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Journal of Mormon History Vol. 21, No. 2, 1995

Table of Contents

CONTENTS

LETTERS

ARTICLES

TANNER LECTURE

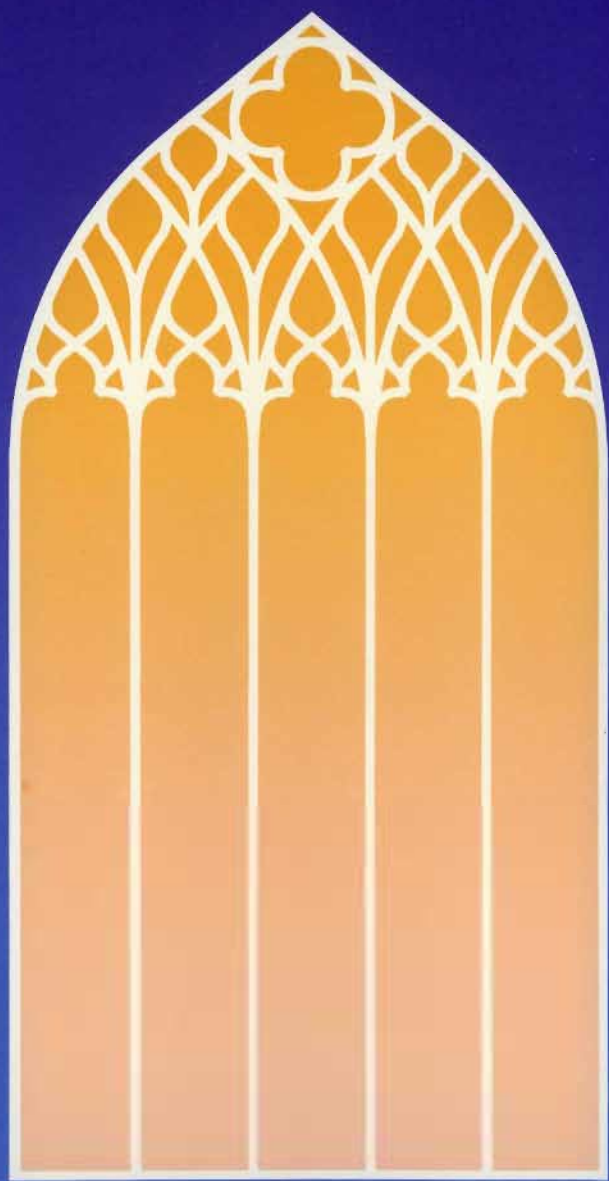
- --Peace Initiative: Using the Mormons to Rethink Ethnicity in American Life *Patricia Nelson Limerick*, 1
- --East of Nauvoo: Benjamin Winchester and the Early Mormon Church *David J. Whittaker*, 31
- --"Lawyers of Their Own to Defend Them": The Legal Career of Franklin Snyder Richards *Ken Driggs*, 84
- --Women and Community: Relief Society in Cache Valley, 1868-1900 *Carol Cornwall Madsen*, 126
- --Moses Smith: Wisconsin's First Mormon *David L. Clark*, 155
- --The Martin Handcart Disaster: The London Participants *Lynne Watkins Jorgensen*, 171

REVIEWS AND NOTES

--*Howard W. Hunter* by Eleanor Knowles Richard O. Cowan, 201

--*Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record* by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters
Scott H. Faulring, 203

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The Martin Handcart Disaster: The London Participants

Lynne Watkins Jorgensen

Two of the most famous journeys along the Mormon Trail from Liverpool to the Salt Lake Valley had their beginnings in London, England, in the tiny Theobalds Road Branch, founded by Wilford Woodruff and Lorenzo Snow in 1841. The first trek, in 1853, was the lyrical and romantic journey of the Miller Cooley Wagon Train, evocatively sketched by London artist Frederick Piercy;¹ the second, in 1856, was the ill-starred Edward Martin Handcart Company,² one of the most tragic events in Mormon history.

LYNNE WATKINS JORGENSEN recently retired from the Family History Library where she was a consultant in the U.S./Canada Department. She taught many of the patron classes specializing in U.S. and LDS research and taught history and religion for the BYU Center. She is an accredited genealogist with an M.A. in history from BYU. Portions of this paper were presented at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, May 1992, in St. George, Utah.

¹See Wilford Hill LeCheminant, "Entitled to Be Called an Artist: Landscape and Portrait Painter Frederick Piercy," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 48 (Winter 1980): 49-65.

²Background information comes from LeRoy R. Hafen and Anne W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* (Glendale, Calif.: The Arthur H. Clarke Co., 1976); and Howard A. Christy, "Handcart Companies," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991), 2:571-73. These publications

Wallace Stegner chose these two trips as extreme examples of Mormon trail crossings in his book, *The Gathering of Zion*, alluding only briefly to the effect one may have had upon the other.³ While this paper focuses on specific individuals from the London Conference who prepared and participated in the ill-fated journey, it will also explore the impact that Piercy's original trip may have had in determining the choices of those involved.

In spite of a continuing fascination with the handcart companies, the story of the Martin Handcart Company has never been completely told, nor can it be. It did not fit easily into the heroic tales that motivated pioneers and built faith. One historian suggested that "one of the reasons our records are scant is that Brother Brigham soon tired of hearing about the heroic survivors of his grand experiment. And so while the Nauvoo Legion had its annual reunions and parades, it was not until after the death of Brigham that the survivors of this experiment were able to publicly announce a reunion."⁴

Other leaders of the Church in Utah and in London were equally silent.⁵ Many of the leaders knew the handcart partici-

indicate that the Martin Handcart Company included 104 handcarts and 576 members; at least 145 died and many others were permanently disabled from starvation and exposure. The Edward Martin Handcart Company and the James Willie Handcart Company are usually but incorrectly treated as a unit. They were the last two of the ten handcart groups. They both started across the plains in August 1856, but the Martin Company left last and they always traveled separately. There were also unnumbered deaths in the Hodgett and Hunt wagon trains which accompanied the two handcart companies.

³Wallace Stegner, "Artist in Transit" and "Ordeal by Handcart," in *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (London: McGraw-Hill Company, 1964), chaps. 7 and 8.

⁴William L. Knecht, "Oh, Say What Is Truth! Wonders at Their Hands," August 1990, vi; copy in my possession. This manuscript details the story of the Martin Handcart Company.

⁵This paper relies heavily on primary documentation from the London Conference which is found by date in the Manuscript History of the Units of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, British Mission, London Conference (hereafter cited as Manuscript History, London Conference), LR 5006, vol. 1, 1837-60, Historical Department Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

pants personally and had put pressure on these converts to come to Zion even if they had to walk halfway across America pulling small handcarts. Dan W. Jones, one of the men who went to the rescue, wrote, "The Elders who had just returned from England having many dear friends with these companies, suffered great anxiety, some of them feeling more or less the responsibility resting upon them for allowing these people to start so late in the season across the plains."⁶

Adding to the silence was the fact that women and children who survived the deaths of their fathers and brothers were scattered among the Saints at the command of a genuinely shocked Brigham Young who urged Mormons in the valley to take the handcart victims into their homes.⁷ In the resulting breakup of families, widows and older daughters became polygamous wives, their histories lost in the daily trauma of staying alive on the frontier. For example, eight-year-old Martin Handcart survivor Jane Griffiths later reported that "my father and mother were taken to one place, my sister and I each to another. I did not see my father again. He died the next day."

Jane stayed in one house for three weeks, then was taken in by Brother Mulliner who had heard that she was to be sent to "the poor house in Provo." He responded, "Never as long as I have a home." He brought her in a wheelbarrow. She was bedridden all

Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives). This record, which is filled with information concerning preparations for the journey, contains *no* references to the disastrous results.

⁶Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years Among the Indians* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor's Office, 1890), 64. This Daniel Jones is not the famous Welsh missionary.

⁷In a speech delivered in the Tabernacle on 30 November 1856, Brigham Young told the assembly, "When those persons [the Martin Handcart survivors] arrive I do not want to see them put into houses by themselves; I want to have them distributed in the city among the families that have good comfortable houses." "Editorial," *Deseret News, Weekly Edition* 10 December 1856, 2; FHL film 26,527. He also admonished the citizens not to overfeed the survivors. One young survivor complained that he was almost starved to death a second time because the household in which he was placed followed these instructions scrupulously.

winter, not walking until the following March. She was next taken to the home of a friend of her late father.

