

# DATA SHEET

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Wyoming
COUNTY:	Natrona
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	MAR 8 1977

### 1. NAME

COMMON:  
Martin's Cove

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Martin's Cove, Martin's Ravine

### 2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: SW 1/2 Section 27, S 1/2 NW 1/2 Section 27; SE 1/2 Section 28, S 1/2 NE 1/2 Section 28, T29N R87W *W of Casper*

CITY OR TOWN: *Casper* CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: First

STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Wyoming	56	Natrona	025

### 3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

### 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
United States Government; administered by Bureau of Land Management

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Federal Building, 2120 Capitol Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Cheyenne STATE: Wyoming CODE: 56

### 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Natrona County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:  
City and County Building

CITY OR TOWN: Casper STATE: Wyoming CODE: 56

### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

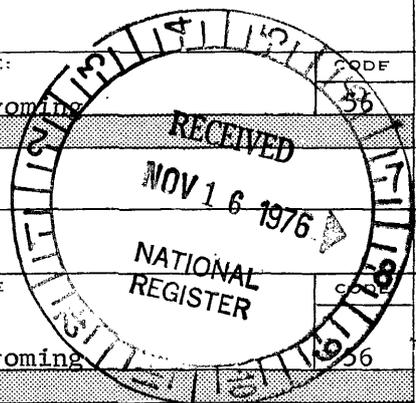
TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Wyoming Recreation Commission, Survey of Historic Sites, Markers and Mon.

DATE OF SURVEY: 1967; revised 1973     Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Wyoming Recreation Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
604 E. 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN: Cheyenne STATE: Wyoming CODE: 56



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: COUNTY: ENTRY NUMBER: DATE: FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Martin's Cove is located in central Wyoming about sixty miles west-southwest of the city of Casper and a little over a mile north of the line separating Natrona County from Carbon County to the south. At an altitude of just over 6000 feet the cove is part of an elevated Rocky Mountain-High Plains valley cut by the meandering, eastward flowing Sweetwater River. A great length of the valley is bounded on the north by the Granite Range, or the Sweetwater Rocks as the range is also called. Although the Granite Range is not particularly high compared to other Rocky Mountain ranges it has the impressive appearance of a steep rock wall rising up between 1000 and 2000 feet from the valley floor. The highest point in the Sweetwater Rocks is Savage Peak at an elevation of 7843 feet, but the hills which border Martin's Cove on three sides are almost 1000 feet lower in elevation. At the base of these hills is the cove, a south-facing cirque sloping toward the Sweetwater River.

Ten miles south of the Sweetwater are the Ferris Mountains, whose highest peaks reach well beyond 9000 feet in elevation. Five miles southwest are the Sentinel Rocks, outcroppings of the Granite Range comparable to the main range north of the Sweetwater. Three miles east of Martin's Cove the Sweetwater has carved an impressive, narrow canyon through the Granite Range at a place called Devils Gate, and from there enters upon a wide plain which is the eastern end of the river valley. About 15 miles east of Martin's Cove the river empties into Pathfinder Reservoir. West of the cove the river valley is not as wide as it is east of Devils Gate, yet it provides an easy gradient or pathway through flanking mountain ranges for travelers heading west in the general direction of South Pass at the southern end of the Wind River Range.

Martin's Cove probably has seen very little change in nearly 120 years which have passed since handcart emigrants sought refuge within it. Pines and cedars dot the walls of granite surrounding it, just as they did at the time they were sought for firewood by emigrants on the Oregon Trail. Sagebrush is the dominant type of vegetation found on the sand hillocks within the cove, and has been from the time the Sweetwater Valley was first seen by white men. Along the bottomland of the river sage is met by grass meadows that provide grazing for the stock of today's ranchers just as they did for the stock of Oregon Trail emigrants. An unimproved road or jeep trail enters the southwest part of the cove, branching from a ranch road north of the river. With the exception of the latter the cove shows little sign of human intrusion or development. It is grazing land, and as such is part of the Sun Ranch livestock operation. Further investigation is needed before the campsite and graves of the Martin Handcart Company of 1856 can be located within the cove.

