

## **They Crossed the Plains with a Handcart (1856)**

By Laural Bushman Published 11/27/2002 Richins Family , Deveraux Family

### Preface

During the summer of 1855, Elder Edmund Ellsworth, who was serving a mission in England, received a letter from President Brigham Young asking if he would lead a company of Saints to cross the plains on foot. (Walker, p44)

On 29 October 1855 the First Presidency issued the Thirteenth General Epistle, regarding immigration to Zion: "The [Perpetual Emigrating] Fund is designed to deliver the honest poor, the pauper, if you please, from the thralldom of ages...Let all the Saints who can, gather up for Zion...Let them come on foot, with handcarts ...[Thereby] the main expense of the immigration will be avoided, consequently thousands more than heretofore can receive assistance." (Walker, p45) By this means of travel, the emigrants could journey from Liverpool, England to Salt Lake City for about forty-five dollars. (Berrett, p280)

Latter-Day-Saint Elders in England, instead of returning directly home, were informed that they were to aid those who planned to emigrate during the coming season. In March of 1856, Elder Ellsworth was with 529 Saints that embarked on the sailing ship Enoch Train. They set sail at Liverpool bound for Boston. This was the first group that would travel with the aide of the Perpetual Immigration Fund and cross the plains with handcarts. (Walker, p45)

-----

### The Enoch Train

#### Deveraux and Richins Families

Also on the Enoch Train were five of my ancestors, John and Ester Deveraux, their daughter Harriet, her husband Thomas Richins and their 1-year-old son, Albert Franklin. Fifteen years previously, the Deveraux family had been baptized by Apostle Wilford Woodruff in a small pond on the John Benbow farm in Herefordshire. They had been among the 600 members of the United Brethren converted by Apostle Woodruff. When Harriet was 13, she was baptized on 30 July 1846 by Elder William Webb. (Fischio) Thomas Richins was baptized, at age 24, on 1 Jan 1850 at Sheepscomb, Gloucestershire. (Richins, p5)

Ester Deveraux was 60 years old and in poor health when she left England and had been advised not to start on such a long journey. But, her faith was so strong that she said she would rather die on the way to Zion than not to make the attempt. When the ship was about ten days out, Ester passed away from consumption and was buried in the sea. (Fischio; Mormon Immigration Index)

### Warburton Family

In January 1856, two months before the ship Enoch Train set sail, John and Betty Warburton, with their six-year-old son Edward (Teddy), had left Yorkshire and sailed on a cargo ship through the canals of Lancashire and into the Irish Sea. Their plans were to sail to Liverpool where they would join with a group of Saints that would then sail to America.

Betty was expecting a baby and on the 2nd day of their journey, as they were going through The Channel, she became ill. Unable to obtain medical help, she died from complications of her pregnancy. Because the ship was then far out at sea, she was wrapped in canvas and lowered into the waters. John and Teddy were devastated as they watched their beloved wife and mother buried in the Irish Sea. Before her death, Betty made John promise that he would continue on to Zion. (Proctor)

Two days later, when John and his son reached Liverpool, they learned the ship they were supposed to have sailed on had left the day before. John was in despair until, he ran into some old missionary friends and they arranged for him and his son to sail on the ship Independence with church leaders and missionaries that were returning home. (Proctor)

Note: This is the reason John and Edward Warburton are not found in the Mormon Immigration Index.

It was the end of February 1856 when they landed in New York. John and Teddy stayed close to the church where John was able to find work and earn enough to care for their needs. A few months later, with another group of Saints, they boarded the Rock Island Railroad in New York and took the North Western route through Chicago to Iowa City. There were coach cars on the train but the Mormon immigrants rode in the boxcars. (Proctor)

The Enoch Train

After five weeks and five days on the ocean, the ship Enoch Train landed at Boston Constitution Wharf on 1 May 1856. The immigrants then went to New York by boat and rail, and by train to Rock Island, Illinois. Crossing the Mississippi River on a boat, they then boarded a train of boxcars. The cars had no seats; the travelers had to sit on their trunks and baggage and had no room to lie down at night. They reached Iowa City late at night on May 12 and had to walk four miles to the camp. The next five weeks were spent making handcarts and preparing for their journey across the plains. (Fischio; Walker, p45)

