

An all-new history of the Mormon overland trek to Zion

The Mormon Handcart Migration

"Tounge nor pen can never tell the sorrow"

By Candy Moulton

In 1856 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints employed a new means of getting converts to Great Salt Lake City who could not afford the journey otherwise. They began using handcarts, thus initiating a five-year experiment that has become a legend in the annals of Mormon and North American migration. Only one in ten Mormon emigrants used handcarts, but of those 3,000 who did between 1856 and 1860, most survived the harrowing journey to settle Utah and become members of a remarkable pioneer generation. Others were not so lucky. More than 200 died along the way, victims of exhaustion, accident, and, for a few, starvation and exposure to late-season Wyoming blizzards. Now, Candy Moulton tells of their successes, travails, and tragedies in an epic retelling of a legendary story.

The Mormon Handcart Migration traces each stage of the journey, from the transatlantic voyage of newly converted church members to the gathering of the faithful in the eastern Nebraska encampment known as Winter Quarters. She then traces their trek from the western Great Plains, across modern-day Wyoming, to their final destination at Great Salt Lake. The handcart experiment was the brainchild of Mormon leader Brigham Young, who decreed that the saints could haul their own possessions, pushing or pulling two-wheeled carts across 1,100 miles of rough terrain, much of it roadless and some of it untrodden.

The LDS church now embraces the saga of the handcart emigrants—including even the disaster that befell the Martin and Willie handcart companies in central Wyoming in 1856—as an educational, faith-inspiring experience for thousands of youth each year. Moulton skillfully weaves together scores of firsthand accounts from the journals, letters, diaries, reminiscences, and autobiographies the handcart pioneers left behind. Depth of research and unprecedented detail make this volume an essential history of the Mormon handcart migration.

Candy Moulton is the award-winning author of more than a dozen books on western history, including *Chief Joseph: Guardian of the People* and *Valentine T. McGillicuddy: Army Surgeon, Agent to the Sioux*. Moulton traveled the Mormon Trail in 1997 with the Mormon Trail Sesquicentennial Wagon Train, pulling a handcart herself for part of the journey.

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