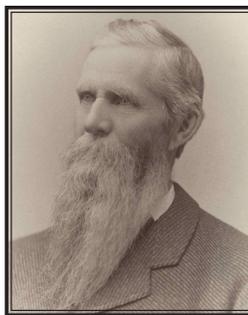


ROBERT TAYLOR BURTON

Born: 1821 Canada

Age: 35

Rescuer



Robert T. Burton left Salt Lake City with the advance rescue party and served as an assistant to Captain George D. Grant. He made brief entries in a journal titled "Camp Journal Relief Train Capt Grant" throughout the rescue period. He sent a typed version of his journal in 1907 to the Handcart Veterans Association for their history. In a few places, the 1907 version, and other clarifications are included here in []. This transcription from the 1856 diary is by Jolene Allphin as it was written by Burton. Things he wrote above the lines or in the margins are enclosed in < >.

Tuesday 7th Oct/56 left GSL City going East to meet the Emmigrating Co^{mp}. Encamped to night at the foot of the Big Mountain.
 8th Passed Over the Big Mountain & Camped in East Kanion had a light snowstorm
 9th had good Roads Camped in Ecco Kanion
 10th Encamped near a little grove at the head of Ecco
 11th traveled down the Old Pioneer Road Encamped to night a Big hollow good feed &c[.] We [sic]
 12th arrived at Fort Bridger. left some of our flower, feed &c at this place got some beef &c. Camp^d <on blacks fork>
 13th left Ft Bridger Camped to night on Blacks fork met Br Smoot Dan Jones & others & some teams returning that had been Back on the road [and] got tierd of waiting [This was Captain Dan Jones of Wales, not Daniel W. Jones, rescuer.]
 14th Brother Smoot returned with us to meet his Co Camped to night on Blacks Fork again. sent on an [sic] express to meet the Co^s and report Back to us their Situation whereabouts &c C H Wheelock JA Young Stephen Taylor A Garr
 15th traveled to Green River left some flower feed &c Camped to night on little <big> Sandy at 8 oclock PM
 16th at the Bendig Sandy Met Cap' Smoot [company] Camped here to night let him have some flower & [or 2] Beef Teams &c 18 men
 17th Started late Camped on little Sandy feed scarce looked like storm very Mu<t>ch
 18th Clear & fair. Storm passed to the right & left of us <over the South Pass> Camped to night on the head of Sweet water good feed & wood looked <stormy>
 19th killed one beef Started afternoon Camped below the mouth of Willow Creek to night commenced storming Cold good feed
 20th Stayed in the same place to day Br Willey came to us near night fall
 21st Started early in the morning to meet Cap' Willeys Co Camped with them to night deal out to them flower Clothing Wm. Kimbal & several others returned with him with Teams &c Snow deep
 22nd traveled 17 miles Snow growing deeper & deeper all the way Camped to night near the Walla[illegible]<under> the Rock not much feed [Burton's 1907 retype of his diary: "22nd. Capt. G.D. Grant and I, with the remainder of our men and teams traveled 17 miles, the snow getting deeper and deeper as we proceeded eastward. We camped tonight under a large rock. Not much feed for our horses.]
 23rd Stayed in the same Camp snow deep could not travel
 24th Clear & fair some warmer Started on Camped to night below the 3 Crosing of Sweet Water Snow still deep seen a large herd of Buffalaw 3 miles distant [Burton's 1907 retype: 24th. . . . We saw a large herd of Buffalaw about three miles distant, but could not get to them on account of the deep snow.]
 25th wind blowed hard Camped to night below the Walla[illegible and crossed out]<huallach> Rock Snow going away slowly weather some warmer [This camp was in the Split Rock area.]
 26th traveled 19 miles Encamped near Devil's Gate found the Express that had been sent on at this place waiting further Orders[.] heard nothing from the Co^s behind [Martin, Hodgett and Hunt companies]
 27th remained in the same place feed tolerable good from this point sent on another express to the Bridge [Richard's (Reshaw's) Bridge] on Platt River[.] JA Young A Garr D Jones to find the Co if Posable & report Back their situation whereabouts &c
 28th remained in the same Camp weather fine snow going away at night Cloudy snow began to fall fast after Prayer ceased snowing
 29th in the same Camp fine warm morning Continued through the day
 30th good weather Snow going away slowley remained in the same Camp express returned to night 7 Oclock reported the Companeyes on the Platt River had been camped their [sic] three days not far apart.
 31st fine & clear Started this morning to meet the Co of Hand Carts met them on Grease wood Creek Camped with them to night dealt to them Clothing flower &c
 Nov 1st Started back to the Valley Br Grant & myself went back [further East] to meet Br Hodgets Co 4 or 5 miles back about noon Commenced snowing Snowed untill late at night Camped near Independence Rock.
 2nd Camped to night at the Devils Gate Snow deep & verry Cold
 3rd remained at the same place. So cold that the Co could not move Sent an express to Salt L City JA Young Abel Garr to report our situation and get Counsel & help [See Joseph A. Young and Abel Garr stories in this section.]
 4th Cold continued verry severe People could not move Stowed away the goods of the trains in the houses Martins Comp moved 3 miles & camped [Martin's Cove]
 5th weather continued verry Cold neither of the Companeyes moved Cap' Hunts Com arrived here at 8 Oclock PM
 6th colder than ever Thermometer 11 Deg^s below Zero Stowed away the goods of Cap' Hunts Train none of the Comps moved So cold the People Could not travel

