

Otterson



HAIGHT CREEK STAKE | 2012



TREK

How Firm A Foundation

Family Journal

Mark Otterson
Jeni Otterson

Benjamin Mullins
Alex Miller
Kyli Woodbury
Logan McEwen
Nicole Law
Megan Adams
Stetson Lyons

Otterson Family



Mark & Jeni

Pioneers We Honored and Remembered on Trek:

**James Hancey
Lois Smith Winegar**

To Our Family:

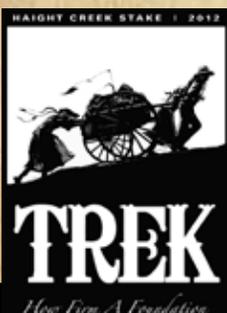
From Pa -

I want my family to know just how fantastic they all are and how much I think of each of them. When Jeni and I got called to be Ma and Pa for Trek this year I knew immediately that it would be a good experience and one that I would be grateful for but I was also a little disappointed because taking the 4 days of vacation time from work would mean vacation time was now tight and I would have to postpone a trip to Australia for another year. After having the experience to both prepare for and participate in Trek I can honestly say that this was the best and most rewarding experience I could have had and I thank my Trek family for helping to make it such a great experience.

From Ma -

My dearest Trek Children,

I loved Trek, every minute of it. I loved feeling so close to my Savior, being taught by him and our Heavenly Father and I was able to do that in part to all of you. When there is no negativity, arguing, complaining or contention the Spirit can be with us constantly and can be felt so intensely. Thanks to all of you we had none of that in our family and I was able to have the most spiritual experience of my life. Thank you!



The strong spirits you all have amaze me! You are so good, it's impressive. I know we all had things to learn from each other and I learned things from each of your examples.

Alex – You taught me the joy that comes from helping without being asked.

Megan – You taught me to pray always.

Kylie – You taught me to smile in the face of adversity.

Otterson Family

Stetson – You taught me the value of verbal communication.

Logan – You taught me the importance of taking time to get to know people.

Nicole – You taught me how important it is to serve others.

Baby Ben – You taught me that humor can bring people together and I learned that you are very strong because you carried me across the river, no problem.

I love you all and will always be grateful for the Trek experience we shared. It was a gift to me from Heavenly Father. My experience and all of you will always have a very special tender place in my heart.

Love Ma

What We Learned on Trek:

From Pa -

Alex, Megan, Stetson, Kyli, Nicole, Logan and Ben - you are all such great young adults. I often look at the world and the evils that are becoming so easily accepted by society and I worry for the future but the 7 of you have made me realize, truly know in my soul for the first time that the future of the church is in good hands. The valiant servants have indeed been saved for the last days.

I cherish the fact that I now have a much deeper understanding of the individual stories of the pioneers that crossed the plains and specifically the members of the Willey and Martin handcart companies, where their strength came from and what it was that motivated them. For me, this understanding and knowledge will motivate me to be a better person and seek for a closer relationship with Christ.

I also learned that:

American kids can indeed do a decent Australian accent - way to go kids!

School busses definitely were not designed for 6"4' people to ride in for 5 hours.

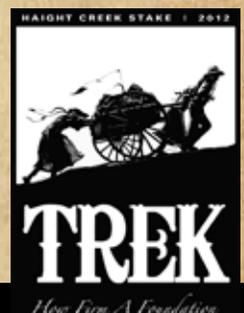
Ski goggles should have been put on the packing list.

Not only is Logan "huge" but all 7 of my trek kids are "huge" in spirit.

While I thought I was tough, there are 8 people in my trek family who are tougher than me!

From Ma -

SO MUCH..... *That Heavenly Father caters each experience to us personally for what we need, because He loves us so deeply. *That you can love people you have never met and know nothing about. *That I actually don't do anything by myself, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are always helping me 'pull my cart'. *That I need to work so much harder to stay close to the Spirit because I LOVED how I felt during Trek. *That when a family truly is committed to the same goal and working hard together life will be so much easier and great things can be accomplished. *That by being strictly obedient to what has been asked of you, Heavenly Father pours His Spirit out to you. *That by doing your best to prepare for a situation Heavenly Father makes you and your efforts enough. *That Heavenly Father places people into our lives for a reason. *That the pioneers are amazing.