He said he would keep me I went there on my 9th birthday. Mother would carry me as far as she could then put me down in the snow and we would cry a while and then go on. I did not stay there long, they told me I would have to hunt another place. I did not know where to go and I was on the woodpile crying when Brother William Keddington came along and wanted to know what was the matter. When I told him he said, "You come along with me and you shall have a piece of bread as long as I have one to break." He afterward married my stepmother and I had a home with them as long as I wanted one.⁸

Fifty years after the Martin Handcart trek, survivor Josiah Rogerson, the self-designated "handcart historian" writing from 45 Richards Street (Deseret Press), sent Western Union telegraphs to survivors and other interested persons in a belated attempt to collect information about the disaster.⁹ In his telegraph he explained that "the Journal of our Captain, the late Edward Martin, that contained all these names in full, has unintentionally been consigned to the flames." When Rogerson finally began to write his history, he claimed, "This is the first time the story of the handcart expedition has been written from beginning to end so far as I know. It was not done before partly for the reason that for years after the journey was made, nobody wished to say or hear much about it."¹⁰

⁸The above example can be read in Rebecca Cornwall Bartholomew and Leonard Arrington, *Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1982), 35, 53.

⁹Josiah Rogerson, Papers, MS 6103, 19 March 1908, LDS Church Archives. These are loose papers including correspondence and writings pertaining to Rogerson's compilation for a history of the Martin Handcart Company. They are unnumbered and many pages are duplicates. Papers collected between 1895 and 1914.

¹⁰*Ibid.* Telegram to the "President or Secretary of the Handcart Association of 1856." This is the second unnumbered page in the collection dated 19 March 1908. This information was telegraphed to others. Although Rogerson spent years trying to garner support for the project, he received little response and no financial support. Linda Haslam, historian in the LDS Church Historical Department, concluded that Rogerson's fruitless efforts to publish the Edward Martin Handcart story is yet another sad note in Mormon history. Linda Haslam,

LONDON: SIX BRANCH PRESIDENTS

LeRoy and Ann Hafen, who were working with primary documents about the handcart company, stated firmly that "most of these . . . emigrants [from England] were poor Saints who had *elected* to go by handcart."¹¹ The implication is that they were marginal, poor, and probably ill-educated. On the contrary, this group included six previously unidentified London Conference branch presidents with their wives and children, plus at least fifty other members of the conference.¹² They were respectable, middle-class¹³ families who had joined the Church during the Woodruff/Snow period; some had been active in the Church for up to fifteen years.¹⁴ The six branch presidents and the family members who made the trek were: (1) William L. S. Binder, age twenty-four,

interviewed by author, 1991 and 31 May 1995.

¹¹Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 91; emphasis mine.

¹²See Appendix, p. 198, for a list of London members of the Martin Handcart Company. Sources include Susan Ward Easton, comp., *Index to the Willie/Martin Handcart Company of 1856*, 42-106. Family History Library book U.S./Can 979.2 H2m. Typescript compiled as a sesquicentennial remembrance and deposited in the library in 1983; Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 295-302. "Appendix M: Fifth Company. Edward Martin, Captain"; "Roster of Cap. Martin's Co.," Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830-present), LDS Church Archives; *Deseret News*, 30 November 1856; Knecht, "Oh Say What Is Truth," xxxci. This list resulted from a study of Josiah Rogerson's Papers.

¹³Historians P. A. M. Taylor and Ronald Walker both suggest that the occupational roles of British converts, which could be judged roughly as middle class in the 1840s and 1850s, steadily declined until, by the 1860s, the middle class was less than 10 percent of the total convert population. London conversions reflected the same pattern. See Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of Their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 150-51; and Walker, "Cradling Mormonism," *BYU Studies* 27 (Winter 1987): 29.

¹⁴See chaps. 1, 2, 5, and appendix 5:157 in Lynne Watkins Jorgensen, "The First London Mormons, 1840-45" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1988) which identify many of the Martin Company participants as being long-time Church members, including the Benjamin Beer family, the John Watkins family, the Samuel George Read family, the John and Sarah Rodwell family, John and James Shorten, the John Jaques family, and the Loader family, plus all of the London branch presidents and their families.

a bread and biscuit maker, and his wife, Eliza Crump Binder; (2) David Blair, forty-six, a professional soldier, Deborah Blair, and three children; (3) James Godson Bleak, twenty-seven, trained as a clerk and a jeweler, Elizabeth Moore Bleak, and their four children; (4) Robert Clifton, Sr., fifty-one, an innkeeper, Mary M. Blanchard Clifton, and four children; (5) John Griffiths, forty-six, a boilermaker, his second wife, Elizabeth Webb Griffiths, and four of his children by his first marriage; and (6) Henry Augustus Squires, thirty-one, trained for the clergy and as a merchant, Sarah Catlin Squires, and four children (a fifth was born on the trek).¹⁵

This essay will describe the responsibilities and attitudes of these six presidents. While it is true that some members of the handcart companies were too poor to buy adequate equipment or supplies, the records indicate that these six made the handcart choice as a matter of faith and to set a proper example. They were neither poor, ignorant, nor incompetent, though it was true that neither their experience nor their equipment was adequate to the rigors imposed on them by the journey.

LONDON 1840S: A MESSAGE FROM AMERICA

"London is the hardest place I have ever visited for establishing the gospel. It is full of everything but righteousness," wrote Wilford Woodruff with indignation on 2 September 1840.¹⁶

¹⁵I identified occupations for London members from the 1841 and 1851 censuses, LDS membership records, personal histories, London Conference records, descendant family group records, autobiographies, and memoirs. All items identified by film number are in the Family History Library, Salt Lake City. Both Jorgensen, "First London Mormons," 43; and James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men with a Mission 1837-1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992), 205-35, indicate that the London members were not the poorest members of the population. Many of them were Irvingite converts, who were generally individuals of means and influence. Massimo Introvigne, "The Concept of Apostleship in Mormonism, 'Irvingism,' and the New Apostolic Church," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, Quincy, Illinois, May 1993, p. 8; photocopy in my possession.

¹⁶Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833-1898*, typescript, edited by Scott G. Kenny, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983-85): 1:494, 506 (hereafter cited as Woodruff with volume and page).

Woodruff would neither believe nor accept the slow response the Mormon missionaries received in the teeming metropolis after major successes in rural villages throughout the British Isles. George A. Smith, Wilford Woodruff, and Heber C. Kimball opened the London area for proselyting in August 1840. Smith left after just twenty-two days, having become dangerously ill in the polluted environment.¹⁷ Kimball also left for other parts of England. Brigham Young joined Wilford Woodruff in London for eleven days of sightseeing in December and then he also left. Woodruff remained in London until the missionaries were recalled to Nauvoo in February 1841. By 6 October 1840, these master missionaries gathered only eleven new members, which compared dismally with other English conferences where members joined by the hundreds.

In May 1841 Lorenzo Snow, who replaced the original missionary apostles, reported only sixty-three members, "infants in the kingdom," who were his responsibility in that "seat of Satan" dominated by "the powers of darkness."¹⁸ One of these "infants" was John Griffiths,¹⁹ a Welshman baptized by John Taylor, who

¹⁷Woodruff 1:546-57. London lacked adequate sewage, street cleaning, and clean air. Outbreaks of cholera, typhoid fever, and smallpox were continuous and deadly. Henry Savage, Whitechapel branch president, wrote that only he and another sibling of fourteen survived to adulthood. Eight of the ten children of William Watkins and Hannah Marie Watkins, Marylebone Branch, died during the couple's first sixteen years of marriage. Anne Jarvis, another early London convert, remembered seeing her parents and other neighbors fall dead of cholera before her eyes. Gavin Weightman and Steve Humphries, eds., *The Making of a Modern London* (London: Sedgewich and Jackson Limited, 1985), 10-19; and Jorgensen, "First London Mormons," 20-23.