For the handcart emigrants of the winter of 1856 Martin's Cove was eight miles west of Independence Rock, or three miles west of Devils Gate. It

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **November 4-November 9, 1856**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

"Walking across the plains and mountains of western America" wrote historians LeRoy and Ann Hafen, "was no novelty in the days before the coming of the railroad. Bullwhackers regularly tramped beside their yoked cattle on the Santa Fe Trail; and the covered wagon emigrants, who first rutted the Oregon Trail, often trudged beside their monotonous rolling wagons. Gold seekers to California, and to other eldorados, sometimes carried their worldly goods flung over their shoulders. The Mormons who pioneered the route to the Salt Lake Valley and those who trekked after them, walked much of the way beside the ox-drawn trains.

But never had handcarts been employed as means of transport for an entire emigrant company.

In these words the Hafens point out the unique aspect of handcart emigration to the West in the years 1856-1860. Uniqueness, however, cannot always be equated with historical significance. The significance of the handcart emigration should be determined in relation to the mass movement of people to the American West during the mid-nineteenth century. The significance of the westward movement of men, animals, material goods and ideas, in turn, relates to the expansion and settlement of a country. Surely the collective journey of almost 3000 men, women and children who traversed plains and mountains, pulling handcarts for 1300 miles from the Mississippi River to the Great Salt Lake, was a physical and mental feat worthy of recognition. But that feat is part of the story of a longer period of heavy migration over a central overland route called the Oregon Trail, one which took place mainly from 1841 to 1862. During that period the flow of covered wagon emigrants and goldseekers was joined by mule pack trains, and by stagecoaches carrying mail, newspapers, payrolls and passengers. For the short period of about 18 months the Pony Express used the same route until replaced by the first transcontinental telegraph. The handcart migration is not an isolated event, but is tied to the past, to the work of mountainmen explorers who laid out the overland route which became the Oregon Trail. It is also tied to a later era during

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

See Addendum

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° 15' 27"	° 27' 37"		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° 14' 15"	° 27' 35"				
SE	° 14' 15"	° 26' 56"				
SW	° 15' 27"	° 26' 57"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 480 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
Mark Junge, Historian

ORGANIZATION: Wyoming Recreation Commission DATE: 3/23/75

STREET AND NUMBER:  
604 E. 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN: Cheyenne STATE: Wyoming CODE: 56

**12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name <u>Paul H. Hestadt</u></p> <p>Title <u>Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer</u></p> <p>Date <u>September 29, 1976</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> CHIEF, Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date <u>3/8/77</u></p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date <u>3/8/77</u></p>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

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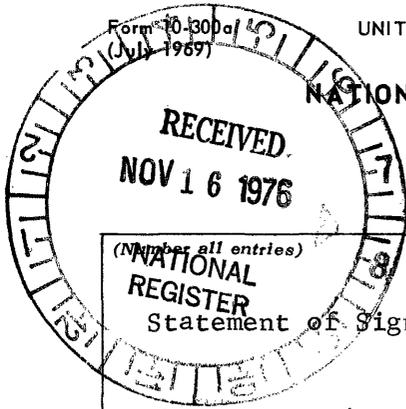
STATE Wyoming	
COUNTY Natrona	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER MAR 8	DATE 1977

(Number all entries)

Statement of Physical Appearance - 2

was fifteen miles east of Split Rock further up the Sweetwater, and 325 miles east of their destination- the Great Salt Lake. The first three sites are prominent natural landmarks along the Sweetwater River segment of the Oregon Trail, and among the most significant historic landmarks along the entire length of that pioneer route. For today's westward-bound traveler who parallels the trail, Martin's Cove is also eight miles west of Independence Rock. Leaving State Highway 220 about three miles west of the rock, the traveler can turn north onto the Sun Ranch Road, or old State Highway 220, and follow that road two miles west to the Sun Ranch at Devils Gate. From the Sun Ranch headquarters he can continue to follow the same road for just over two miles to a native stone monument located on the north side of the road. The monument was erected in 1933 to the memory of handcart emigrants who perished in an early winter storm in October and November, 1856. One mile north of the marker, across the Sweetwater River, is Martin's Cove.





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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NATIONAL REGISTER  
Statement of Significance - 2

which new modes of transportation were developed, constituting vast improvements in speed and travel comfort.