Otterson Family

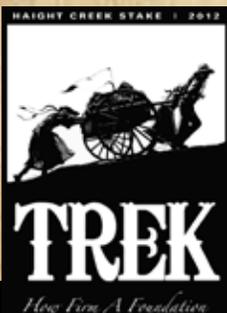
Our Testimonies:

From Pa -

I love having opportunities to build on the knowledge I have of the gospel and to put another layer of steel on my armour. I have been so blessed to be raised by parents who accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ as young adults and who always taught me righteous principals. I have had many witnesses of the spirit throughout my life some of which I remember well and others where the memory has faded. I believe Satan uses this issue of faded memories to attempt to cast doubt in our minds and have us question our faith of and belief in Christ's gospel. This is why it is so important for us to stay active in church attendance and all of the other wholesome activities that are provided for us by church programs. I know that we are a part of Jesus Christ's church here on the earth and I have joy in my life as a result in my membership in this church. To my trek family I ask you to record in your journals each time the spirit speaks to you and reflect on that often. Learn to recognize when the spirit speaks to you and learn to listen to and obey the sweet and gentle promptings. Stay strong in your church attendance so that when temptation comes your way you will be prepared to overcome. It is not always easy to do what is right but I promise the rewards given to us (both earthly and heavenly) for obeying the commandments are worth it!

From Ma -

I know that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is true. Heavenly Father truly wants us to have joy in life and provides us with so many blessings for that reason. I know without question that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love me so dearly and I love them. I know that when we leave the things of the world we can be so close to our Savior. I love President Monson and know that he is a prophet of God and speaks with God and truly does tell us what Heavenly Father wants us to know. How grateful I am to Joseph Smith who dedicated his life and suffered so much to restore the Gospel and for the pioneers who also suffered so much for the gospel. I have a testimony of the Book of Mormon and the strength we can gain from it, it is a blessing from Heavenly Father. How grateful I am for the Savior and the atonement and that through it I can live with Heavenly Father again. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.



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Nicole Law

Pioneer Name I Honored and Remembered on Trek:

Martha Lythgoe

To My Family:

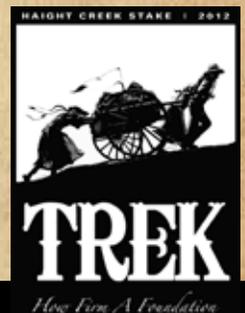
Dear Ma and Pa, I am so grateful that you two were my Ma and Pa on Trek! You two were the absolute best! :) You looked out for me and treated me like your own daughter, and that really meant a lot to me. I was nervous at first because I didn't know you, but once I got to know you, I learned how amazing and "awesome" <-- (Said in an Aussie accent,) you were and how lucky I was to be put into your family. Thank you for the experience of a lifetime! :)

What I Learned on Trek:

One thing that I learned on Trek was how hard it actually was for the pioneers to cross the plains. Whenever I started to think, "My feet hurt." or, "I'm tired" etc. I would think about the Martin and Willie handcart companies were half starved and pulling through snow. That stopped the negative thoughts immediately.

My Testimony:

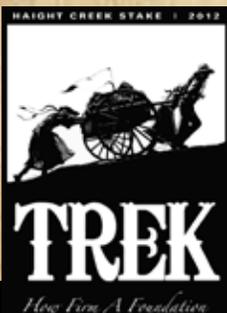
My testimony about trek is, I know that Trek changes lives. It has helped me so much in my day to day life. Trek taught me that I can do hard things, and that I can allow others to help me. I struggle with letting other people help me whenever I'm trying to figure something out, fix something, well, you get the idea. But when I was on Trek, I learned quickly that there was no way that I would be able to pull that handcart alone, I didn't exactly want to, but it still helped me gain the perspective for other problems. But I think the biggest thing I learned is that God will never let you down. On the first day of pulling the handcart, I knew that I was tired and sore but I was able to just keep moving forward. (This was after the Women's Pull and the boys wouldn't let us help.) I kept walking and I helped Kyli with her blistered feet and was her "crutch" when she needed it.