¹⁸Joseph Smith, Jr., et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1946-50), 4:360. Lorenzo Snow, Letters to George A. Smith, 1 December 1840 and 17 February 1841, George A. Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives.

¹⁹John Griffiths was born 7 July 1810 in Bonzar Crnyn, Wales. His wife, Margaret Griffiths, was born 25 August 1810 also in Bonzar Crnyn. They were both baptized 30 January 1840 by John Taylor. Margaret died giving birth to twins on 7 July 1853. Griffiths married Elizabeth Webb in February 1856, three months before they left England. Only four of his fourteen children (Margaret, sixteen; John, twelve; Jane, eight; and Herbert, six) were alive to accompany them on the Martin Handcart journey. Woolwich Branch records, Film 87,039, and Deftford

had moved from Liverpool to eastern London, filled with faith and zealously. On 14 February 1841, the relieved American missionaries, Wilford Woodruff and Heber C. Kimball, chose Griffiths as first president of the Woolwich Branch of the London Conference.²⁰

On 14 May 1841, Snow reported that Woolwich had only six members though "every means in their power has been employed to get a door open for preaching: yet in consequence of . . . unhallowed influences it has been without success. President Griffiths is . . . in good standing and strong in the faith."²¹ Later Snow told Heber C. Kimball, "This little branch . . . you left in Woolwich still continues . . . strong in faith, and rejoicing in the midst of persecution. They have stood like a rock in the midst of Dashing waves, unharmed and unmoved."²²

By 1842, Lorenzo Snow had made two of his most dependable and zealous converts: David Blair,²³ a member of Queen

Branch records, Film 86,994. Griffiths became president of the Woolwich Branch when he was thirty, then served as president of the Woolwich and Deptford Branches alternately until he left for Utah in 1856. See the excellent name index (items listed by date) to the Manuscript History, London Conference, 1837-60, vol. 1, MS 11401 LR 5006. Biographical information for all six branch presidents is derived from LDS membership records, censuses, personal histories, London Conference records, descendant family group records, autobiographies, and memoirs.

²⁰Manuscript History, London Conference, 14 January 1841, LR 5006, vol. 1 (locate by dates, not pages). Woolwich, an east-end suburb of London, was a major ship-building center on the Thames. Griffiths was both a boilermaker and an engineer. See also Jorgensen, "First London Mormons," 36.

²¹*Times and Seasons*, 2:510.

²²Manuscript History, London Conference, 14 May 1841.

²³David Blair, a professional soldier, was born 5 May 1810 in Scotland. His wife, Deborah Jane (surname not known), was born 11 October 1816 in Berkshire. Blair was baptized 8 May 1842 by an Elder Lewzey. Deborah was baptized 14 September 1842 by Lorenzo Snow. They had at least three children: Deborah, Elizabeth, and David. David Blair was a member of the Marylebone, Theobalds Road, Somerstown, and Chelsea Branches. On 7 December 1851 at age forty-one, he became president of the Windsor Branch and served until he left for Utah in 1856. Marylebone Branch records, Film 87,018; Theobalds Road Branch records, Film 87,036; Somerstown Branch records, Film 87,032; Chelsea Branch records, Film 86,991; Manuscript History, London Conference, LR5006,

Victoria's elite Life Guard; and Robert Clifton, Sr.,²⁴ who founded and then became president of at least four London branches. Blair's and Clifton's names first appeared on the membership rolls of the Theobalds Road Branch where they began illustrious careers as missionaries. From this branch came solid and stable priesthood leaders who fanned out from the center of the city to proselyte and lead branches all over London. Many were nonconformists, and the message of the American missionaries struck a responsive chord in those with anti-establishment and dissenting sentiments against a state church and professional clergy. Nonconformist ministers were usually lay members with solid occupations, primarily educated in a church Sunday School.²⁵ It was a heady beginning for Mormonism in London. Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Orson Hyde, Samuel Richards, and Orson Spencer visited the Theobalds Road Branch.²⁶ Thomas Ambrose Poulter bragged that the branch was always filled with "pretty girls and smart elders."²⁷

vol. 1.

²⁴Robert Clifton was born 3 March 1805 in Norfolkshire and baptized 21 July 1842 by James Albion. Mary Matilda Blanchard Clifton was born in Southwark, London, and baptized in November 1841 by Lorenzo Snow. Four of their children accompanied them on the Martin Handcart trek: Rebecca, twenty-one; Robert, Jr., twenty; Sophia, thirteen; and Anne, six. Marylebone Branch records, Film 87,018; Theobalds Road Branch records, Film 87,036; Whitechapel Branch records, Film 87,038; Stoke Newington Branch Records, Film 87,001; Hackney Branch records, Film 87,001; Tottenham Branch records, Film 87,036; and Haggstone Branch records, Film 87,001; Manuscript History, London Conference, 1837-60. Clifton, a member of the Marylebone, Theobalds Road, Whitechapel, and Stoke Newington Branches, served as president of the Hackney, Tottenham, and Haggstone Branches, beginning at age forty-four. He was released to emigrate to Utah on 13 April 1856. Whitechapel Branch records indicate that Clifton went to America briefly in 1844 with several other London converts.

²⁵John F. C. Harrison, *The Early Victorians, 1832-51* (Glasgow: William Collins and Sons, Ltd., 1984), 165; Hugh McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (London: Croon Helm, Ltd., 1974), 104.

²⁶John Paternoster Squires, "Notes to the Descendants of Thomas Squires by His Son," typescript, FHL book Q 929.273 Sq58s or FHL film 1036774, item 11, commented in 1849 on "the glorious impression" Orson Pratt made on him.

²⁷"The Life of Thomas Ambrose Poulter from his Diary, Federal Writer's

One of the most successful members of the Theobalds Road Branch was Frederick Piercy, at eighteen a student at the Royal Academy of Arts. His activities resulted in several baptisms. He served successively as the records clerk and financial clerk, then served in the French Mission with Apostle John Taylor in 1850.²⁸ Piercy traveled to Utah and back in 1853 and produced sketches of the completed journey depicting a pleasant expedition and describing the trip enthusiastically. These sketches, as engravings, were published in fifteen installments beginning June 1854 in *An Illustrated Route from Liverpool to the Great Salt Lake Valley*. It was printed in Liverpool by Samuel W. Richards, editor of the *Millennial Star*, with travel notes and a history by James Linforth, an 1842 Liverpool convert who contributed frequently to the *Millennial Star*. It was distributed at the centrally located Latter-day Saints' Book Depot in London which served thirty LDS branches within a seven-or-eight-mile radius.²⁹

LONDON 1850S: THE PROCESSION OF PRESIDENTS

In May 1851, all of England celebrated when Queen Victoria opened the Grand Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. On the second to the fourth of June, a much smaller celebration marked the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in London. Among those who planned the gala were Eli B. Kelsey, president of the London Conference, John Griffiths, a branch president for eleven years, and Robert Clifton, Sr., who was almost as senior. A junior member of the committee was Henry Augustus Squires, trained

Project," *Utah Pioneer Biographies*, 44 vols., typescript, 1947, 44:124. Collection in Family History Library, U.S./Can 979.2 D 3 U, vol. 44, and Utah State Historical Society Archives.

²⁸London Conference membership records, FHL Film 87,014; LeCheminant, "Entitled to be Called an Artist," 49-65; and Lynne Watkins Jorgensen, "John Hyde, Jr., Mormon Renegade," *Journal of Mormon History* 17 (1991): 120-44. Piercy was John Hyde, Jr.'s, brother-in-law.

