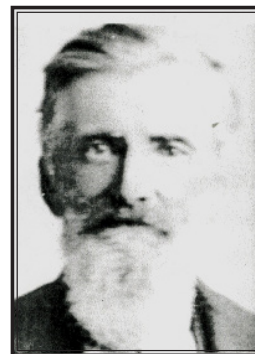
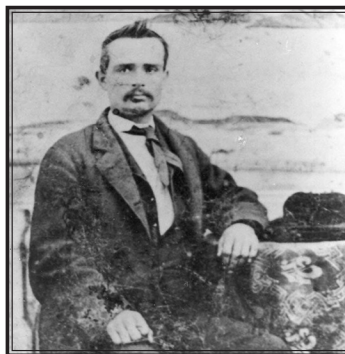


ABEL WEAVER GARR

Born: 11 Dec 1833 Richmond, Indiana

Age: 22

Rescuer



The Garr family is best known for their life at Antelope Island in the Great Salt Lake. However, when Abel's father, Fielding Garr, died in 1855, Brigham Young encouraged Fielding's sons to move their livestock off the island and locate in Cache Valley where they could be of service with the Church cattle there. In August of 1855 they brought their cattle off the island on rafts. The Fielding sisters took their father's lot in Salt Lake City after his death and the sons took the cattle. (Their mother had died previously in 1844 in Nauvoo, Illinois.)

Abel and his brothers, John Turner, William Henry, and Benjamin Franklin, were some of the finest horsemen in the Utah Territory. Known as the "Garr boys," they were successful ranchers, scouts and cowboys. One Cache Valley historian wrote: "It is doubtful if there is any part of, or family group that came that early [1855] and remained so continuously in the valley as the Garr boys. They seemed to have come in contact with practically every group that came to the valley from the ranching period and from then on for several years. They therefore stand out as the real early ranchers and herders of the valley."

The Garr boys helped to establish the Church's Elkhorn Ranch, later known as the Church Farm, and they were the earliest pioneers in the settlement of Millville. The Elkhorn Ranch, which became the social center for all of the surrounding communities, was sold in 1877 and the proceeds used to endow the Brigham Young College in Logan. The Garr boys also returned to Antelope Island in 1860 at the request of Brigham Young. This time the mission was to give a western life sample of entertainment to a select party of prominent men that Brigham took there to witness the boys' fine horsemanship. Other noted horsemen took part as well and it was said of them: "There was not one of them but could ride a bucking horse bareback or lariat the wildest mustang in the range."

The Garr boys took turns staying in Salt Lake City with their sisters. Because Abel was taking his turn in the fall of 1856, it appears this may be one reason that Abel went out on the rescue with the first group of men called by Brigham Young. It is reported that the blessings given these men by Brigham prior to leaving "fairly made them quake." (Cutler, *Fielding Garr*, 111.) They left Salt Lake City on October 7, hoping to meet the latecomers soon. When they were not found by Oct. 14, Captain George D. Grant send an express to locate them. This express consisted of Cyrus H. Wheelock, Joseph A. Young, Stephen W. Taylor and Abel W. Garr. They located the Willie company on Oct. 19, bringing encouragement and hope that they would soon meet the rescue wagons. They also gave the Saints a small amount of food. When Captain Grant's party met the Willie company, they split the rescue party and sent a portion back with the Willie company toward the Valley. The rest of the rescue party continued east, following Garr's express.

The express sped on with orders to not go farther than Devil's Gate if they hadn't found the rear companies by then. Unfortunately, this was the case and they waited until the main rescue party caught up with them for further orders. On October 27, Captain Grant again called on Abel Garr to ride express further to locate the Martin, Hodgett and Hunt companies. This time he traveled with Joseph A. Young and Dan W. Jones. The next day the missing companies were located near their last crossing of the N. Platte River, stranded at a place called Red Buttes. John Jaques of the Martin company recorded: "The 28th of October was the red letter day to this handcart expedition. On that memorable day Joseph A. Young, Daniel W. Jones and Abel Garr galloped unexpectedly into camp amid the cheers and tears and smiles and laughter of the emigrants."