-----  
Iowa City

When John and his son reached Iowa City they found old friends from Yorkshire and new friends from other parts of England. They joined with the Edmund Ellsworth group where they met Thomas and Harriet Richins and John Deveraux. John Deveraux was 56 years old, Thomas was 30, Harriet was 22 and their little son, Albert, was 16 months. John Warburton was 33 and Teddy had just turned 7. (Proctor)

The handcarts were made of hickory and oak with axles of strong hickory or iron. The shafts were six feet long with three or four cross bars from the back part to the front. There was a space of four feet for the lead person to pull the cart. Canvas was stretched over the crossbars or boards, which was topped by a box frame three or four feet long and eight inches high. This cart held all the family's belongings. (Fischio)

John Warburton was a great help in building the handcarts and getting them into shape. He had experience as a wheelwright and was a healthy, strong man. Though not large in stature, he had a great will to work. He also helped to repair the handcarts during the journey. Every tiny bit of oil and grease was important to keep them from drying out and falling apart, especially the wheels. They were built of wood to keep the carts as light as

possible for the people to pull them. Thomas Richins, who was a blacksmith by trade, also contributed much to the success of the trek. (Proctor)

According to the Walker article, the members of the company were given one tent and four handcarts to twenty persons. However, in John Warburton's life sketch it says that John and his son were issued a handcart of their own but they shared it with the Richins family. Harriet Richins wanted badly to take along her rocking chair. Her sewing machine was allowed in the supply wagon because sewing machines were in short supply in the valley. (Proctor)

To each company of twenty handcarts, there would be two or three covered wagons drawn by a span of oxen, a few milk cows and some beef cattle. The herd boys, who included Teddy Warburton, cared for the animals. The boys' shoes wore out rapidly and after a few patchings they took burlap to wrap their feet in when the going was rough. They seldom complained. (Fischio; Proctor)

Mary Ann Jones, another member of the Ellsworth Company, wrote: "We left Iowa City 9 June 1856 and traveled to Florence, leaving there 16 July. The handcarts were flimsy and were continually breaking down...Our company [Edmund Ellsworth, captain] consisted of 274 members, the other passengers of the ship were in the second company [Daniel McArthur, captain]. We traveled from ten to twenty eight miles each day." (Walker, p45)

The ox teams started with them in the morning but would be from one to three hours behind getting into camp at night. The Ellsworth Company was a happy group and had little misfortune. There were four babies born, two died and one mother. All was good with them if the babies came in the night while they were in camp. But if they came in the daytime, the carts and wagons would just keep rolling along. Sometimes the supply wagons would have two mothers to care for at one time. (Fischio)

When the Saints would die along the way, they would dress and prepare the bodies, wrap them in blankets or canvas and dig a shallow grave in the evening. The next morning a short service would be held and the company would go on. Two or three men would stay behind to finish the burial and often John Warburton would be called upon to perform this service. They would say an extra prayer that the Indians or wild animals would not molest the grave and also leave a message for those coming on behind. (Proctor)

Provisions became scarce so they were put on rations, one pint of flour per person per day. This they cooked as best they could. One day Harriet mixed too much water with the flour and all they could do was drink it. One time Thomas was so hungry he cut pieces of rawhide from the cart to eat. (Hilton)

Harriet told how a band of Indians came into their camp. One of the Indian squaws who had a papoose saw a hungry pioneer woman trying to nurse a little undernourished baby. The Indian mother felt so sorry for them she took the baby in her arms and nursed it. However, it made the baby sick because it was not used to such rich milk. (Fischio)

The travelers did have some meat. Occasionally a deer or elk was served out and once Brother Ellsworth killed a cow. On the sixth of August they saw thousands of buffalo. Four were shot. The next day their hungry appetites were satisfied with buffalo meat, but they had to dig for water and it was very thick. A few days later, all or most of them had bad diarrhea or purging. They didn't know whether it was the buffalo meat or the muddy river water that caused it. (Fischio)

