

“I Will Find Them”



Arza Erastus Hinckley was born August 15, 1826, in Ontario, Canada. He joined the church in 1838, while traveling with his family in Illinois. The family immigrated to join the saints and just happened to land in DeWitt, Missouri just in time for the hostilities that would later be known as the Siege of DeWitt and the Mormon Missouri War. Arza, his family, and the saints in DeWitt were driven out by the mobs and took refuge at Far West. When Far West fell to the mobs, family history records that young Arza stood by and watched as the men of the church were rounded up by the mobs, their weapons **grabbed, and given a choice at gunpoint, “leave your Church, or sign your property away and leave the state, or be shot forthwith.”** It is said in the family records that, **“These events burned into the mind and soul of young Arza.”**

When the saints went to Nauvoo, Arza and family went with them. There he labored on the Nauvoo Temple until he was afflicted with the ague, or malaria. Arza was there in Nauvoo, August 1844, and witnessed for himself the transformation of Brigham Young to appear as the prophet, Joseph Smith. In 1846, Arza followed President Young and twelve out of Nauvoo, bound for the Rocky Mountains. When the call came in July 1846, for men to join the Mormon Battalion and march to California, and the United States War with Mexico, Arza, young, strong, and single, volunteered. On July 20, 1846, he joined the rest and marched out of Council Bluffs bound for Fort Leavenworth.

There was one point in that march, west of Santa Fe, that Arza was taken down with mountain fever and became so low, so sick, that one of his messmates was asked how he was doing. The man stood over Arza looking down at him lying in his **tent and said, “Oh, he’s no better. We’ll have to burn a brush heap over him before morning.”** According to the family history, when Arza heard this, he responded with some grit, **“You dry up. I didn’t come to this country to die, and I ain’t a-going-to. If you don’t burn a brush**



heap over anyone before you do me, it will be a long time before you burn one over me." Though Arza would be sent with the sick detachments to Pueblo he would eventually recover.

Arza finally made it to the Salt Lake Valley with his brother, Ira. Because of his skills as a horseman, a teamster, Arza was put in charge of church's horses, teams, and wagons. In time, he became President Brigham Young's personal teamster and bodyguard. By his own account, He "traveled first to last with President Young in his visiting and organizing different settlements of the saints in the valleys as a minuteman and bodyguard near 5,000 miles."



On October 5-6, 1856, when President Brigham Young stood up in General Conference and vigorously called for men, teams, and supplies to bring in the handcart people, then on the high plains of Wyoming, Arza was there. In fact, as he had promised, President Brigham Young himself set out with the rescuers to bring those people in. As President Young went east, Arza was his driver. President Young was voted down in the conference and told not to go. He went anyway! Arza was driving him. They only made it as far east as Canyon Creek when President Brigham Young became so ill that Arza had to take him back to Salt Lake.

Arza delivered President Young safely home and then Daniel H. Wells, President Young's counselor, asked for Arza to go. Arza was more than willing. He immediately gathered up, and with a friend they set out again with two wagon loads of supplies pulled by four-mule teams. They were stalled at Fort Bridger by the same howling blizzards that overtook the Willie and Martin Companies farther to the east. When the storms abated, Arza started east and met a party of the rescuers heading back for Salt Lake, having given up the search. Arza persuaded them to make camp and wait until word came of the location of the handcart companies. When asked what made him so sure he would find them when they had been unable, Arza is reported to have said, "Brigham Young sent me out to find the handcart folks and I will find them or give my life trying to find them." The men agreed and established camp. Among those men was Ephraim K. Hanks. As Arza went east, Eph became troubled in soul and soon left the camp following Arza. He caught up to Arza near the crossing of the Green River and together they went on in search of the Martin Company.





It was on November 10, that the two men made camp not far from the Ice Springs Bench along the Sweetwater. While Arza tended to camp, Eph went out to hunt for buffalo. By the time he had procured the meat and packed it on his horses, it was starting to get dark. Off to the east, Eph saw lights. Curious, he rode towards them and soon discovered the starving immigrants of the Martin Handcart Company. In a now-famous story, Eph met the company, was treated like an angel, distributed that meat to the grateful

emigrants and returned that night to tell Arza. It is reported that Arza was so excited he could not sleep. Early the next morning, the two men joined the Martin Company and ministered to them the rest of the way to Salt Lake. Incidentally, one of those immigrants was James G. Bleak. Ever after, he was so grateful to Arza Erastus Hinckley for his service that whenever he saw him, "he put his arms around him and said, 'My savior.'"

If only we could be that determined to minister.

Sources:

<https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/KWVK-PP7>

Andrew D. Olsen, *The Price We Paid*, p. 385-386

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