

## CHRISTINA MCNEIL

Born: September 22, 1832 in Scotland  
 Age: 24  
 Willie Handcart Company



Christina was a very independent young woman. She was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the age of 17 on October 2, 1849. The Mormon faith was not kindly received in Scotland at the time and Christina was told to leave her house and never return. Christina was faithful to her beliefs and she spent seven years preparing her own way to Utah. She boarded with a fellow member, the newly widowed Margaret Caldwell, who ran a boarding house. Margaret wrote of some of Christina's experiences:

Christina McNeil, a young girl I had befriended, was working for me. She was happy to join our family. Her mother was a drunkard and only came to see her daughter when she needed money. With my little family and Christina we left for Liverpool in April 1856. . . . June 14, 1856, the ship docked in New York harbor. We landed at Castle Gardens, which is now Ellis Island. Here we started out to find an LDS Sunday School. It was extremely hot for walking. We . . . were well on our way when Christina's nose started bleeding and, try as we would, we could not stop the bleeding. In fact it was to no avail. Finally I administered to her as she had always shown a great deal of faith in the power of healing and administering to the sick.

An incident that happened when the company reached Fort Laramie, Wyoming, is recorded by Margaret's daughter, Agnes:

Mother, in company with . . . a young lady, Christena McNeil, who was making the trip under Mother's care, visited one of the generals in command at the fort to obtain permission to trade some trinkets and silver spoons for flour and meat. The officer said he himself could not use any of the things but to leave the young lady in his office while mother went to another station, where he assured her she would be able to obtain the things she desired . . . During her absence the officer used the time in trying to persuade Christena to stay there, proposing to her and showing her the gold he had, telling her what a fine lady he would make of her. Then he tried discouraging her, pointing out to her how the handcart company would never reach Utah, because of the severe cold, and that they would die of cold and hunger and exposure. Like all noble girls, and true to the cause for which she had left her native Scotland . . . she told him in plain language she would take her chances with the others even though it might mean death. She was greatly relieved to have Mother return. The officer, however, seemed to admire her very much for her loyalty to her faith and gave her a large cured ham and wished her well in her chosen adventure.

Margaret also wrote of this experience: "At the Army Trading Post . . . an Army Officer told us in all sincerity of the cold weather we would encounter and he predicted that none of us would ever reach the Salt Lake Valley alive. He wanted Christina to stay with him, promising her most anything, and telling her she was much too pretty to freeze and be buried on the prairie. Her faith was strong enough to resist all of his offers and she said she would take her chances along with the others."

Others were not as faithful as Christina, as reported in the Willie company journal October 1, 1856: "The first thing this morning, it was discovered that several sisters had left the camp and had taken up their residence at the fort." The journal also reported one girl leaving "with an apostate Mormon."

Christina survived the journey, and in June 1857, she married Warren Ford Reynolds. They were married 44 years and had seven children. Christina remained faithful to her beliefs.

Sources: Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; autobiographies of Margaret Caldwell and Agnes Caldwell Southworth, copies in files of Jolene Allphin. See *Follow Me To Zion* by Andrew Olsen and Jolene Allphin, *Deseret Book*, 2013, for more information and artwork of Christina as well as the Caldwell family.