Mary Ann Jones, wrote:

"Some stomachs may reject a supper cooked with water taken from a buffalo wallow and on a fire of buffalo chips, but to us the food was good...A very remarkable thing happened while we were at the Platte River. One of the oxen used to pull the wagons, died. Brother Ellsworth asked the brethren what could be done. Should we place a cow in the team? One brother said; Look, Brother Ellsworth, at that steer on the hill...The animal worked as well as the others. When we were within two days of Salt Lake City we met some wagons sent with provisions to help us the remainder of the way. The next morning, when gathering animals, that steer was gone. After hunting for him for several hours Brother Ellsworth said, the Lord loaned him to us for as long as we needed him." (Walker, p47)

-----  
"The Handcart Song"

They traveled through dust storms, electrical storms, and bright sun that sunburned and baked them. To keep their spirits up as they traveled they would sing:

"The Handcart Song"

Ye Saints that dwell on Europe's shores,  
Prepare yourselves with many more  
To leave behind your native land  
For sure God's Judgments are at hand.  
Prepare to cross the stormy main  
Before you do the valley gain  
And with the faithful make a start  
To cross the plains with your handcart.

Chorus:

Some must push and some must pull  
As we go marching up the hill,  
As merrily on the way we go  
Until we reach the valley, ho. (Walker, p49)

They camped about nineteen miles from Fort Laramie and there they had plenty of wood to burn. It was quite a treat after burning nothing but buffalo chips for so long. (Fischio)

On 18 September 1856, while the handcarts of the Ellsworth Company were traveling up the hill west of Green River, they were surprised to suddenly come upon seventeen missionaries bound for Great Britain and other locations. Thomas Bullock, one of the missionaries, wrote,

When reaching Fort Bridger and the mountains, the way became harder and they could not make as good a time. However, knowing that they must go through the mountains before reaching the promised valley, they pressed on. (Proctor)

After almost four months of weary traveling, having been delayed by sickness and deaths and the breaking down of handcarts, which were made of unseasoned lumber, the Edmund Ellsworth Company reached Salt Lake on the 26th of September 1856. The company was met in Emigration Canyon by Brigham Young, the Nauvoo Band, and a large number of Saints. They were given a hearty welcome. Harriet used to tell of them bringing watermelons to them on their arrival. (Fischio; Walker, p49) What a joyous day that would

have been for Thomas and Harriet Richins to finally reach their destination after traveling such a long and difficult journey from their home in England. But, for the two Johns who had both buried their wives in the sea, it must have been bittersweet.

Church Emigration publications give the following report of their arrival in the Salt Lake Valley:

"In the evening of September 25th, 1856, it was reported that Captain Edmund Ellsworth's company was encamped at Willow Springs for the night. Consequently, on the 26th, Presidents Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Daniel H. Wells and many other citizens in carriages and several ladies and gentlemen on horseback, with a part of Captain H. B. Clawson's company of lancers, and the brass bands under Captain William Pitt left the President's office at 9:00 AM with the view of meeting them back of the Little Mountain.

President Young ordered the party to halt until the handcarts should arrive, and with President Kimball drove to meet them. Soon the anxiously expected train came into sight led by Captain Ellsworth on foot, and with two aged veterans pulling the front cart, followed by a long line of carts attended by the old, middle-aged, and young of both sexes.

When they were opposite the escorting party, a halt was called and their captain introduced the newcomers to Presidents Young and Kimball. This followed by joyous greetings of relatives and friends, and an unexpected treat of watermelons. While thus regaling, Captain Daniel D. McArthur came up with his handcart company, they having traveled that day from the east of Big Mountain.

From the place of halting to the public square in the Sixteenth Ward the following order of march was observed, under the supervision of Captain Clawson: 1. lancers, 2. ladies on horseback, 3. Presidents Young, Kimball, and Wells carriages, 4. the bands, 5. Captains Ellsworth and McArthur companies, 6. citizens in carriages and on horseback.

