

## BRIGHAM YOUNG

Born: June 1, 1801 Whitingham, Windham, Vermont

Age: 55

Rescuer



On October 4, 1856, Franklin D. Richards, returning president of the European Mission, and other missionaries who were returning with him, arrived in Salt Lake City and reported to Brigham Young, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They had hurried across the plains by carriage and light wagon, having passed the last immigrants of the season the previous month in Nebraska. The third handcart company of 1856 had just arrived in Salt Lake City two days previously. Following are some excerpts from Brigham Young's first rescue call, the next day at a Sunday meeting:<sup>1</sup>

Brothers and sisters, I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak today and during the conference. ... As most of you have heard, on this, the fifth day of October ... many of our brethren and sisters are still out on the plains with handcarts. They must be brought here. We must send assistance to them. ... Here is the subject to which we all shall speak. The text will be—to get them here! I want the brethren who may speak to understand that their text is the people on the plains, and the subject matter for this community is to send for them and bring them in before the winter sets in.<sup>2</sup> That is my religion. That is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess. It is to save the people! We must bring them in from the plains.

I shall call upon the bishops this day. I shall not wait until tomorrow nor the next day. I want sixty good mule teams and twelve or fifteen wagons. I do not want to send oxen. They are much too slow for this enterprise. I want good horses and mules. They are in this Territory, and we must have them. I want also twelve tons of flour and forty good young men as teamsters.

Let me make myself perfectly clear. I will tell you that all your faith, all your religion, and all your profession of religion will never save one soul of you in the celestial kingdom of our God, not unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. Go and bring in those people now on the plains! Attend strictly to those things which we call temporal duties, otherwise your faith will be in vain. The preaching you have heard will be in vain to you, and you will sink to hell, unless you attend to the things we tell you.

I feel disposed, brothers and sisters, to be as speedy as possible with regard to helping our brethren who are now on the plains. Consequently, I shall call upon the people forthwith for the help that is needed. I want them to give their names this morning, if they are ready to start on their journey tomorrow. Don't say, 'I will go next week, or in ten days, or in a fortnight hence,' for I wish you to start tomorrow morning. ... I want the sisters to have the privilege of fetching blankets, skirts, stockings, shoes and so forth for the men, women, and children that are in those handcart companies. I want hoods, winter bonnets, stockings, skirts, garments, and almost any description of clothing. I now want brethren to come forward to the stand, for we need forty good teamsters to help the brethren on the plains. You may rise up now and give your names.

There was an immediate response from the men and women present. Approximately 80 to 100 men answered the call, including 50 men who signed up as teamsters.<sup>3</sup> Two days later, on October 7, the first rescue party of about 50 men was on its way. George D. Grant was set apart and sustained as their captain. Church leaders continued to call for more rescuers and more men continued to answer these calls for the next ten weeks until all the late companies were brought to the Valley. President Young went out himself, but he became sick and was forced to return to Salt Lake City.<sup>4</sup>

The following excerpts are from a few of the rescue calls that were either reported in summary or published as given in the *Deseret News* or in personal journals:

**October 26:** Journal of Wilford Woodruff: "Sunday, I attended meeting all day at the Tabernacle. ... President [Heber C.] Kimball ... spoke in the power of God. At the Close of his remarks He Called for all the Horse teams in the City & Country to go into the Mountains & pick up the companies who were coming with hand Carts & bring them into the City. 115 Teams were raised in a few moments. All were to be prepared to start in the morning. They were to take grain to feed them with. This is a great exp[ense] to this Territory to send out so many teams to bring in the companies. ... President B. Young ... was unwell & did not attend meeting through the day."<sup>5</sup>

