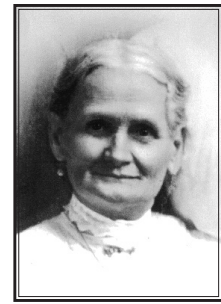


AGNES CALDWELL

Born: February 22, 1847 in Glasgow, Scotland

Age: 9

Willie Handcart Company



Agnes came from Scotland with her widowed mother, Margaret Ann (age 39), and siblings, Robert (16), Thomas (14), and Elizabeth (11). Also traveling with the family was Christina McNeil (24) who worked for the Caldwell family after fleeing her abusive home. Agnes recorded: “I have no memory of my father, as before my birth he set sail for the Canadian borders. He had visited with his parents [in Canada] and was on his way to the United States to investigate the feasibility of bringing his family to America or Canada. His parents notified mother about the news that he was lost at sea. His name was neither on the list of those saved or those lost. ... You can well imagine it was no easy thing for mother to make a living for a family of five, three boys and two girls. Necessarily, I was brought up in the strictest economy. The Mormon Elders visited us from time to time as preparations were going on for our departure to the great Rocky Mountains and the bosom of the Church. To this end my mother was bending every effort to prepare herself and family to emigrate. I have often marveled at the faith and courage of my mother in undertaking to forsake her all to be with the Saints.

“When not far from the time of departure, my oldest brother, William, in company with his pals, were passing a recruiting station. In the spirit of bravado and banter [they] dared each other to enlist [and] as a result they all found themselves in the Scottish army. Can you imagine the grief and sorrow it brought to my mother and all of us? I fancy you mothers at this time with your boys across the water, fighting for their country, [in World War I] can in part sympathize with the ache in my mother’s heart. Torn between a faith in the gospel she knew was true, and the thought if she went with the Saints to the mountains she must leave her boy behind. Every effort was put forth to obtain his release but to no avail. So disheartened had he become with the thought of being left behind, he stole away trying to desert. [It was] a very unwise thing to do, but to what extent we sometimes go for the love of our dear ones. But of course, he was recaptured and we had to leave him to serve his full enlistment.”

After more than nine years of hoping, planning and saving, the Caldwells finally emigrated, as Agnes stated, “for the promised land,” and began “the noted tramp across the desert waste.” A few days out, Thomas Caldwell was lassoing a wild cow to be milked when his foot became tangled in the rope. He was thrown on his shoulder, dragged quite a distance, and broke his collarbone. Agnes’ mother now had a heavier burden in pulling the handcart. Agnes said, “I can yet close my eyes and see everything in panoramic precision before me - the ceaseless walking, walking, ever to remain in my memory. Many times I would become so tired and, childlike, would hang on the cart, only to be gently pushed away. Then I would throw myself by the side of the road and cry. Then realizing they were all passing me by, I would jump to my feet and make an extra run to catch up.”

Agnes remembers coming to a section of country inhabited by rattlesnakes. She and her friend, Mary Hurren, held hands and jumped over them. Agnes said, “It seemed to me we were jumping for more than a mile. Due to the protecting hand of the Lord, we were not harmed.”

When rations were reduced, Agnes remembers that they did not suffer as much from hunger due to her Mother’s careful and frugal planning. Margaret had sold a quilt and a bedspread in Iowa City for twenty-four cents and saved the money to buy food. She had traded trinkets with Indians for dried meat. Agnes said, “One very cold night, some young men were on guard. Mother prepared some meat broth, thickened with flour, and a little salt; she gave each one of the young men a half pint. They often declared it saved their lives.”

As the rescue wagons arrived, Agnes hoped to be able to ride, but the wagons were first filled with the sick and aged. Agnes and other children “decided to see how long we could keep up with the wagons, in hopes of being asked to ride ... One by one they all fell out until I was the last one remaining. After what seemed the longest run I ever made ... the driver, who was [Brother] Kimball, called to me, ‘Say sissy, would you like a ride?’ I answered in my very best manner, ‘Yes sir.’ At this he reached over, taking my hand, clucking to his horses to make me run, with legs that seemed to me could run no farther. On we went, to what to me seemed miles. What went through my head at that time was that he was the meanest man that ever lived or that I had ever heard of,

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and other things that would not be a credit nor would it look well coming from one so young. Just at what seemed the breaking point, he stopped. Taking a blanket, he wrapped me up and lay me in the bottom of the wagon, warm and comfortable. Here I had time to change my mind, as I surely did, knowing full well by doing this he saved me from freezing when taken into the wagon.”

