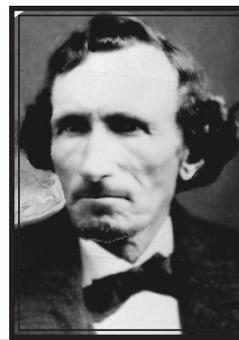


GEORGE DAVIDSON GRANT

Born: 1812 New York

Age: 44

Captain of Advance Rescue Company



Early in 1856, George D. Grant returned to the United States from England after serving there as a missionary for two years. Before continuing to Utah, he was assigned to help prepare for the upcoming wave of Mormon immigrants. This work had actually begun months before with other immigration agents negotiating on land and handcart contracts. George Grant and another returning missionary, William H. Kimball, first met with Elder John Taylor in New York and then arrived in Iowa City in March where they contracted to have 100 handcarts built.

Property near the terminus of the railroad in Iowa City had to be obtained and prepared for a camping and outfitting ground. Altogether, 300 handcarts were built by contract in Iowa City, Chicago and St. Louis. But the number of immigrants swelled and to meet the growing needs, the agents and immigrants built some handcarts with wood cut around Iowa City.

In Florence, Nebraska, arrangements were made for this former “Winter Quarters” of the pioneers to be their final outfitting point before crossing the last 1,000 miles of plains. A large warehouse was constructed, arrangements made for timber and fuel, and contracts written for ferrying across certain rivers. “Preparing Florence for the emigration also included fencing fields, putting in grain, building corrals, and assembling a supply of equipment and tools—all within about two months.” (Olsen, *The Price We Paid*, 54) Mules and oxen for the emigration needed to be purchased, branded and driven to Iowa City and Florence. (See biography of Joseph Elder, Willie Company, in *Tell My Story, Too*, for some understanding of this task.) Back and forth between Iowa, Nebraska, and Missouri, these immigration agents were tireless in their preparations.

After George had worked hard at these tasks for over 6 months, he headed for home in September, no doubt anxious to be reunited with his family and obtain a little rest. Instead, after arriving in Utah on October 4, he went back on the trail only two days later to rescue the last companies. He took his 17-year-old son, George Wilson Grant, with him. It was risky and dangerous, but George did not hesitate. After receiving a priesthood blessing from Brigham Young, George left Salt Lake with a small group of men who sustained the appointment by Brigham Young of George as their captain. In making very difficult decisions over the next 2 1/2 months, George proved to be the right choice.

The immigrants were much farther away than George had expected, and if these first rescuers had not come when they did, perhaps none of the immigrants would have survived. Shortly after locating the Martin, Hodgett and Hunt companies about 375 miles from Salt Lake City, George wrote a letter to Brigham Young and sent it express from Devil’s Gate on Nov. 3. The letter summarizes the previous four weeks and reports on the needs and expectations of the next few weeks. It reflects the enormity of the situation and George’s feelings about this rescue mission:

Devil’s Gate, Nov. 2nd 18/56

President Young: Dear Brother: _

Knowing the anxiety that you feel for the Companys behind & espacely for the hand-Cart Companys, I have concluded to send in an express from this place.

We had now Snow to contend with, untill we got to the Sweet Water 19th & 20th of Oct. The storm was verry severe indeed We met Br Willeys the 21st the Snow was from 6 to 10 inches deep where we met them. They were truely in a bad situation but we rendered them all the assistance in our power. Br Wm H Kimball returned with them with several other Bretheren & the particulars of this Co you have doubtless learned from him before this time. Previous to this time we had sent on an express to ascertain if posable, the Situation & the whereabouts of the Companys behind & report back to me not thinking it safe for them to go farther than Independence Rock, I advised them not to go farther than that point.

