**  
The strategic point is doubtless well taken, but there is perhaps a better and a stronger reason why the Israelites should have taken that route. It was the land that was destined to become their inheritance. The hand of providence was over them, and whether or not they were worthy to enter, without reformation and discipline, upon the land bequeathed to Abraham the faithful, they were too precious in the sight of heaven to be longer permitted to remain in servitude.

The story of Israel's wanderings lies upon the center of nearly every family in the land, and it is not necessary to here dwell upon the oft-told tale. Suffice it to say that it took 40 years to complete the journey, which, with all its windings and doubling on its own track, did not exceed a distance of 1,200 miles. The route lay through the heart of a desert, and the death of water

and burning sands proved most fatal to the pilgrims. Of the 2,000,000 persons who went out from beneath the heel of the Egyptian oppressor, only two souls were alive when the crossing of the Jordan was reached.

**AS TO MODERN ISRAEL.**  
And now as to modern Israel. It is interesting to trace the similarity and the dissimilarity between the ancient and the latter-day exodus. The principal difference lies in the fact that the last exiles were comparatively few in number, and unlike their antetypes, did not run away, but were driven forth, whether or not to what fate, their oppressors neither knew nor cared. Behind both companies were cold and relentless foes, and in front savage tribes and the wilderness. The distance traversed by Brigham Young in almost a direct line equalled all the meanderings of Moses, and the time required to cover the journey was about as long compared to 430. The first leader of his people suffered from a lack of water, the pioneers of the western new world often deplored the fact that the streams they encountered were so numerous, broad and deep.

**PILGRIMS AND PATRIOTS.**  
The law-giver of Sinai had as a following a race that for four hundred years had been subject to servitude, the most menial; his compeer of latter days was surrounded by men and women who for the most part were descended from pilgrims and patriots, freemen of the highest type, as to the remainder, they were of the best blood of the nations. With them there was no forgetting of the wrongs once suffered, while longing for the flesh-pots left behind.

After the advent of the pioneers into the region of the Great Salt Lake, an almost continuous stream of immigration followed in the trail of the new comers. With horse teams, with mule teams, with ox teams, and even with teams came the pilgrims. No condition seemed sufficiently forbidding to deter men and women from undertaking the wearisome and hazardous journey, and once under way, a marvelous fortitude and resignation characterized the travelers. Little murmuring and discontent were manifested, though the privation and suffering undergone were extremely trying.

**FRONTIER OUTFITTING.**  
The matter of outfitting on the frontier was very expensive, made more so by the demands for animals and vehicles to accommodate the fast increasing number of men bound for the gold fields of the Pacific coast. In various parts of Europe were thousands of Latter-day Saints whose fondness for the land of promise was so great that they were unable to be permitted to gather with their fellow religious in the valleys of the Rocky Mountains. For nearly ten years the settlements founded by the pioneers had been augmented by the arrival each season of thousands of Americans and foreign converts. And still there were many thousands who were unable to "gather to Zion" by the modes of emigration in vogue. If they had means sufficient to pay for the year's voyage and to bring them as far as the western frontier, there the journey must end. To purchase wagons and teams for the crossing of the plains, so far as these were concerned, was an impossibility.

**A NEW PLAN EVOLVED.**  
This state of affairs brought about the inauguration of a new plan for the traversing of the distance from the Missouri river to Salt Lake valley, which was none other than the formation of handcart companies. The idea was no sooner given expression than it spread with wonderful rapidity among the poorer classes of European converts, who saw in the new departure the realization of their fondest dreams. To walk a thousand miles, with Zion as the terminus, seemed but a small matter, and men and women were carried with the plan almost beyond reason. Within a few months from the time the idea was first mooted, there had arrived upon the western frontier of America hundreds of men, women and children, making ready for the journey by foot to their destination in the Rocky Mountains.

**ON THE LONG ROAD.**  
The first arrivals at the outfitting point were soon supplied with hand-carts, and proceeded on their way. The journey of 1,200 miles, fraught as it was with dangers and hardships, was completed with success and with little loss of life by these, as compared with what the later companies of the season, with poorly constructed carts suffered. The first

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## To the Utah Handcart Veterans of 1856, '57, '59 and '60.

Greeting—It will be just 50 years this coming fall since the first handcart companies crossed the great plains, and arrived in Salt Lake City. This being the fact, with the approval of the authorities, and through the courtesy of the Deseret News, we desire to give notice to all who came to Utah by handcart, no matter in what year, in whose company, or at what age, that it is the intention to hold a jubilee gathering during the next October conference in Salt Lake City, the exact date to be October 2.

