

EUPHEMIA MITCHELL

Born: 1833 Scotland

Age: 23

Willie Handcart Company



Euphemia was born in Dundee, Forshire, Scotland, on November 14, 1833, to David and Anne Walker Mitchell. Her family was Presbyterian. Euphemia's father died when she was four years old and she was the youngest of seven children left for her widowed mother to raise.

Euphemia was traveling with the family of Margaret McEwan Bain Smith, a widow (age 51), and her children, May Bain (22), Jane (17), Mary (15), Elizabeth (13) and Alexander (6). Euphemia was friends with May Bain and had gone to a Mormon meeting with her when she was only sixteen. She believed the testimony of the Elders and Joseph Smith and loved how they preached by the Holy Ghost and without pay. May Bain had already been baptized and Euphemia also wished to join the Church. She continued to attend the meetings, but her mother was so bitterly opposed to the Mormons she thought it best to keep it a secret.

In her own words she tells, "There was to be a conference on the following weekend and I agreed with a Brother George Harris that if I could wake at 3:00 o'clock in the morning to prepare to be there I would be baptized. All of us children slept in the same room with our mother and I knew it would be very difficult for me to get up and out of the room without waking Mother. I prayed and prayed that if it be right that I be baptized that I would be able to wake up in time. I did wake that morning and dressed and was baptized where the ice had to be broken. I feared I would catch a fever but no ill effects occurred." The baptism was held this early to avoid disturbances and harassment from the anti-Mormons in the area.

One evening Euphemia's mother asked her if she had joined the Mormons. When Euphemia confirmed her mother's suspicions, she was told she was "not welcome at home anymore." About this same time, May's family was making plans to emigrate to Utah to join their older brother, Robert Bain, who had gone there two years previously. May's mother invited Euphemia to go with them. They sailed from Liverpool in May of 1856 aboard the ship *Thornton* and then left Iowa City, Iowa, with the Willie handcart company in July.

With all of the trials that this family had to face, it is truly remarkable, even miraculous, that none of them died. Euphemia began her trip with five pair of shoes but they all wore out before she reached the Valley. Euphemia remembered praying with all her heart that they would reach Zion alive and says they knew the Lord was with them if they did their part and tried very hard each day. She said: "The campfires at night were very good times. We sang the Church hymns and they inspired us. Come, Come Ye Saints [was] my favorite, and we were happy in our labors. A bond of love and friendship was amongst us. We learned the value of resting and keeping the Sabbath Day. We did not choose to remember the pains of hunger and the cold, but wanted to remember the goodness of God unto us as Dear Mother Bain Smith counseled us so many times."

In Lehi, Utah, Robert Angus Bain had been in bed for four weeks, sick with Mountain Fever. He was so weak he had to be lifted into the wagon and have the whip put in his hands, but when he heard that his family was out on the plains, he went to go and help them. With the help of Robert and the other rescuers, the family made it into the Salt Lake Valley where they were taken in to Captain Willie's home and nursed back to health. Euphemia and Robert fell in love and were married just one month after she reached Zion. May and Euphemia were now sisters as well as best friends. Robert and Euphemia named their first baby girl May.

They continued to live in Lehi until June 1860 when they were called to go north and help settle Smithfield. Euphemia answered the call, but grieved to leave behind the grave site of her little girl who had only lived nine months.

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The Bains first lived in the Fort and shared in the tribulations, privations and Indian troubles with the rest of the pioneers there. Euphemia lived in Smithfield seventy-one years of her life until her death in 1931. She was often honored at Pioneer celebrations as the oldest living pioneer there.

Euphemia was an avid reader and well-versed in current events. She taught one of the very first schools because she could read and write and had basic math skills and a great love for children. She gave birth to the first twin girls born in Smithfield. (Three of her great-grandchildren also have twins.) Robert and Euphemia had a store and a farm. Robert was the town Doctor for many years and also pulled teeth. He was an Officiator in the Logan Temple, a Patriarch in Cache County, and took care of the tithing house. He was best known for his profession as a miller. Robert died in May of 1905, leaving Euphemia a widow for the next 26 years. They were the parents of nine children, eight of whom preceded them in death.

Euphemia's obituary reads: For many years she has been "Auntie" or "Grandma Bain" to everyone in the town. She was a jovial sociable being, loving her friends devotedly. Sister Bain was all her life, since conversion, a devoted enthusiastic Latter-day Saint. She was a great reader and until the last year of her life she could converse with her associates on the current happenings of the world at large and the activities of her Church in particular. It may console those who loved her to know that she was well and enjoyed her meals the day before she was stricken with a cerebral hemorrhage, and that she then sank into a deep sleep and quietly and peacefully slept away. At her death she was 98 years old.

Following are some excerpts from an autobiographical sketch by Euphemia:

At Iowa City we secured hand carts, and packing in our few belongings we started on the long journey to Zion. We left Iowa City July 15, 1856, with 120 hand carts, and six wagons. Mrs. Bain and her daughters and I pulled one cart. The weather was very hot at times and we suffered considerably but we got along fine for some time, compared with what came to us later. ... Our food now began to run short, and we were put on short rations. We did not have flour to make bread and made a sort of gruel which we had to live on from day to day. We had a terrible time. For two days we had a soda cracker each. Captain Willie tried to encourage us, but things looked gloomy indeed. Deaths were occurring nearly every day. It began to snow and at night we had to sweep the snow away to make down our beds. In sorrow and hunger and falling strength we tugged at our hand carts, hardly able to get them up the little hills.

One day [October 19] we saw a dust coming towards us from the west. It was a lone horseman. It proved to be Brother Wheelock. He called to us and told us help was near. He stood by and said how he never expected to see brethren and sisters in such a condition as we were. Tears ran down his cheeks as he spoke to us and encouraged us, saying help would reach us [soon], and we should have plenty to eat.

Help did come in the shape of several wagon loads of provisions, clothing, etc. [October 21] We were allowed one pound of flour in the morning and the same in the evening. The wagons went on to help the Martin company which was behind us. Other help came to us as we went on, but the weather turned very cold and many froze their feet, and many others died. The Lord blessed our little band, the widow Bain, her daughters and I. We suffered hunger, thirst, and fatigue, but were well, and none of us froze our feet. We all came through safe and sound. We started with about 500 souls, and 66 died on the journey.

We reached Salt Lake City November [9], 1856. When I left Scotland I had five pairs of shoes, but when I reached Salt Lake City I had to tie grass around them to hold them together.

While away out on the plains we met a company of Elders going east on missions.¹ Lorenzo Hatch was with them. He had known Mrs. Bain's son, at Lehi and he hunted us up and told us Robert had a room ready for us at Lehi. Robert had come out to meet us and met us at Green River with a team and we tied our cart behind the wagon, and we got a chance to ride once in a while after that.

¹ The Willie company passed the eastbound missionaries on October 2, near Fort Laramie.

Sources: "A History of Euphemia Mitchell Bain," by Helen Joyce Bean Chappell; "The Tired Mother," *Improvement Era*, July 1919, by Betsy Smith Goodwin; Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel online website; interview by Jolene Allphin with Alene Christensen, August 16, 2007; biography of Robert Bain. (See Robert's story in rescuer section and Elizabeth Smith's story in Willie section, *Tell My Story, Too*.) See "Margery Smith Family," Chapter 3 in *Follow Me To Zion* by Andrew Olsen and Jolene Allphin, *Deseret Book*, 2013, for artwork and more family stories.