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THE FIRST HANDCART COMPANY.

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On Good Friday, in the year 1856, there sailed from Liverpool on the ship *Enoch Train*, three hundred Saints who were leaving the British Isles bound for America, and who were to



Phyllis Hardy Ferguson.

draw handcarts across the great western prairies to the city by the Great Salt Lake.

The six weeks they were crossing the mighty deep were happily spent. "O we had such a good time," they say, "making the tents we were to use on the inland journey, and singing the songs of Zion; the melody floated far and wide over the boundless sea."

They dreamed of Zion, and the castles they built were filled with joyous anticipations of the time when they should reach the goal of their homes. The voyage was a prosperous one and good health prevailed.

The larger part of the company were from Scotland, and were under the care of Captain Dan McArthur, of St. George, Truman Leonard, of Kaysville, and Elder Crandall of Springville, three returning missionaries from Utah, men staunch and true, brave and loyal to the cause they had been sent forth to advocate.

The Scots, fresh from climbing their native hills, or from their simple life on the heath, were physically adapted to the hard journey, and could easily surmount the difficulties that had to be met. Not so

the English company, though they were as brave and full of faith. Captain Edmund Ellsworth was in charge of the company, and by appointment of President Brigham Young, he was to bring the first handcart company into Salt Lake. The minor part of the company were from other points of Great Britain. Boston was their port of landing, and in June of the same year, they reached the frontiers of Iowa. Here six more weeks were consumed in making the handcarts to be used on the overland journey. The time, though full of excitement, passed but slowly, as all were eager to be on the way. One or more handcarts were appointed to each family, according to its size. A number of wagons carried the necessary tents, bedding and cooking utensils. Thus was undertaken this long, unknown journey. Every effort was made and care taken to secure wood and good water for every night's camp-ground, while the people vied with each other to see who could walk all the way, and not have to ride in the wagon.

Some have said: "What, tied to the handcarts, no wagon to carry you?" That was not it. The great desire of these earnest Saints was (also their boast and pride) that they walk all the way to Zion, drawing their handcarts. Among those who still tarry with us of that company are Sisters Mary Crandall of Springville, Phyllis Hardy Ferguson, and Agnes Hardy Lynch of Salt Lake, the two latter, daughters of Janet Hardy, who has long since passed the Divide.

Of herself, Sister Ferguson (widow of James Ferguson, private secretary to President Young) says:

"I was a very delicate girl when I left Edinburgh, whom people thought was going into a decline, but I walked every step of the way from Iowa to Salt Lake, and waded every river, except the Elkhorn and Green, and arrived in sound health."

What wonder, then, that those whose hearts were full of faith and religious zeal started each morning's walk with a cheerful, buoyant step, drawing their handcarts up hill and down dale, and every day outstripping the wagons, which always started first.

The Scottish Saints chafed under the thought that the English company (always ahead) were to be the first to enter the valley. The average daily walk was about fifteen miles, but on one

occasion they must have nearly doubled that distance. It happened in this way: when Captain McArthur reached the place where they were to camp, he found the camp ground undesirable, nor was the water good. "Now," said he, "if you like we will go ahead to where the water is good, and more than that, we will overtake Captain Ellsworth's company tonight." This was greeted with "Hurrah for the handcarts! Hurrah for the Scotch!" Partaking of their captain's spirit, fatigue was forgotten, the great desire to be first inspired them, and again they commenced their walk, merrily singing, 'Hurrah, hurrah for the handcarts!' by our beloved poetess, the late Emily H. Woodmansee:

Some must push and some must pull
So merrily, O so merrily O;
And some go marching up the hill,
Until they reach the valley O.

"When it became quite dark," says Sister Ferguson, "we reached the top of a high hill, where by Captain McArthur's instructions we left the handcarts, and quietly walked down towards the blazing camp fires. Just before we reached the Ellsworth company, we all began to shout, 'Hurrah for the handcarts!'

"Captain Ellsworth, thinking it was the overland mail coach, in which was Franklin D. Richards, the returning president of the European mission, and others who were expected, hurriedly called out the band to give them glad welcome. Imagine his chagrin when he discovered that his welcome was given to the Scotch handcart company, who had overtaken him! But he was a good man, and has long years ago ended his life's journey. Peace to his ashes! The English people, though just as good and zealous, had not the endurance that we had, and it was difficult for them to be first. This ended our thirty-two miles' walk.

"At this camp ground the Scotch company rested for two weeks, making ready for the home stretch to the valley, thus giving the English a grand start ahead. What an indomitable will had these handcart people! How zealous for their religion!"

What wonder, then, that they were nerved for this arduous journey? "We are doing this for our religion," and the thought uplifted them above their trials, and faith was the impetus that inspired them.

A sturdy one of their number, a woman about sixty years of age, was always the first one up in the morning. With her walking stick she would wrap on the tents, with the familiar cry, "Hurrah for the handcarts! Time to get up!" With her granddaughter Mary, about ten years of age, she invariably walked ahead of the wagons. "Mother Bathgate," as she was called, was a familiar figure. One morning soon after starting she was stung on the ankle by a rattle snake. The train was stopped; all were horrified. Captain Leonard lifted her into the wagon. From its open front she looked out and impressively said, "I want you to witness that I never went into the wagon, until stung by the snake. Her pain was intense; from her hip to her ankle was a deep purple. Truman Leonard with his penknife cut a little place around the bite, administered to her, and then sucked the poison out, which he spat on the ground. She recovered, but rode the rest of the way to the valley. She could neither read nor write, but was a natural poet. On her misfortune she composed several lines, only two of which Aunt Phyllis remembers:

A rattlesnake placed its deadly fangs,
Into my ankle vein.

There were only three deaths during the journey, a little child, an aged man, and a boy who, lagging behind the company, either met with accidental death, or was stolen.

The nights were often made hideous by the yelp of the coyote both near and far, and the growls of the beasts of prey.

One morning, when it had become quite cold, a rattlesnake was found curled up at the head of Aunt Phyllis' tent, presumably attracted by the heat. Before reaching Emigration Canyon, the Scots overtook Captain Ellsworth. They traveled behind him down the canyon, but came into the valley side by side with him, on the 26th of September, lustily singing, "Hurrah, hurrah for the handcarts!"

Salt Lake City, Utah.