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My Testimony - continue...

The moment that I stopped walking and we were setting up camp, I felt my legs totally give out on me. I had to get my bucket and sit down for a very long time. I felt so useless while the boys were setting up the tent, I was sitting on my bucket like a slug. I wanted to help but I knew that I would probably collapse if I tried. I looked over at Kyli and told her that the moment the cart stopped moving that my body practically shut down on me. She simply said something along these lines, "God will give us the strength to do what we need to do." I don't know if she knows this, but it totally changed my perspective on the whole of Trek. I soon started relying on the Lord more and to trust in Him and his Son. I know that God will be with us and will give us the strength to finish what we started. I will be forever grateful for what Trek has done for me and how much it has changed my life.



Otterson Family



Alex Miller

Pioneer Name I Honored and Remembered on Trek:

Samuel Bryson

To My Family:

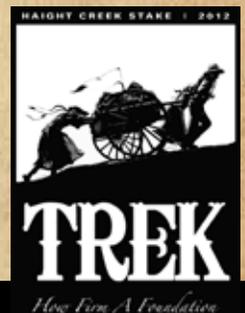
Thank you so much for letting me be a part of this family. It was seriously THEE best family I could've had! You guys were all amazing! Coming into trek, I was kind of expecting to carry the family and to pull the handcart the whole time, and I did, but you guys took a ton of the load off by helping so much! You guys are all seriously thee best family! Go Aussies!

What I Learned on Trek:

I learned a lot more about women and the strength they all have. Trek was awesome! The women, not only in my family, but other Mas and sisters (especially mine) were all amazing and so, so, so very strong! They all did very well and did very well on the women's pull. My family's girls and ma were so strong and said that they all felt the motivation to just keep pulling! To me, they didn't even have a hard time! They all looked so strong and they wanted to keep going. They told me after that they didn't want to stop and take breaks like they were forced to because of the people ahead of them. They said that they could've made it up the whole thing without a break, and I believe them because they didn't look at all in any way tired. Trek was awesome!

My Testimony:

My testimony grew a lot on trek. I had been having struggles before for about a year or so with friends and just all around life, I guess. I had been working on trying to be better through the summer and wanted trek to be sort of a hammer to push that "nail" of trying to be better all the way in. At the first of the year when we were registering for trek, I was hesitant to register because I didn't want to go and pull a handcart for three days and sleep on the ground. It sounds very dumb and makes you ask, "Why would I ever want to do such a thing?" Boy, I'm so glad everyone pushed me to go. Trek was the best four days of the summer hands down. And it will probably be the best four days of the year 2012 for me (other than my birthday and Christmas of course ;)). I'm glad I went and I know that we can turn to Christ when we are struggling with our life. And I say that in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.



Otterson Family



Megan Adams

Pioneer Name I Honored and Remembered on Trek:

Janetta McBride

To My Family:

Thank you, Ma and Pa, for everything. I learned so much from both of you during Trek and I know that by your examples you will continue to teach me. I want to thank Ma for always looking out for me and making sure I was okay. Ma always has a smile on her face and is so positive. I want to thank Pa for being such a great example of how to treat women. Pa always treated Ma and the rest of us with so much respect. Thank you Ma and Pa

for always sharing your testimony through words and your examples. Thank you for being willing to come on Trek. I owe my amazing Trek experience to both of you as well as the rest of our family. I love you all!