The line of march was scarcely taken up before it began to be met by men, women, and children on foot, on horses, and in wagons, thronging out to see and welcome the first handcart companies and the numbers rapidly increased until the living tide lined and thronged South Temple Street.

The procession reached the Sixteenth Ward Square about sunset, when the lancers, bands, and carriages formed in a line facing the line of handcarts; and after a few remarks by President Young, accompanied by his blessings, the spectators and escort retired, and the companies pitched their tents at the end of a 1,300 mile walk." (Fischio)

Mary Ann Jones described their arrival: "It was a day never to be forgotten. We had reached our goal, traveling on foot all of the way....We had left comfortable homes, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and friends, all for our testimony of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and for the privilege of hearing a prophet's voice and to live with the Saints of God." (Walker, p48)

Of the 274 people who embarked upon the journey of the Ellsworth Company, 13 persons died from consumption, diarrhea, and whooping cough, except for the death of Henry Walker who was killed by lightning. (Walker, p48)

Thomas and Harriet found a little one room dugout in the foothills, on the East Bench of Salt Lake Valley to live in and John and his son stayed with them just long enough to help

build on an extra room and a lean-to. Thomas' brother, John Richins, his wife, and their baby, were following in the Willie Handcart Company and would need a place to live when they arrived. That company, unfortunately, started too late in the season and got caught in mountain blizzards in Wyoming. When they arrived in Salt Lake they were in need of much help. (Proctor)

The Richins family stayed in Salt Lake for five years until they were called by President Brigham Young to move south and help settle Goshen, Utah County. Thomas engaged in farming and worked at his trade as a blacksmith. (Proctor)

John and Teddy Warburton stayed in Salt Lake until the following March when President Young issued John a quarter section of land in the northeast part of Battle Creek, Utah County, now known as Pleasant Grove. They moved to Battle Creek where John built a small adobe house in the fort. (Proctor)

On 10 Jun 1857, John Deveraux married a widow named Mrs. Ann Perkins Price. (Ancestral File) In the 1870 Federal Census Records, John is listed as age 65, living in a community called Newton in Utah County, with a wife named Anne who was 60. He was a farmer, owned personal estate worth \$200 and property valued at \$275. He could read and write and his birthplace was England. It may be that President Young also issued John Deveraux a piece of land.

Twenty years later in 1876, Edward (Ted) Warburton married Alice Mirenta Richins, a daughter of Thomas and Harriet Richins that had not yet been born when they crossed the plains together. Ted and Alice were my great grandparents.

Note: There is a discrepancy between English records and American records regarding John Deveraux's birth date. English records have him born in 1800 while American records list his birth as 1805.

-----

## Bibliography

Berrett, William Edwin. The Restored Church. Thirteenth edition, Deseret Book Company, 1965. Salt Lake City, Utah.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints. Ancestral File. Copyright 1987, August 1993.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints. Mormon Immigration Index. CD-Rom published by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. Copyright 2000.

Fischio, Afton Gene Richins. "A Short History of Thomas Richins and his wife Harriet Deveraux." Unpublished, 1982.

Hilton, Gladys Richins. "Biography of Thomas Richins," written for Daughters of Utah Pioneers. Unpublished, no date.

Proctor, Eva Mirenta Warburton. "The Life Sketch of John Warburton and Betty Sunderland and son, Edward Warburton." Unpublished, no date.

Richins, Hazel. "Richard Richins and Charlotte Priscilla Wager." 2000 edition, Richins Surname Association. Family Heritage Series website: [www.familyheritageseries.org](http://www.familyheritageseries.org).

Walker, Newell R. "They Walked 1,300 Miles," Ensign, July 2000 , pp 44-49. Salt Lake Distribution Center. Salt Lake City, Utah.

NOTE: This history taken from "Family Heritage Series", found at:

<http://www.familyheritageseries.org/site/categories/Histories/Richins-Family/>