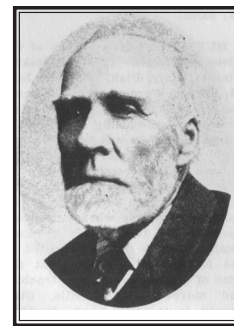


## JOHN ALEXANDER HUNT



Age: 26

Born: 16 May 1830 Gibson County, Tennessee

(Captain) Hunt Wagon Company

John A. Hunt was the oldest son of seven children of Daniel Durham and Nancy Davis Hunt. When he was ten years old he traveled with his father from their home in Tennessee to Nauvoo, Illinois, where he became personally acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith. John's parents were impressed with the Prophet and decided to move to Nauvoo. John was baptized in 1843. He emigrated with the other persecuted Saints out of Nauvoo in 1846 and arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in 1850.

Two years later, John left Utah and started without purse or scrip to fill a mission in Great Britain. James G. Willie and Edward Martin, captains of 1856 handcart companies, left for this mission field at the same time. When John and his companion, William Woodward, also a Willie handcart company captain, reached Philadelphia, they had seventeen cents between them. They hunted up U.S. Army Colonel Thomas L. Kane who had been a friend to the Mormon people. Kane took them to a hotel and fed them and gave them some money. Their way was opened up and they were able to reach their destination without undue delay.

Elder Hunt served a successful mission and returned home in 1856. At Iowa City, Iowa, he was put in charge of the last wagon train that crossed the plains that season. It followed closely with the Martin handcart company, suffered along with them from the early and severe winter storms, and assisted them as much as possible.

The Hunt company journal records many difficulties with the ox teams, in guarding the animals, finding sufficient feed for them, and experiencing two oxen stampedes in which women were killed. One was the mother of a 4-week-old baby. Babies were born and several of them died throughout the journey. John had a great responsibility to keep this camp organized and moving. The following are only a few representative excerpts from the Hunt company journal:

**Friday, August 8, 1856** - Started at 9 A.M. In going up the hill to the road unfortunately Bro. Briner Waggon got in a hole and tipped over. his Wife, child & Mother were in the waggon but were not much hurt, although the bows were all Smashed. ...

**Thursday, September 4, 1856** - All possible means was done for the Co to start earlier and they left this morning at 8 a.m. Good travelling for 12 miles and rested an hour and three quarters near the River Platt. Bro W Salisbury's son aged 4 years was run over by the waggon & seriously hurt. He fell from the seat in front of the waggon. Camped at Slew. Had to give water to the Cattle. Feed plentyful but coarse. Travelled 18 Miles.

**Sunday, September 21, 1856** - The cattle were driven in the carel to be yoked but on account of a Brother being near death, the camp was detained the whole of the day. A Buffalo was shot in the afternoon and the meat distributed. Bro. Elias Davis ... departed this life at 3:45 p.m. aged 44 years leaving a Wife. he was highly respected by those who knew him. The disease which laid him low was diarrhea. He was buried the same evening at the road side.

**Monday, October 6, 1856** - As the morning was very foggy, the brethren found it difficult to find all their cattle, but the journey was resumed at 8:30 a.m. Brother John Turner from Natley, Kent, England, died at 9:45 a.m. . . his illness having lasted about four weeks. Brother Turner, who was 42 years old, left a son and daughter of tender years. A tire came off one of the Church wagon wheels which caused some delay. The company passed Scott's Bluffs, traveling over a very irregular, rough road. No noon halt was made that day and the night encampment was made on the Platte River at 4:30 p.m., after traveling 9 miles. Feed was scarce. Ruth Jones born.

**Monday, October 20, 1856** - This morning the ground was covered with snow which prevented the company from moving. The cattle were driven into the corral in the afternoon, some 12 or 14 head being missing. It commenced snowing again at 3 p.m. and continued for some time.

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**Sunday, November 2, 1856** - During the night a hard frost had prevailed and several of the cattle had strayed away. Search was made some distance around the camp but they could not be found. Those who had their teams traveled on to Willow Springs, from which place oxen were sent back to bring up the other wagons afterwards. Capts. John A. Hunt and Gilbert Spencer went back to the previous day's camping place and found the missing oxen, which they brought to camp late in the evening. At this place, the snow was 6 or 7 inches deep, and the weather was very cold. The brethren cut down willows for the oxen. The company had traveled 4 miles during the day. A meeting was held in the camp in the evening addressed by Elders Wheelock, Webb and Broomhead, and a unanimous vote was taken that all the emigrating Saints would be willing to do as they were instructed, even if it was required of them to leave all they had behind and be glad to get into the Valley with their lives only. They agreed to cease complaining at coming so late in the season, as everything was being done to start the company.

**Thursday, November 6, 1856** - The weather was intensely cold and stormy and the snow drifted very much. The brethren commenced to unpack their wagons and store the goods in the log house [at Devil's Gate]. William Burton died at 10 o'clock p.m. He had been brought down with ague, and could not bear the intensity of the cold. Brother Burton was 26 years old.

**Saturday, December 6, 1856** - A messenger arrived from Great Salt Lake City in the evening, bringing intelligence that a number of [additional rescue] teams were coming on the road to bring in the remainder of the Saints from the mountains and they were also bringing provisions with them. This caused great joy in the camp.

Some modern accounts of the Hunt wagon company indicate that they did not suffer as much as the Willie and Martin handcart companies. The first-person accounts of many in the Hunt company prove otherwise. One well-known account that has often been quoted by President Gordon B. Hinckley is that of Mary Goble, Marjorie Hinckley's grandmother. Another little girl, Maren Johansen, age 7, in the Hunt company, lost her feet to the frost and then had to have her legs amputated to the knees upon arrival in Salt Lake City. Ann Malin, a cook for the Hunt company teamsters, reported giving her meager rations to others, with a prayer in her heart that she would not be hungry or need to eat. She testified that her prayers were answered.

In 1857 John was called to take charge of the mail station at Devil's Gate where he had suffered so much the previous winter. After returning from this assignment he married Elizabeth Tilt. John and Elizabeth became the parents of four children. Two of them died in infancy.

Soon after their marriage, John and Elizabeth moved to Grantsville, Utah, where John served as county commissioner. In 1864 they moved to St. Charles, Idaho, in the Bear Lake country where John was called to be the Bishop of the St. Charles Ward. He served in that capacity for twenty-eight years and was loved by members of the community.<sup>1</sup> He was also a member of the first High Council of Bear Lake Stake. He served this community as a county commissioner of Bear Lake County, Idaho. A 1913 newspaper article honoring John stated: "He was a sturdy, valiant man, successful and highly esteemed for his integrity and for the generous qualities that endeared him to all who knew him. He died in St. Charles in 1913."

Sources: *Biographical Encyclopedic History of the Church*, vol. 3, p. 121; letter from Roger Pugmire to Jolene Allphin, January 27, 2007; photo and family histories from Roger Pugmire; Hunt Company Journal.

<sup>1</sup>Roger Pugmire of St. Charles, Idaho, tells the following account of Bishop Hunt's humility: "When my father was born he was not expected to live so they called Bishop Hunt to give him a name and a blessing. Bishop Hunt told them that my father would live and have a family. For some time my father did not show much improvement and Bishop Hunt they said walked the floor and said, 'Why did I promise them that the baby would live?'" Brother Pugmire said his family always loved Bishop Hunt.