

GEORGE PEDEN WAUGH

Born: 11 Feb. 1789 Scotland, died Nov. 29, 1856

Age: 67

Martin Handcart Company



Affectionately known as “Father Waugh,” George first immigrated to Utah in 1853 with his widowed daughter, Elizabeth Waugh McComb, and her young daughter, Elizabeth Wallace McComb. They traveled on the ship *International* where during the voyage there were seven deaths, seven births, five marriages and forty-eight convert baptisms, including the captain, first and second mates, and eighteen of the crew, many of whom went right on through to Utah with the other Saints. By the time this group of immigrants arrived in New Orleans, there were only three people left on the ship who were not members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Captain Brown had also been ordained to the office of Elder. While on board the ship, the Saints celebrated the 23rd anniversary of the organization of the Church on April 6th. From a letter written by the presiding Elder, Christopher Arthur, to President S. W. Richards, we read:

[It was] a splendid affair. Early in the morning, a goodly number of brethren assembled on the forecandle, and fired six rounds of musketry, to usher in our festivities. At half-past ten we marched in regular procession to the poop deck, in the following order - president and counselors with sashes, and white rosettes on their breast, who took their seats with their backs to the main-mast. After them followed twelve young men appropriately robed, each with a white rod in his hand, with sashes, rosettes, &c. Then followed twelve young women mostly dressed in light dresses, each holding in her hand a scroll of white paper, bearing the significant motto, “Utah’s rights,” adorned with ribands and white rosettes. The young men took their seats on the right hand of the presidency, and the young women on the left. Then followed twelve old, venerable men, dressed similar to the young men, each carrying a Bible and Book of Mormon in his hand, led on by Father Waugh, who read portions out of each book, illustrative of this latter-day work. We then took the Sacrament, and attended to the celebration of four marriages. . . . In the evening we met on the quarter deck, and skipped the light fantastic toe, to a late hour.

Despite his advancing years, George Waugh no doubt participated in the dancing as well. During his second return to Utah, he was also noted by his fellow traveler, John Jaques, aboard the ship *Horizon* in 1856, as being “lively as a cricket.”

Between George Waugh’s first and second immigration, he served a mission in Canada and again in Scotland. As a trusted and proven Saint, he served his fellow travelers on board the *Horizon* as a second counselor to the presiding Elder, Edward Martin, blessing and cheering and administering to their needs. Among this group were the aged and invalids who needed a special kind of cheering and blessing when they began their handcart journey from Iowa City, Iowa. We learn of Father Waugh’s incomparable service from the writings of John William Southwell of the Martin company:

Father George P. Waugh, then between 65 and 70 years of age, would be seen and heard calling between the tents for his company to muster between 7 and 7:30 a.m. These consisted of all the aged that could walk at all, and not required to pull at the carts; our fathers and mothers from 45 to 86. Away they would start ahead of our seven wagons and the carts, singing and talking and cheering each other with the hallowed reminiscences of the early days of the gospel in the British isles, and the days of Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt and Willard Richards. Traveling three to five miles or more in this manner, the mother with the babe in arms and one by the hand, the widow and the aged widower with their walking cane and staff, would rest a few minutes for our coming in sight, then on at it again till noon, but betimes leaving the little ones and the young for their father with the cart to pick up and bring to camp. The oldest and most feeble of this advance guard would be picked up by the wagons as often as possible, and as the loads were lightened by our daily rations. The able and hardy of this advance guard (Captain Martin would generally ride ahead of us a few miles and locate the noon camp) would be there; the matron and the sire also, with their flour and packs filled with fuel to cook the noon meal. An hour or two for our noon rest, then were going again, the same aged advance guard ahead of us, with Father Waugh, who was returning from his mission of three years to Scotland, and one of the most devoted Scottish worthies that ever came to Utah.

