

## GEORGE WILSON GRANT

Born: 12 December 1838, Far West, Missouri

Age: 17

Rescuer



George W. Grant is one of two teenagers represented in the bronze statues of the rescuers near Martin's Cove.<sup>1</sup> He went out on the rescue with his father, George D. Grant. His father had been away from home for two years, serving a mission in England, and had just returned from that mission. Young George was ready to travel back on the plains with him two days later. His father was appointed captain of the first rescue party to leave Salt Lake.

George W. performed many services during the two months he helped with the rescue, but he is most noted for his part in carrying members of the Martin Handcart Company across the Sweetwater River on November 4, 1856. Patience Loader of the Martin Company wrote: "We came to the Sweetwater River and there we had to cross. We thought we should have to wade[,] as the cattle had been crossing with the wagons with the tents and what little flour we had and had broken the ice. But there were brave men there in the water, packing the women and children over on their backs. Those poor brethren were in the water all day. We wanted to thank them, but they would not listen." (Bell, *Life History and Writings of John Jaques*, 162.)

John Jaques wrote of this day: "The passage of the Sweetwater at this point was a severe operation to many of the company. ... The teams and wagons and handcarts and some of the men forded the river. Four members of the relief party waded the river, helping the handcarts through and carrying the women and children and some of the weaker men over. They were D.P. Kimball, George W. Grant, Stephen W. Taylor, and C.A. Huntington." (Bell, 174.) Other men in the rescue company also assisted at this crossing.

The teenage boys in the Martin Company greatly admired George and the other young rescuers. Albert Jones of the Martin Company called them "red shirted young giants" who tried "to make merriment to cheer up our gloomy & sorely tried people." Jones wrote: "The Valley Boys were my companions as soon as they made their appearance—the American axe in their hands was an instrument of especial wonderment to me "how bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke." I watched with great surprize to see with what precision and rapidity their blows were delivered and I felt to acknowledge it and paid silent tribute to the great adjunct and coadjutor to the cause of Civilization, "The American axe," and longed for the day when the skill should be mine with which I saw it wielded. I followed these boys occasionally at our Camps, allowed the priviledge of cutting off a Stick at the expense of considerable jests at my awkwardness—I sang to them round the huge Camp Fires we built and then listened to their accounts of Kanyon life—untill one Evening in my admiration for their prowess I secretly vowed that I would seek to repay their kindness in coming to our rescue, by returning the same kind of pay to some other party of Emigrants, who might be caught as we were: ... I kept this Vow."

Patience Loader also wrote words of gratitude for the rescuers who chopped wood for fires: "George [W.] Grant ... told us all to stand back, for he was going to knock down one of those log huts to make fires for us. He said, 'You are not going to freeze tonight.' ... He raised his ax and with one blow knocked in the whole front of the building, took each log and split it in four pieces, and gave each family one piece." (Bell, 168.)

After the rescue, George returned with his father to his home in Bountiful. He celebrated his 18th birthday in December. On New Year's Day in 1867, George married Lucy Curtis Spencer. Lucy died less than a year later, and it appears that George never remarried. He died on August 5, 1873 at the age of 35.

Sources: Archer, Patience Loader Rozsa, *Recollections of Past Days*, edited by Sandra Ailey Petree, Utah State University Press, 2006; Bell, Stella Jaques, *Life History and Writings of John Jaques, Including a Diary of the Martin Handcart Company*, 1978; Jones, Albert, address to Handcart Veterans Association, Oct. 4, 1906 (available on Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel Database website).

<sup>1</sup>Although George W. Grant is one of four rescuers named by Patience Loader and John Jaques, there were other rescuers helping the Martin Company immigrants across the river on November 4, 1856. The statues represent the service of all of these men.