We respectfully request the co-operation of all the prominent handcart veterans throughout the state, to canvass their respective wards and to ascertain how they and their fellow travelers feel in regard to this movement and to let us know the result. Wherever we have made mention of it thus far, it has met with hearty approval.

We make this request, so we may have an idea as to what size hall or meetinghouse we ought to engage and so as to know what other necessary arrangements we should make. We especially desire the presence of those who are with us yet, who were captains of the various companies. I give their names as kindly furnished by Elder A. Milton Musser of the historian's office:

In 1856—Five handcart companies, Capt. E. Ellsworth, D. D. McArthur, Edward A. Bunker, J. G. Willis, Edward Martin and Dan Tyler.  
In 1857—Two companies, Capt. Christian Christensen and Israel Evans.  
In 1858—None.  
In 1859—One company, Capt. Geo. Rowley.  
In 1860—Two companies, Capt. Dan Robinson, Capt. O. O. Stoddard.

**EXPERIENCE OF S. S. JONES.**  
Of the snow storm near Devil's Gate, S. S. Jones writes:  
"The whole story of the travels and sufferings of the Martin and Tyler Handcart companies that arrived in Salt Lake City on the Sunday of Nov. 30, 1856, can never be written or told. Sketches and episodes may be related in brief, but it was not long before it got to be a communication from the committee and append thereto personal accounts of men now living who were in the memorable hand-cart brigades, whose accounts are now published for the first time."

There were five companies of handcart emigrants that crossed the plains in that year, 1856 was the year of the handcart craze, the three first of which were the craze, and the two last that started from the frontiers so late were the craze, and the last of those two was the craziest of all, and the writer was in it.

"We started from Florence on the west bank of the Missouri river just about Sept. 1. We traveled on under pretty favorable circumstances until the last of that month, but after that, in October, it got to be pretty cold. The wading of streams, and an occasional wind storm, that leveled all our tents made it somewhat uncomfortable. This continued until we got within one day's travel of a stockade fort, near Devil's Gate on the Sweet Water in Wyoming, about 400 miles out from Salt Lake City. By this time it was the first part of November. If this had been our destination, the journey might have been regarded as a little tough, and let it go at that, but what we had endured up to that date was only a prelude to what followed."

"I will remember the afternoon march before we reached the place above mentioned. We had rested for noon along the roadside, and partaken of our scanty meal, when soon after we started on again, the wind blew from the east, and the clouds came scurrying along the sides of the mountains. I remember those clouds; they looked like they meant mischief, and they got to work in all right; pretty soon it began to snow a little light at first, but it was not long before it got down to business, and it snowed in earnest. The line of carts was generally a little broken and scattering, but on this occasion they all closed up, following right behind each other. It seemed to strike each heart that we had not the enemy and he had got us. Not a word was spoken. I never shall forget that silence, as we trudged

along, each footstep deadened by the fallen snow, which was getting a little deeper at every step."

**GOD ONLY KNEW.**  
"There was no sound, save the faint creak of the little hand carts as they were tugged along. Where were we going? What should we do? God only knew; we didn't. It commenced to get dusk but on we pulled, it seemed as though this new terror gave us fresh energy, for the snow was by this time from eight to 10 inches deep. At last when we reached Salt Lake City, we looked in, one log room and several hundred of us; our hope of shelter was soon dissipated; several of the women folks had fainted from the steam from their wet clothing, and the heat, and had to be carried out."

We soon saw we had to clear off the snow and take to our cold tents. At it we went, with tin pans and plates, there were no shovels or spades in our equipment. The ground here was frozen hard, we could not drive the tent pins, so we raised the tents on the poles, stretched out the flaps, and huddled in under the best shelter we could get. I do not call to mind any music or singing that night, but no doubt there were many a silent prayer.

"Never mind that night; but oh, in the morning! I was the first out of the tent to make a fire. When? How cold it was. It fairly bit my face and hands. I had to run for a fire that had been kept burning all night from the poles of the stockade."

Then I ran back to the tent to tell the folks to stay there till I called them, and they did it. After the sun arose it was bearable but still very cold."

**ACROSS THE SWEETWATER.**  
It was decided that morning that we should cross the Sweet Water, and so into what is known as Martin's ravine, as there was some cedar for fuel, and wait until more teams from the valley arrived to help us in. Ten teams with some supplies had already met us. They had dealt out part of the shipment to Capt. Willie's company that was a long way ahead of us, and what we obtained from them was soon exhausted among so many hungry souls.

