

HANDCART EXPERIENCE

taken from

SKETCH OF DANIEL DUNCAN MCARTHUR, CAPTAIN OF ONE OF THE COMPAINES

“In the year 1852, during a special conference, I was called to go to Europe on a mission to preach the Gospel, to be gone from four to seven years. I left my home on the 12th of September in company with a host of other Elders and landed in Liverpool, England, the 5th of January, 1853, and was sent from Liverpool by President S.W.Richards, who was at that time presiding over the British Mission, to Scotland, to labor under Elder Robert Campbell, the President over the British Mission, and landed in the city of Glasgow, January 7th. From there I was sent by President Campbell to the city of Aberdeen in the Highlands of Scotland. Here I labored for ten months, mostly by myself, and built up a nice little branch. I was then called by President S.W. Richards to go to the city of Dundee to thake the Presidency⁶ of the Dundee Conference, December 9, 1853. I presided over that Conference until I was released to return home to my family in Salt Lake City. While in Dundee I took charge of three companies of Scottish Saints from Scotland to Liverpool who had started for the Utah Territory, In March 1856, I was released from my Eurpean Mission to return home and, of cours, this was glad new to me, but I should look back on my four years of labor with great satisfaction for I had done the best I could to win Saints to Christ. in April I turned the Presidency of the Dundee Mission over to my successor, James Chambers, and bid farewell to the Saints whose hearts I had won.

I went to Liverpool to assist in getting things ready to start with a shipload of Saints who were to leave on a ship named “American Union” or “Enoch Train” and when the ship’s company was organized of six hundred saints I was chosen to be the second Counselor to the President of the Company across the ocean and through the United States to the city of Iowa on the east line of Iowa State which is about 1330 miles from Salt Lake City. We landed in May and after landing I was called to take charge of a Handcart Company to start from that city and go through to Salt Lake City. I took hold of this work, putting my whole trust in God of Heaven. I Had two Counselors by the name of Truman Leonard and Spicer Crandall. We were chosen and set apart by Daniel Spencer who had charge of the emigration. We got all things started as I wanted my handcarts to be in good condition—the timber well dried, as we had to use green timber. Captain Ellsworth requested that he permitted to be first to arrive in Salt Lake City with his company and I complied with his request. My outfit was much better equipped to stand the journey than his, and we caught up with him at the Platte River. While he went on, after making his necessary repairs, we rested and fixed up our outfits. We passed his company again on the plains, but before we reached Emigration Canyon we waited three days and then both companies went in to-gether. When word reached Salt Lake that we were at the mouth of Emigration Canyon on the 24th of October, 1856, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and many other prominent citizens came out to meet us. Captain William Pitts with his brass band and a company of Lancers with Colonel H.B. Clawson formed a part of the greeting parade and we were escorted into the valley with flying colors.

We were Three months on this hazardous trip as we covered a distance of 1330 miles. All who were old enough to pull carts, did so cheerfully, male and female. Imagine our joy after the hardships and trials of climbing mountains, crossing rivers, plains, etc., to reach the land of Zion. I don not want to give the impression that this was all hard-ship because it wasn’t, as we had our good times. At night, after the day’s journey, the handcarts were all formed in a circle and on the inside of this circle a fie was built. Around this fire we gathered, danced and sang songs, and

thanked our Heavenly Father for our safety during the day. In our company we had two hundred and fifty souls, five wagons, one hundred handcarts, twenty-four oxen, and four mules. Most of these emigrants were from Europe and many of them were aged and infirm. Most of them walked the entire distance of more than 1330. Our company came through with every man, woman and child that it started with.

Here I would like to relate some of the numerous incidents of this long trip. We had in our company one young girl, who was the life of the company and who never tired in her efforts to help others and make their load as light as possible. She could always see the humor in everything. I always rode a little brown mule to check up on the company, riding back and forth to make sure that any who needed help got it. This girl always insisted upon riding behind me when we crossed streams and on day when I started to ford a stream, she yelled, "Captain Dan, don't go without me." She ran to the bank of the stream and lifting her long skirts, made a jump for the back of the mule, but landed in the middle of the stream. This caused a hearty laugh and the others went across good naturedly.

After arriving in Salt Lake, establishing our camp and had something to eat, Pres. Brigham Young came to me and asked if I wanted to go to my hoe. I told him that was what I would like to do if it was agreeable with him. He said, "Go home and God Bless you." So I bid good afternoon to my handcart company and went home to my family, who were all glad to see me after an absence of more than four years. In a very short time I was called to be a home missionary through great reformation of 1856 and 1857. In the spring of 1857, I was called to go back to Devil's Gate on the Sweet water, to bring up those of the emigrants of 1856 who had started out too late and who had been snowbound and who had suffered bitter privations, as the result of hunger, cold, and attacks by Indians. I made the trip safely, bringing them all through, arriving in Salt Lake in August."