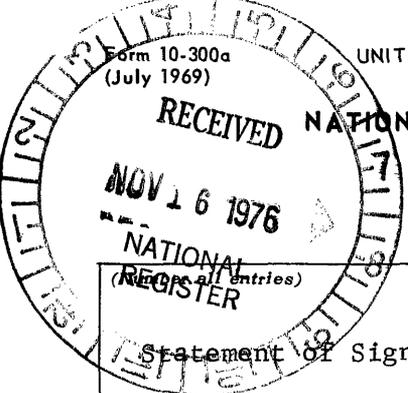
Founded in 1830, Mormonism is a missionary religion that has gathered to itself many converts. An especially productive field of mission work in the mid-nineteenth century was England. From that country thousands of converts proceeded to America, hoping to begin a new life in the Zion located on the shores of the Great Salt Lake. Some of the English emigrants were converts; many had been Mormons for years, and were some of the oldest members of that body in Britain. Many were also poor, and upon arriving in America could not afford to purchase a wagon and team for transportation to the West. In order to provide them the means to reach Salt Lake the Mormon Church devised a plan whereby, following their arrival in Iowa City just west of the Mississippi River, companies of emigrants could walk to their new homes in the Great Basin Kingdom, pulling behind them in two-wheeled carts their supplies and a few worldly goods. Three such handcart companies made the trip in 1856, two of them arriving in Salt Lake City on September 26 and another on October 2. The Fourth and Fifth companies were the last two handcart groups to cross the plains in 1856, experiencing terrible hardships because they made the trip too late that year. The first delay occurred in England where difficulty in obtaining ships and making arrangements for the passage of the emigrants, clamor for passage to America, and perhaps, also, human miscalculation accounted for lateness in departure.

On May 3 the ship Thornton left Liverpool with 764 Mormons aboard and on May 25 the Horizon departed with 856 Mormons. A month's voyage across the Atlantic brought the emigrants to Boston, and it was another month before they reached the camp a few miles northwest of Iowa City that was the outfitting point for the journey across the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains. For various reasons handcarts for these companies were not ready on time, causing further delay. When the trip was finally begun the emigrants were divided into two companies: one was under the leadership of Captain James G. Willie and contained 500 souls, 120 handcarts, 5 wagons, 24 oxen, and 95 beef cattle and cows; the other was under Captain Edward Martin and contained 576 souls, 146 handcarts, 7 wagons, 30 oxen, and 50 cows and beef cattle. Three members of Martin's company were veterans of the campaign of Waterloo and were between 75 and 80 years of age, and more than half the company was between the ages of 35 and 55, which meant that the company was not a young group. Behind the handcart companies were two ox trains: Captain W.B. Hodgett's 33-wagon company carrying 185 passengers, 187 oxen, cows and beef cattle; and John A. Hunt's train of 50 wagons, 297 oxen, beef cattle and cows, and carrying 200 emigrants.

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Statement of Significance - 3

The 275 mile trip from Iowa City to Florence, Nebraska located on the west side of the Missouri River was made in good weather, along good roads, and took four weeks. While at Florence the companies hesitated to repair hand-carts and to consider traveling across the plains and mountains so late in the year. John Chislett, a sub-captain of the Willie Company wrote:

The elders seemed to be divided in their judgment as to the practicality of our reaching Utah in safety at so late a season of the year, and the idea was entertained for a day or two of making our winter quarters on the Elkhorn, Wood River, or some eligible location in Nebraska; but it did not meet with general approval. A monster meeting was called to consult the people about it.

The emigrants were entirely ignorant of the country and climate- simple, honest, eager to go to "Zion" at once. ...Under these circumstances it was natural that they should leave their destination in the hands of the elders. There were but four men in our company who had been to the Valley, viz.: Willie, Atwood, Savage, and Woodward; but there were several at Florence superintending the emigration, among whom elders G.D. Grant and W.H. Kimball occupied the most prominent position. These men all talked at the meeting just mentioned, and all, with one exception, favoured going on.

