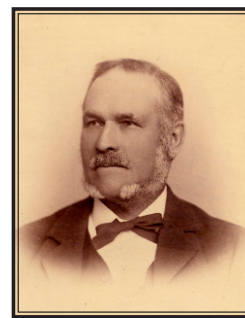


JOHN JACQUES

Born: January 7, 1827 Market Bosworth, Leicestershire, England

Age: 29

Martin Handcart Company



John Jacques was a most colorful and interesting handcart pioneer. We learn of his life from his own writings:

“My father was naturally in manner a little gruff and short tempered but I never knew him to knowingly do a dishonorable thing. As to my mother if she had any fault at all, I never knew what it was. ... My mother said I was a good boy, though I could hardly believe that myself. I remember her hiding me with her apron when my father wanted to whip me. In my earlier years I used to go to an old woman’s school, whom we knew as grandmother Palmer. When I was seven ... I went to the Free Grammar School. We had to be able to read a chapter in the Bible as a requisite for admittance. I remember the festivities of Queen Victoria’s Coronation. We had games in the market place, such as ducking in a tub for oranges, hands tied behind back; climbing a greasy pole for a prize at the top; eating treachled buns hung at the end of a string, hands tied behind. The buns would bob around our head.”

“Besides going to school I had to work in the gardens. ... Nearly everybody had gardens [and] very proud the people were of their gardens. Manure was not wasted there as it is here. It was carefully gathered up on the roads and used on the gardens or sold to the farmers. I had a wheelbarrow and used to go out along the road, gather up all I could and put it in a heap by the road side until I had a cart load, and then I would sell it to the farmers. A good cart load of horse manure brought four schillings. That was a little fortune for a boy.”

At the age of 13, John was sent to a cabinet maker and upholsterer as an indentured apprentice. “Most of the men where I worked when apprenticed and after were corrupt. [As a religious boy, I] was consequently unmercifully plagued and made the butt of ridicule. These were not good moral schools for boys. I always had the highest regard for truth and virtue. ... No matter who is the tempter nor what is the temptation, your virtue is worth more than them all, it is the pearl of great price. It is beyond all price. ... No offer involved is worth a moment’s consideration. The unfailling motto should be “Never surrender.”

In spite of the bad influences surrounding John’s teenage years, a journeyman by the name of Thomas B. Ward came to work for John’s employer. Thomas was a Latter-day Saint. This was about the time of the death of Joseph Smith. John became interested in the things Thomas Ward spoke of: “There seemed to be good scriptural reason for the faith that was in him and the doctrines he taught. I was earnestly seeking the true religion. ... I arranged ... that I should be baptized in three weeks. But I could not wait three weeks. ... My master ... sent word to my father as a deplorable matter that I had become a Mormon.” John’s father felt the same way and urged John to give up his new religion. He sent him anti-Mormon pamphlets which John tried unsuccessfully to show the error of to his father.

John began to write articles and poetry for the Church publication *Millennial Star*. He wrote the hymns, “Softly Beams the Sacred Dawning” and “O Say What Is Truth?” He loved to visit Shakespeare’s garden in Stratford-on-Avon where he was connected to the branch of the Church for a time. It was here in the garden that he composed “O Say What Is Truth.” This hymn at one time was published in the Pearl of Great Price.

Just two and a half years after John’s baptism, he was called to serve as a traveling missionary. He was 20 years old. He recorded many interesting and amazing experiences:

“Went to Coleshill with Elder Cordon to a sister by the name of Goodes. Sister Goodes was lame previous to her coming into the church. She was taken in a cart to be baptized, but she came out of the water and was able to walk home without help though it was a distance of two miles. The professors of religion and neighbors said she was a hypocrit and could have walked before if she had tried, which they knew was a lie. The saints however gave the glory to God.”

“Went to visit my father’s house, found all pretty well. My father and mother were very vexed at my having left my trade to go to preach The Gospel. They said I was idle and done so that I might live without working by subsisting upon other people. The manner in which my father ranted at me induced me to go over to Leicester to a tea party our people were getting up in the chapel. Came back to Bosworth, my father would not bid me goodbye, told me I need not write to, nor visit him until I began to work at my trade again.” [This was the last time John ever saw his father. When John returned for his second mission in England in 1869, his father had passed away.]

