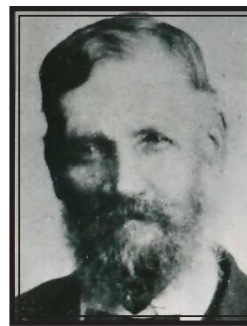


BENJAMIN PLATT

Born: 12 Apr 1833 England
 Age: 23
 Martin Handcart Company



Benjamin Platt traveled to Utah with his wife, Mary (age 19). Ann Wrigley (age 63) also traveled with them. In 1899, Benjamin recorded his own narrative, portions of which are included here:

“My parents were very poor and were common laborers. My father worked on railroads and other such work. He was a good butcher and a good shoemaker and sometimes he went peeling bark for tanning and in his latter days he rented a small farm. My mother in her young days was a hand loom weaver. She was the mother of 13 children, 8 sons and 5 daughters. We did not have the benefit of a common education. We had to go to work when we were very young and it required great economy to provide for us food and raiment. I don’t remember going to school more than about six weeks except to Sabbath school, but when about 14 years of age I commenced going to a night school where a few young boys clubbed together and taught each other.

“At about the age of fifteen and a half years, the Latter-day Saints came in the neighborhood where I lived . . . One John Yates and Isaac Duffin came and preached the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and on the 7th of October I was baptized . . . About two years after this I was ordained a Deacon. In this office I labored for about 3 years and was then ordained a Priest and went out preaching in the highways and public places around in the neighborhood.”

In late 1855 or early 1856, Benjamin began to make plans to emigrate to Utah by handcart. He was married on the 13th of April 1856 at the Oldham church in Lancashire to Mary Graves. Together, they set sail on the *Horizon* May 25, 1856, from Liverpool “. . . and arrived in Boston Harbor on the 28th of June.”

“On the 2nd of July we met Orson Pratt and Ezra T. Benson going to England. We took train at Boston for Albany, New York, crossed the Hudson and took train and passed through Rochester and Utica on to Cleveland and Toledo and Chicago, from there to Rock Island and crossed the Mississippi and on to Iowa City to the end of the track. We stopped here three weeks waiting for the handcarts that were being built here and our time was spent in herding cattle that were to haul our wagons and other stock that was being brought through. We traveled by handcart [with Jesse Haven’s company] through Iowa three hundred miles to the Missouri River and crossed into Nebraska to old Winter Quarters called Florence on a high hill west of the river.”

“We here stopped three weeks waiting for Edward Martin’s handcart company and repaired our handcarts, they having worn their axles through and we had to cut them shorter and shoulder them up or put the wheels on further and when we started from here for Salt Lake we had to put on each cart 100 lbs. of flour and all our luggage and our tents and the carts being without skins on the axles it was too much work for them and they commenced to break down and that hindered us and caused great delay.

“We here [at Florence] joined the two companies together on account of hostile Indians on the plains which retarded our progress and caused us to be late in the season. I think we started from Florence on the 27th of August for a trip of 1,000 miles and had it not been that we were delayed by our carts breaking down we might have been in Salt Lake City in October where as [instead] it was the last day of November. Apostle Franklin D. Richards called a meeting and advised us to stop at Florence until the next season but there were some apostates there or Josephites and we did

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not want to stay and we declared we would go through or die trying and we prevailed and he seeing we were determined, he consented. But he said he did not want anyone to try that could not walk every foot of the way. But we started, men, women and children, and the result was great suffering. He told us that President Young had promised to send out teams to meet us and that we might have ten weeks of Indian Summer and we might get within reach of the teams before the cold weather set in.

“By October we had reached the last crossing of the Platte River and the snowstorms started and cold weather set in and our rations being limited, starvation and cold began to tell on us and many began to die and I have helped to bury as many as nine in a morning. At the last crossing of the Platte I took off my shoes and stockings and carried my wife over on my back and then went back for my handcart and that night we had a snowstorm but we had plenty of wood and we stayed here for several days, and it was here that Joseph A. Young and another man met us, having been sent out to meet us. At this time we had 4 pounds of flour to each individual in camp and 400 miles from Salt Lake City. . . .

“[On the trail] I met two brethren from Oldham that I was well acquainted with and they were going back to the States and they tried to persuade me to go back with them, but the Spirit told me not to go back. At parting with them, Thomas Eccles said, ‘Ben, if you are going back, let us have your handcart.’ And I said to them, ‘Goodbye, I guess I will go on,’ and we parted - them to damnation and me to Salvation, I hope.

“After the two brethren spoken of above that came out to meet us, we traveled one day and found eleven wagons loaded with flour and clothing and I fitted me out with a large pair of shoes lined with stockingleg that came up above my knees and they kept my feet from freezing and we kept meeting teams every day after this. When we got to Devil’s Gate or Sweetwater River, we left our handcart and went in wagons and then the feet of the people began to freeze on account of inaction or want of exercise. Our captains were hard on us and we had to herd at nights and pull handcarts all days and many times I have been kept up until midnight and then stood guard until morning and then started again and it was this everlasting guarding that killed the people. . . .

“[We] arrived in Salt Lake City on the last day of November 1856 on Sunday as the people were coming out of the meeting. We were on the streets awaiting friends to take care of us and we were taken down to John Olgers, that is me and my wife and Thomas Eccles and family and an old lady that came with us named Ann Wrigley. The next day, me and my wife were taken down to Zera Pulcifers . . . next night we camped in the tithing yard and next morning the watchman told us that Jedediah Grant died in the night. . . . [in the] morning we started for Iron County and arrived at Fort Harmony about 1 week before Christmas, and the Bishop, W. R. Davis, sent us to stay with Henry Barney with intent to stay until Spring, but in about a week we were sent to stay at John D. Lee’s and in the Spring I hired out for the year for \$15.00 per month.”

Benjamin moved his family to the Southern Utah town of Grafton (now a ghost town) in 1860. His descendants have written a book “Ghost Town on the Rio Virgin” about this settlement.



Sources: *The Platt family history*, compiled by Lyman De Platt (available at Family History Library; “Diary of Benjamin Platt 1856-1863,” copied by the Brigham Young University Library, 1947; files of Joann Mellor Felix; Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website.

Mary Graves Platt