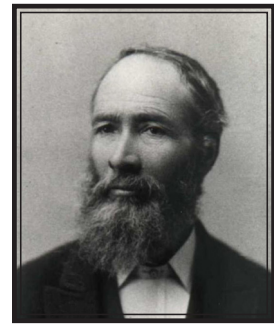


ANDREW A. WATSON

Born: October 13, 1832 Scotland

Age: 23

Willie Handcart Company



At the age of 18 Andrew's father died in a smallpox epidemic and Andrew was left to support his mother and six younger siblings. He was an engine-tender in a coal mine in Fifeshire, Scotland. In 1853, Andrew joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. When his brothers and sisters were old enough to take on the responsibility of supporting the family, he decided to go to Utah. Upon leaving his mother's home at Lumphinan in 1856, she gave him ten pounds. The Saints with whom he had labored as a missionary gave him a suit of clothes. Andrew borrowed a wheelbarrow into which he placed his belongings, including a large box of his precious books, which he had sacrificed greatly to obtain. With the help of his siblings, Andrew pushed his cart fourteen miles to Dumferline, where he boarded the train to Liverpool, England. He then sailed to New York aboard the *Thornton*. After traveling to the end of the rail to Iowa City, the Saints had to lighten their handcart loads. Andrew had to leave his books and many other belongings on the street because there was no room in the handcart. He prayed to the Lord that his "precious books might be a light and testimony to some honest soul."

Andrew wrote a biographical letter for the Provo Fourth Ward Jubilee Box, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Relief Society. In this letter he gives a brief history of his life. The following excerpts are from that letter: "I left my native home Lumphinan where the family resided at that time, and on the 28th of April, 1856, sailed from Liverpool on board the ship *Thornton*, bound for New York. We were six weeks out on the ocean. We traveled from New York by railway and steamship across lakes and up the rivers to Iowa where we pitched our tents, made our handcarts previous to starting from there (I don't remember the exact date) to Salt Lake City.

"We finally came to Council Bluffs and in a short time we started for the plains. Seventeen pounds of luggage to the person was allowed and one man to the handcart, with a wife or a girl or two to help push. We started with one hundred pounds of flour on each cart to lighten what few teams we had with us to carry the sick and infirm. Finally, after much toil and suffering, and many deaths, we arrived in Salt Lake City on the 9th of November, 1856 A.D. Had it not been for the prompt action of President Brigham Young and the blessings of the Lord in sending teams with provisions to meet us, we would have perished on the plains and in the mountains. History will never fully reveal the sufferings of those belated handcarts, but I have ever felt thankful that I got here. After staying in Salt Lake City one night, I, with some others, was brought to Provo in ox teams, having remained here ever since with the exception of a two-year mission to Scotland. I went in the fall of 1877 A.D. and returned in the fall of 1879."

In an interview with Church Historian, Andrew Jensen, in July 1893, Andrew told him of some kind friends in the Willie company. Jensen wrote: "At Rocky Ridge and South Pass a fierce storm was encountered, and again the heroic little band [was] thrown into terrible danger. Fifteen died from the fatigue and exposure during one night and day. Brother Watson himself was thoroughly exhausted, and would have perished but for the kind efforts of some of his companions who encouraged and urged him on. He makes special mention of a Sister [Ellen] Tofield, a Sister [Amelia] Evans, and of William Leadingham, a captain of the guard, who proved themselves in that awful extremity devoted and self-sacrificing friends." [In a later interview, Andrew said that his greatest desire, as he neared the close of life, was to thank those good sisters, his traveling companions.]

A granddaughter, writing of this event, adds that the two women went back many miles through a blizzard when Andrew didn't make it to camp that evening. They pulled him back in his handcart. "He was so near gone that when he was placed near the campfire to dry and get warm, he did not know that his clothing had caught fire." (Margaret Mitchell, Watson family histories)

After settling in Provo, Utah, Andrew married and had six children. He remained a faithful man, and was ordained a Patriarch by Apostle Reed Smoot in 1902. Andrew died Sept. 24, 1908, in Lethbridge, Canada.

Sources: "Andrew Watson & Jean Allan," by Nonavee W. Jones and Ann M. Jones; "Biography of Andrew Watson," by Mamie Watson Dyches, 1936; *History of William Woodward*, 1980 & 2005; "Andrew Watson," *Deseret News*: Pioneer Jubilee Edition, July 24, 1897; "Questing Lights," Relief Society Magazine, July 1948; *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, Vol 2; *Pioneers and Prominent Men*, by Frank Esshom.