

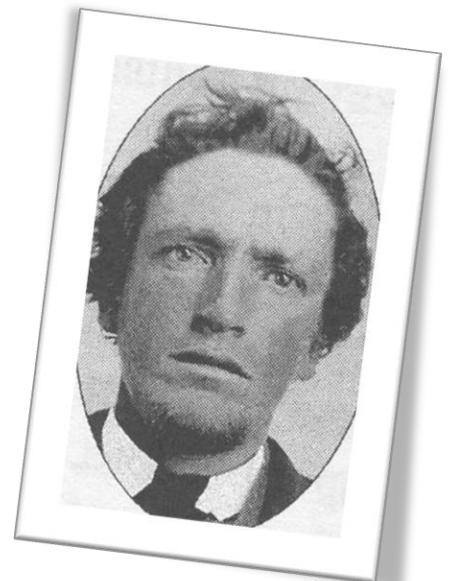
“Sternness Was Our Only Salvation”



The advanced team of the rescue riders found the snowbound Willie Handcart Company on October 19th, near the fifth crossing of the Sweetwater, high up on Wyoming plains. Those riders: Steven W. Taylor, Joseph A. Young, Abel Garr, and Daniel W. Jones. As they reached them, they brought word that wagons were ahead. And indeed, wagon loads of those supplies reached the Willey company on October 23rd at Willey Meadows. Though they were found they were not yet rescued. The worst of the ordeal for the Willey Company was yet ahead of them. They still had

to cross Rocky Ridge. They still must get through Rock Creek Hollow. They still had to go up and over South Pass at 7,550 feet in elevation. They were yet hundreds of miles from safety and shelter in Salt Lake City. Among them was Michael Jensen and his family. They had come from Denmark. Michael describes a most, to some, troubling moment in their journey just beyond Rocky Ridge. He said,

“My father was very weak from lack of food and so the men in charge of the wagons fastened our handcart to one of the wagons and told father to hang onto the wagon. He was walking between our handcart and the wagon when he slipped and fell, and before anyone could reach him, the handcart had passed over him as he lay on the ground. They picked him up and put him into the wagon and we went on until dark and then camped for the night. Sometime during that night my father died and next morning they buried him beside the road. I can remember well how sad we were. I was just 11 years old and my brother, Anthony, was only 9, and we could not say much to help our mother in her sorrow. Mother sat on a large kettle turned upside down



weeping bitterly, I and Anthony stood beside her not knowing what to do. One of the men who was helping to manage the company came along just then and he had a walking stick in his hand. He struck Mother across the back with his stick and said in a sharp voice, 'Get up and go on, you cannot sit here crying. We have to go at once or we will all die.' Oh, how I wished I were a man so I could fight for my mother! I never forgave this man.... Now in my late years as I look back, I see things more clearly and I see that sternness was our only salvation and the only thing we could stand as it roused us from our misery. Had the leaders allowed us to grieve we could not have endured the hardships left to us when we had to go on alone. Father died on the 29th of October, and we did not reach Salt Lake City until November 11, 1856, which made us more than seven months from the time we had left Copenhagen."

In that same area, a similar experience was shared by Agnes Caldwell. She said,



"Just before we crossed the mountains, [South Pass] relief wagons reached us, and it certainly was a relief. The infirm and aged were allowed to ride, all able-bodied continuing to walk. When the wagons started out, a number of us children decided to see how long we could keep up with the wagons, in hopes of being asked to ride. At least that is what my great hope was. One by one they all fell out, until I was the last one remaining, so determined was I that I should get a ride. After what seemed the longest run I ever made before or since, the driver, who was William Henry Kimball, called to me, "Say, sissy, would you like a ride?" I answered in my very best manner, "Yes, sir." At this he reached over, taking my hand, clucking to his horses to make me run, with legs that seemed to me could run no farther. On we went, to what to me seemed miles.

What went through my head at that time was that he was the meanest man that ever lived or that I had ever heard of, and other things that would not be a credit nor would it look well coming from one so young. Just at what seemed the breaking point, he stopped. Taking a blanket, he wrapped me up and lay me in the bottom of the wagon, warm and comfortable. Here I had time to change my mind, as I surely did, knowing full well that by doing this he saved me from freezing when taken into the wagon."

Consider those two stories. Is there not an eternal lesson in these two experiences? The unrelenting hardships of mortality, stern as they are, may be the very whip across the

back that saves us. And again, how many of you are holding on to the Lord's hand and running for all you are worth to keep up with the wagon of Zion, in hopes that we will get rescued in the end, and He just keeps making us run. Hang on. Keep running!

Source:

<https://history.lds.org/overlandtravel/sources/11383/jensen-michael-the-story-of-my-life>

<https://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/sources/9430/southworth-agnes-caldwell-autobiographical-sketch-in-susan-arrington-madsen-i-walked-to-zion-1994-57-59>

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