

“Be Kind to the Poor”

Robert Taylor Burton was first among the rescue teams to leave Salt Lake City in October 1856 in search of the handcart people stranded on the plains. He was appointed an assistant to Captain George D. Grant who led the expedition of rescuers. He gives detailed accounts day by day of their heroic efforts to save the people. He tells of snow so deep that the axletrees of the wagons would drag, of temperatures so bitterly cold at Devils Gate that the companies could not move forward. He describes that they “found them suffering from cold and hunger, much of which it was impossible for us to relieve. In the snow and intense cold we were reduced to 1/4 rations, very many of the people falling by the wayside in spite of all our efforts, burying as many as 16 persons in one grave.” His diaries and journals are invaluable.



Robert Burton stayed with them all the way into the Valley. He summarized the emigrant's journey thus, “The hardships and sufferings of this company of people can never be told.” Again, speaking of their journey after the companies had been found, “I have striven for years to obliterate from my mind some of the sights that I witnessed on the return to the Valley.”



Captain Robert Taylor Burton kept detailed records of all that was donated and distributed to the handcart emigrants.

He would go on from there to serve as a missionary in Europe, Major General of the Utah Militia, a member of the Utah legislature, a regent of the University of Deseret, and a counselor for thirty years to Bishop Edward Hunter—the presiding Bishop of the Church. His was a noble and giving heart.

The story is told that as the Martin Company passed through Echo Canyon, just outside of Salt Lake City, Sarah Minnie Caitlin Squires went into labor and delivered a baby girl on the morning of November 26, 1856. She was named Echo in honor of her place of birth. It is reported that there was not adequate clothing to keep the little one warm. John Jacques recorded, "One of the relief party generously contributed part of his [clothing] to clothe the little stranger." Literally in that extreme cold, the rescuer "took off his own homespun shirt and gave it to the mother to [wrap] the baby."

That generous compassionate rescuer was General Robert Taylor Burton. On his deathbed in 1907, as his family was gathered around, Bishop Burton urged them to "Be kind to the poor." And so he was.



Source:

<https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/KWNT-99V>

<https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/KWNT-RBF>

<http://www.tellmystorytoo.com/fine-arts/julie-rogers/rescue-me-robert-taylor-burton>

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