

## **EDWARD MARTIN**

Born: 1818 England

Age 38

Captain of Martin Handcart Company

Edward was born in Preston, Lancashire, England, November 18, 1818. He joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in England and emigrated to the United States. He was one of the Saints called upon to defend his country as a member of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War. Later he was sent on a mission back to England, and returning from there, he became Captain of the ill-fated Fifth Handcart Company of 1856.

The Fifth Handcart Company actually left Iowa City as two companies. Edward Martin was the Captain of one and Jesse Haven was the Captain of the other. They traveled separately until they reached Florence, Nebraska, where Elder Haven joined the Hodgett Wagon Company, and the two handcart companies combined under Elder Martin.

Captain Martin also brought a wife back with him from England, Eliza Salmon. Their first baby, George, was born August 12, 1856, in Iowa City, Iowa, while waiting for the handcart journey to begin. Edward and Eliza eventually had ten children. Two of Edward's other wives died and Eliza also raised their children.

As the handcart company sought the shelter of the northern mountains in a ravine later to be named Martin's Cove, they had many difficulties. It was a struggle for all of them to keep from freezing to death. Icy winds blew over a number of tents and many of the immigrants died.

One afternoon, Captain Martin, together with two or three other men, set out from the camp at Devil's Gate, when they were surprised by a snowstorm and they lost their way. After wandering about for several hours, the men came near perishing and endeavored to make a fire to warm themselves. They gathered some cedar twigs and struck match after match to light them, but in vain. At length, with their last match and the aid of portions of their clothing, they succeeded in starting a fire. This was seen from the handcart camp, from which, after all their anxious and weary wanderings, they were only about a half-mile distant. Help soon came to the wanderers and the rescuers carried Captain Martin, who was nearly exhausted, back to camp.

There were many deaths in the camp. John Bond, a 12-year-old boy in Martin's company recorded some experiences that give us a small idea of what leadership meant for Edward Martin: ". . . [Some died] lying side by side with hands entwined. In other cases, they were found as if they had just offered a fervent prayer and their spirit had taken flight while in the act . . . Some died sitting by the fire; some were singing hymns or eating crusts of bread . . . Captain Martin stood over the grave of the departed ones with shotgun in hand, firing at intervals to keep the crows and buzzards away from hovering around in mid air."

Peter McBride, a young boy in the Martin Company, later paid tribute to Captain Martin in the narrative he wrote of their trek: "We had to burn buffalo chips for wood, not a tree in sight, no wood to be found anywhere. Just dry earth and rivers. We children and old folks would start early so we wouldn't be too far behind at night. A great many handcars broke down, oxen strayed away, which made traveling rather slow. Quite an undertaking to get nearly one thousand persons who had never had any camping experience to travel, eat, and cook over campfires. It took much patience for the captain to get them used to settling down at night and to get started in the morning."

John Bond also recorded a time when a sister whose husband was near death and whose two sons were suffering with frozen feet, appealed to Captain Martin, "Do you think that the relief party will come soon with food, clothing and shoes?" Bond recalls that Captain Martin gave this suffering pioneer woman encouragement by answering, "Y almost wish God would close my eyes to the enormity of the sickness, hunger and death among the Saints. Yes, Sister Sermon, I am as confident as I live that the President (Brigham Young) will and has dispatched the relief valley boys to us and I believe that they are making all the haste they can, that they are bringing flour, clothing, shoes, etc."

A day or two later, this sister, with faith in Captain Martin's words, was looking into the west. All at once she sprang to her feet and screamed at the top of her voice, "I see them coming! I see them coming! Surely they are angels from heaven."

Edward Martin lived in Salt Lake City and died there at the age of 64, on August 8, 1882. His youngest child was just eight years old. Eliza lived as a widow for 30 more years.