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**November 2:** Brigham Young: “My mind was been with them ever since I had the report of their start from Winter Quarters (Florence) on the 3rd of September. I cannot talk about anything, I cannot go out or come in, but what in every minute or two minutes my mind reverts to them; and the questions? Whereabouts are my brethren and sisters who are on the plains, and what is their condition, force themselves upon me and annoy my feelings all the time. And were I to answer my own feelings, I should do so by undertaking to do what the conference voted I should not do, that is, I should be with them now in the snow, even though it should be up to the knees, up to the waist, or up to the neck. My mind is there, and my faith is there; I have a great many reflections about them. ... A good many teams have already gone out to meet the Saints who are struggling to gain this place; I can hardly keep from talking about them all the time, for while I am preaching they are uppermost in my mind. The brethren were liberal last Sunday [Oct. 26] in turning out to meet them with teams, still if any more feel desirous of going to their assistance, I will give them the privilege and advise them to take feed, not only for their own animals, but also for those of the brethren who have already gone but, for they will very likely be short. But I should be more particularly thankful if the minds of this community could be so impressed and stirred up, so wakened up, that when those poor brethren and sisters who are now on the plains do arrive they may be able to say of a truth and in very deed, ‘God be thanked, we have got to Zion.’ ... I cannot help what is out of my reach, but I am on hand to send more teams, and to send and send, until, if it is necessary, we are perfectly stopped in every kind of business. Br. Heber says that he will send another team, and I mean to send as many more as he does; I ought to send more than br. Heber, for I am fourteen days older than he is. I can send more teams, but I do not intend that the fetters shall be on me another season.”

**November 2:** Joseph Warren Wadsworth journal: “I raised a fair crop and then went to work in the canyon hauling wood until November. About this time the call came for volunteers to meet the Hand Cart Companies. I was in the third call which was composed of myself and a man named Dave Osborn. We went as far as Fort Bridger where we met the last company coming in. We turned around and came back with them. This was the saddest sight I have ever seen.”

**November 9:** Charles Sansom journal: “A call was made for teams to go out. ... In response to this call, over two hundred horse and mule teams went out, some went as far as the Sweetwater. I volunteered to go and on November 11th I left North Ogden with a four-horse team well loaded with horse feed. In Salt Lake City I met with President Brigham Young. He told me not to hurry my team but try and have them in as good condition as I could to come back with, so as to be able to do more good than I would be with a used up team.”

[**November 13:** Joseph A. Young and Abel Garr arrived in Salt Lake City at 4:00 a.m. They had ridden 327 miles in 10 days. Their report was the first word Brigham Young had of the circumstances and location of the Martin, Hodgett and Hunt Companies, but the rescue calls were now in their sixth week.]

**November 23:** This rescue call was reported by Joseph Elder in his diary. Joseph had traveled with the Willie Handcart Company. He had arrived in Salt Lake City on November 9. He wrote: “I again went to the Tabernacle. After preaching was over, the President made a call for volunteers to go out and help the last handcart company into the valley. I volunteered to go. ... [When] we [returned to] the city again ... truly we were glad for some of the boys had been gone nearly three months in the snow and mountains and sometimes without feed for their animals.”

**November 30:** Brigham Young: “I have a few words to say, before this meeting is brought to a close. We expect that the last hand-cart company, Brother Martin’s, will soon be in the streets by the Council House. ... We have quite a task upon us this season, for when the last hand-cart company arrives and is comfortably disposed of, we still have about 400 more brethren and sisters who are yet beyond Fort Bridger, probably near Green river. They are those that came out with [wagon] teams, or the independent companies. All their gold, their silver, their cattle and their other property will not enable them to reach here before the snow has overtaken them; and they had plenty of cattle, of money and means; everything that heart could wish, for an outfit for crossing the plains. To succor those 400 I call out door business; I call it a snow business, a labor, mountain toil and fatigue of a severe description.

Night before last we received a messenger [This messenger was at Ft. Supply on November 27 and in Salt Lake City on November 28] from those two independent trains, by whom we have learned that they are living on their cattle at Green river. The brethren at Fort Supply are striving to get them as far as Fort Bridger.

Our messengers started out night before last [November 28] to gather fifty more relief teams.<sup>5</sup> We have sent to Utah and Tooele counties. Until now, [Salt Lake] and Davis and Weber counties have had to bear the burden. We have sent for those teams to carry flour to Fort Bridger, and load back with people. Some, perhaps, will have to be left there, and if so we will carry supplies to them and keep bringing in the people, until all are comfortably provided for.

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Those that are yet back [Hodgett and Hunt companies] have been living probably for nearly a week, solely on the cattle that die; they have no flour, and are subsisting upon cattle that drop down through weakness and exposure, which is certainly hard fare. [This is the same message given on November 27 at Fort Bridger and Fort Supply.] Still, do not be scared, for they will eat and live and come here. ...

As soon as this meeting is dismissed I want the brethren and sisters to repair to their homes, where their Bishops will call on them to take in some of this [Martin] company; the Bishops will distribute them as the people can receive them. I have sent word to Bishop Hunter that I will take in all that others will not take. I have house room enough to accommodate the whole of them, if it is necessary; I am willing to take my proportion. ...

This is what I can say truly, with the rest of your counselors and directors, that no man or woman, that we have any knowledge of in the church, has refused to do as requested, with regard to this immigration; they have run by day and night. Our messengers have been traveling from here to the Platte, and back and forth between Bridger, Green river and the Sweetwater; and scores of men have been riding by day and night, without having enjoyed an undisturbed night's rest during the last two months only occasionally snatching a little sleep when sitting by the camp fire. They have been riding by day and night, hurrying to and fro and laboring with their might and have not refused to do what we have required of them; this is to their praise. Works have been most noble when they were needed; we put works to our faith, and in this case we realize that our faith alone would have been perfectly dead and useless, would have been of no avail, in saving our brethren that were in the snow, but by putting works with faith we have been already blest in rescuing many and bringing them to where we can now do them more good.

Some you will find with their feet frozen to their ankles; some are frozen to their knees and some have their hands frosted. They want good nursing, and if you do not know how to treat frozen flesh, let me inform you that the same treatment is needed as in a burn, and by pursuing that method you can heal them.

The Bishops are here, and as soon as the meeting is closed they will meet the company and dispose of them as wisdom shall dictate. And I want you to understand that we desire this people to nurse them up; we want you to receive them as your own children, and to have the same feeling for them. We are their temporal saviors, for we have saved them from death. ...

Now that most of them are here we will continue our labors of love, until they are able to take care of themselves, and we will receive the blessing. You need not be distrustful about that, for the Lord will bless this people; and I feel to bless them all the time, and this I continually try to carry out in my life. The two wagon companies still out we are sending for, and will supply flour to such as may have to tarry at Forts Bridger and Supply. We do not calculate to have the winter blast stop us; it cannot stop the Mormon Elders, for they have faith, wisdom and courage; they can perform that which no other men on the earth can perform.

**News Report:** Capts. Hodgetts and Hunt's companies, with those who went to their relief, have been arriving within the past few days, and are now, **Dec. 16**, all in, except a few who will tarry at Fort Supply during the winter,<sup>6</sup> and the small company previously mentioned as being stationed at the Devil's Gate. ("Immigration," *Deseret News*, 17 Dec. 1856)

<sup>1</sup>The Semi-Annual General Conference did not begin until Monday, October 6.

<sup>2</sup>The urgency of Brigham's rescue call meant that the first rescue party reached the immigrants "just in time." But the immigrants' journals belied the coming onslaught of cold weather and delays. On Oct. 5, John Jaques of the Martin Company recorded the weather in what is now Wyoming as "hot." On Oct. 14, the Willie Company journal recorded: "Weather splendid." Jesse Haven of the Hodgett Company made the following entries: Oct. 2: "Ever warm for the season and dry." Oct. 3: "Thermometer stood at noon in the Sun at 112 1/2 degrees." Oct. 4: "Weather continues hot." Oct. 5: "Weather still warm." Oct. 13: "Pleasant weather." Oct. 14: "Pleasant this morning." Oct. 15: "Weather continues pleasant." Oct. 16: "Pleasant but windy." Oct. 18: "Weather pleasant." Oct. 20: "Weather cold and snowing." Oct. 21: "Thermometer standing at 26." There had been an 86 degree drop in temperature in 2 1/2 weeks. On Nov. 6, a cold snap brought another 37 degree plunge at Devil's Gate. Robert Burton recorded: "6th colder than ever Thermometer 11 Deg's below Zero." Harvey Cluff, a rescuer who was camped with the Martin Company in the cove on this date, wrote: "The only glimmer of hope that seemed to reconcile our feelings and that was the utmost confidence in President Brigham Young's inspiration that he would keep companies coming out to meet us. ... The boys from Utah knew that president's foresight and excellent judgement would be sufficient to grasp the situation of the emigrants and their needs in such an inclement season and therefore teams and supplies would be forwarded train after train until the last Saint should arrive safely in Zion."

<sup>3</sup>This original handwritten list of names is in the Church archives; research by Laura Anderson; copy in files of Jolene Allphin.

<sup>4</sup>See John Pulsipher, rescuer section of *Tell My Story, Too*, for some details.

<sup>5</sup>This was Brigham Young's immediate response. He did not wait until the next day, but sent for help that very night.

<sup>6</sup>These included Lucy Ward, Willie company; Jane Barlow, Martin company; and the Parker family, Hunt company.