²⁹LeCheminant, "Entitled to be Called an Artist," 56; Manuscript History, London Conference, 7 May 1855, 7 July 1855. The London members were generally well read, several were employed in printing, and John Jaques and James Godson Bleak eventually became Mormon historians and editors.

for the clergy and already presiding elder of Cold Ash Common (23 December 1849).³⁰

The gala was a statement of permanence and triumph for the young church, designed to attract and inspire the public. Guests included leaders from America and members from both the British Isles and Europe. The Church rented the Literary and Scientific Institution, a hall which seated 4,000 people, for its celebration on 2 June 1851 which began with a grand procession.³¹

To the historian's eye, knowing the disastrous 1856 handcart expedition, the "Grand Procession" provided in its structure an ominous parallel to the beginning march to the Salt Lake Valley. In the gaslit hall, a formal procession marched in state around the overflowing room where the General Authorities and guests were seated.³² First to appear were twenty-four

³⁰Henry Augustus Squires, third of four brothers to join the Church, was born 22 February 1825 in Welwyn, Hartford, and baptized in the Marylebone Branch in London by Moses Martin on 8 August 1847. His wife, Sarah Minnie Catlin Squires, was born 16 November 1826 in Welwyn and was baptized 22 August 1847 by Henry Savage. Henry and Sarah had eleven daughters and one son. Four daughters (Sarah, eight; Mary Emily, seven; Catherine Harriet, four; and Clara Annie, three) accompanied their parents on the Martin Handcart trek. A fifth, Echo, was born in Echo Canyon. Squires, a former Baptist minister and merchant, was a member of the Marylebone and St. Albans branches, became president of St. Albans Branch and Cold Ash Common, and was a traveling elder and missionary in Hartfordshire and Luton, Bedfordshire, as well as in the London Conference. He converted his fourth brother, James. Henry and a plural wife, Emma Caroline Slade Squires, became the parents of four sons and one daughter, and Squires prospered as a Salt Lake City merchant. Marylebone Branch records; and St. Albans Branch records, Film 87,030; Manuscript History, London Conference, 1837-60; John Paternoster Squires, "Notes," and "HAS #1." (Squires added three pages about his brother, Henry Augustus Squires, to his own history, paginated as HAS #1, HAS #2, HAS #3.)

³¹Manuscript History, London Conference, 1-6 June 1851.

³²A London-style festival parade or procession became very popular in Utah particularly on the Fourth and Twenty-fourth of July. A typical procession featured young women carrying banners identifying them as "Zion's Daughters," young men bearing globes and banners proclaiming "Bulwark," priesthood leaders including the General Authorities, female members, and groups from each of the working groups within the Salt Lake Valley such as appropriately costumed tailors, bakers, masons, blacksmiths, clerks, mechanics, and agriculturists. See P.

young ladies dressed in flowing white muslin capes, their hair adorned in blue ribbons. They were followed by twelve branch presidents each carrying a long wooden walking staff, then twenty-four young men with blue scarves. A second procession followed of "Twelve Apostles" or "Fathers in Israel," all gray-bearded men carrying staffs. Next came twelve young men wearing large blue scarves, with Bibles in their right hands and Book of Mormons in their left, and finally twelve young women, "taller and better-looking than the former," dressed in white muslin, with blue scarves upon their heads crowned by a coronet of roses, each carrying a bouquet of flowers. They marched with the same fervor and joy which was evident when they began their trek pushing handcarts—the proud "staffs" now walking sticks. The assembly arose to salute the procession, then with fervor and longing, sang:

See on yonder distant mountain
Zion's standard wide unfurled
Far above Missouri's fountain
Lo! it waves o'er all the world.³³

For a brief moment London was the center of the Mormon world.³⁴ Addresses followed from Franklin D. Richards, well-beloved president of the British Mission; Apostles Lorenzo Snow, Erastus Snow, and John Taylor; and from their own numbers, "an honored young Woman" and an "honored young Man." For two days the conference continued, its oratory filled with eloquent longing to gather to a Zion home. Richards stressed the need for the brethren to increase the Emigration Fund.³⁵ Listening to him were branch presidents

A. M. Taylor, "Early Mormon Loyalty and the Leadership of Brigham Young," *Utah State Historical Quarterly* 30 (Spring 1962): 122-24, and *Journal History*, 4 July 1861, 2, for detailed descriptions of various pageants. In 1861, William L. S. Binder, Martin Handcart survivor, led a group of bakers in the parade. *Journal History*, 4 July 1861, 2.

³³Manuscript History, London Conference, 1-3 June 1851.

³⁴T. Edgar Lyon, "In Praise of Babylon: Church Leadership at the Great Exhibition in London," *Journal of Mormon History* 14 (1988): 49.

John Griffiths, Robert Clifton, Sr., and Henry Augustus Squires. Recent converts and future branch presidents William L. S. Binder³⁶ and James Godson Bleak,³⁷ were probably among the blue-scarved young men in the congregation. David Blair, a soldier whose duties kept him at the Crystal Palace, missed the conference festivities but became president of the Windsor Branch on 1 December 1851.

BEFORE THE JOURNEY

The London Conference's membership began to decline after 1851. London was struck by a depression, marked at its worst by the "Bread Riots" of March 1853. Fifty thousand Britons were

³⁵Manuscript History, London Conference, 2-3 June 1851. London Conference records appeals for members to send money to support the Utah Saints, to clothe and supply American missionaries in London, to rent and furnish meeting halls, to contribute to temples, to pay travel expenses for conferences, and even to exhume the bodies of three American missionaries and send them home in lead coffins. Emigration was the greatest expense. British Saints were encouraged to contribute to the Perpetual Emigration Fund, a revolving fund set up in Salt Lake City to help pay the expenses of the poorer Saints, who would repay the loan after arriving in Utah. Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 23.

³⁶William L. S. Binder, the youngest of the branch presidents, was born 10 July 1832 in London. He was baptized 13 November 1849. His wife, Eliza, was baptized 9 September 1849. They had no children although Binder later had a daughter by his second wife, Alice Maud Crawford Blind. He was a member of the Marylebone, Theobalds Road, and Finsbury Branches, and at age twenty-three served as president of the Lambeth Branch until he was released to emigrate to Utah on 13 April 1856. Manuscript History, London Conference; Marylebone Branch records; Theobalds Road Branch records; Finsbury Branch records, Film 86,998; and Lambeth Branch records, Film 87,008.

³⁷James Godson Bleak was born 15 November 1829 in Southwark, Surrey, and was baptized 8 February 1851 by Thomas Johnson in London. Elizabeth Moore Bleak was born 6 March 1828 in Twig Folley, London, and was baptized 27 June 1851. They had twelve children, four of whom (Richard, six; Thomas, five; James, three; and Mary, one) accompanied them to America. On 6 February 1854 at age twenty-five, Bleak became president of the Whitechapel Branch, the largest in London, and served until he was released to emigrate to Utah on 13 April 1856. He and Binder served on the planning committee for the 1855 New Year's festival.

out of employment at this time and many Londoners were starving. Families were also dying of disease, pollution, and overcrowding in the city.³⁸ Pressures for members of the London Conference to gather to Utah intensified, and emphasis on the Perpetual Emigration Fund increased.³⁹ Church officers urged some guidelines: families should emigrate as units and those aided by the fund had to have their conference president's permission. (Brigham Young had warned them to screen out those who joined the Church "whose chief aim and intention may only be to get to America."⁴⁰) Members read copies of Piercy's illustrated travel guide to tatters, visualizing an easy trek.⁴¹ But as trail historian Wallace Stegner pointed out, "In Piercy's pictures, the road looked softer than it was with no dirt, disorder, dust, mud, or ruffianly population."⁴²

In October 1855, the First Presidency issued an epistle urging "the poor" to "come on foot, with handcarts or wheel-barrows let them gird up their loins and walk through, and nothing shall hinder or stay them. . . . Let the Saints, therefore, who intend to immigrate the ensuing year, understand that they are expected to

³⁸Editorial, "The Winter and the Poor: Bread Riots in Liverpool and London," *Millennial Star* 17 (February 1855): 163-67; Weightman and Humphries, *The Making of a Modern London*, 138-39.

³⁹Of the six branch presidents under study, only the names of Blair and Griffiths appear on the Perpetual Emigration Fund (PEF) list. Both died on the trail. The list includes only names of members who did not pay back their loans, so it is probable that the fund included all six, as this was the means through which Martin Handcart participants funded their trip. Perpetual Emigration Fund 1850-77, Film 25,686.

⁴⁰Manuscript History, London Conference, 29 March 1851; Brigham Young, Letter to Franklin D. Richards, *Millennial Star* 17 (30 September 1855): 814-15.