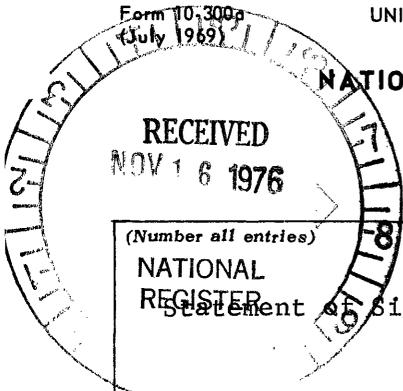
Levi Savage declared that they "could not cross the mountains with a mixed company of aged people, women and little children, so late in the season without much suffering, sickness, and death. He therefore advised going into winter quarters without delay. Savage was voted down, the majority being against him. He then added: 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 suffer with you, and, if necessary, I will die with you. May God in his mercy bless and preserve us."

The Willie Company left Florence on August 18 and the Martin Company followed about a week later. While moving through Nebraska the companies were overtaken by a party of missionaries traveling in carriages and light wagons pulled by horses and mules. The faster-moving missionaries had departed from Florence for Salt Lake after seeing the last handcarts leave camp. Upon overtaking the emigrants they promised to send back supplies as quickly as possible. At this point the plight of the Martin Company will be related, while that of the Willie Company may be left for another essay.

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NATIONAL REGISTER

Statement of Significance - 4

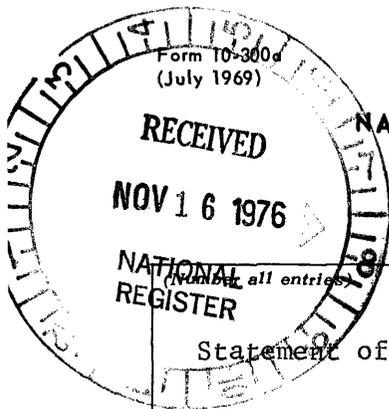
The journey of the Martin Company through Nebraska was made in good time with few real problems, but by the time it reached Fort Laramie at the east base of the Rockies provisions were so low that members of the company were forced to sell watches and jewelry in order to purchase necessities. West of Fort Laramie food rations became lower and lower, and grass for the stock became harder to find. The weather became progressively colder, yet after the company crossed from the north to the south bank of the North Platte River at the mouth of Deer Creek (present-day Glenrock) carts were emptied of everything that was not necessary for everyday use, including clothing, and the excess was then burned at the Deer Creek campground. One account relates that for the next four days snow fell almost continuously, blowing in the faces of the weakening emigrants until they reached Red Buttes or Bessemer Bend Crossing of the North Platte River. If it was not snowing, it was at least getting colder. John Chislett described the effects of the cold on the Willie Handcart Company which at that time was a short distance up the Sweetwater River Valley, west of the Martin Company.

Cold weather, scarcity of food, lassitude and fatigue from over-exertion, soon produced their effects. Our old and infirm people began to droop, and they no sooner lost spirit and courage than death's stamp could be traced upon their features. Life went out as smoothly as a lamp ceases to burn when the oil is gone. At first the deaths occurred slowly and irregularly, but in a few days at more frequent intervals, until we soon thought it unusual to leave a campground without burying one or more persons.

Death was not long confined in its ravages to the old and infirm, but the young and naturally strong were among its victims. ...Many a father pulled his cart, with his little children on it, until the day preceding his death. I have seen some pull their carts in the morning, give out during the day, and die before next morning.

West of present-day Casper the two wagon trains caught up with the Martin company and helped move the handcarts across the North Platte River. Barely had the ford been made when the already cold weather turned into a wind-driven winter snowstorm. Crossing the North Platte, noted one member of the company, reminded him of Napoleon's decision to retreat from Moscow 40 years previous.

That was a bitter cold day. Winter came on all at once and that was the first day of it. The river was wide, the current strong, the water exceedingly cold and up to the wagon beds in the deepest parts,



Form 10-300a  
(July 1969)

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Statement of Significance - 5

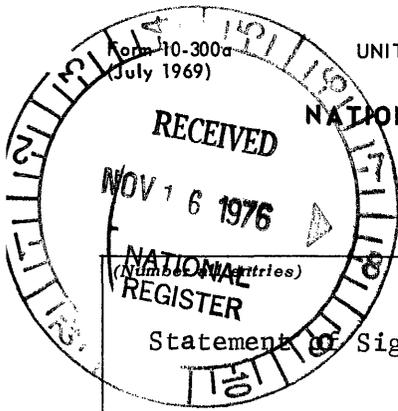
and the bed of the river was covered with cobble stones. Some of the men carried some of the women over on their backs or in their arms, but others of the women tied up their skirts and waded through, like heroines as they were, and as they had done through many other rivers and creeks. The company was barely over when snow, hail, and sleet began to fall, accompanied by a piercing north wind and camp was made...