What I Learned on Trek:

I learned so much on Trek. I thought I knew a lot about the pioneers, but I was wrong. They suffered so much, but they did it so willingly. They knew that they were going to Zion. They had so much faith and belief in the church. I learned that with the Lords help, I can do anything. Nothing is too difficult when the Lord is on my side. I gained a deeper understanding of my Saviors love for me. I learned so much about trials, and how they are for my good. Trials only teach us and make us stronger. I learned that you can care for people you barely know. I was only with my family for a few days, but I care so much about them. I would do anything for them. I am so grateful that I was put in the family that I was in. They all taught me something new. They never complained, or gave up; they were happy during every trial. I am so grateful for everything I learned on Trek. Trek really did change my life

My Testimony:

I know that the Church is true, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind. I know that Joseph Smith sacrificed everything to restore the truth of this gospel back on earth. I know that the pioneers sacrificed everything for this gospel too. I am so grateful for all of their sacrifices and I know that I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for Janetta McBride and her family. I am so grateful that she had the faith and courage to continue on to Zion. I know that the Savior lives and that He loves me. I know that He died for me and that through Him, I can return to live with my Father in Heaven. I am grateful for prayer and the scriptures and the guidance they offer. I know that through prayer, scriptures, and the help of my Savior, everything is possible; no temptation is too great, and no sin is unforgivable. I know that prayers are answered. Before Trek, I didn't think I was going to be able to stay the entire time because of a family vacation. But I know that the Lord answered my prayers and made everything work out so that I was able to stay. I know that I was supposed to stay and I'm so grateful that I was able to. I am so grateful for this amazing Trek experience and I wouldn't trade it for anything. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Otterson Family



Kyli Woodbury

Pioneer Name I Honored and Remembered on Trek:

Samuel Bryson

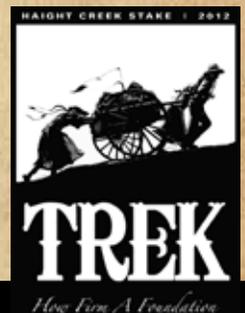
To My Family:

Dear Ma and Pa,
Words alone cannot even describe my gratitude for all that you did for our family and for me personally when we were on Trek. I prayed long and hard that I would have parents that would help me along the journey, and would be willing to talk to me and the family and be our friends. Heavenly Father answered

my prayer. I know I'm speaking for the entire family when I say that we had THE best parents. It was an added bonus that Pa just happened to be Australian. So cool! Ma and Pa, you really helped bring our family together. You encouraged us to talk to each other, and get to know each other. I love that even though we aren't on Trek anymore; we all still feel like a family and are such good friends! I feel like I can turn to anyone in our family for anything. I know that Heavenly Father catered to my needs when this family was put together. We all became so close, so fast, and I know that wouldn't have been the case had it not been for both of you. All the get-to-know-you games sure helped too! Ma and Pa, your testimonies are so strong! You both helped lift me up and feel close to the Savior when you bore your testimonies. You also helped me build on my testimony by sharing yours. I know for a fact that a lot of our strength in our family came from the both of you. So thank you. Thank you so much for your willingness to come on Trek and spend those four days with seven kids you didn't even know. You have definitely made an influence on my life. And you really helped make Trek the best experience it could've possibly been. Thanks for all you've done! Love you both so much!
Sincerely, Kyli Woodbury

Dear siblings!! (Yes I do have to write two separate letters!)

First off, I love you all so much! I knew some of you just a little bit before Trek and others not at all, but now we're so close! I have seven new best-friends! I love that! I'm not going to lie, like many others I worried about who would be in my family. If I had any doubts about going on Trek it was because I was so scared about who would be in my family. But the minute I walked on that bus and good ole' President McKay put me into that family; I knew I was where I was supposed to be, with who I was supposed to be with. All of my doubts and concerns vanished. One of the harder things for me is being able to trust in others and open myself up to them. I didn't have to worry about a thing with you guys. At all! And that's what makes me even more grateful to have you all in my life. Every day the strength of our family grew stronger, I was so surprised. And so grateful! I hope this is allowed,