⁴¹Few copies of Piercy's emigrant guide are in existence. Accordingly, Robert Ernest Cowan, bibliographer and expert in early Americana, attached a note to his own copy, now in the Rare Book Collection of the University of California at Los Angeles: "The work was of peculiar interest to the Mormon people, and the few extant copies were thoroughly (and most carelessly used), and all are in very indifferent condition." Frederick Piercy, *Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley*, edited by Fawn M. Brodie (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962). Cowan's note appears in Brodie's "Notes on Text," xxvii.

⁴²Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion*, 218, 221.

walk and draw their luggage across the plains, that they will be assisted by the Fund in no other way."⁴³ This message was published in the *Millennial Star* in January but no doubt circulated immediately among the branches.

Meanwhile, on 22 December 1855, the *Millennial Star* published articles by both Brigham Young and Franklin D. Richards extolling the virtues and practicality of handcart travel to the Salt Lake Valley. Young assured: "Fifteen miles a day will bring them [the handcart travelers] through in 70 days, and after they get accustomed to it they will travel 20, 25, and even 30 [miles] with all ease, and no danger of giving out, but will continue to get stronger and stronger; the little ones and sick, if there are any, can be carried on the carts, but there will be none sick in a little time after they get started."⁴⁴ Richards's editorial was as idealistic as Piercy's sentimental sketches:

When we allow our imaginations to wander into the future and paint the scenes that will transpire on the prairies next summer, they partake largely of the romantic. The plan is the device of inspiration, and the Lord will own and bless it. . . . There being few animals in a handcart company, there will be less to tempt the cupidity of the Indians—a large share of that most laborious and harrassing duty—guarding—can be dispensed with, and the time occupied with sleep and refreshments, with songs of rejoicing and prayer.⁴⁵

As matters turned out, nothing could have been further from the truth. Eleven days later at a conference meeting on 31 December 1855, James Godson Bleak, Whitechapel Branch president, was appointed conference secretary.⁴⁶ His careful minutes sum-

⁴³Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Jedediah M. Grant, "Thirteenth General Epistle," 29 October 1855, *Millennial Star* 18 (26 January 1856): 52-54; Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 35.

⁴⁴Franklin D. Richards, "Emigration," *Millennial Star* 17 (22 December 1855): 809-10.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶Brigham Young appointed Bleak clerk and historian of the Iron County Mission, his calling for the rest of his life. Caroline Addy, "James Godson Bleak: Pioneer Historian of Southern Utah" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1953), 7; and Preston Nibley, "Stalwarts of Mormonism," *Church News*, 31 December 1955, 16.

marize continued discussions of emigration funding, and handcart companies. Special emphasis was laid on how important it was that the “presidents” emigrate. Ironically, one of the most pointed sermons came from William H. Kimball, a son of Heber C. Kimball, and later one of the most determined rescuers of the Martin Handcart Company. A subscription paid for “President Spencer’s outfit and my own,” and neither he nor Spencer opted for handcarts.⁴⁷ In March 1856, James Furguson, a London missionary originally from Ireland, talked of his Mormon Battalion trek across the continent and enthusiastically endorsed handcarts, urging all elders to do the same.⁴⁸ By 8 November 1855, William H. Kimball assured Franklin D. Richards somewhat flippantly that “folks are willing to part with all their effects and toddle off with a few things in a pocket-handkerchief.”⁴⁹

On 1 March 1856, the *Millennial Star* contained a final poetic and faith-promoting editorial message from Franklin D. Richards: “The Lord can rain manna on the plains of America just as easily as He did on the deserts of Arabia, or as he sent quails into the camp of the Saints on the Mississippi river in 1846. Ancient Israel travelled to the promised land on foot, with their wives and little ones. The Lord calls upon modern Israel to do the same.”⁵⁰

Some of the branch presidents were skeptical. Bleak, writing under the pen name of “Scribo” in the *Juvenile Instructor* in 1902, described how he had sent funds to purchase “an ox-team outfit” for himself, his wife, and their four children before the handcart policy was announced. He said that going by handcarts was presented as a matter of “faith,” so that the money saved could be used “to emigrate other faithful Saints.” Writing in third person, he explained, “The writer confesses, that, in view of his wife being

⁴⁷Manuscript History, London Conference, 18 January 1856; William H. Kimball, Letter to President Franklin D. Richards, *Millennial Star* 18 (18 January 1856): 91.

⁴⁸Manuscript History, London Conference, 3 March 1856.

⁴⁹William H. Kimball, Letter to President Franklin D. Richards, *Millennial Star* 17 (8 November 1855):765.

⁵⁰Franklin D. Richards, Editorial, *Millennial Star* 18 (1 March 1856): 138.

unused to travel, and that the four children were of tender years, ranging from six years, the oldest, to eleven months, the youngest, he hesitated, indeed made up his mind not to adopt the suggestion requiring a journey of thirteen hundred miles on foot, from Iowa City to Salt Lake, by handcart."

But when "co-laborers" and members of his branch "declared they were going in the same company, and in the same way that he was going," Bleak yielded:

Realizing that he had always striven to set a becoming example in temporal and spiritual matters to the brethren and sisters entrusted to his care, he hesitated no longer, but at once wrote to President Franklin D. Richards, asking to be numbered on the handcart list; and to hold the balance of funds subject to his order, "to be used for emigration purposes only."

After receiving the approval of President Richards, this change was announced in public meeting; and, to the credit of those who emigrated from that branch that season, all adopted the same method of gathering.⁵¹

Richards's 1 March 1856 editorial confirmed Bleak's message by praising the "several presidents . . . who have been blessed with means to purchase teams, have concluded to cast their lot with the Lord's poor, and share with their brethren in the hand-cart companies. We wish all . . . to feel that the work is the Lord's."⁵² In March and April, the branch presidents were released so they could emigrate.

Six presidents were in the company that sailed from Liverpool 28 May 1856 on the *Horizon*. The ship had been delayed in leaving and had to be towed into Boston harbor, where further delays awaited them.⁵³ LeRoy and Ann Hafen summarize: "The unexampled clamor for Zion, the difficulty in procuring ships and in making the necessary arrangements, and various disappoint-

⁵¹Scribo [James Godson Bleak], "An Item of Handcart Experience," *Juvenile Instructor* 37 (15 June 1902): 365-67.

⁵²Richards, Editorial, *Millennial Star* 18 (1 March 1856): 140.

⁵³Margery Taylor, *World Wide LDS Ship Register*, Family History Library 1991, p. 1856 (page number by date). FHL book 973 W33t/FHL film 1592753. LDS passenger roster FHL film 25,691; Knecht, "Oh, Say What Is Truth," Appendix A "Chronology," iii-vii.

ments and miscalculations account for the failure to meet the planned schedule for departures. As matters eventuated, the lateness of sailings and subsequent delays . . . at Iowa City and at Florence were to be nothing less than tragic.”⁵⁴

DEATH ON THE TRAIL: THE PROCESSION OF THE SAINTS

At a meeting held 11 August 1856, the approximately 980 members of the Martin and Willie Handcart Companies decided unanimously to continue, despite the lateness of the season, with only Levi Savage objecting.⁵⁵ Ten days later at a second meeting, according to Benjamin Platt, a member of the Martin Handcart Company, “Apostle Franklin D. Richards called a meeting and advised us to stay in Florence until the next season but there were some apostates there or Josephites, and we did not want to stay and we decided that we would go through or die trying and we prevailed.” Josiah Rogerson, fifteen at the time, recalled in 1913: “Richards warned of the possibility of encountering snow storms before we should reach Salt Lake, and that we are then three weeks or a month late in starting from there to make the 1031 mile journey to Salt Lake, we all consented with uplifted hands to go on and take the risk.” Brigham Young poured out his wrath publicly on Richards for his bad judgement; but it seems unlikely, as William L. Knecht points out, that Richards issued such a warning, for he did not reach Florence until 21 August. If he did, it was not sufficiently strong to change the handcart pioneers’ minds and this attempt was never cited in extenuation when Brigham Young raged on.⁵⁶

But the mood in camp was festive. The young men and women who had marched in the London Conference’s procession were there, along with the branch leaders and their families, and the grayhaired elders with their walking sticks.⁵⁷ On 24 August,

⁵⁴Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 91.

⁵⁵Christy, “Handcart Companies,” 2:571.