Upon arrival in the Valley, Elizabeth Caldwell had two toes amputated due to frostbite. The family moved to Brigham City, where Agnes married Chester Southworth and had 13 children. They pioneered in Brigham City, Utah, Idaho, Canada, and California, where Chester died in 1910. Agnes then returned to Brigham City and said, “Here I have enjoyed the acquaintanceship of my youth and girlhood. I enjoy going to my meetings. I enjoy seeing my old friends, talking over old times that were full of happiness in spite of our many hardships. At a Relief Society Conference in the Tabernacle I was called to the stand. Here in my meekness and humility, I bore my testimony as to the truthfulness of God’s great work.”

Agnes died September 11, 1924, at the age of 77, having been a widow for fourteen years. Two of her daughters, Veara Fife and Jeana Miller, wrote the following of her:

Our mother was slight of nature and ... weighed 96 pounds when she was married at age 18. After raising her family of 13 children she still weighed 96 pounds and could stand under her husband’s outstretched arm. Her carriage was graceful - she held herself straight and erect - and she was both dainty and refined. Her language was well chosen and she never tolerated anything on the ludicrous side nor would she participate in an off-color story, use slang words, or take the name of the Lord in vain. If anyone else did any of these things she would get up and leave the room without comment when the conversation did not meet with her standard. She chose not to be a bearer of tales, but loved people and made many friends. She was always friendly and our friends always enjoyed being around her. ... She read the newspapers and kept abreast of the times. She had an excellent memory and could tell much of our government’s historical involvements. She was especially interested in history and frequently read the school books of her children as well as other histories, particularly histories and biographies related to the Church and its leaders. She was very accurate with details and could relate almost day-by-day the happenings during the handcart journey and remember almost all of the members of the group. She could also tell of many happenings in her native Scotland, including her baptism at the Bridge of Weir.

Although she had quite an even disposition and was not taken to ‘ups and downs’ she could be most frank at times. Because of her Scottish background, we would say she had given us a ‘Scotch blessing’ or lecture whenever we were reprimanded. ... Her nose was slender with a straight bridge and her ears were quite large with a long ear lobe that lay back near her head. When she was a young girl she had her ears pierced and she used the same gold earrings until they finally wore through her ear lobes. (Note pictures.)

The following talk was given by Agnes in her Canadian Ward Relief Society:

The source of cheerfulness is hope. The supply of cheerfulness comes through faith. We can do a great deal if we are living as we should. Then we can go to our Heavenly Father in all confidence knowing that he answers prayers. Then we go to Him humble and sincere, believing that we will get that which we desire, if it is for our good, then is the time we will get that which we ask for. We can certainly be cheerful and thankful if we keep his spirit with us at all times. We should be cheerful at all times, knowing that no other spirit will creep in on us if we are on our guard.

Faith and hope go together. If we did not have faith and hope, how sad indeed we would be. We must strive continuously to keep that spirit of cheerfulness with us at all times. Where there is cheerfulness there is happiness and love in the home. How nice it is to go into a home where unity and cheerfulness are with each member - the father, the mother and each of the children. You see it in their faces. Each one is trying to please each other. In a home where cheerfulness does not abide, you do not care to go into this home. Do you not feel much better when you leave the cheerful home?

Did you ever know how many of us complain unthinkingly? We complain about the weather. We complain about the seasons. It is either too hot or too cold. Did it ever occur to you that our Father in Heaven rules over all and does all things well. This reminds me of a lady who stayed overnight with me. She had to go by team eight miles before she got her train. It was just pouring down rain that morning. As she was going, I said I was sorry it was such a bad morning. Think how I felt, me being a Latter-day Saint and she a non-Mormon, when she said, “The Lord does everything well.” I commenced to think how ungrateful I was of the Lord’s blessings. I started right then trying to be more conscious of the Lord’s blessings by trying to be more grateful, cheerful and uncomplaining.

Sources: “Life Sketch of Margaret Ann McFall Caldwell,” (autobiography); DUP history files, “A Word Picture of our mother, Agnes Caldwell Southworth,” by Veara S. Fife and Jeana S. Miller; “Biography of Agnes Caldwell,” (autobiography, with added poem by Rosilla E.S. Osborn); “Short Sketch of Thomas Caldwell,” (autobiography); interview with Lorraine Thatcher, January 2003, by Jolene Allphin; interview with Norda Fife Emmett, February 2003, by Jolene Allphin; photos and autobiographies courtesy of Norda Fife Emmett; photo of Elizabeth in Daughters of Utah Pioneers files. (See tellmystorytoo.com and *Follow Me To Zion*, by Andrew Olsen and Jolene Allphin, for more and for Julie Rogers artwork depicting this family.)