The company bogged down as snow piled up around them one to two feet in depth. On October 29 while encamped less than a dozen miles west of the river crossing the company was found by the vanguard of a rescue team sent from Salt Lake. They were three messengers, Joseph A. Young the son of Brigham Young, Dan Jones, and Abel Garr, and they told the company it would have to continue west some 30 miles in order to reach the rescue wagons at Devils Gate. On October 31, as they plodded toward the Sweetwater, the handcart emigrants were met by the rescue wagons on Greasewood Creek 16 miles east of Devils Gate. The meeting of the rescue wagons and the Martin Company is described by George D. Grant in a letter to Brigham Young, written from Devils Gate on November 2, 1856.

Not having much feed for our horses they were running down very fast, and not hearing anything from the companies, I did not know but what they had taken up quarters for the winter, consequently we sent on another express to the Platte Bridge. When that express returned, to my surprise I learned that the companies were all on the Platte river, near the upper crossing, and had been encamped there nine days, waiting for the snow to go away, or, as they said, to recruit their cattle.

As quick as we learned this, we moved on to meet them. Met br. Martin's company at Greasewood creek, on the last day of October; br. Hodgett's company was a few miles behind. We dealt out to br. Martin's company the clothing & c., that we had for them; and next morning, after stowing our wagons full of the sick, the children and the infirm, with a good amount of luggage, started homeward about noon. The snow began to fall very fast, and continued until late at night. It is now about 8 inches deep here, and the weather is very cold.

It is not of much use for me to attempt to give a description of the situation of these people, for this you will learn from your son Joseph A. and br. Garr, who are the bearers of this express; but you can imagine between five and six hundred men, women and children, worn down by drawing hand carts, through snow and mud, fainting by the way side; falling, chilled by the cold; children crying, their limbs



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stiffened by cold, their feet bleeding and some of them bare to snow and frost. The sight is almost too much for the stoutest of us; but we go on doing all we can, not doubting nor despairing.

Our company is too small to help much, it is only a drop to a bucket, as it were, in comparison to what is needed. I think that not over one-third of br. Martin's company is able to walk. This you may think is extravagant, but it is nevertheless true. Some of them have good courage and are in good spirits; but a great many are like children and do not help themselves much more, nor realize what is before them

I have never felt so much interest in any mission that I have been sent on, and all the brethren who came out with me feel the same. We have prayed without ceasing, and the blessing of God has been with us.

Br. Charles Decker has now traveled this road the 49th time, and he says he has never before seen so much snow on the Sweet Water at any season of the year.

On November 2 the Martin Company finally reached an abandoned trading post at Devils Gate where the snow was deep and the weather was cold. The following day Captain Grant sent his letter to Brigham Young at Salt Lake City, via an express consisting of Joseph A. Young and Abel Garr, in order to obtain further help for the large group congregated at Devils Gate. With supplies dwindling, a council was held at Devils Gate to determine if a winter camp should be made at that point, or if the company ought to continue the march to Salt Lake. Meanwhile it was necessary to get the emigrants out of an exposed position away from the freezing blasts of wind, and a reorganization of the company was effected. Most of the carts were left at Devils Gate but two of the best were kept for each group of 100 persons and loaded with supplies, other baggage being put on wagons. On November 4 emigrants, carts and wagons pushed westward a little over two miles to the Sweetwater River, crossed to its north bank, and ascended a sage-covered slope into the cove. The crossing of the Sweetwater, described by John Jaques in the Salt Lake Daily Herald in late 1878, was apparently more trying than the crossing of the North Platte River at Bessemer Bend.

