

Celebration of Arrival

Of the arrival of the first caravans [the first two handcart companies] at Florence, J. H. Lacey wrote on August 14, 1856: "The first and second companies of emigrants by hand carts, under the care of Captains Edmund Ellsworth and Daniel D. McArthur, assisted by Elders J. Oakley, William Butler, Truman Leonard, and S. W. Crandall, piloted by Elder Joseph France, who acted as agent and commissary, arrived in Camp on the 7th of July, in fine health and spirits, singing as they came along Elder J. D. T. McAllister's noted hand cart song- 'Some must push and some must pull.' etc. One would not think that they had come from Iowa City, a long and rough journey of from 275 to 300 miles, except by their dust-stained garments and sunburned faces. "My heart is gladdened as I write this, for methinks I see their merry countenances and buoyant step, and the strains of the handcart song seem ringing in my ears like sweet music heard at eventide or in a dream. The first company had among its number the Birmingham Band, and though but young performers, they played really very well--far superior to anything to be found this far west.

"In giving you this description of the feelings of the first companies, I give you in effect the feelings of the whole. This is the bright side of the picture, and is of those who may really be called Latter-day Saints; who have in continual remembrance the covenants they have made; who obey counsel, and may really be called Saints of the Most High God. There are others --for I have seen both sides of the picture--who are apt to forget the God who has delivered them from their Gentile chains and task masters, and are allured by fine promises and high wages; others there are whose faith is not of that nature to stand the trials they are called upon to undergo, and back out from five to fifty in a company of 300; but the mirth of the one kind does not interfere with the gloom of the other or, vice versa, each one does what suits him best."¹

Wilford Woodruff, one of the Counselors of President Young, describes the reception: "One of the most interesting scenes that was ever witnessed in our Territory, was the arrival of two of the handcart companies on the 26th inst. Having heard the night previous that they were camped between the two mountains, President Young and Kimball, and many citizens, with a detachment of the Lancers, and the brass bands, went out to meet and escort them into the city. They met the companies at the foot of the Little Mountain. Elder E. Ellsworth led the first company, and Elder Daniel D. McArthur the second.

"After the meeting and salutations were over, amid feelings which no one can describe, the escort was formed, a party of Lancers leading the advance, followed by the bands, the Presidency, the Marshal, and citizens; then came the companies of handcarts, another party of Lancers bringing up the rear. . . I must say my feelings were inexpressible to behold a company of men, women, and children, many of them aged and infirm, enter the city of the Great Salt Lake, drawing 100 handcarts, (led by Brother Ellsworth, who assisted in drawing the first handcart) with which they had traveled some 1,400 miles in nine weeks, and to see them dance with joy as they traveled through the streets. . . This sight filled our hearts with joy and thanksgiving to God. . . As I gazed upon the scene, meditating upon the future result, it looked to me like the first hoisting of the floodgate of deliverance to the oppressed millions. We can now say to the poor and honest in heart, come home to Zion, for the way is prepared."²

¹ From: Hafen and Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*; pp 64-65. ²Ibid. pp. 76-77.