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Handcarts to Zion LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen

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Handcarts to Zion. The story of a unique western migration, 1856-1860, with contemporary journals, accounts, reports; and rosters of members of the ten Handcart Companies. By LeRoy R. Hafen, Professor of History, Brigham Young University, and his wife, Ann W. Hafen. Published by the Arthur H. Clark Company, Glendale, California, 1960, in two editions: The "Pioneers Edition" at \$4.95, and as volume 14 of the Historical Series *The Far West and the Rockies, 1820-1875* (all volumes of which are under the joint editorship of the Hafens), at \$9.50. 328 pp.

The authors are eminently qualified to write on the subject of the handcart migration. A lifetime of research in western history has provided them with the general background for this account, and, as descendants of Utah pioneers and of one who crossed the plains in a handcart company, the ability to write history and edit historical documents is enhanced by personal interest. Dr. Hafen first treated this subject in a master's thesis completed at the University of Utah in 1919. He and Mrs. Hafen have been adding to their store of knowledge concerning the journeys by handcart since that time.

Many scholarly volumes have been produced by the Hafens, all widely acclaimed by fellow historians and those with a more general interest in western history, but this reviewer anticipates that *Handcarts to Zion* will add many new readers to the previous list, particularly from "Mormon" households. The extensive use of source materials and the thoroughness of the research, with the resulting wealth of information available in this study, make it apparent that the work will be basic to any study of the westward movement of the "Mormon" pioneers that may be undertaken in the future.

Ten handcart companies made the journey of over a thousand miles overland to Salt Lake valley between 1856 and 1860. Of the almost 3,000 members of these companies about 250 died en route. It had been predicted that those walking, pulling, and pushing the handcarts bearing all their earthly possessions, could travel with greater speed than the wagon trains hampered

by slow moving ox teams. The first three companies tended to bear out the prediction. The fourth and fifth and now famous Willie and Martin companies resulted in stark tragedy. Only the prompt action of Brigham Young and his associates in sending out rescue parties kept the number who died as low as it was.

Although the church leaders reported that the 1856 tragedies did not discourage them, and a group of missionaries were sent east by handcart from Utah to demonstrate how practical this mode of travel was, only five more companies made the trek during the years from 1857 to 1860, when the tenth and last group with their two-wheeled vehicles arrived in Utah.

Today the handcart experiment is one of the many curiosities in the annals of western history. With the pony express, the trail drives, the rush for gold, trapping for beaver, vigilantes, Indian massacres and other phenomena, the story of the handcart migrations with the accompanying heartaches, tragedy, faith, and devotion adds color to the many threaded tapestry which is early western history.

Appropriate illustrations and a map of the handcart route add interest and enhance the good workmanship that has come to be expected in the publications of the Arthur H. Clark Company. Professional historians, western history enthusiasts, those interested in Mormon church history, and other lay readers will find interesting information available to them in this useful study.

—S. LYMAN TYLER