The water was not less than two feet deep, perhaps a little more in the deepest parts, but it was intensely cold. The ice was three or four inches thick and the bottom of the river muddy or sandy. I forget exactly how wide the stream was there, but I think thirty or forty yards. It seemed a good deal wider than that to those who pulled their handcarts through it.

Form 10-300a  
(July 1969)

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NOV 16 1976

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Statement of Significance - 7

...In the rear part of the company two men were pulling one of the hand carts, assisted by two or three women for the women pulled as well as the men, all the way, so long as the handcarts lasted. When the cart arrived at the bank of the river, one of these men, who was much worn down, asked, in a plaintive tone, "Have we got to go across there?" On being answered yes, he was so much affected that he was completely overcome. That was the last strain. His fortitude and manhood, gave way. He exclaimed, "O dear? I can't go through that." and burst into tears. His wife who was by his side, had the stouter heart of the two at that juncture, and she said soothingly, "Don't cry, Jimmy. I'll pull the handcart for you." A noble and generous offer, which, however, was not carried out. Jimmy besought one of the "boys" from "the valley," who was in the water, to carry him over. The "boy" urged that the women and children had the first claim, but finally consented to carry him across. Jimmy got on the back of the "boy" to ride over, and the "boy" slipped and fell with Jimmy into the water, very wet water it was too and very cold, freezingly cold, enough to congeal anything. The women with the handcart were carried over safe and the cart remained with the one man to pull it through. He rolled up his pants as high as he could, pulled off his stockings and boots which he had happened to receive at Greasewood Creek, put on a pair of old shoes he carried with him, and all along went into the river with naked legs and with his cart laden with pots and kettles. It was easy enough to go into the river, but not so easy to pull across it get out again. The way of the ford was to go into the river a few yards, then turn to the left and make for the opposite bank. When in the water the narrow felloes of the cart wheels cut into the soft bottom of the river bed, and he soon got stalled. Two of the "boys" in the water went to his help and one soon exclaimed "dammm it you don't pull an ounce!" So hard was the tugging at the cart that it required the utmost combined strength of the three to take the vehicle through safe to dry land. While in the river the sharp cakes of floating ice below the surface of the water struck against the bare shins of the emigrant inflicting wounds which never healed until he arrived at Salt Lake, and the dark scars of which he bears to this day. When the river was forded, he found that Jimmy and the women assigned to help pull the cart were all gone on to the camp at the base of the mountains, from half a mile to a mile distant. The way to camp was over rising ground, covered with sage brush, and with about a foot of snow on the surface, similar to the benches adjacent to this city in winter. All alone he had to pull his heavily laden cart over the snow and the clumps of sage brush for road there was none, till he reached the camp.

Form 10-300a  
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

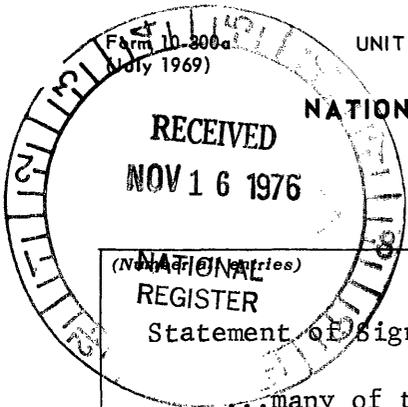
STATE	
Wyoming	
COUNTY	
Natrona	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAR 8 1977

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Statement of Significance - 8

