

**Crossing the Sweetwater**  
By Solomon F. Kimball

The following incident is an example from Church history of three young men who lived the second great commandment. It happened when the Martin handcart company was coming to Utah in 1856. They were caught in severe winter storms, mud and snow froze to their clothing, and many died.

One account gives details of the rescue: "When the people who were drawing carts came to the brink of this treacherous stream [the Sweetwater], they refused to go any further, realizing what it meant to do so, as the water in places was almost waist deep, and the river more than a hundred feet wide by actual measurement. To cross that mountain torrent under such conditions to them meant nothing short of suicide, as it will be remembered that nearly one-sixth of their number had already perished from the effects of crossing North Platte, eighteen days before. They believed that no earthly power could bring them through that place alive, and reasoned that if they had to die it was useless to add to their suffering by the perpetration of such a rash act as crossing the river here. They had walked hundreds of miles over an almost trackless plain, pulling carts as they went, and after making such tremendous sacrifices for the cause of truth, to lay down their lives in such a dreadful manner was awful to contemplate. They became alarmed, and cried mightily unto the Lord for help, but received no answer. All the warring elements of nature appeared to be against them, and the spirit of death itself seemed to be in the very air.

"After they had given up in despair, after all hopes had vanished, after every apparent avenue of escape seemed closed, three eighteen-year-old boys belonging to the relief party came to the rescue, and to the astonishment of all who saw, carried nearly every member of that ill-fated handcart company across the snowbound stream. The strain was so terrible, and the exposure so great, that in later years all the boys died from the effects of it. When President Brigham Young heard of this heroic act, he wept like a child, and later declared publicly, `that act alone will ensure C. Allen Huntington, George W. Grant and David P. Kimball an everlasting salvation in the Celestial Kingdom of God, worlds without end'" (Improvement Era, Feb. 1914, p. 288).