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7th yet remained Cold Could not travel Stowing away goods trying to save the People & stock &c
 8th wind did not blow so hard some warmer this morning hunting up the Cattle & horses to move on the morrow
 9th fine Warm morning hand Co & Cap' Hogets Co moved on at 11 O'clock AM Cap' Hunts not yet done cashing goods ~~10th more pleasant morning perparing~~ This evening had a meeting of the Officers of the companeys to appoint Brothers to remain with the goods left here by Cap' Hodgets and Hunt[.] D Jones left in Charge or president TM Alexander and Benjamin Hampton counselors with 17 other brethren from the two Companeyes the Brottheren were instructed in their duties (during our stay at this place we had meeting every evening to Council together & ask the Lord to turn away the Cold and storm so that People might live [parenthese at beginning of sentence by Burton])
 10th very fine morning Cap' Hunts Co fixing to start on getting up Cattle &c the last wagons moved on about 2 O'clock Cap' Grant[.] CH Whelock[.] S Taylor & myself moved on at 3 O'clock Camped that night with Cap' Hodgetts
 11th Started early in the morning overtook the hand cart Co 10 O'clock Br E Hanks was with them from the valley Brought good news Camped to night on Bitter Cottonwood
 12th fine morning warm for the season sent on an express to the south Pass it returned 5 O'clock this evening met 4 teams with some flower Camped above the 3 crossings
 13th very pleasant morning Companeyes all moving on finely Camped again on the sweet Water at the Lower end of the 16 mile <drive>
 14th Weather very pleasant all the Co moving on Camped on the 16 mile drive about 4 miles from sweet water good fuel not much feed no deaths in Camp to night. Capt Hunt Co ahead Hodget near
 15th Weather continued fine & Warm traveled on 8 miles & Camped on Sweetwater not much Wood not very good feed
 16th met 10 teams from the Valley Br [Anson] Calls Co on the Rocky ridge Camped in a little Cottonwood grove good wood & feed
 17th fine warm day Camped on the Branch of Sweetwater
 18th Cloudy Snowing in the afternoon Met several Teams Wm Kimbal, Ferguson J Simmons Stout &c Camped to night at our S[t]ation on Sweetwater [William H. Kimball, James Ferguson, Joseph Simmons, and Hosea Stout]
 19th Snowing in the morning sent an express to the City Co moved on all in Wagons 3 O'clock Capt Grant & Myself after seeing the Ox trains moved on after the Co Camped to night on dry Sandy
 20th this morning Brothers Grant Kimbil & others Started to the City I was left in Charge of the Company Camped at ben <bend> on Big Sandy
 21st this morning looked like Storm in the afternoon Snowed a little met Some Teams with some flower &c Camped to night on Green River
 22nd this morning fair but Cold met more Teams sent some back to the Ox Trains with flower &c Camped on Blacks Fork
 23rd fine day some Cloudy Snowed again at night Camped at Bridger
 24th this morning took in supplies for the Co from Br [Lewis] Robison started late Camped on the muddy Cold good wood & feed
 25th this morning Started another Express to the City CH Wheelock Bullock & others Sent two other Teams to the Ox Trains Camped on Bear River plenty of wood
 26th Cold but Clear Camped to night in the head of Ecco Kanion <here we> met Br <F> [Feramorz] Little & others from the City
 27th this morning Snowing a little Camped to night on the Webber River had another Express from the Pres' Young
 28th today the road was sideling got all the wagons over Safe Camped in East Kanion met serveral of the Bretheren here
 29th Passed over the Big Mountain snowing fast[.] stoped snowing after noon passed over little mountain Camped in the head of Emmigration Kanion met <additional> supplys
 30th this morning started early arrived in the City a little before noon with all the hand Cart Co & several famileys from the Ox trains[.] had in the Trains 354 Horses and mules 104 Wagons 32 Oxen [End of daily camp journal]