Having forded the river the exhausted saints finally reached Martin's Cove where some of the wagons were already parked. There they found shelter and obtained a few pines and cedars for fuel, while the animals foraged. After camp was made, tents set up, and supper eaten, a raging north wind blew over the mountain and whirled inside the cove, leveling the tents to the ground. No one was seriously injured and the tents were once again set up that night. The blizzard continued to dump snow on the grass within the cove, forcing the stock to seek forage along the river bottom. Nevertheless, cattle died daily and were preserved where they lay in a frozen state. The exact number of people who died and were buried in the cove is unknown but the total number of the Martin Company who perished before reaching Salt Lake City was between 135 and 150. For five days the company was pinned down in the cove by the cold, unable to move, and on November 6 the thermometer registered eleven degrees below zero. On November 8 the wind abated somewhat, the weather warmed slightly and the emigrants began to round up their surviving stock in preparation for the trek west. Sunday, November 9 was a fine, warm day and the handcart company and Captain Hodgett's wagon train once again began their trek west. Captain Hunt's wagon train, which was at Devils Gate, did not join the rest immediately as they were busy caching their goods in the fort or post at Devils Gate. After the freight was cached a small group was chosen to remain behind to guard the goods during the winter, and on November 10 the train moved west. The entire group, except the guards at Devils Gate, thus began the 325 mile trip to Salt Lake City through snow, cold and mountains. As the group moved west supplies again became low. Meanwhile the second rescue train sought by the emigrants was parked in the snow at South Pass, its members unsure of the status of the emigrants. Some thought the handcart company had taken up winter quarters, but Mormon scout Ephraim Hanks pushed ahead through a storm with saddle horse and mule to find the handcarts near Three Crossings on the Sweetwater. The description of what he encountered follows.

I think the sun was about an hour high in the west when I spied something in the distance that looked like a black streak in the snow. As I got near to it, I perceived it moved; then I was satisfied that this was the long looked for handcart company, led by Captain Edward Martin. I reached the ill-fated train just as the immigrants were camping for the night. The sight that met my gaze as I entered their camp can never be erased from my memory. The starved forms and haggard countenances of the poor sufferers, as they moved about slowly, shivering with cold, to prepare their scanty evening meal was enough to touch the stoutest heart.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Wyoming	
COUNTY	
Natrona	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAR 8 1977

(NATIONAL) REGISTER  
Statement of Significance - 9

...many of the immigrants whose extremities were frozen, lost their limbs, either whole or in part. Many such I washed with water and castile soap, until the frozen parts would fall off, after which I would sever the shreds of flesh from the remaining portions of the limbs with my scissors. Some of the emigrants lost toes, others fingers, and again others whole hands and feet; one woman who now resides in Koosharen, Piute Co., Utah, lost both her legs below the knees, and quite a number who survived became cripples for life.

Four rescue wagons finally reached the emigrants at Three Crossings on November 12 and on November 16 ten more wagons of supplies from Salt Lake met the company at Rocky Ridge. Two days later still more wagons with food and clothing reached them. With the emigrants safely tucked under covers, the wagons crossed South Pass, met more supplies at Green River, and arrived at Fort Bridger on November 23. On November 30, three months after their departure from Florence, Nebraska, the Martin Company finally reached Salt Lake City, although the last members of the wagon trains did not arrive until December 15 and 16. The guards at Devils Gate remained until April 15. The Handcart company of James G. Willie that preceded the Martin Company across the Plains arrived in Salt Lake City on November 9, 1856. Sixty seven out of 400, or about one sixth of their number perished along the way. Together over 200 lives were lost in these two companies in the winter of 1856.

Leroy and Ann Hafen sum up the tragedies of the Martin and Willie companies by placing the disaster of the two groups into perspective.

Most people, in looking at the handcart emigration, have seen only the tragic misfortune of those late companies of 1856. This was indeed a pitiful episode, one of the most pathetic chapters in the history of the West. But taken in its normal operation, with adequate preparations and proper scheduling, the handcart plan was an economical, effective, and rather beneficent institution.

The question involved in this essay is not one, however, of the practicality of handcart travel as a means of overland travel. The question is why the Martin's Cove site is an important historic site worthy of National Register status. For the casual visitor the significance of the site is explained by a stone monument and plaque located a mile south of the cove. The historic site is associated with a disaster and the historical marker is a commemorative one, to remind us of those who passed away. Possibly it can be seen also as a monument to those who survived to raise their progeny in the Salt Lake Valley.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

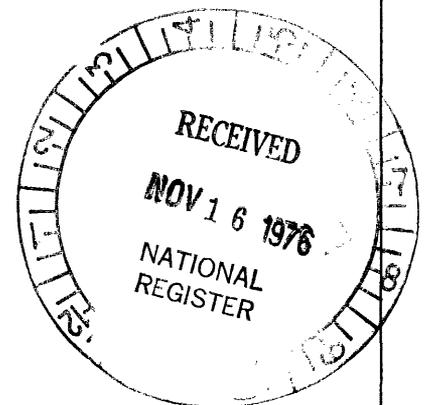
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	MAR 8 1977

