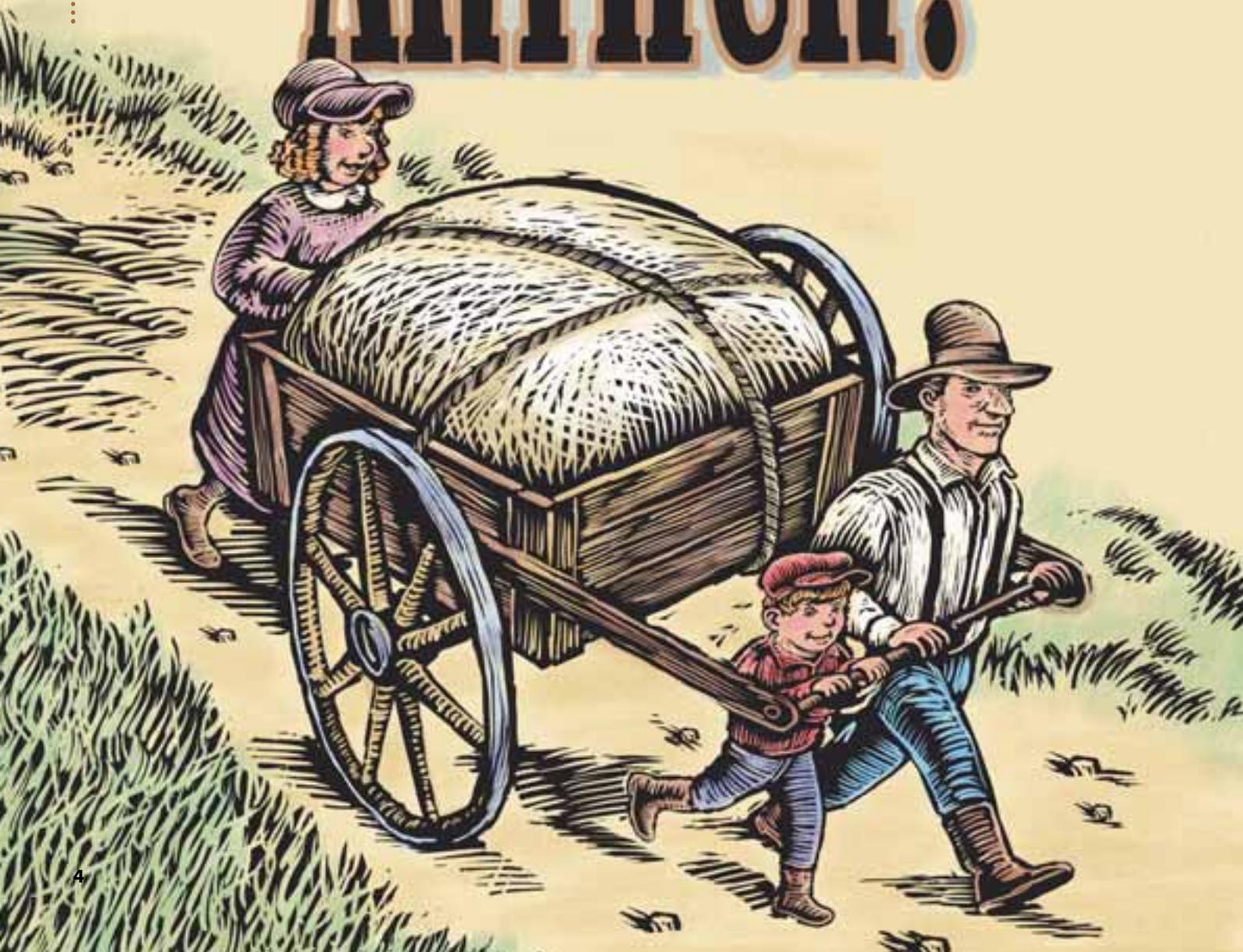


WHERE'S ARTHUR?





BY WILLIAM G. HARTLEY

(Based on the experiences of Arthur Parker; taken from historical sources)

Without faith there cannot be any hope (Moroni 7:42).

Arthur Parker walked and walked and walked. Even though he was only six years old, he sometimes helped his mother and father pull their loaded handcart. When everybody stopped to rest, he liked to explore. He wandered around to see other people, the prairie grass, a stream, or a grove of trees.

Arthur had one brother and two sisters: Max, 12; Martha Ann, 10; and Ada, 1. The Parkers had sailed from England to America that spring. Now they were traveling west with the McArthur Handcart Company. As Max helped his parents pull the handcart, Martha Ann walked behind, taking care of Arthur and Ada.

