

## ANNA F. TAIT

Born: 1825 Scotland (Died Oct. 20 - "Sixth Crossing" of Sweetwater)

Age: 31

Willie Handcart Company

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Anna was apparently traveling by herself, without any other family members, in the Willie company. What is known about Anna and her emigration are some excerpts from the following letter she wrote June 6, 1856, aboard the ship *Thornton*:

"Dear Brother and Sister Turnbull – We are drawing near our first landing place. I have enjoyed myself first-rate crossing the great water. It has been like a pleasure trip all the time. I have been blessed with the living Spirit of our God all the time, and have never found the moment but what I could thank my God with all my heart for the privilege of going across the Atlantic on such a beautiful ship, under the guidance of so good a captain.

"There has been a great deal of sickness on board, there being many old and infirm. I believe there has never before been a company with so many old and young, halt, blind, and lame, from so many nations, crossed the sea. There have been seven deaths, three births, and two marriages on board . . .

"The under decks were divided into seven wards. Brother Gourlay has charge of the sixth, which is the one that I am in. He is a kind, good man.<sup>1</sup> We have had some good meetings.

"June 11. The pilot came on board last night. It was a joyful sight to see an American pilot. It is a perfect calm, and a real warm day. The sun is so strong that the captain has got sails spread over the passengers to keep it from hurting them. This has been such a day of rejoicing. Brother Quinn was called on to sing a song which he had composed about the voyage. The "Working Bee" was then sung by Brother [Alexander] Burt. President Willie addressed the Saints on "What they were going to America for." There have been no restrictions on the brethren of the priesthood. They have been allowed to speak freely, and they have done so. The captain, doctor, and officers always listened attentively and respectfully. The captain often joined in the songs of Zion. He would not allow any of the sailors to disturb the Saints in any of their preaching or amusement meetings. I have often thought that President F. D. Richards must have breathed his spirit on him at Liverpool.

"June 14. The tug has brought us to New York. We have all passed the doctor, and are now going to land.

"June 15. Castle Garden, New York. I am sitting in the largest house I was ever in. We all landed safe, and got in here at 7:40 p.m. yesterday. Our names were called over, and we had to state where we were going, what money we had, and other particulars, which were entered into a book, and we then passed into the house.

"Since I left you I have had all that I stood in need of, spiritually and temporally. May the God of Israel grant that you may be brought in safety to this beautiful land. ... Give my love to all my friends that may come within the sound of your voice or the reach of your pen. I remain your affectionate sister, Anna F. Tait"

Anna died October 20 near the Sixth Crossing of the Sweetwater. She was spared the devastating effects of the next few days as the company made its way across Rocky Ridge in a blizzard and on to Rock Creek Hollow. The company journal was brief the day Anna died. It included: "This morning there was about 4 inches of snow on the ground. Anna F. Tait from Glasgow, Scotland, aged 31 years died. ... Our provisions were all issued last night & that was hard bread."

<sup>1</sup> This is a reference to Paul Gourley from Scotland, whose family traveled on the *Thornton*, but not with the Willie handcart company. The Gourley's stayed in Iowa City where Paul's help was needed in constructing handcarts. His two oldest sons, Robert and Alexander, were further separated into the Hodgett wagon company where their help was needed as teamsters.