

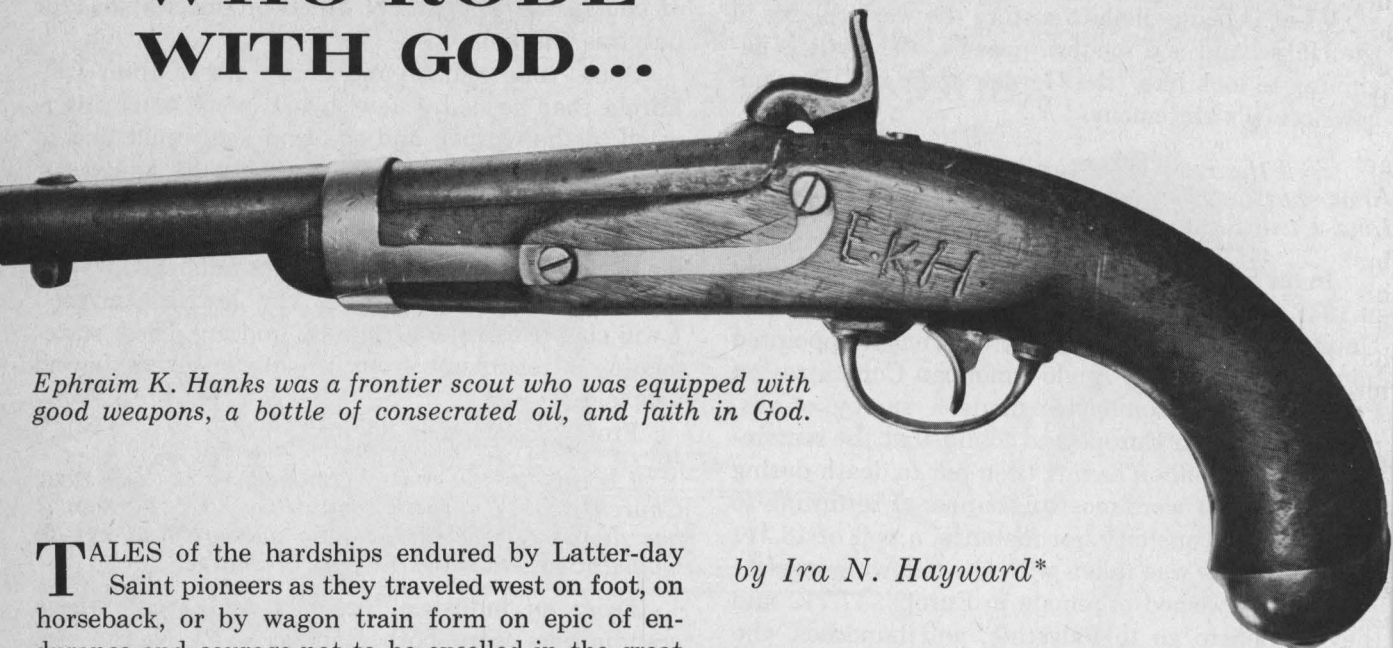


# THE Instructor

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# THE SCOUT WHO RODE WITH GOD...



*Ephraim K. Hanks was a frontier scout who was equipped with good weapons, a bottle of consecrated oil, and faith in God.*

**T**ALES of the hardships endured by Latter-day Saint pioneers as they traveled west on foot, on horseback, or by wagon train form on epic of endurance and courage not to be excelled in the great literature of the world. What is not often mentioned is that much of the success of this great migration was made possible by a handful of hardy, brave, resourceful men who stood ready, in all seasons and weather conditions, to lead a pioneer train, supply its members with wild meat, deal with hostile Indians, or ride to the help of a camp in distress. These were the *scouts*—men who obeyed the Scout Law long before the great Boy Scout organization came into existence.

Among those heroes, none was braver than Ephraim K. Hanks. If Brother “Eph,” as his friends called him, had been asked which of the twelve points of the Scout Law he would put first, his answer would undoubtedly have been “Reverence.” A man who rode out in all kinds of weather, into all the perils of the Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains—often without human companions—he could not have come through unharmed if he had really been alone. But Eph Hanks was never all alone. Filled with a deep, sincere faith, he knew that his calling was of God. He rode by faith, and God rode with him by the power of His Spirit.

On an October morning in 1856, the Gerney Brown family must have been puzzled when they heard their guest of the night stirring about in his room soon after midnight. Thinking that perhaps he might be ill, they asked him what was the matter.

“I must go back to Salt Lake,” he answered.

(For Course 11, lesson of June 30, “The Handcart Companies”; for Course 7, lessons of July 7, August 11, and 18, “Mormon Pioneers upon the Great Plains,” “The Fight against Famine,” and “Handcart Companies and Stagecoach Days”; for Course 9, lesson of June 30, “A Leader Serves His Fellow Men”; for Course 13, lessons of June 2, 9, and 16, “Service”; and for Course 19, lesson of August 18, “Spiritual Gifts.”)

*by Ira N. Hayward\**

“There is a handcart company out on the plains that needs my help.”

Since their guest had come down to the Brown home on Utah Lake only the day before to catch a load of fish for the Salt Lake market, the Browns must have been astonished at that announcement. But Brother Eph explained that three times during the night a voice had called his name; and when he had answered the third call, it had said: “That handcart company is in trouble. Will you help them out?”