But one day Arthur's father became ill. Martha Ann took his place helping to pull the handcart and sent Arthur to walk with a group of other children in the company. When Arthur sat down to rest beside the trail and fell asleep, the other children didn't notice. The company moved on without him.

By the time Arthur's family discovered that he was missing, it was too late and too dark to go looking for him. That night, the cloudy sky burst open. Thunder and lightning raged, and many tents blew over. Water ran across the ground in streams as people huddled in wet clothes. All night long, the Parkers worried about Arthur, lost out in the stormy darkness. They hoped somebody would bring him to their tent, but no one did.

The next morning, search parties went back along

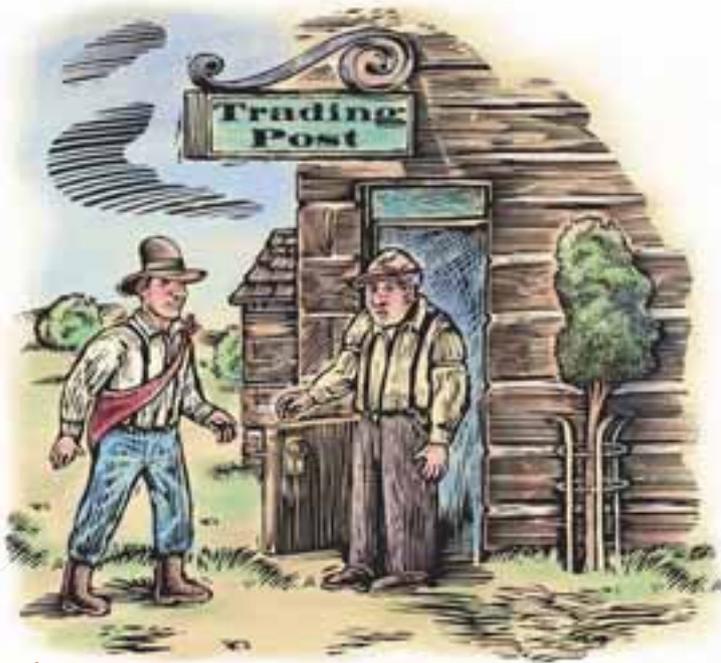
the trail to look for Arthur. The handcarts stayed camped all day so the searchers could continue looking. Where was the little boy? Was he hurt in the thunderstorm?

After searching for two days, the company could not wait any longer. They had more than a thousand miles left to go.

Arthur's parents didn't give up hope. They decided that Brother Parker would go farther back along the trail to look for Arthur, while Sister Parker and the other children would stay with the company and pull the handcart.

Before Brother Parker left, his wife pinned a bright red shawl around his shoulders. If he found Arthur dead, he would wrap him in the shawl. But if he found Arthur alive, he would wear the shawl on his shoulders or hold it in his hand to signal that Arthur was all right.





The worried father retraced the trail—calling Arthur’s name, searching everywhere he could, and praying. He walked and searched for 10 miles, determined not to leave without finding his son.

Meanwhile, the handcart company moved ahead. Two days went by. Sister Parker kept looking back anxiously, hoping to see her husband and son catching up with them.

At last, Brother Parker came to a mail-and-trading station. He asked if anyone had seen a lost six-year-old boy. Someone said that a boy had been found! He was being cared for by a farmer and his wife. Arthur’s father went to the farmhouse and found his son. How glad they were to see each other!

Arthur told his father that he had spent the first night under some trees, which protected him from the rain-storm. Then he had wandered until he came to the farmhouse. Brother Parker figured out that Arthur had walked about nine miles!

The handcart company was now 60 miles past where Arthur had disappeared. Arthur had been missing for four days, and his mother had hardly slept at all since

then. She kept watching the trail behind her, looking for her husband, hoping he would be waving the red shawl.

A few days later, as the sun was setting, she suddenly spotted the red shawl waving in the distance. Arthur was alive! Captain McArthur sent a wagon back to meet the father and son. Everyone in the company rejoiced to see Arthur, but no one felt as happy as his mother. Completely exhausted, she slept soundly for the first time in days.

The Parkers continued on their journey. Arthur kept walking, singing, and exploring—but he stayed a little closer to his parents. Each night, they hugged him a little tighter. ●

William G. Hartley is a member of the Riverside Third Ward, Murray Utah North Stake.



“There was little that [the pioneers] could carry with them . . . , but each wagon and handcart was heavily laden with faith . . . that God knew where they were going and that He would see them through.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “You Have Nothing to Fear from the Journey,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 60.