(John Jaques - page 2)

“Went to Tysoe, changed some tracts but could not get a bed. I stayed under a porch nearly all night. Cold, wet morning. ... Went on to Shipston, obtained lodging at the old widow’s where I had slept before. She refused to take any money from me. ... Went to Moreton. I called at a house and asked for some food. The man at the house told me that I looked as if I was more accustomed to dine with gentlemen than with such as he. He said I could not eat his food for he had nothing good enough. ... An old man told me a Quakeress was going to preach and that all the town was going to hear her. Upon receipt of this news I determined to go myself. ... The Quakeress prayed and in a few minutes after she stood up and preached. She took no text. (The large audience was thanked and dismissed.) I immediately arose, stood upon a bench and said to the following effect. ‘Friends, listen a moment. I bear testimony in the name of the Lord that he has restored the everlasting gospel in these latter days, that he has apostles once more in the church and that the Holy Ghost is now enjoyed as formerly by dreams, by visions, by revelations, and by the gift and interpretation of tongues. And I say to everyone of you repent of your sins and be baptized for the remission of them and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. I am sent to preach this gospel without purse or scrip. I depend entirely on God and good people. I have nowhere to lay my head this night. If any will take me home I will inform them more fully upon these subjects and the Lord will bless them.’ Some laughed, no one spoke a word. Not an individual condescended to exchange a single sentence with me. ... I walked about [12 miles] and applied as a servant of the Lord for some food [in Moreton]. A poor woman, the wife of a shoemaker, gave me some in my hand.”

The next four years found John as the assistant editor of the *Millennial Star*. He is known for writing a religious study for children called the Catechism for Children. It was a set of questions and answers, with references to the answers for the children to familiarize themselves with the Standard Works. From the Utah towns of Ephraim and Manti comes this information about their yearly festivals using the catechism: “All wards would gather at a given point ... from where the gayly dressed children would march under their own banner to the place of meeting which had been decorated for the occasion. The banners would be placed so as to divide the hall in sections and each ward would sit behind its own banner. Recitations in concert was a major part of the program (using the catechism). The teacher would ask, ‘Who led the children of Israel out of the wilderness?’ The class would repeat in concert, ‘The children of Israel were led out of the wilderness by Moses,’ and so on for ten or twelve questions. The Articles of Faith and the Ten Commandments were also repeated. After the morning exercises, the teachers and children from visiting towns were taken into homes and good, country dinners served to them.”

John also was married during this time—just three years before he came to Utah. He had met Zilpah Loader when he was a traveling missionary. He wrote: “She was a beautiful woman. ... Marriage is a wonderful thing, the wonder of wonders. It is a veritable garden of delights, of felicities unspeakable, a perennial fountain of the most exquisite sweetness, happiness, pleasures imaginable, a land of enchantment. ... At our wedding supper we had by invitation a dozen of the poorest Saints in Liverpool, in accordance with the instructions of the Savior of his disciples. ... Man is never happier than when making woman happy, in enobling, assisting her to fulfill her royal destiny according to the original intent and heavenly design. ... Not only honorable is marriage and undefiled, but that estate the consummation of all delights, the crowning of every heavenly desire, no mortal tongue can tell how good it is, and those who know its real ecstasy will chant its praise throughout eternity. But it is nothing without love, pureborn, that in its nature is itself divine and all essential to the perfect life.”

John and Zilpah had one child, a little girl named Flora, before they emigrated to Zion. Flora was John’s pride and joy. His journal entries record frequent walks in the parks and gardens with Flora. He took her with him nearly everywhere he went. John and his wife attended many plays, concerts, and performances.

In August of 1855, Brigham Young wrote a letter to the mission president, Franklin D. Richards, requesting that John Jaques “might come to the Valley the ensuing season.” John answered this call and began to prepare. President Richards gave him a gun and John bought some books about guns and hunting, and did some practicing. He no doubt had visions of crossing the plains and providing for his family from the spoils of the hunt. All John ever shot were four blackbirds and a crow, but his guns must have given him a feeling of protection against prowling Indians and wolves.

