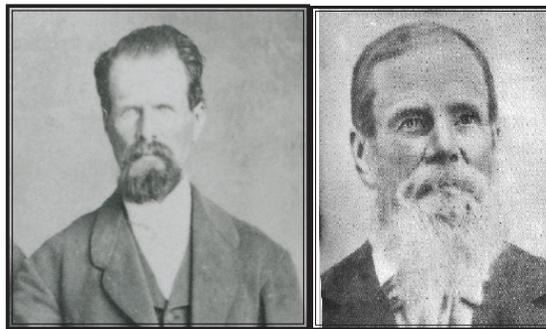


ARZA ERASTUS HINCKLEY

Born: August 15, 1826 in Canada

Age: 30

Rescuer



Arza went to live with his grandparents as a young boy. His father died of tuberculosis when Arza was only five years old. Arza's brothers also lived with relatives, except for his youngest brother, Ira, who stayed with his mother. Arza was converted and baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when he was twelve years old. His mother and younger brother were also visited by missionaries and converted to the gospel.

Arza and his grandparents moved to Missouri to be with the Church membership. They faced the mob persecutions and were driven out of Missouri in 1839. They settled in Illinois near Springfield, where Arza supported his grandparents by raising corn. In 1842, at the age of sixteen, Arza went to Nauvoo, Illinois. In the Spring of 1845, Arza began working on building the temple in Nauvoo. As persecution against the Saints in Nauvoo increased, Arza made plans to go west. He and his brother, Ira, went to Springfield, Illinois, to get an outfit ready to take their grandparents west with them, but at the last minute it was decided the grandparents were too old and weak to make the long journey, so the boys sold their outfit and walked 120 miles back to Nauvoo. By then, their mother had died. Arza started west in the Spring of 1846, driving a team for Joel Ricks.

In June 1846, Arza joined the Mormon Battalion. He suffered a great deal through this difficult experience. At one time, Arza recorded that he traveled sixty miles without water. In November, Arza was very ill and was part of the group of men sent back to winter at Santa Fe, or if possible to go to Pueblo. They struggled to reach Pueblo just before Christmas on the 20th of December 1846. "Arza E. Hinckley had sent all his money back to his family and the Mormon Church. As the Willis [sick] detachment crossed the snowy mountain, Arza waded through deep snow in a hickory shirt, blue drill pants, socks, shoes, and a hat. He needed trousers, so when he arrived in Pueblo he traded for two deer skins, tanned them, and made a pair of pants. Each time the pants got wet, they shrank until they were very short and skin tight."

In the early fall, Arza started back for Winter Quarters with very scant rations. From Winter Quarters he went down to Platte County, Missouri, and found his brother, Ira. He intended to go to Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, and learn a trade. Three years later, in the Spring of 1850, he returned to Salt Lake City with a freight wagon. His brother came with a different wagon train. Arza was very experienced as a teamster and had skill in handling horses and mules. By 1851, he was driving a Church team. He became a personal teamster for Brigham Young. Arza wrote: "I traveled from first to last with Pres. Young in his visiting and organizing different settlements of the Saints in the valleys as a Minut Man & body guard near 5,000 miles. I had charge of the guard at his office one night in a week for ten years, was in police of the city for 7 years, a cavalraman in the Minit Men for 17 years."

In 1856, the handcart method of travel was introduced. The first handcart company, Ellsworth, ran short of food while still many days from their destination. Arza was part of the relief wagon train that went to meet them in August. He helped them into the Valley and let part of the elderly handcart people ride in his wagon and drive his team while he took their place pulling the cart. Two other handcart companies, Bunker and McArthur, also successfully completed their journey to Zion in the fall of that year. Arza wrote of his 1856 service:

I went out and met the first handcart company 400 miles & traveled in with them. Started out again to meet the last handcarts 2 weeks later as Pres. B. Young's carriage driver. [This group left Salt Lake on Oct. 13.] Went out as far as big Canyon Creek [East Canyon] where on the following [day] He took very sick and as soon as he was able to ride, returned home. 2 weeks later [probably Oct. 27] I started again to meet the last Co. of Carts in Co. with Dan

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Johnson, each with 4 mule loads of provisions of medisons for the sick. When at Bridger there came a blisard which detained us a few days. [This bad storm near Bridger was the first week of November. Arza passed the Willie Handcart Company during this time.] The first night out from there one of the mules died in D.J. team. Next day we met 2 companies on there way home that had been out to near Pacific Springs & could not hear anything of the [Martin Co.] h[and] carts. But after my making some propositions they went on to camp one way & wated there untill they herd of the carts then went after them. Dan & I went on to Green River where a team overtook us when they took D[an] J[ohnson's] load and he went back to Bridger as his was large mules of Prs. Youngs and was not used to being out doors of nights. We met the handcart folks at Ice Springs on Sweet Water River. From there in to Salt Lake City, Eph. Hanks, one of my Battalion chums, spent much of our time while in camp administering to the sick. Ephraim was a man of grate faith.”

In a letter to Wilford Woodruff, while serving a mission among the Lamanites in Arizona in 1882-83, Arza wrote: “As to myself, it would be better as a traveling missionary, than remaining with a tribe ... I believe, as such, with such a man as Ephraim Hanks, if we were as well united in the faith and feelings as we were when we went out to meet the handcart company we would be willing [to accomplish the work].” Arza was no less appreciated. James G. Bleak of the Martin Company felt such gratitude for Arza that at all later meetings in their lives, James would put his arms around Arza and say, “My Savior.”

Arza remained a strong and valiant member of the Church throughout his life. His brother, Ira Hinckley, is the grandfather of President Gordon B. Hinckley, fifteenth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Sources: *Arza Erastus Hinckley - Ira Nathaniel Hinckley - Descendants and Ancestors*, compiled by Lorin A. Hinckley, 1979; “Arza Erastus Hinckley” by Joel Hinckley Bowen; “Arza” by Lynn Paul (Harold B. Lee Library, BYU Special Collections, Americana Collections); “United in Faith - The Rescue of the Martin Handcart Companies” by Steven K. Jones, 1991, SUP Research Library, Special Collections; “Arza E. Hinckley Diary 1882-1883”, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU, Special Collections Manuscript Collection; *The Mormon Battalion: U.S. Army of the West, 1846-1848*, by Norma Baldwin Ricketts; *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah*, Frank E. Eshom, 1913; James G. Bleak, Martin company, reminiscences.