(Number all entries)

Statement of Significance - 10

But Martin's Cove is only one of a number of handcart company campsites, and at one other campsite along the North Platte-Sweetwater segment of the trail a longer period of time was spent by the Martin Company. The cove is a place where people died but the ones who passed away there form only a portion of the entire casualty list of 1856. The cove was certainly not a natural landmark common to all Oregon Trail travelers such as Independence Rock, Devils Gate or Split Rock; rather it is a topographic feature of the Oregon Trail landscape that derives its historic significance as a temporary place of refuge for handcart emigrants. And as such it is associated not only with a calamity, but also good fortune, since it served as a shelter, a place offering limited protection from the elements where handcart pioneers could gain respite prior to continuance of their journey.

More than the site of a tragedy involving those who took part in a unique aspect of Western travel, Martin's Cove is a symbol of the physical strain, even extreme hardship suffered by many who sought a better way of life. In terms of numbers killed it was the biggest disaster that ever occurred on the Oregon Trail. Yet it more appropriately serves not as a landmark to great numbers who died because of certain miscalculations, but rather to call attention to a spirit that moved great numbers to Western America. There must have been a number of factors which pushed and pulled people to the West, factors that can be described in terms of their political, economic and social significance. But in the final analysis the handcart migration ought to be seen as part of the larger picture of overland migration to Oregon, California, Utah and other areas of the West. That migration, in turn, can be seen as an epic in the annals of American History. Viewed as part of an American epic the handcart migration becomes a search for a better way of life. And shining out brightly in that search are characteristic ideals of western civilization transferred to America: a belief in the freedom of choice, and a belief in both spiritual and physical improvement or, a belief in progress.



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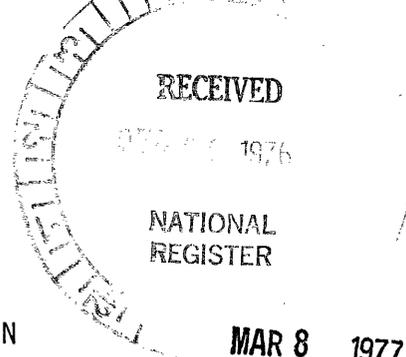
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA ADDENDUM

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION - MARTIN'S COVE NOMINATION

The southern boundary of Martin's Cive is a one-mile-long line which is the southern boundary of the W $\frac{1}{2}$  Section 28 and the E $\frac{1}{2}$  Section 27, T29N, R87W. From a point at the west end of that line the western boundary extends three-quarters of a mile north to a line which, extending in an east to west direction for one mile and paralleling the southern boundary, forms the northern boundary of the district. The eastern boundary begins at the east end of the northern boundary, and continues south to the southern boundary line. Thus, the boundaries form a rectangular district enclosing an area less than one square mile.



MAR 8 1977



GEOGRAPHICAL DATA ADDENDUM

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION - MARTIN'S COVE NOMINATION

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The southern boundary of Martin's Cove is a line, one and one-quarter miles long, which is also the southern boundary of the east half of Section 28, and connects with the southern boundary of Section 27 for a further distance of three quarters of a mile. Both sections are in Township 29 North, Range 87 West of the Sixth P.M. From the west end of the above described line the western boundary of the site extends three-quarters of a mile north to a line which, extending east to west for one and a quarter miles and paralleling the southern boundary, forms the northern boundary of the site. The eastern boundary begins at the east end of the northern boundary, and extends south to the southern boundary. Thus, the boundaries form a rectangular district enclosing an area slightly less than one square mile in size.

Acreage of nominated property 600 acres

Latitude and Longitude Coordinates Defining a Rectangle Locating the Property

Corner	Latitude	Longitude
NW	42 <sup>0</sup> 27' 37"	107 <sup>0</sup> 15' 27"
NE	42 <sup>0</sup> 27' 35"	107 <sup>0</sup> 13' 58"
SE	42 <sup>0</sup> 26' 56"	107 <sup>0</sup> 13' 58"
SW	42 <sup>0</sup> 26' 57"	107 <sup>0</sup> 15' 27"