Even though many of the emigrants had prayed and wept for an opportunity to gather to Zion, surely this parting was accompanied with much sorrow. John left behind his parents, four brothers and four sisters, and some were very bitter toward him because of his new found

(John Jaques - page 3)

religion. Only one brother, James, relented and came to see him before his departure. Several members of John's wife's family, the Loaders, had already sailed for America the year before. They would meet up with them in Iowa City and then travel with them to Utah. John's sister-in-law, Tamar Loader, came with John and Zilpah. John wrote a beautiful poem on the ship *Horizon* entitled "Farewell to Thee England." Following are just two of the nine stanzas:

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| Farewell to thee England, and farewell to all Whose love hath but hallow'd my pathway below, Though sadly I leave thee, I would not recall One hour of the past for the present to know. | Yes, England, I leave thee, all dear though thou art, A country more precious lies over the wave, With hope for thee, Albion, I turn to depart, God guard thee my country - protect thee and save. |
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John gives us some insight into what a shipload of emigrating Saints was like. Whenever there were speeches made by the Captain or the brethren, or weddings or other noteworthy events, they were met with three cheers of "Hurrah" by the emigrants.

One interesting event of a later group of Saints was the visit of the great author, Charles Dickens, before they left. Mr. Dickens had come to visit for the express purpose of seeing for himself these Mormons of which he had heard so many terrible things, and exposing them by writing about them in the newspaper. However, he was truly surprised and instead wrote a glowing report of their goodness, saying: "These people are so strikingly different from all the other people in like circumstances. ... The captain said the most of these came aboard yesterday evening. They came from various parts of England [and other countries] in small parties that had never seen one another before. Yet, they had not been a couple of hours on board, when they established their police, made their own regulations, and set their own watches at all the hatchways. Before nine o'clock, the ship was as orderly and as quiet as a man-of-war. I should have said they were in their degree, the pick and flower of England."

From John's journal: "Sun. 29: Very warm day. ... Our Flora was very cross. ... Meeting on the main deck at 3 p.m. Three cheers for the captain and three for the officers and crew. The captain responded and said that this company of emigrants was the best he had brought across the sea. (The worst, he claimed, were the Irish with their "numerous bloody quarrels.") He complimented them on their good behavior and said that we sung, 'We'll Marry None But Mormons,' and he said he would say that he should 'Carry None But Mormons.'"

The Saints likewise honored Captain Reed and sent a letter to the Editor of the *Daily Journal* in Boston when they arrived there. It read in part: "Of Captain Reed we cannot speak too highly. He deserves and has our sincere gratitude for the gentlemanly conduct and kind manner in which he has constantly treated the company, visiting the sick, having given them many comforts from his own stores." Seventeen years later Captain Reed crossed the American continent and called on a few of the emigrants residing in Salt Lake, whom he had carried across the Atlantic. He was "very much pleased" to see them. Not everyone on the ship loved the Mormons, however. John wrote of the first mate, "First mate pled guilty of disliking our guarding. Said no women go on deck without guarding ways and manners, with other emigrants. Our morality is hard upon those outside. Makes these sailors good whether or not, better than they otherwise would be, better than they wish to be. Hard to keep outside of us and hard to get in among us. Sailors pled guilty of divers attempts to get below, but said it was no go, a guard everywhere."

During the course of John's overland travel preparations, he passed Nauvoo, Illinois. John wrote that it was "a fine site for a city. The ruins of the temple looked noble in their desolation." In one town along the way he "tasted ice-cream for the first time. Liked it very well, but would rather have had a draught of new milk."

At Iowa City, John was appointed to be captain of the second hundred of handcart emigrants, and sent with other brethren to procure some provisions for the camp before they began their trek. He tells of leaving: "I received my instructions, while a mule was being saddled and bridled to carry me to the railroad depot. Some of the brethren from the mountains testify how awkward they feel when they are sent into the world to preach. I suppose that I felt about as awkward at the thought of being fixed on the back of this mule, as such brethren do when they think of being fixed upon the public platform. However, as I do all my preaching in the name of the Lord, I resolved to do my riding in His name, too. So I mounted my steed accordingly, and, though I had not sat on any animal's back for about fourteen years, my good mule brought me safe to the depot."

(John Jaques - page 4)

Upon returning to Iowa City, John and his wife, and her family, prepared to leave. “As only a very limited amount of baggage could be taken with the handcarts, during the stay in the Iowa camping grounds there was a general lightening of such things as could best be done without. Many things were sold cheaply to residents of that vicinity, and many more things were left on the camping ground for anybody to take or leave at pleasure. It was grievous to see the heaps of books and other articles thus left in the sun and rain and dust, representing a respectable amount of money spent therefore in England, but thenceforth a waste and a dead loss to the owners.”

President Richards and Cyrus Wheelock left England after the Martin company, yet arrived a day ahead of them in Florence, Nebraska, having traveled by steamship across the ocean. President Richards administered to the sick and gave many great blessings and promises which were fulfilled to the faithful. He wrote a letter from there to President Brigham Young in which he said, “It certainly would warm your heart with melting kindness to pass the line of camp going by handcarts, and receive the cordial shakes of the hand, with fervent ‘God bless you,’ as I did when I visited Captain Martin’s train, several of whom expressed their thanks in a particular manner for being permitted to come out this year.”

John had been working extra hard up to this point. His father-in-law and his sister-in-law, Tamar, had been very ill. John had pulled Tamar for one hundred fifty miles, then his wife, who had just had a baby, the next one hundred fifty miles. His father-in-law recovered for a while, due to a blessing given him by President Richards, but died later from the effects of diahrea. John and Zilpah’s new baby was named Alpha Loader Jacques. He gained the notoriety later in life of reportedly being the longest-lived member of the Martin handcart company.

The Martin company began to ration their flour, knowing that supplies from the Valley would meet them, but not knowing when. Then the winter came. John writes, “On the 19th of October the company crossed the Platte for the last time at Red Buttes, about 5 miles above the bridge. That was a bitter cold day. Winter came on all at once, and that was the first day of it. The river was wide, the current strong, the water exceedingly cold and up to the wagon beds in the deepest parts, and the bed of the river was covered with cobble stones. Some of the men carried some of the women over on their backs or in their arms, but others of the women tied up their skirts and waded through, like heroines as they were, and as they had done through many other rivers and creeks. The company was barely over when snow, hail and sleet began to fall, accompanied by a piercing north wind. ... That was a nipping night, and it told on the oxen as well as on the people. ... The next day after crossing the Platte, the company moved on slowly. ... It snowed three days ... and the teams and many of the people were so far given out that it was deemed advisable not to proceed further for a few days. ... Here the flour fell to four ounces per day. In addition to the flour ration, considerable beef was killed and served to the company, as had been the case most of the journey. But the cattle had now grown so poor that there was little flesh left on them, and that little was as lean as could be. Stewed meat and soups were found to be bad for diarrhea and dysentery, of which there was considerable in the company. ... The outlook was certainly not encouraging, but it need not be supposed that the company was in despair, notwithstanding the situation was rather desperate. Oh! No! A hopeful and cheerful spirit pervaded the camp, and the ‘Songs of Zion’ were frequently heard at this time, though the company was in the very depths of privation. Though the bodies of the people were worn down, their spirits were buoyant, while at the same time they had become so accustomed to looking death in the face that they seemed to have no fear of it.”

After the Martin company had been stopped by the storms and lack of food for nearly a week, John writes, “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. Those three men being the most advanced relief company from Salt Lake, brought the glad word that assistance, provisions, and clothing were near, that ten wagons were waiting at Devil’s Gate for the emigrants. ... All was now animation and bustle in the handcart camp, everybody was busy at once in making preparations for a renewed start in the morning. The revived spirits of the company were still exhilarated by an increased ration of flour that day.”