**HELP FROM THE VALLEY.**  
The brave boys from the valley, under George D. Grant carried the women and children over the Sweet Water river, but the men and able bodied had to wade and take the handcarts with them. The water and ice took me up to the waist, and my clothes had to dry on me. That was a terrible night. We stayed in the ravine five or six days on reduced rations. One night a windstorm blew down almost everything. Many perished of cold and hunger at that place. I am not going into

detail about the occurrences at Martin's ravine. We stacked our carts there, but I remember the pinched, hungry faces, the stolid absent stare, that foretold the end was near, the wide and shallow open grave, awaiting its numerous consignments. The start from that place in the wagons when the camp broke up; the looks of the living freight; the long cold rides, the longer nights; the cold, pitiless sky, the lack of sleep; many dozing down by the fire and turning at intervals all through the night, and so on, and on, until we reached Salt Lake City. Let the curtain fall gently! This is not written in any spirit of complaint, I cannot recall a rebellious spirit or feeling on the trip. We started for Zion, and to help build up the same in the valleys of the mountains, and thank God we are here and in conclusion I will quote the good old hymn, transposed a little:

"What if they died before their trip was o'er?  
Happy day! All is well.  
They will endure, no toil or sorrow more,  
With this in peace they dwell.  
And as our lives were spared again  
To see the Saints their joys obtain  
Come let us make the chorus swell,  
All is well, all is well."

**ALBERT JONES' STORY.**  
It is all right, now it's over, past and gone. President Young was desirous for the good of the Saints and anxious that these goodly tales should be filled with the people of his faith, hence the coming to Zion with handcarts was projected, and with all the trials of the route, we sang in good faith the hymn:

"How well the Saints rejoice to tell  
And count their sufferings o'er,  
When they upon Mount Zion dwell,  
And view the landscape o'er."

But the Donner lake disaster and the Martin and Tyler handcart company, bring remembrances that are not of a very pleasant order. As a boy of 15 and the youngest of a family of five, my experience cannot be compared with fathers of families, whose heart strings were fretted and jarred, when perchance a boy of six years, with his big blue eyes filled with tears, asked for bread.

**THE START.**  
The sturdy men and women of English pluck and courage, left the Iowa camp ground in good spirits. Their handcarts were a light burden, as they were with the "spirit of the gathering," but with the first snow storm came a contraction of the muscles of the face, which gave an expression to the features of the men denoting that they were now about to enter a struggle with snow and frost which would take all their energy to conquer.

As the days grew shorter and colder, and the snows were more frequent, it became a struggle of human endurance to keep body and soul together."

**AT GIANT FALLS.**  
Old men succumbed to the severity of the weather and died. A Brother Blair

one of the Royal Life Guards Blue of her majesty, the British queen, was with us, whose grand physique and gigantic frame was the admiration of us boys of the London branch, whenever he attended meeting in his regimentals. With the lack of proper nourishment, he dwindled down to a wreck, both mind and body; his wife, to keep him from giving up, willow in hand, drove him about camp to fetch wood or water, as she required it for camp use. He died and was buried under a big tree on Quakenasp hill.

**HEROIC WOMEN.**  
The women of the company bore the strain well; free from night guard and other cares which were on the men, they endured the privations of the journey with less loss to their ranks."

**SLEEPING BY A CORPSE.**  
I well remember waking up very early one morning, after I had been on guard in the fore part of the night, with my feet nearly touching the corpse of a brother Jackson—they told me he was dead—and I laid back for another sleep, so little terror had I for death in his frequent visits to our camp.

So apparent was the sentence of death written on the lantern-jawed expression of some of the half starved men and boys who died, that I could tell how long they would stand the ordeal.

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**THE NEXT TO GO.**  
One boy about my own age was walking up and down by a large grave. I was helping to dig. I read in his face, that he would be interred there unless we moved on before two days had passed—we stayed there four—he was buried in that grave."

**A BLUE-WINGED ANGEL.**  
It was at this place that Joseph A. Young arrived as the leader of the red-shirted party from the valleys by President Brigham Young—he rode a white mule down a snow-covered hill or dug way. The white mule was lost sight of on the white background of snow, and Joseph A. with his big blue soldiers' overcoat, its large cape and caraculous skirts rising and falling with the motion of the mule, gave the appearance of a big blue winged angel flying to our rescue.

The scene that presented itself on his arrival I shall never forget—women and men surrounded him, weeping, and crying aloud; on their knees, holding to the skirts of his coat, as though afraid he would escape from their grasp and fly away. Joseph stood in their midst drawn up to his full height and gazed upon their upturned faces, his eyes full of tears, I, boy as I was, prayed "God bless him!"

**THE HUNGRY FED.**  
His coming gave us a pound of flour that night instead of the four ounces we had issued to us for several days past. The next morning we left this camp where we had been about four days and had buried about 14 of our number."