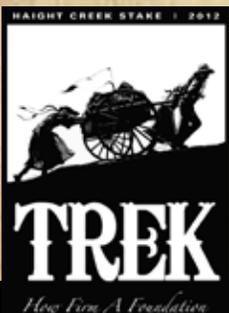


Otterson Family

but I want to thank you guys individually for a minute. Meg, I can call you that right? Well, too bad if I can't! You're stuck with your nickname! (: Meg, girl, you are such a light to be around! You have THE brightest smile and it's so contagious! You were the first person in our family I really got to know, and I felt like we got along way well. Girl, you pulled that cart up in front all day every day. If you don't already know this, you've got strength! Physically and spiritually! You helped me so much through my trials on Trek, and I'm not going to lie, I wouldn't have survived women's pull if you weren't there cheering us on, and for suggesting that prayer before. Thank you so much Meg! Alex! You are quite the example! You set the standard for strength in our family. Thank you for carrying me across the river. I know that couldn't have been easy. And even though I denied you half the time, thank you so much for offering me all those piggy back rides! It means a lot to have someone offer to carry your burdens for a bit. Thank you so much Alex! For caring and sharing your testimony. Nikki, Nicole Law, Sheila. I. love. You. You were literally my crutch when I needed you most, you were always there for me to lean on. Remember the first day of pulling when you were basically carrying me and we were sharing those spiritual stories? That was probably one of the most meaningful moments of Trek for me. And girl, I'll let you sleep on my lap on long bus rides anytime! (: Thank you for all you did for me. You are such a great friend. Logan! You are probably the sweetest, most innocent kid I've ever met! I loved your smile! You could probably tell because I only made you smile a million times (: seriously I hope you keep sharing that smile every possible moment. It's an uplifting one! Logan, you never gave up. I really noticed that about you. You never gave up. Even when it was clear it was hard, you stuck to it and kept your strength. I want to thank you for sharing your testimony and living up to that testimony. Stetson, even though I basically grew up with you, we never really became the close friends that we did after Trek. You made me laugh SO hard! I love laughing if you couldn't tell! So thank you for that! You brought a spirit into our family that helped push us through to the end. And you have the best attitude! I don't know how I would've felt if my family stuck a lemon-head in my mouth when I was sleeping! Haha! I hope you always remember that you made such an impact on my life. And for that, thank you. Finally, Baby Ben. Ahhh Baby Ben. I'm sorry if you totally hate that I gave you the nickname "Baby Ben" but seriously, it was so perfect! (: And I'm going to be calling you that the rest of your life, sorry! (: Even though you were the "baby" of the family. You were the one who helped glue us together. With your sturdy strength combined with your sense of humor, you made the family complete. I am so proud of you. And I can't thank you enough! Now that I've written a novel, haha, I just wanted to thank you all again for making this Trek experience the best it could've been. I already miss not feeling the spirit and talking and laughing with you guys every day. Team Aussie rules.

Love you all!

Sincerely,
Kyli Woodbury



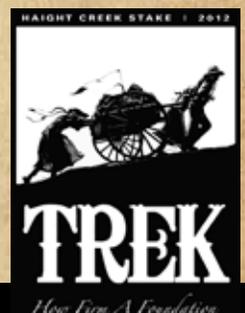
Otterson Family

What I Learned on Trek:

I learned a very valuable lesson on Trek. I learned that it's okay for people to help you when you're struggling. I had a very hard time riding in that handcart and being a burden on my family. But something Ma said really hit me hard. She said something along the lines of "you just have to let people help you sometimes. Give them the opportunity to serve." I love you Ma! I'm not lying when I say that riding in that handcart was the hardest part of Trek for me. Both times. I got so frustrated, I couldn't help but wonder why I couldn't walk because my feet hurt so bad, then I almost got angry at myself because, all of those pioneers and my ancestors walked so much more with so much worse. So why couldn't I suck it up and not hurt anymore? Then, through the spirit, and the words of those around me, my attitude changed. That anger turned to gratitude because I was able to feel, if only just a fraction, what my pioneer ancestors felt when they walked across. I owe everything to my family, and to the Savior for the strength and uplifting words I received to help me finish on my feet. I came home knowing that it's okay to let the Savior in and help me through all my trials, he's been through it too. He knows what I'm going through. If I would just let him in, he can help me, he can carry me through when it gets to be too much. This is one of the many lessons I learned on Trek. I wouldn't change anything when it comes to Trek. It is, by far, the best experience I've ever had.

