FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Christian

In the Company of Angels
David Farland
Cedar Fort
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Prior to the Transcontinental Railroad, which was completed in 1869, cross-country travel in the nineteenth century was perilous, a dismal reality documented in David Farland's *In the Company of Angels*. Based on historical records and dramatized for entertainment purposes, his novel is the story of the early Mormon Church and the tribulations of the Willie Handcart Company, a group of Mormon immigrants who attempted to journey from the end of the railroad in Iowa City, Iowa, to Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1856.

In a grueling haul across rugged terrain, these daring pioneers experience deprivation, discomfort, and death in an effort to reach their chosen Zion. Persecuted and rejected by mainstream America, the followers of Brigham Young, then president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (known as the Saints), travel through a hostile environment. Written with both profound sensitivity and religious fervor, this enlightening book takes a painfully honest look at the fateful decisions made by a downtrodden group seeking acceptance in a judgmental nation.

Even a religious skeptic will finish this heartrending story with greater knowledge of and sympathy toward the people brought to life on every well-crafted page. Farland's main characters include Captain James Willie himself, the stressed leader of the company; Baline Mortensen, a devout, nine-year-old Danish girl, who is the naïve motivator of the group; and Eliza Gadd, a married woman with children from England who rejects the Mormon faith.

As they journey through the American West, encountering blizzards and natural obstructions along the way, countless pilgrims succumb to the harsh elements. Farland's ability to color the landscape adds a poignant beauty to the dangerous side of nature and brightens his scenes with vivid details. His descriptive style creates a visual landscape for the reader.

In this passage, Eliza leaves camp and climbs a hill: "The grasses turned out not to be all brown. She found wildflowers as she walked, great trumpets of white, like lilies except that they

came from a creeping plant, and golden balls that looked like cotton, and stalks of vibrant red flowers called Indian paintbrush. The grasses were strange, various breeds of needle-grass rising up in purple-brown clumps, their long thin blades turning to silver at the tips."

A New York Times best-selling author who lives with his family in Saint George, Utah, David Farland is a noted LDS author. With *In the Company of Angels*, which won the Whitney Award for Best Novel of the Year, he reminds readers that only the strongest survive in the wilderness. The spiritual significance of the nearly impossible journey remains the impetus for those searching for a higher truth.

Julia Ann Charpentier