⁵⁶Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 96-98; Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion*, 240-48; Bartholomew and Arrington, *Rescue of the Handcart Companies*, 2-3; Platt and Rogerson are quoted in Knecht, “Oh, Say What Is Truth,” xlvii.

⁵⁷Josiah Rogerson said that the Martin Company contained many elderly men

Robert Clifton, Jr., and Elizabeth Malcomb McKay were married, adding another gala note.⁵⁸ James Linforth, present for the festive departure, wrote a glowing report for the *Millennial Star* of the departure on 25 August: "Most were in good health. . . . All seemed in good spirits and lively faith concerning their journey. . . . When they got to the foot of the hill on which they had been encamped, they made the air ring with a good hurrah! three times repeated."⁵⁹

The procession moved briskly at first, then more slowly. Two weeks later, on 7 September 1856, near Loupe Fork in Nebraska Territory, a fine carriage bearing Franklin D. Richards passed the determined marchers.⁶⁰ Of this final contact with the Martin Company he wrote to the *Millennial Star*: "It certainly would warm your heart with melting kindness to pass along the line of a camp going by hand-carts, and receive the cordial shakes of the hand, with a fervent 'God bless you,' as I did when I visited Captain Edward Martin's train, several of whom expressed their thanks in a particular manner for being permitted to come out this year."⁶¹

Despite the Saints' cheerful willingness, the obstacles were simply too formidable. City dwellers had no experience dealing with ferry-boat rafts, Indians, outdoor cooking, and camping in snow, hail, and sleet. Despite Richards's assurances, they had to

and women who could not keep up with earlier companies. Josiah Rogerson, *Autobiographical Sketches of Beaver Resident* (1879), MS 3363 item 2, p. 12. Others also claimed the company was made up solely of the elderly. The six branch presidents ranged from twenty-four to fifty-one, and many of the families were complete family units with children ranging in age from late teens to infants. Franklin D. Richards "Historian's Office Minutes," 4 October 1856, claimed that "old grey-headed men" were *part* of the Martin company.

⁵⁸Family Group Sheets, Ancestral File, FHL. Elizabeth may have been a widow. Elizabeth Malcomb McKay is listed as the wife of Donal McKay in the Somerstown Branch.

⁵⁹James Linforth, "Letter written to Elder Asa Calkin, and the brethren in the *Millennial Star* Office," *Millennial Star* 18 (25 October 1856): 684. Linforth and his family traveled with Captain John A. Hunt's wagon train.

⁶⁰Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon, 1892-1904), 1:560.

⁶¹Franklin D. Richards, Letter to Brother J. A. Little, written 3 September 1856, *Millennial Star* 18 (25 October 1856): 682-23.

stand guard. Alice Walsh Strong recalled the crowding, with "three couples and six to eight children under eight years of age" in a single tent, the intense cold after passing Fort Laramie, and the exhaustion of men required "to stand guard six hours every other night."⁶² Josiah Rogerson added:

After a man had pulled a handcart 20-25 and 30 miles in a day, to go, and tramp around on guard from sundown till midnight every other night, and sometimes oftener is more than mortal bone and sinue can stand, and the fact that more men died than women attests what I have above written. Passing a good many things, that occured [sic] on the journey, forgiven, and I wish now were forgotten, I will now close by saying, that for a man or half dozen to lead and direct a company of hand-cart emigrants through the terrible scenes and privations we passed through, is more than the [mind] of man is capable of [understanding].⁶³

"Carts broke down, cattle stampeded, Indians threatened, provisions ran out, and a violent winter storm hit before they were even out of the Black Hills—a month before the usual snowfall."⁶⁴ Three of the branch presidents died. Patience Loader described the death of David Blair, probably the first of the six to die:

I remember well poor Brother Blair. He was a fine, taul [sic] man, had been one of Queen Victorea's life guards in London. He had a wife and four children.⁶⁵ He made a cover for his cart and he put his four children on the cart. He pulled his cart alone. His wife helped by pushing behind the cart. Poor man was so weak and waurn down that he fell several times that day but still he kept his dear little children on the cart all day. This man had so much love for his wife and children that instead of eating his morsael of food himself he would give it to his children. Poor man. He pulled that cart as long as he could then he died and his wife and children had to do the best they could without

⁶²Rogerson, Papers, Sketch of Mrs. Alice Walsh Strong, LDS Historical Departmental Archives, MS 6103. This collection also includes several copies of a letter from Strong to Rogerson, 6 February 1912.

⁶³Josiah Rogerson, "Autobiographical Sketches of Beaver Residents," MS 3363, item 2, p. 27, LDS Church Archives.

⁶⁴Bartholomew and Arrington, *Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies*, 2.

⁶⁵I have been able to identify only three children for Blair.

him to help them. The children got frozen. Some parts of there bodys was all sores, but thay all got to Salt L City alive but suffering.⁶⁶

Robert Clifton, Sr., died on the trail in November 1856. His newly married namesake son also died on the trail.⁶⁷

The John Griffiths family experienced horror after horror. Eight-year-old Jane Griffiths later remembered, "In the morning we would find their starved and frozen bodies right by the side of us, not knowing when they died until daylight revealed the ghastly sight to us."⁶⁸ John Griffiths became weaker and weaker and finally was so sick he had to ride in the provision wagon. One day, feeling stronger, he attempted to walk but fell back and grabbed the rod on the endgate of the last wagon. The teamster hit Griffiths with his whip.⁶⁹ Griffiths fell to the ground and lay in the snow as the wagon rolled away. Finally, after regaining consciousness and discovering tracks leading to another camp, he crawled until he found help and later was able to rejoin his family.

When the handcarts were fifty miles from Devil's Gate, deep snow and cold forced them into camp where twelve-year-old Johnny Griffiths died. Six-year-old Herbert froze to death at Independence Rock. Provisions and rescue wagons finally reached them at this point. The survivors, John, Elizabeth, and their

⁶⁶Patience Loader's sister was married to John Jacques. Her "Diary" (reminiscences) is included in Stella Jaques Bell, *Life History and Writings of John Jaques including a Diary of the Martin Handcart Company* (Rexburg, Ida.: Ricks College Press, 1978), 150.

⁶⁷ Clifton family records, TIB records; see also Easton, *Index to the Willie/Martin Handcart Company*. See also Rogerson, Papers. He was born 22 May 1836 and baptized at age fourteen by his father on 10 February 1850. Whitechapel Branch Records, Film 87,038; Minnie Margetts LDS Membership Records, Film 415,445; Robert Clifton family "Ancestral File." Temple Index Ancestral File computer records dates both deaths as November 1856 in Wyoming.

⁶⁸In Bartholomew and Arrington, *Rescue of the Handcart Companies*, 53.

⁶⁹He may have been trying to keep Griffiths moving rather than driving him away. According to Nicholus Courley Teeple, Martin Handcart survivor, in *Utah Pioneer Biographies*, 27:5, "Often the people would get so tired they would lie down under a tree or bush and then they would be very hard to get up. The leaders had to take a whip to them and lash them back to consciousness, while they would beg to be left to die."

daughters Margaret and Jane, reached Zion 30 November, but John died the next morning.⁷⁰

Twenty-four-year-old William L. S. Binder, former Lambeth Branch president, and his wife Eliza had their own grisly experience. William's feet were frozen during the late November storms.⁷¹ Then their tent companion, fellow Londoner John Watkins,⁷² spotted a stray ox and was determined to kill the animal for food. He decided to go after it at night when the animal was sleeping but did not dare go alone. He managed to persuade a Brother James Hudson to help him and also allowed Eliza Binder to go in her lame husband's place. Obviously in the freezing weather, none of them was thinking clearly. Clad only in a thin gown, Eliza followed them, at one point sinking into the deep sleep that precedes a freezing death. Amazingly she recovered in time to help them kill and carve the ox. Its warm blood was all that kept the three alive. Later, Brother Hudson went into the same death sleep, and Eliza helped John Watkins drag the meat and their fellow worker back to the handcart train before morning. The broth saved William Binder's life.⁷³

James G. Bleak reached Salt Lake Valley alive, but his feet were "so badly frozen that the flesh dropped from his heels, the effects of which he felt until the end of his days." Two other survivors remember him bursting into tears when they reached the bank of yet another river to be forded. "His wife who was by his

⁷⁰John Watkins, "Stories from the Martin Handcart Company," in *Heart Throbs of the West*, compiled by Kate B. Carter, 12 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1945), 6:369.

