

# EDMUND WEEKS DAVIS & JANE ANTIONETTE JUSTIT DAVIS

Edmund Weeks Davis was born December 12, 1823 in Breeds or (Brede) Sussex, England, to Thomas L. and Mary Weeks Davis. Edmund was taught the gospel and was baptized on November 11, 1853. He married Antionette Justet on May 10, 1870 in the Endowment House. He died May 7, 1906.



Antoinette Justet, was born February 18, 1840, in Pinarsha, Piedmont, Italy. Her parents were Daniel Justet and Jane (Jeanne) Rostan. She was baptized a member of the church on October 10, 1868, in Manti, Utah. She married Edmund Weeks Davis on May 10, 1870, in the Endowment House.



There is no information about Edmund's life until he was 32 years of age when in 1856 he and his brother Elias and Elias' wife, Ann Jones Davis, came to America.

After many delays, they sailed from a Port in Liverpool, England on May 25, 1856 on the ship Horizon. This ship was built in 1858 at Ellsworth, Maine. It weighed 1,775 tons and was 200' x 42' x 21'. The vessel was commanded by Captain William Reed from Chelsea, Massachusetts. He was a mariner of considerable experience and part owner. Elder Edward Martin presided over 856 Mormon emigrants. He was assisted by Elder Jesse Haven and George P. Waugh.

After 26 days on the seas, the Horizon arrived in Boston on June 26, 1856. The emigrants then traveled by rail to Iowa City. Most of the saints were poor, 635 having been financed by the perpetual Emigration Fund. Edmund was most likely one that could not afford to travel by wagon and so he joined the newly formed Martin Handcart Company, His brother Elias and his wife traveled with the Hunt Wagon Train.

The handcart company left Iowa City on July 28, 1856 with 576 people, 146 handcarts and 7 wagons. They arrived in Florence, Nebraska in August. Here they were advised to wait until spring before continuing on to Salt Lake.

A sub-captain of the Martin Company, Levi Savage, advised them to not cross the mountains so late in the season. When he was outvoted he said, "Brethren and sisters, what I have said I know to be true; but seeing you are to go forward, I will go with you, will help you

all I can, will work with you, will rest with you, will suffer with you, and, if necessary, I will die with you. May God in his mercy bless and preserve us." Prophetic words.

They left Florence, Nebraska, on August 27, 1856 bound for the Salt Lake Valley. The Willie Company was two weeks ahead of them. On October 19, 1856 a snowstorm caught the Willie Company at the Sweetwater River in central Wyoming. This same storm caught the Martin Company on the North Platte River near Casper, Wyoming.

By the time the Martin Handcart Company reached Devil's Gate there were twelve hundred people assembled there. Snow storms and severely cold weather continued to torment the saints. Men and cattle were dying. Supplies were inadequate. They had to find shelter and wood to burn so they loaded the sick and dying people in wagons and moved along the Sweetwater and crossed to a depression later known as Martin's Cove about two and a half miles from Devil's Gate.

It was here that the saints experienced much suffering and many died. A very good book giving the account of the Martin, Willie Handcart Companies is "Handcarts to Zion 1856 - 1860" by LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen.

When word of the saints plight reached Brigham Young he immediately sent a rescue party for them. They finally arrived in Salt Lake City on November 30, 1856. Out of 576 saints, between 135 -150 had died.

Edmund's brother Elias, was 44 years of age when they left England He died on September 21, 1856, on the Platte River, 58 miles past Fort Kearney, with Dysentery. The following was recorded about him in "Emigrating Journals of the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies and the Hunt and Hodgett Wagon trains" by Lynne Slater Turner, on page 177: "Brother Elias Davis departed this life at 3:45 p.m., age 44 years, leaving a wife. He was highly respected by those who knew him. He was buried the same evening by the roadside." His wife, Ann, died at Devil's Gate, Wyoming on November 7, 1867. She passed away shortly after help arrived from the Salt Lake Valley. Edmund was the only member of his family to have made it to Salt Lake.

After arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, he journeyed on to Panguitch, Garfield County, Utah. There he married Jemina Whitechurch on August 17, 1867. Jemina was born September 7, 1829 in Britton, Glouster, England to Henry Whitechurch and Nancy Jeffries. She died May 5, 1891 in Escalante, Garfield, County. Edmund and Jemina did not have any children.

Edmund married Antoinette Justet in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City on May 10, 1870. He was 46 years old and Antoinette was 30. There is no record of how Edmund and Antoinette met. They lived in Panguitch until December 1876 when they moved to Escalante, to help settle that area. They had six children. Their third child Bertha Ann was my grandmother.

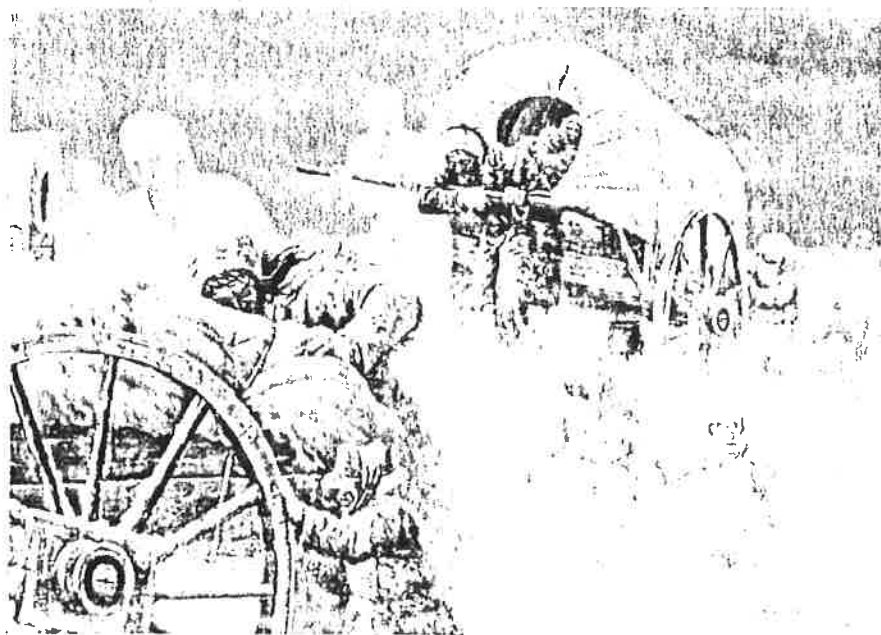
Edmund died on May 7, 1906 at the age of 83. Antoinette died July 30, 1923. They are buried in the Escalante City Cemetery.

There is no written history about Edmund's life. He probably didn't want to talk about the tragedy of that winter of 1856. But he, along with many others, were faithful members of the Church and obeyed the commandment to gather to Salt Lake Valley. They relied on the Lord and in doing so their testimonies grew.

Of all the illustrations of faith in the Lord, few stories are more powerful than that told of the pioneer who years later stood to defend their decision to start for Salt Lake so late in the year. In a Sunday School class there was sharp criticism of the ill-fated Martin and Willie Handcart Companies. An elderly man arose and said;

*"I ask you to stop this criticism. You are discussing a matter you know nothing about. Cold historic facts give no proper interpretation of the questions involved. Mistake to send the Handcart Company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that company and my wife too. We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but we became acquainted with God in our extremities.*

*I have pulled my handcart when I was so weak and weary from illness and lack of food that I could hardly put one foot ahead of the other. I have looked ahead and seen a patch of sand or a hill slope and I have said, I can go that far and there I must give up, for I cannot pull the load through it. I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it, the cart began pushing me. I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart, but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the angels of God were there.*



*When The Angels Come*  
Cliff Bailey Inc.

*Was I sorry that I chose to come by handcart? No. Neither then nor any minute of my life since. The price we paid to become acquainted with God was a privilege to pay, and I am thankful that I was privileged to come in the Martin Handcart Company."*

This man could have been Edmund Weeks Davis, as it could have been all the other saints that traveled with the handcart companies. Surely they all experienced the same thoughts, suffered from the same exposure and starvation, and had the same feelings of giving up. But their faith kept them going and made their testimonies strong.