The Browns, too, had faith; so when the scout had told his experience, Brother Brown helped him get his team ready while Sister Brown got breakfast for him. Before he left they put warm clothing and a sack of flour into his wagon for the distressed travelers. As Eph entered Salt Lake about daylight next morning, he was met by a messenger from President Brigham Young, asking him to find the company and help them all he could until rescue parties could reach them.

With the blessing of the great pioneer Prophet upon his head, Eph set out in a light wagon filled with supplies into the mountains that lay between him and his destination. But the blizzard that had trapped the Martin Handcart Company was sweeping through the mountains, and the scout was forced to abandon his wagon. Riding one horse, and loading the other as a pack animal, he went on, taking

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with him part of the supplies—a small part only, because of the dangerous road ahead of him.

Once he lost his way in the blinding storm; and before he had gone far off the road, he came upon a small band of Indians whom he persuaded—rather unwilling—to guide him. But he soon realized that they, too, had lost their way.

Then the storm stopped temporarily, and he was able to get his bearings from familiar landmarks. Alone again, one night he was saved from possible freezing when, in answer to his earnest prayer, a buffalo bull suddenly appeared on the slope above his camp. At a single shot from Eph's rifle, the bull fell and rolled down the slope into the hollow where he was camped. As he later told the story to historian Andrew Jenson:

*I was soon busily engaged skinning my game, finishing which, I spread the hide on the snow and placed my bed upon it. I next prepared supper, eating tongue and other choice parts of the animal I had killed, to my heart's content. After this I enjoyed a refreshing night's sleep, while my horses were browsing on the sagebrush.*

Next morning he came upon a herd of buffalo and killed a young cow. Loaded with as much of the meat as his horses could carry, he rode on, and about an hour before sunset he saw the forlorn camp of the Martin company, "a black streak in the snow." That night the famished pioneers had meat in camp for the first time in many days. Next morning Eph led some of the stronger men to the place where he had killed the buffalo, and with their help brought the rest of the carcass into camp. He adds:

*A prophecy had been made by one of the brethren that the company should feast on buffalo meat when their provisions might run short; my arrival in their camp, loaded with meat, was the beginning of the fulfillment of that prediction; but only the beginning, as I afterwards shot and killed a number of buffalo for them as we journeyed along.*

But Ephraim Hanks brought more than food to the distressed company. In all his travels, the faithful scout was never without his bottle of consecrated oil. Once again, let him tell in his own words how he brought life and spiritual strength to Saints whose faith had been sorely tried by the cruel tragedy which overtook them on their way to Zion:

*After dark, on the evening of my arrival in the handcart camp, a woman crying aloud passed the campfire where I was sitting. Wondering what was the matter, my natural impulse led me to follow her. She went straight to Daniel Tyler's wagon, where she told the heart-rending story of her husband being at the point of death; and in pleading tones she asked Elder Tyler to come and administer to him.*

*This good brother, tired and weary as he was*

*after pulling handcarts all day, had just retired for the night and was a little reluctant in getting up; but on this earnest solicitation he soon arose, and we both followed the woman to the tent in which we found the apparently lifeless form of her husband.*

On seeing him, Elder Tyler remarked, "I cannot administer to a dead man." Brother Tyler requested me to stay and lay out the supposedly dead brother, while he returned to his wagon to seek that rest which he needed so much. I immediately stepped back to the campfire where several of the brethren were sitting and addressing myself to Elders Grant, Kimball, and one or two others, I said: "Will you boys do just as I tell you?" The answer was in the affirmative.

We then went to work and built a fire near the tent which I and Elder Tyler had just visited; next we warmed some water and washed the dying man, whose name was Blair, from head to foot. I then anointed him with consecrated oil . . . after which we laid hands on him and commanded him in the name of Jesus Christ to breathe and live. The effect was instantaneous. The man who was dead to all appearances immediately began to breathe, sat up in his bed, and commenced to sing a hymn.

His wife, unable to control her feeling of joy and thankfulness, ran through the camp exclaiming: "My husband was dead, but is now alive. Praised be the name of God. The man who brought the buffalo meat has healed him."

This circumstance caused a general excitement in the whole camp, and many of the drooping spirits began to take fresh courage from that very hour. After this the greater portion of my time was devoted to waiting on the sick. "Come to me," "Help me," "Please administer to my sick wife," or "My dying child," were some of the requests that were made of me almost hourly for some time after I had joined the immigrants; and I spent days going from tent to tent administering to the sick.

Truly the Lord was with me and others of His servants who labored faithfully together with me in that day of trial and suffering. The result of this our labor of love certainly redounded to the honor and glory of a kind and merciful God. In scores of instances, when we administered to the sick and rebuked the diseases in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sufferers would rally at once; they were healed almost instantly. I believe I administered to several hundreds in a single day; and I could give names of many whose lives were saved by the power of God.

The story of Ephraim K. Hanks is a noble example of faith, endurance, and courage. Put together by two of his descendants in the book, *Scouting for the Mormons on the Great Frontier*, it is a moving narrative full of incidents to stir the hearts of all who love the lore of our pioneer past. Boys thrill to incidents of almost incredible bravery and resourcefulness. But above all there is the sublime faith of a man who knew that this latter-day work is truly the work of God, and that they who engage in it whole-heartedly never travel alone.

Library File Reference: Faith-promoting Stories.