⁷¹Andrew Jenson, "Biography of William L. S. Binder," *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Co., 1901-37; reprinted Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971), 1:640-42.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 641. Finsbury Branch records identify John and Margaret Watkins and William and Eliza Binder as members of the Finsbury Branch and thus close neighbors. See "Appendix" at the end of this paper. Finsbury Branch FHL film 86,998.

⁷³John Watkins, "Reminiscences of John Watkins," *Heart Throbs of the West*, 6:372-76; "Frank" [John Watkins], "A Night Adventure on the Plains," *Juvenile Instructor* 23 (1 January 1888): 1-4. This second version is thinly disguised with the hero appearing as "Watson," Eliza as "Lizzie," and Hudson as "Hunter."

side, had the stouter heart of the two at that junction, and said soothingly, 'Don't cry, Jimmy. I'll pull the handcart for you.'" In fact, he could not walk, and she did pull both the handcart and him.⁷⁴

Throughout the trek, James Bleak had complete faith that he and his family would survive. Before he left London, a woman speaking in tongues had reassured him: "I, the Lord, am well pleased with the offering [of funds for the handcart emigrants] made by my servant, Elder [Bleak]; and notwithstanding he shall see the angel of death laying waste on his right hand and on his left, on his front, and on his rearward, yet he and his family shall gather to Zion and not one of them shall fall by the Way."⁷⁵ The entire family of six did, in fact, reach Utah, although five-year-old Thomas drowned in the Green River in November. Refusing to accept his death because of this promise, James and Elizabeth continued their attempts at resuscitation and succeeded in reviving him.⁷⁶

Sarah Squires, the wife of Henry Augustus Squires, former president of St. Albans Branch, was pregnant, and the oldest of their four daughters was only eight. She never complained, even though, in addition to all of the other misfortunes, she became "snow blind for three weeks and had to be led."⁷⁷ The rescue wagons came in time for Sarah to give birth to the baby, Echo Squires, in Echo Canyon. Patience Loader remembers Henry "running around camp inquiring of everybody if they had a pin to give him to hold something around the baby. No one had one."⁷⁸ As Wallace Stegner commented, "Their women were incredible."⁷⁹

⁷⁴Told by John Jaques and in an 1878 *Salt Lake Herald* article as quoted in Whitney, *History of Utah*, 1:559-64; and interview with Aaron Jackson, Martin Handcart survivor, "Pioneer Personal History," in *Utah Pioneer Biographies*, 15:6; James G. Bleak, Obituary, unidentified St. George newspaper, January 1918, James Godson Bleak Family Records, reproduced by the Bleak Family Organization, 1980, Family History, FHL book Q929.273 B 6/4.

⁷⁵Scribo, "An Item of Handcart Experience," 365-67.

⁷⁶Addy, "James Godson Bleak," 11.

⁷⁷Echo Squires Kirkham De Lee, "A Short Sketch," ca. 1938, MS 7825, 2, LDS Church Archives.

⁷⁸Patience Loader Rosza, as quoted in John Jaques, "Some Reminiscences

AFTER THE JOURNEY

Few survivors sent reports of their ordeal back to London immediately; however, the Mormon Trail was a two-way road and news of the handcart disaster traveled quickly. One of the first accounts was James G. Bleak's, an optimistic attempt to soften the tragic message. A letter to in-laws and friends within a week after his arrival in Salt Lake City reflected either unquestioning faith or a carefully censored version of the ordeal. With no mention that Elizabeth had had to pull him on the handcart, Bleak wrote:

I shall suppose you have received our letter giving the particulars of our sea & part of our land voyage. . . . We left a place called Iowa City on the 1st of August and arrived in this City on last Sunday the 30th of November the distance being 1,300 miles. We should not have been so long performing the journey but we were detained on the road in consequence of the snow falling considerably the latter part of our journey.

The scenery across the plains is certainly not to be surpassed. We saw the prairie on fire several times and consider it one of the grandest sights in nature. While the weather was fine we had an abundance of excellent plums and grape which grow wild in the woods also cherries and gooseberries small, but of a nice flavor. Our health as a general thing has been very good. Becky has enjoyed better health on the whole of the journey than she did at home. Mary is rather poorly, at present, and I have my feet frostbitten in consequence of which I am not able to do any thing like work and do not expect to be able for at least two months. But thank God I am consoled to know that neither my wife or children will want for any thing.

Your affectionate Son and Daughter,
James and Elizabeth Bleak

But the death toll shocked many and created the beginnings of a permanent breach with the Church for other Londoners. John Hyde, Sr., refused Brigham Young's call to gather and Young excommunicated him. John Banks, neighbor and former president of the London Mission, led a train of sixty wagons and three

by John Jacques," *Daily Herald*, 30 Nov. 1878, reproduced in Bell, "Life History and Writings of John Jaques," 151.

⁷⁹Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion*, 13.

hundred people to Utah that arrived on 1 October 1856. He probably passed the Martin Handcart Company somewhere on the plains. He subsequently became disillusioned, espoused the Morrisite heresies, and was killed in the attack on its headquarters. Frederick Piercy left no record of his reaction, but his shock at the contrast between the idyllic journey and the grueling reality can only be imagined. He had already broken with the Church, refusing to return to Utah on Brigham Young's demand to Orson Pratt, then British Mission president, written on 30 October 1856 and received before 30 January 1857. He was excommunicated in March 1857.⁸⁰ In America, Piercy's coauthor James Linforth, perhaps feeling guilty and certainly stunned, continued straight on to San Francisco where he lived out his life.⁸¹

In Salt Lake City, Brigham Young refused to entertain any questions about the efficiency and practicality of handcarts. In May 1857, six months after the Martin Company arrived, he sent seventy men from Utah to Florence pulling handcarts. In decent weather, and without women, children, and the elderly, the healthy men made the trip in forty-eight days.⁸² One of these missionaries, Phillip Margetts, baptized in London in 1841, kept a detailed diary of both the reverse handcart trip and of his stay in London.⁸³ He recorded the blows sustained by the London branches: not only the leadership drain caused by emigration but the handcart tragedies, the Utah War, and

⁸⁰The letters are quoted in LeCheminant, "Entitled to be Called an Artist," 62-64. Later, Orson Pratt and Brigham Young refused to pay the full amount Young had originally agreed on for Piercy's engravings.

⁸¹Brodie commented in *Route from Liverpool*, xxvii-xxviii, "Certainly it must have shaken the young British editor [James Linforth], when faced with the horrors of the Willie-Martin disasters, to remember the cheerful expectation and glowing hope implicit in his (and Piercy's) recently published emigrant's guide." She also includes Linforth's obituary from San Francisco; see also Josiah Rogerson's Papers, "Mrs. James Linforth," unpag. "Linforth's go to San Francisco. They could not stand the hardship of Zion nor the trauma of the trip."

⁸²Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 159.

⁸³Phillip Margetts, "Journal of Mission to London, 1857," microfilm of holograph; copy in my possession.

lurid press accounts of polygamy. After attending a meeting at Holborn Branch (formerly Theobalds Road) on 17 August, he wrote, "Most of the saints are spiritually dead." On 22 November, he added, "There is no sign of an increase, the work seems at a perfect stand still." Even Margetts's close relatives were reluctant to receive him.⁸⁴

LONDON 1870S: THE RETURN OF THE PRESIDENTS

All three of the London Conference branch presidents who survived the Martin disaster—James G. Bleak, William L. S. Binder, and Henry Augustus Squires—eventually returned to England. Bleak, who lived in St. George where he became temple recorder, served a proselyting mission in 1872 and was appointed editor of the *Millennial Star*. William L. S. Binder, a merchant in Utah and a member of Salt Lake City's first Old Folks' Committee, served both a proselyting mission in 1874 and a genealogical mission in 1898.⁸⁵ In 1876, Binder brought a group of 322 emigrants by steamship from Liverpool to New York and by train from New York to Salt Lake City—a plains journey that took only ten days.⁸⁶ Both Bleak and Binder died in good standing, Bleak in 1904 and Binder in 1918.