The Martin company continued to push on, meeting a few more wagons each day with more supplies and clothing. Many of the pioneers were barefoot or nearly barefoot, leaving a path of blood in the snow. They still had many crossings of the Sweetwater, as well as the Rocky Ridge, that the Willie company had just passed a few weeks before. John wrote:

(John (John Jaques - page 5))

“On the evening of November 1st, the handcart company camped at the Sweetwater bridge, on this side of the river, [at Independence Rock] about five miles before reaching Devil’s Gate, arriving there about dark. There was a foot or eighteen inches of snow on the ground. As there were but one or two spades in camp, the emigrants had to shovel it away with their frying pans, or tin plates, or anything they could use for that purpose, before they could pitch their tents, and then the ground was frozen so hard that it was almost impossible to drive the tent pegs into it. Some of the men were so weak that it took them an hour or two to clear the places for their tents and set them up.”

At Devil’s Gate, an earnest council was held to determine whether to endeavor to winter the emigrants at that point, or to push them on to Salt Lake as fast as possible. It was decided to continue the march to Salt Lake. When the Hodgett and Hunt wagon companies arrived at Devil’s Gate it was decided to store most of the freight at that point for the winter, which was done, and twenty men were left, under the direction of Daniel W. Jones, to take care of the goods. A few miles west of Devil’s Gate, on November 4, the Martin company crossed the Sweetwater to the north side and camped at a place known since as Martin’s Cove or Martin’s Ravine.

The passage of the Sweetwater at this point was a severe operation to many of the company. It was here that at least four members of the relief party waded the river for hours, helping the handcarts through and carrying the women and children and some of the weaker men over. John was struck by a sharp cake of floating ice below the surface of the water against his bare shins, inflicting wounds which never healed until he arrived at Salt Lake four weeks later, and leaving permanent scars. The company was detained at Martin’s Cove for five days. Several died and the cold was extreme.

On November 9, the majority of the handcarts were left as there were now enough wagons in which more of the sick and weak could ride. They trudged onward. There were miracles and heavenly manifestations to encourage them. They recorded angels appearing to them to give encouragement. It surely was needed, for when the company neared Fort Bridger, John’s precious little Flora died. She had contracted the measles just as they were leaving the ship and was never thoroughly healthy afterwards. John, Zilpah, her baby that was born at Cutler’s Park, and her dear little dead child were taken home by Franklin D. Richards when they reached Salt Lake City. John said little Flora looked like a piece of marble. She was buried in Franklin D. Richards’ lot.

John wrote of ways that he thought such migrations should be: “In all such journeys there should be a reasonable sufficiency and variety of food to maintain health and strength. The object should be not to see how much a man can endure and live and drag through the journey with reasonable economy, and at the same time with as little hardship as can be, so as to have no unnecessary expenditure of vitality and no loss of good feeling, if possible to help it. No traveling company should be wearied and harassed and tormented with needlessly frequent and lengthy public meetings. Nor would it add to the efficiency or happiness of the emigrants to be preached to death. ... There are people who believe in doing very disagreeable and painful penance and in suffering horrible self torture, but there seems to me to be a great deal more sense in trying to pass through the world with all reasonable comfort consistent with the performance of duty. ... If we must walk through this vale of tears with peas in our shoes, whether all or part of our allotted time, we need not have the peas raw and hard. ... We may just as well take the liberty to boil our peas and keep them as soft as we comfortably can, so as to make our walking as easy as possible.”

John also wrote that he did not blame anyone for his handcart company’s misfortune. He praised Captains Martin and Tyler as being active, careful and vigilant and doing the best they could under the circumstances. He highly praised the residents of Salt Lake Valley who sent so many provisions to help them and then kindly took them into their homes when they arrived. Forty years later, he wrote: “Although suffering so much privation, at no time did the emigrants feel despondent. They felt nothing like the discouragement which many people feel now-a-days, when they go to the city to pay their burdensome taxes.” John Jaques became a great and notable man in his own right, and left a posterity that honors his name through the generations.

Sources: *Life history and writings of John Jaques including a diary of the Martin Handcart Company*, by Stella Jaques Bell, 1978; Sandra Ailey Petree, *Recollections of Past Days: The Autobiography of Patience Loader Rozsa Archer*, 2006, All USU Press Publications, Book 37. Some excerpts available at Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website.