My Testimony:

I have a testimony that this church is true. I used to say I "believe" the church to be true. But now, because of Trek, I know the church is true. I had many angels help me along the way through Trek. But Satan was never there. Like President McKay said, Satan was "bound". I only felt peace and the spirit the whole way. I know my prayers were answered when it came to Trek. I couldn't have had a better family, a better company, or even a better bus! I felt the spirit of the ancestor I was walking for with me, but the angels I speak of are mostly my family. They are angels in my life. I don't know what I would've done if those people chosen to be in my family, weren't there. The Lord has blessed me with so much. I have no room to complain in my life, because all the ugliness and trials are blinded by the blessings I have received. I can't thank the Lord enough for giving me the strength to cross the finish line. And I definitely can't thank him enough for putting people in my life to be my legs and help carry me through when times get rough. I love this gospel so much, and I love my ancestors so much, and I respect them for all that they had to go through and for all that they accomplished. I owe the Lord thanks for everything that I am today.



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Stetson Lyons

Pioneer Name I Honored and Remembered on Trek:

William Lowder Payne

To My Family:

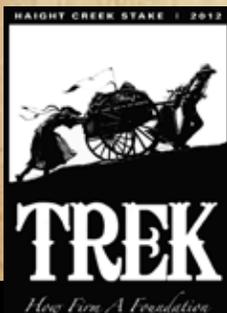
Thank you so much for making trek such a fun experience. I know our family was supposed to be how it was, and that we helped each other learn and grow on trek.

What I Learned on Trek:

I gained a deeper meaning of respect for women. They mean so much in men's lives. Without them we would be lost. I also learned that Heavenly Father does answer prayers, whether they be immediately or over a period of time he does answer them in full. I learned patience with others and myself. And I learned that I can do hard things.

My Testimony:

I know that this church is true I know that the Book of Mormon is a true book and that Christ is our savior and that he died so that I can go to the celestial kingdom. I know that trek is a good experience and that all young people should get the opportunity to experience its blessings.



Otterson Family



Logan McEwen

Pioneer Name I Honored and Remembered on Trek:

Samuel Bryson

To My Family:

Hey guys! All of you were such an example to me on trek. I couldn't have asked for a better family. Each one of you is valiant and strong in the gospel. Keep it up! Don't ever quit pulling your personal handcarts through life. Thank you so much Ma, Pa, Megan, Kyli, Nicole, Alex, Stetson, and Baby Ben for making this such a wonderful trek experience! It wouldn't have been the same without you. I love you all!

What I Learned on Trek:

On this trek experience I was able to understand what it was like for the pioneers to go through what they did. They loved this gospel so much that they gave up their lives for it. I learned that the trials we have to go through in our lives are just as hard as the trials the pioneers went through. They had their major hardships in life for about a year, and their work was all physical. Our hardships and trials are all around us everyday of our lives; we get pounded on by the devil all the time. We sometimes think, "How could the pioneers possibly go through what they did?" But in their minds they are thinking, "How could they possibly survive the last days?" The worldly things in life constantly try to tear us down.

My Testimony:

Trek was a very spiritual experience. The pioneers were dedicated and selfless. Their spirits live in us today. I know the Savior is always there for us. His atonement is real. Joseph Smith saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, and he translated the Book of Mormon. Thomas S. Monson is our true and living prophet today. I know that families are forever, and I know we will return to our father in heaven if we are diligent and hold firm to the rod. I testify of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen

