

CLARK ALLEN HUNTINGTON

Born: December 6, 1831 in Watertown, New York

Age: 24

Rescuer



Clark Allen Huntington was most commonly known as C.A. or Al. He was the oldest child of Dimick Baker and Fannie Maria Allen Huntington. Al's grandparents were early converts to the Church. One evening in late November, the Huntington family had gathered after dinner to play their musical instruments. These included a bass viol, cello, cornet and drum. A stranger soon came to the door seeking overnight lodging. He was welcomed in and Grandmother Huntington prepared a light supper for him:

It was the custom to read a portion of the scriptures before going to bed. He again joined the circle, and father Huntington began to read from the Holy Bible, a portion of the New Testament, to which they all listened attentively. Grandmother Huntington made some comment on the fact that they would like to hear the Gospel in its fullness as explained and taught by the Saviour. The stranger immediately took up the subject and began explaining the scriptures and quoting the sayings of the Saviour in what seemed to them a new light and greater beauty than they had ever thought of before. ... When the Gospel to life and salvation was brought to them by Hyrum Smith and other Elders, they seemed to coincide with what the stranger had told them concerning the Bible and the restoration of the Gospel. All the family but one accepted the Gospel and prepared to emigrate in a few years to Kirtland; here they met the Prophet of God, Joseph Smith, and became his faithful and loyal followers and friends. [When] Brother Huntington related this little incident to him, [Joseph] laid his hand on his head and said: "My dear brother, that man was one of the three Nephites who came to prepare you for the restoration of the Gospel and its acceptance." (Lundwall, Nels B., "The Prophet Joseph Identifies The Stranger," in *Assorted Gems of Priceless Value*, as related by President Wm. R. Sloan to Nels Lundwall, Sept. 1938, Portland, Oregon.)

Al was baptized at age nine. His family moved with the Saints from Kirtland, Ohio, to Far West, Missouri, to Nauvoo, Illinois, and finally to Utah. Al's father, Dimick, helped construct the temples in Kirtland and Nauvoo. He served as a coroner in Nauvoo and helped prepare Joseph Smith's body for burial after the martyrdom. Dimick also served in the Mormon Battalion and took his family along with him. Al was fifteen years old at the time. After arriving in the Salt Lake Valley in July 1847 with the discharged Pueblo detachment, Al's father wrote:

Through all my travels in the Battalion ... I carried in my wagon a bushel of wheat, and during the winter of 1847, slept with it under my bed, keeping it for seed. For three months my family tasted no bread. We dug thistle roots and other native growths and had some poor beef, with a little milk, but no butter. Early in the spring of 1848, I (Dimick) rode one hundred and fifteen miles to Fort Bridger and bought a quart of little potatoes about the size of pigeon eggs, at twenty-five cents each. From these I raised that year about a bushel of potatoes, but ate none of them. I planted them in 1849 and have had plenty of potatoes ever since." (*Heart Throbs of the West*, Kate B. Carter, Vol. 6, p. 432)

Al worked and gave service in many capacities for the Church and Utah. He went on several scouting expeditions for the Church and was a stock man, a body guard for Brigham Young, and an Indian interpreter. He was one of the first white men to master Indian languages in Utah. As an interpreter for a peace commission during the Black Hawk War, Al endured the abuse of being struck in the face by a hostile Indian warrior, and mocked by him, calling Al a boy instead of a man. The fearlessness of Al and the others at this time facilitated a peace treaty. Another time Brigham Young sent Al to negotiate peace with Uintah Indian Chief Tabby, when Tabby was preparing to join with Black Hawk and cut off the isolated communities in southern Utah. From a family history we learn about Al's success on this mission:

Brigham Young as a seer and prophet of the living God promised Huntington that no harm would befall him if he undertook the task. With that promise in mind, Huntington did as directed. He went to Tabby's camp and attempted to deliver the President's message, but the Indians were too angry to listen to words of peace. Oddly no attempt was

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made at first to harm Huntington, probably due to the amazement that a white man would come alone to their village. But as he attempted again and again to preach peace to them, they became more and more angry ... when a messenger arrived to tell them that Sanpitch had been killed. The Indians were now ready to kill Huntington in retaliation. ... But Sowiette, ... rose to his feet and took the Indians to task for their attitude. ... Sowiette reminded them that it took the utmost courage to come to their village alone, as Huntington had done. He told them that since the brave man had come in peace he should be allowed to leave in peace. ... The Indians let Huntington return to his home unharmed just as President Young had promised him.” (*Creer Family History: William Madison Wall*)

Al was a scout for many trips and hunting expeditions. He went on a hunting trip as a scout for Buffalo Bill (William Cody) and a party of two English Lords. (See Southern Utah University, Gerald R. Sherratt Library, Special Collections.)

Al worked for Warren Johnson at Lee’s Ferry. During this time Johnson had an accident and Al served as a surrogate father to Warren’s children. He taught the boys life skills and shooting. Frank Johnson said that “Al was a perfectionist when teaching it. The boys were always trying to get Al to do shooting tricks and would do his chore of chopping the wood if he could do marksmanship tricks that they deemed impossible. I think we chopped the wood most of the time.” Those who knew Al best also spoke of his gift of prophecy which they witnessed. He also spent time each fall getting wagon loads of wood for widows and those in need. Because Al was such a good friend to the Indians, they often visited him toward the end of his life and brought him fresh meat. Jody Johnson said: “Daddy Huntington lived with us for about fifteen years. ... He was just like a father to us kids.” Another daughter, Lydia Johnson, said that “Al used to tell them stories and entertain them ... make toys and things for them.”

In 1856, Al participated in rescuing the pioneers who were late getting to Utah. He was one of four named boys who assisted the Martin Handcart Company across the Sweetwater River into Martin’s Cove. Heroic-size monuments now stand on the footpath near Martin’s Cove in honor of these named boys. John Jaques of the Martin Company wrote:

The passage of the Sweetwater at this point was a severe operation to many of the company. It was the worst river crossing of the expedition and the last. The water was not less than two feet deep, perhaps, a little more in the deepest parts, but it was intensely cold. The ice was three or four inches thick, and the bottom of the river muddy or sandy. I forget exactly how wide the stream was there, but I think thirty or forty yards. ... Before the crossing was completed, the shades of evening were closing around ... Four members of the relief party waded the river, helping the handcarts through and carrying the women and children and some of the weaker men over. They were D[avid] P. Kimball, George W. Grant, Stephen W. Taylor, and C.A. Huntington.

Patience Loader of the Martin Company wrote:

We came to the Sweetwater River and there we had to cross. We thought we should have to wade as the cattle had been crossing with the wagons with the tents and what little flour we had and had broken the ice. But there were brave men there in the water, packing the women and children over on their backs. Those brethren were in the water all day.

Both Frank Johnson and Al’s son, Alexander Wiley, stated that Al afterward developed a cough that never left him. Frank stated that “Clark Allen suffered from severe coughing spells for most of his life. These spells started after his experience of carrying the Martin Handcart Saints across the Sweet Water River in Wyoming in 1856.” Alexander Wiley said that his father “contracted a cough when he had helped the people at the Sweetwater and that it stayed with him all the rest of his life, eventually causing his death.” Al died at the home of Warren Johnson and was buried in Kanab, Utah, on November 16, 1896.

Sources: Stella Jaques Bell, *Life History and Writings of John Jaques*, pgs. 160, 162; “Clark Allen Huntington 1831-1896,” research paper by Brent Turek, available at: <http://tellmystorytoo.com/pdf/TellMyStoryToo-ClarkAllenHuntington.pdf>