**A KEY TO HEAVEN.**  
I have heard that a lady well known among the saints once said, while the surest way of getting to heaven was under discussion, "When I approach the Golden Gate, Peter will at once grant me admission when I cry, 'Hand Cart!'"

I have crossed the plains once with a hand cart, twice with ox teams, once in a palace car. I prefer the latter, but if pulling a hand cart a thousand miles shall help in opening the Golden Gate, I shall urge my claim."

**AS TOLD BY JAMES GARDNER.**  
"I left Scotland the 17th of March, 1856, with two or three hundred from the same land.  
The British Isles were all aglow at that time with the thought that the P. E. fund had abandoned the old way of carrying the saints to Utah, with the slow ox teams, and was providing a way for them to come with 'Pullman' cars. It caused considerable excitement at that time.  
"With about 500 emigrants I sailed on the good ship Enoch Train. After rolling in the billows of the mighty deep for about 40 days we landed in the port of Boston about the 1st of May.  
"Making our way as speedily as possible, we arrived at Iowa City, then the Mormon outfitting camp. There for the first time we saw some of the carts that were to carry our baggage and little children a distance of 1,200 miles.  
"As there were only a few of the

carts ready for use, we had to wait a month for the number required for the 500 emigrants."

**RICKETY HANDCARTS.**  
The carts were of very frail construction. Instead of having rubber tires, we bound the wheels with rawhide. All being ready we broke camp at Iowa the 31st of June. The season being a wet one, and the many rivers we had to cross, stretched the raw hide tires so we had to substitute strong hoop iron to tire our wheels."

**THE "PULLMAN" BRIGADE.**  
"After about three weeks' march we crossed the Missouri river and pitched our tents at the old Winter Quarters camp ground. Our 300 miles travel had proven that our company was too large. It was then divided in two companies, Capt. Ellsworth taking the English part and D. D. McArthur taking the Scotch and a few from other lands."

"After being fully organized with a captain over each 10, our baggage reduced to 17 pounds per head, we were ready to cross the wide plains. Capt. Ellsworth desired the honor of leading the first handcart company to Salt Lake, which was granted him. His company pulled out from us about the middle of July. McArthur's company remained in camp three days longer, when we started out."

"There were about 400 men, women and children, 50 handcars and two ox teams which carried our four and tents. "Capt. Dan, as we called him, purchased a little yellow mule, which was made to do good service in carrying the old ladies across the rivers. Our day's travel varied from 15 to 20 miles per day. One day we covered 30 miles in order to camp with the pioneer company as it was called. We rested the next day to let our friends get out of our way again. This was repeated three times."

"On the 26th of September, McArthur's company camped near the summit of the 'little mountain.' Capt. Ellsworth's company was camped two miles and a half nearer Salt Lake. Quite a number of teams and friends camped with us there. The next morning most of the women and children were taken by friends. The male portion were left to pull the carts. Before the mouth of Emigration canyon was reached, McArthur's company had closed up with the pioneers. When we entered the bench out of the canyon all eyes were set on Salt Lake City."

**COMPANIES SIDE BY SIDE.**  
We had there an opportunity to gratify our ambition, as was done in this way. Instead of forming one line we spread out on the bench. There was also an opportunity to try our stuff. The long, trying travel of 1,200 miles and the scant three-quarter pound of flour a day for rations had tired some of the company, for the race, especially did it the writer, for as the song has it,  
"He was swammy, supple, sharp and thin,  
Fine for goin' against the wind."

**AGAIN IN LINE.**  
"The race continued till we reached the city. Then the line was formed and Capt. Ellsworth and McArthur's companies reached emigration square in the same order that they left Iowa City."

"Three other handcart companies came that year but you will find their history in Whitney's History of Utah."

**JAMES GARDNER.**  
AS SEEN BY L. A. BAILEY.  
In the year of our Lord 1856, May 23, about 500 Latter-day Saints took passage on the sailing vessel "Horizon," from Liverpool, England. After five weeks' good sailing we landed in Boston harbor. The day was far advancing, and many of the company, for the first time, were informed that we must travel on foot four miles to the camp ground. All felt delighted in having the privilege of a pleasant walk. Accordingly, we took up their beds and walked. We had not gone far before it thundered and lightning and poured down with rain. The roads soon became very muddy and slippery. The noise soon about 200 having stayed at Boston and other places en route, trudged along. The day was far advancing, and many did not reach camp until after dark. We were conducted into tents, packed very close together, and stood up all night in our wet clothes. In the dark parents and children became separated. Daylight in the morning brought fine weather, and parents and children found each other with joy. This was

(Continued on page twenty-one)