From Robert Burton's autobiography, we also read of the rescue: "Early in Oct. in company with Genls. G.D. Grant, William H. Kimball and some twenty others I was sent East to aid the last companies of the hand cart emigration who were yet some 500 miles from the valley and reported in a suffering condition. On arriving at the head of the Sweetwater river the weather became very cold, snow falling deep and no tidings from the Emigrants. Sent forward messengers who returned reporting the critical condition of the handcart companies. We pushed on through snow and cold meeting them near the Platte River. Found them suffering from cold and hunger, much of which it was impossible for us to relieve, but we were enabled to bring them along slowly. In the snow and intense cold we were reduced to 1/4 rations, very many of the people falling by the wayside in spite of all our efforts, burying as many on one occasion as 16 persons in one grave, but as we journeyed homeward in a few days began to receive additional aid from the valley of teams and provisions until arriving at the South Pass some 250 miles from Salt Lake. We were enabled to get all that remained of these companies into wagons and could now make good progress toward home. Here General Grant and Col. Kimball left me in charge of the company which finally arrived in Salt Lake on the last day of Nov. with 104 wagons and teams winding their way over the Big mountain. This indeed was a grand sight to us as we looked back upon the hardships and sufferings of this most critical campaign of my life. The hardships and sufferings of this company of people can never be told. Found my family all well."

The following is a letter Burton wrote to the Handcart Veterans Association reunion committee (Samuel S. Jones of the Martin Company): "November 9, 1906 / S.S. Jones, / Provo, Utah / Dear Brother: - I am in receipt of your favor of October 10th, last, and I feel that I owe you an apology for not sooner replying thereto. It is true as you state that I came to the 14th Ward Assembly Hall when the Hand Cart people assembled there and found it was so crowded that I could not very well make my way to the stand; the crowded condition of the Hall as stated, and my businesses affairs at the office requiring almost constant attention, I did not press my way to the front. But I do not wish you nor my hand cart friends to think it was because I had forgotten the importance of the

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event they gathered together to commemorate, had opportunity occurred I would like to have spoken a few words to the survivors of that 1856 expedition.

“I state for your information, that on the 7th of October, 1856, we left Salt Lake City with a small detachment of cavalry and three or four wagons in which we had limited supplies. We made fairly good headway passing over the old emigrant route from the Big Mountain and up Echo Canyon, etc., and finally made Fort Bridger on the 12th of the same month. Here we obtained some little additional supply and forage, etc., and then pursued our journey on the old route. As before stated[,] crossing Green River at Sandies and so on over South Pass, until we arrived at Sweet Water; traveling down the Sweet Water we arrived at the Devil’s Gate on the 26th of October, however, I may say that the snow was so deep and the storm so excessive that we were compelled to lay up one or two days on the Sweet Water. It might be well now for me to here state that our progress was necessarily slow as the axle-trees of our wagons dragged through the snow as we were making our way toward the people who were in distress, and we were going from our homes.

“In the meantime, we had forwarded an express to ascertain, if possible, where the Hand Cart people were; this express was carried by two of our bravest men, who have many years departed, namely: Joseph A. Young and Able Garr. They reported that they had been farther down to the Platte and had no tidings of the people. We refitted them up, however, and sent them on again to find the people, which they did, as you probably remember, on the head of the Platte River. Now Brother Jones, it would be too tedious at this time to explain to you all the features of that terrible march from and back to our homes. In charge of the expedition was our departed friend George D. Grant, aided by Wm. H. Kimball and myself. On our return toward our homes Grant and Kimball were compelled to leave me and come to the City. By this time, however, we had got the most of our people in comfortable wagons, and from that on, made fairly good headway toward the City, in spite of the storm, snow and frost.