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In the morning father Waugh called his invalids together early and started on the road. In his company was one of the worst cripples I ever saw to be a traveler. His lower limbs were paralyzed and his body badly deformed but he was strong in the faith. He was able to propel himself with surprising speed with the use of crutches. On the road the old father missed him. The road followed down an old dry bed of a creek but finally crossed on to the other side where we expected to get back of him. There were, on the road he was traveling, faint tracks that had been used by stock, perhaps buffalo, and the poor fellow followed those tracks instead of crossing on the other side. We camped for noon near the loup part of the Platt[e] River. Myself and two other men, taking a hand cart, went back to where we left the buffalo tracks and followed down about a mile when to our horror we saw around an old tree two large gray wolves prowling around, and half a dozen eagles hovering over the tree waiting for him to quit his screams and gestulations with his crutches so they would pounce upon him and devour him in his cramped position under the roots of the tree, screaming out his death knell. We arrived in time to save him from his pending fate, took him out and placed him on the cart we had brought, placed him in position to ride back to camp. How the poor fellow begged us to let him walk, as he said he had promised brother Tyler when we started on our trip that he would walk every foot of the way to Salt Lake City. However, we only saved him to travel a few days longer, which at the close of the sixth days march his trouble in this world came to an end and he was buried on the banks of the Elkhorn River where one other passed beyond the veil of tears. [See biography of Robert Pierce in Martin section of *Tell My Story, Too*.]

Josiah Rogerson, age 15, of the Martin Company, also wrote about George Waugh:

Sunday, [Nov. 30] With the arrival of the majority of the members of our handcart company, in Main street, and around and in the tithing yard. That scores of friends and relatives, and I know of fathers of families, had been waiting for weeks with the most intense solicitude and anxiety for the arrival of our train, is a matter of history, past half the decade, and the expressions of fear and doubt as to the existence of the sought for were written on many countenances. The wagon I rode in this morning from the head of Emigration canyon was driven by Elder Joel Parrish, of Sessions, or Centerville, settlement in Davis county, and as we stopped for a few minutes near the block since then of the Walker brothers' residences, a lady asked. "Please where is Father Waugh?" and my mother, knowing of his death the day before, pointed to the next wagon north, where she could find the veteran. She was there instantly, and found her father, wrapped in a sheet, and dead. I shall not tell of her grief and the scene that followed. The aged Scotch worthy had braved and weathered the storms of the Rocky mountains from the Platte bridge, and when within eighteen to twenty miles from the valley, and the Zion he worshiped, and to which he was returning after a three or four years' mission to Scotland (his native land), succumbed to the hardships of the journey, between the Big and Little mountains, and was brought into the city for interment.

George P. Waugh had lived a full life of many experiences. The births of his two known daughters, Elizabeth and Janet, were respectively in the Jersey Isles in 1814 and the Caribbean Isle of Jamaica in 1817. George was baptized and confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Scotland in August 1840. He was soon ordained to the offices of Priest and Elder by Orson Pratt and George D. Watts. Janet was also baptized in 1840 in December. Daughter, Elizabeth, was baptized in February 1842, and her daughter, Elizabeth Wallace McCord, in 1852.

In 1850, George was serving as Secretary to the Edinburg Branch in Scotland. Janet died in August of 1851, and George's wife, Elizabeth Wallace Waugh, died in 1852. When George brought his daughter and granddaughter safely to Salt Lake City, he took care of the living and proxy temple ordinances for himself and his beloved family before returning to Scotland to serve this last earthly mission.

On the morning of October 28, just before the first rescuers reached the stranded Martin company, 21-year-old Jane Bitton decided that if she was going to die, she wanted to die clean, so went to the icy river to bathe and don some clean clothing. As she sat down to await the end, she heard a commotion back at camp and thought she should go back to see what was happening. She met "an elderly Scotsman" on the way who was crying. When she asked him what was the matter, he answered, "Aye, lassie, we're saved! We're saved!" Jane replied, "Then what in the world are you cryin' for?" Although not named, as the "aged Scotch worthy" in the Martin handcart company, this was likely George P. Waugh.

Sources: Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; *Life History and Writings of John Jaques*, by Stella Jaques Bell, 1978; Rogerson, Josiah, "Martin's Handcart Company, 1856 [No. 10]," *Salt Lake Herald*, December 8, 1907; mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu: ships *International* and *Horizon*; autobiographical sketch of John William Southwell, September 28, 1912; familysearch.org.