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The express team spent the night with the emigrants, got them going the next morning, then hurried back to Devil's Gate to notify Captain Grant who quickly made a start to meet them. Joseph Young reported this day as follows: "On the 29th [of October] I returned from Capt. Hunt's to Capt. Martin's company. Capt. Martin had started early in the morning, and when I overtook them their cry was, 'let us go to the Valley; let us go to Zion.'"

On the 3rd of November at Devil's Gate, with about twelve hundred people, it was too cold to move. Captain Grant was now ready to send word to Brigham Young. This express would just be Abel Garr and Joseph Young, sent to "report our situation and get counsel and help." Before riding, Young put on three or four pairs of woollen socks, a pair of moccasins, and a pair of buffalo hide over-shoes with the wool on, and then remarked, "There, if my feet freeze with those on, they must stay frozen till I get to Salt Lake."

The report carried by Young and Garr from Captain Grant read in part: "There is not much use for me to attempt to give a description of these people; for this you will learn from your son, Joseph and from Brother Garr, who are the bearers of this message. You can imagine between five and six hundred men, women and children worn down by drawing carts through mud and snow, fainting by the wayside, children crying with cold, their limbs stiffened, their feet bleeding, and some of them bare to the frost. The sight is too much for the stoutest of us, but we go on doing our duty, not doubting, not despairing. Our party is too small to be much of a help. The assistance we give is only a drop in the bucket, as it were, in comparison to what is needed. I believe that not more than one-third of the Martin Company will be able to walk any further. You may think this extravagant, but, nevertheless, it is true. Some of the emigrants have good courage, but a great many of them are like children, and do not realize what is before them. I have never felt so much interest in any mission that I have ever before been called to perform and all of the boys who came with me feel the same. We have prayed without ceasing and the blessings of the Lord have been with us."

Abel Garr was not a member of the Church when he went out on the rescue. He was baptized and confirmed in May of 1857 by his rescue party leaders, George D. Grant and William H. Kimball. He received his temple endowment less than a year later. He married Laura Maria Pitkin in 1860. She became very ill and only lived five weeks. In 1864 Abel married Eliza Ann Stevenson. They had ten children, only five of whom lived to adulthood. After being called from the pulpit at the 1874 October General Conference, Abel served a mission to his early home in Indiana. In his lifetime, Abel served in trusted positions as a scout, patrol leader, and Captain of the Calvary in the Cache County Militia. In the 1880's Abel served as trustee of the Millville school board and was known for having the first mowing machine in Millville.

Abel Garr's son-in-law, H. A. Campbell, wrote of him: "He was a very spiritual minded man. He with Henry Chandler built the Millville LDS Church which now stands (1954). ... During the years of 1864-1898 Abel was a prosperous farmer and stockman. He farmed around 100 acres of his own land, 40 acres of his brother John's land. He formed a partnership with Indian Jack who cared for the cattle in the summer and assisted in feeding them in the winter months. He wasn't much of a talker, but a very fine man. ... I'll tell you what Abe used to do. No man ever went hungry around Abe Garr. At Christmas time he would drive up to the farm and he would slaughter a beef and bring it down and hang it up to cool and on the morning of Christmas he would cut it up in pieces and drive around to the widows and poor people and deliver the beef to them. He did that repeatedly for years and years.

"Abe Garr wasn't much of a preacher. When we had our Seventies meeting he got through the meeting and paid his dues, laid down \$5.00 and said, 'That's the way I preach.' He was one of God's noblemen, a charitable neighbor and loving husband and father. There was no person in need but what if Abel Garr knew of it he would come to their rescue with assistance. Abel had no bad traits. Every one of his associates will tell you that Abel's character was above reproach. Abel Garr died March 4, 1909, leaving an estate valued at \$16,000, including real estate, cattle and horses."

Source: Cutler, A.M., *Fielding Garr 1794-1855 And His Family: Early Mormon Pioneers On Antelope Island*, 1991, pgs. 91-95, 111-114; Bell, Stella Jaques, *Life History and Writings of John Jaques, Including a Diary of the Martin Handcart Company*, 1978.