“Arriving at the Big Mountain on the evening of the 30th of November, where the snow had piled up on each side of the road nearly to the tops of our wagons, which had been kept open by the efforts of our dear President Brigham Young by the use of ox teams passing up and down the road. This was a sight which to those who were present could never be forgotten; 104 wagons laden with the survivors of the distressed companies and the hardships endured before we got there, are many of them too severe to be related. I have striven for years to obliterate from my mind some of the sights that I witnessed on the return to the Valley.

“In conclusion, let me say if it will be of any service to you or any one else who may desire to further perpetuate the remembrance of this terrible trip, I have got every days camp noted in my journal, and the forage and provisions that were bestowed upon the companies and individuals, just as we were compelled to scantily dole them out, so that we could have at least quarter rations in the hardest of the time.

“You will probably think my letter somewhat lengthy and so it is, but as you know I have hardly entered upon the history of this matter, but will say, that if I am permitted to remain until there is another gathering of the same kind I will take pleasure in contributing my mite to the comfort of the survivors who may be spared to assemble on such an occasion. With kind regards and well wishes to yourself and others interested, I am, As ever, Your Brother, RT Burton”

Describing the events of 26 November 1856, John Jaques of the Martin company wrote: “The next camp . . . was in a small canyon running out of the north side of Echo canyon, a few miles above the mouth of the latter. Here a birth took place, and one of the relief party generously contributed part of his under linen to clothe the little stranger. The mother [Sarah Squires] did quite as well as could have been expected, considering the unpropitious circumstances. . . . The little newcomer also did well, and was named Echo, in honor of the place of her nativity. She is still a resident of the territory, is a happy wife and mother, and lives in the north country.”

Robert kept a meticulous record of the supplies he distributed, except when he literally gave the shirt off his own back to little newborn Echo Squires. This event was described in later years by his granddaughter, Lenore Gunderson: “After he had distributed all the clothing, Robert noticed a mother whose newborn baby did not have sufficient clothing to keep it warm, so he took off his own homespun shirt and gave it to the mother to cover the baby.” In sacrificing his own warmth for the comfort of the new baby, Robert exemplified the way he continued to live throughout his life. Among his final words of advice to his children before his death in 1907 was the admonition to “be kind to the poor.” Leading men of Utah who spoke at his funeral articulated Robert’s character in these words and phrases: “Genial; charitable; a general in the army of right, in the army of truth and of love; integrity; love; honor; years filled with good works; tender-hearted; sympathetic; worthy of confidence; never false to God, to himself or to his fellow-man, friend or foe.” George Bean, fellow rescuer and friend, wrote the following testimonial: “General Robert Taylor Burton was born on 25 October 1821 in Amhurstburg, Ontario, Canada, and died 11 November 1907 in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was a bugler in the Nauvoo Legion band; a Utah pioneer 23 September 1848; married Maria Haven on 18 December 1845 at Nauvoo. He was valiant in Church and military affairs; Deputy United States Marshal in 1853; met belated Hand Cart Company in 1856; Internal Revenue Collector during 1862-1869; missionary to Europe in 1873; Counselor to Bishop Edward Hunter and first counselor to Bishop Wm. B. Preston. He was captain of Company A, then major, and finally appointed Major General of Utah Militia by Governor Durkee in 1868; member of legislature in 1876; and regent of University of Deseret in 1884. He was tall and stately, courageous and true. We frequently visited each other’s home.”

Sources: *Be Kind To The Poor: The Life Story of Robert Taylor Burton*, by Janet Burton Seegmiller, 1988; Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel Database at lds.org; Handcart Veterans Association Scrapbook, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU, Provo, Utah; *Robert Burton Diaries*, MS 1221, Church History Library, transcription by Jolene Allphin. See also “Rescue Me,” painting of Robert T. Burton and Squires baby, by Julie Rogers, at www.tellmystorytoo.com. Burton made a typed copy of his 1856 diary in 1907 and sent it to the Handcart Veterans Association. He made a few changes in the typed version.