Squires, a merchant in Salt Lake City, had a more complicated departure. In the spring of 1867, he took his first wife, Sarah, and their younger children back to England, leaving three

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 4 August 1857.

⁸⁵In 1866 only nine small branches remained, according to J. Ewing Ritchie, *The Religious Life of London* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1870), 343-45. A non-Mormon contemporary, he painted a dreary picture of Mormonism at that time: "The principal place of worship of the Mormons . . . is in the Commercial Road, but there are others; one of them in George Street. . . . In that locality there is a very shabby dancing saloon, from which the graces seem long since to have departed. At three o'clock every Sunday afternoon the Mormons assemble there. On a raised platform may be seen seated some seven or eight men, apparently decent workmen. All seem enthusiastic and very friendly, and wretchedly poor. . . . You might fancy as you enter you had made a mistake, and got amongst the Primitive Methodists."

⁸⁶Andrew Jenson, comp., *Church Chronology: or a Record of Important Events* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Press, 1886), 95.

married daughters in Utah. His plural wife, Emma Caroline Slade Squires, refused to go and stayed in Salt Lake City with their three sons and a daughter, born six months after Henry left. According to one of Sarah's granddaughters, Brigham Young advised the move because of Henry's health problems. However, it seems more likely that Henry had lost his faith in Mormonism. In England, the family attended Methodist school and the Baptist church, and Henry again became a Baptist minister, serving until his death in 1914. Sarah returned to Utah in May 1874 for a year. When she returned to England, her seventeen-year-old Echo, who had "prayed all the way to Zion that she would have the knowledge that the Gospel was true," remained behind with a married sister.⁸⁷ Squires's apostasy contradicts the Mormon folklore that no member of the Martin Handcart Company ever left the Church.⁸⁸

CONCLUSION

The decision of Brigham Young and the leaders of the Mormon Church to assist the worthy poor to "gather" to Zion was a project of daunting proportions. Although they had been forced from their homes by hostile mobs in Missouri and Nauvoo, the Mormons pledged to assist all who would join them in Utah. When funds ran out for wagons and oxen, leaders searched for new ways to bring the Saints to Zion. The handcart experiment seemed promising. For the most part it worked; eight of ten companies arrived successfully. To members of the Edward Martin Handcart Company, nature dealt a cruel blow; but except for a few, their faith remained alive.

⁸⁷De Lee, "A Short Sketch," 2.

⁸⁸President Gordon B. Hinckley told a story with this point in October 1991 conference (*Ensign*, November 1991, 54); see also Bruce C. Hafen (*Ensign*, April 1992, 16); and Elder James E. Faust (*Ensign*, May 1979, 53). Squires has many active descendants by both his wife Sarah who returned to England with him, and also by his plural wife, Emma.

APPENDIX

London Members of the Edward Martin Handcart Company

Sources for London convert index chart include: (1) Susan Easton Black, comp., "Members of the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies of 1856," 42-106, Family History Library book U.S./Can 979.2 H2m. Typescript compiled as a sesquicentennial remembrance and deposited in the library in 1983. (2) LeRoy R. Hafen and Anne W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clarke Co., 1976), 295-302. "Appendix M: Fifth Company. Edward Martin, Captain." (3) "Roster of Captain Martin's Company," *Deseret News*, in *Journal History*, 30 November 1856; FHL film 12,597,433. (4) William L. Knecht, "Oh, Say What Is Truth?: Wonders at Their Hand (August 1990)," xxci. This list is a result of study of Josiah Rogerson's Papers. Knecht typescript in my possession. Rogerson's loose papers are available in the LDS Archives, MS 6103. (5) Family History Library Ancestral File; and London Conference records, and records of Theobalds Road, Holborn, Whitechapel, St. Albans, and Woolwich branches. (6) References to Alfred Bridge and Elizabeth Johnston are included in James G. Bleak's "Letters to London," which is included in the "James Godson Bleak Family Records Book" in the Family History Library, FHL book Q 929.273 B614. Other members of the Martin Handcart Company who spent time in London before they emigrated included the Loader and Jaques families.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Birthyear</i>	<i>Baptism</i>	<i>Death on Plains</i>
Beer, Benjamin James	1812	20 Jan. 1844	
Beer, Margaret	1812	17 Jan. 1848	
Binder, William L. S.	1832	13 Nov. 1847	
Binder, Eliza Crump	1832		
Bird, Thomas P.	1838	8 Nov. 1854	
Bitton, John Evington	1830		
Bitton, Jane	1836		
Bitton, Sarah S.	1839		
Blair, David	1810	Aug. 1842	Oct. 1856
Blair, Deborah	1816	Aug. 1842	
Blair, Deborah (age 8)	1848		
Blair, Elizabeth (6)	1850		
Blair, David (1)	1855		
Bleak, James G.	1829	8 Feb 1851	
Bleak, Elizabeth Moore	1828	27 June 1851	
Bleak, Richard (6)	1850		
Bleak, Thomas (4)	1852		
Bleak, James (3)	1853		
Bleak, Mary (1)	1855		
Bridge, Alfred	1831	Nov. 1856	

<i>Name</i>	<i>Birthyear</i>	<i>Baptism</i>	<i>Death on Plains</i>
Clifton, Robert Sr.	1805	21 July 1842	Nov. 1856
Clifton, Mary M. Blanchard	1810	Nov. 1841	
Clifton, Robert, Jr.	1834	10 Feb. 1856	Nov. 1856
Clifton, Rebecca (21)	1835		
Clifton, Sophia (13)	1843		
Clifton, Anne (6)	1849		
Griffiths, John	1810	30 Jan. 1840	1 Dec 1856
Griffiths, Elizabeth Webb	1826		
Griffiths, Margaret (16)	1840	23 May 1848	
Griffiths, John (12)	1845		Nov. 1856
Griffiths, Jane (8)	1848	April 1856	
Griffiths, Herbert (6)	1851		22 Nov. 1856
Harper, Mary	1792	9 July 1846	
Haydock, Elizabeth	1811		
Haydock, Mary	1835		
Johnston, Elizabeth	1806		
Jones, Sarah Bradshaw	1801		
Jones, Samuel	1837		
Jones, Albert	1839		
Lawley, George	1801		
Read, Samuel George	*1807	18 Aug. 1854	
Read, Elizabeth G. Quilley	1805	16 July 1855	
Read, Alicia Quilly (16)	1840		
Read, Samuel Milford (15)	1841	24 Jan. 1856	
Read, Thisbe Quilly (11)	1845	13 May 1855	
Read, Walter Pyramus (8)	1848		
Rodwell, John	1801		
Rodwell, Sarah	1797		
Shorten, John Bussey	1836		
Shorten, James	1842		
Squires, Henry Augustus	1825	8 Aug. 1847	
Squires, Sarah Catlin	1826	22 Aug. 1847	
Squires, Sarah (8)	1848		
Squires, Mary Emily (7)	1850		
Squires, Catherine (4)	1852		
Squires, Clara (3)	1853		
Squires, Echo	born on trail in Echo Canyon		27 Nov. 1856
Watkins, John	1834	15 Oct. 1852	
Watkins, Margaret Ackhurst	1831	15 Oct. 1852	
Watkins, Elizabeth (4)	1852		
Watkins, John Thomas (2)	1854		

*Samuel George Read, a wealthy Londoner, sailed on the *Horizon* but did not travel with the Martin Handcart Company after it left Florence, though

he is listed on all official rolls. In London Samuel volunteered to travel with the handcart people, using his wealth to pay travel costs for other members and purchasing medicines and supplies for the whole group. His six-year-old son Walter disappeared in Florence, so the mother, Elizabeth, and two daughters continued with the Martin Handcart Company while Samuel and the older son, Samuel Milford, searched for the child, found him, and went west the next year. Elizabeth provided medical care to the company and later became the only pioneer doctor in Price, Utah. Daughter Thisbe eventually married one of her rescuers, Ephraim Hanks. May S. Arnold, "Samuel Read," in Carter, *Heart Throbs of the West*, 6:370.