(George D. Grant - Page 2)

When we overtook them they had heard nothing from them & had traveled through Snow all the way from Willow Creek to this place from 8 inches to one foot deep not much feed for our horses they were running down very fast & not hearing any thing from the Companeyes, I did not know but they had taken up quarters for the Winter. Consequently we sent on another express to the Platte Bridge & when the express returned, to my surprise I learned that they were all on the Platte River & had been Encamped there nine days, waiting for the Snow to go away or, as they said, for to recruit their Cattle. as quick as we learned this we moved on to meet them. Met Br Martains Co at Greasewood Creek on the last day of Oct. Br Hodgets Co were a few miles behind. we dealt out to the Co (Br Martains) the Clothing, &c., that we had for them & the next morning after Stowing our Wagons full of our the sick, the Childern & with a good ammount of lugage, started homeward about noon. the Snow began to fall very fast & continued untill late at night. It is now about 8 inches deep here & to night is very Cold. It is not much use for me to attempt to give a discreption of the situation of these people for this I must refer you to Brother Joseph & Brother Gar who are the bearers of this express but you can imagine five or six hundred people ' men, Women & Children worn out by drawing their hand Carts traveling through Snow and Mud; fainting by the way side; falling, Chilled by the Cold; Children crying from the Cold their limbs Stiff their feet bleeding & some of them bear to snow & frost The sight is almost to mutch for the stoutest of us but we go on doing all we can not doubting nor despairing but our Co is to Small to help them mutch it is only a drop to a bucket as it were, in comparisone to what is needed for I do think that not over one third of the entire Co are able to walk. This you may think is extravegant but it is nevertheless true. Some of them have good courage & are in good Spirits but a great maney of them are like Children & do not help themselves mutch more nor realize what is before them.

I am going to make a cash here of a lot of Books & other things in fact every thing that can be dispensed with in the Co for the lives of the People are the first consideration & I believe if you could speak to me you would advise me so to do

I never felt so much intrest in aney Mission that I have been sent on in my life & all the Bretheren who are with me feel the same. We have prayed without ceasing & blessing of God have been with us.

Br Charles Decker has traveld this road this makes the 49th time & he sayes he has never seen so much snow on the SweetWarter before in any season of the year.

I will now mention what I think would be for the best & leave the matter in your hands to dispose of as you think best if we had from 30 to 50 Teams well supplied with feed for thir animals this is something we very mutch need & it will be a hard matter to get some of our teams in without it some good Boots of different sizes would come very good for the Bretheren who are with me Some of them are most destitute they started with short notice & have been out longer then they expected Some good pants also their folks would send some probably if they new of it Br Hodgets Co Camp with us to night

I am sorry to inform you of the death of Br Tennant among those who have fallen by the way side Br Hunts Co are two or three days behind yet Br Wheelock will be with them to Councell with them also some of the other Bretheren

We will move every day toward the Valley if we shovel Snow to do it the Lord helping us I have never seen sutch energe & faith among the Boys before & so good a spirrit as those who are with me we realize that we heve your prayers for us continualey also all of the Saints in the Valley I will now close by praying that the blessings of God may be with you & all those who seek to build up the Kingdom of God on the Earth. George D. Grant

By the end of the rescue efforts, George would, in fact, be shoveling through deep snow to bring the people through the last mountain passes and canyons. The Martin handcart company arrived in Salt Lake City on November 30. The following day, George's brother, Jedediah M. Grant, died. He was a trusted counselor to Brigham Young in the First Presidency and beloved by the people. His funeral was held that week.

George D. Grant was trusted at other times as a leader. He spent a great deal of time working with the Indians in Tooele Valley and protecting and assisting the residents there. They were so grateful for his service that they named the town of Grantsville after George. He served other missions for the Church and rose to the rank of Major General in his military service.

After returning from the rescue, George went home to Bountiful. On December 12, his son, George Wilson Grant, who had been on the rescue with his father, celebrated his 18th birthday.

The words of Emily Hill (Woodmansee) of the Willie Company reflect the gratitude and admiration felt for George D. Grant and his fellow rescuers: "Life, Life was the treasure held out to our view / By the 'Boys from the Valley' so brave and so true / O'er mountainous steeps, over drearissime plains / They sought us, and found us, thank God for their pains!"

Sources: Olsen, Andrew D., *The Price We Paid*, Deseret Book, 2006; "A Sketch of the Life of George Davis Grant" by Grant Davies Atkinson, unpublished research paper, July 1998; "Hunger and Cold," in *The Poetry of Emily Hill Woodmansee*, comp. Myrlon Bentley Abegg (1986), 169–70, Church History Library; email from Grant Atkinson, January 2004; original letter from George D. Grant to Brigham Young, without the 1856 editor's changes and omissions, as transcribed by Jolene Allphin February 23, 2017, located in Church History Library, Brigham Young Incoming Correspondence, 1839-1877, box 24, folder 19.