

## ELLISON JAP GOURLEY

Born: June 14, 1833 in Scotland

Age: 23

Martin Handcart Company



Paul and Margaret Glass Gourley were among the first converts to the Church in Scotland in 1842. The family had hoped to gather with the Saints in Nauvoo, but they were unable to realize that goal. Margaret died in 1852, leaving five children ranging in age from one to thirteen. The next year, Paul Gourley married a woman named Ellison Jap, who was also a member of the Church. Ellison was the youngest of six children born to Thomas Jap and Janet Harvey. Paul's children grew to love Ellison as their mother.

When Paul and Ellison were married, Paul had already been serving for ten years as the presiding elder of the Holston or Sterling branch in the Glasgow Conference. His service continued for three more years until the family's emigration in 1856. Paul's occupation was that of a joiner and carpenter. His sons, Robert and Alexander, had worked in the mines, as did many young boys at that time.

The Gourley family sailed from Liverpool on the ship *Thornton* in May 1856. James Willie presided over the group on board, and most of these emigrants continued to Utah with the Willie handcart company. The Kirkwood and Caldwell families and Andrew Smith of the Willie company were listed on the British Mission Record with the Gourleys as part of the emigrant "allotment" from the Glasgow Conference. (See their stories in the Willie section of *Tell My Story, Too*.)

Paul Gourley was called to preside over a group on board the ship. Anna F. Tait recorded: "The under decks were divided into seven wards. Brother Gourley has charge of the sixth, which is the one that I am in. He is a kind, good man. We had some good meetings."

The Gourley family was assigned bunk number 103, a 6 x 6 ft. space. The family of nine slept in shifts. The Gourley children at the time were sons Robert (17), Alexander (15), George (7) and Paul Jr. (2), as well as daughters Nicholas (11), Janet (8) and Margaret (5 months).

The family arrived in Iowa City on June 26 and began preparations for their 1,300-mile trek to Utah. On July 15, Ellison bid farewell to approximately 100 Scottish immigrants with whom she had traveled the last 2½ months. She stayed because Paul was "called" by immigration agents to remain in Iowa City. His carpentry skills were needed to continue building handcarts for the large number of immigrants in the Martin company who had just arrived.

The Martin company left Iowa City almost two weeks after the Willie company. The Martin company was actually two separate companies as they departed from Iowa City. The Gourley's traveled with the first contingent as the Jesse Haven handcart company. As they prepared to go, the Gourley family made another sacrifice. Robert and Alexander were asked to assist the Hodgett wagon company as teamsters. The Hodgett company traveled to Utah close to the Martin handcart company, so the boys were never far away, but they could not assist the family with their handcarts. Ellison also could not assist much as she was reportedly very ill.

Paul and 7-year-old George pulled Ellison and the two youngest children in one of the family's handcarts. Nicholas and Janet pulled the other handcart containing the family's belongings. Paul Gourley had completed his assignment to build handcarts, but his carpentry skills would soon be needed again. Only two short weeks into the handcart trek, at West Scottia, Iowa, little Margaret died from an unknown cause. Captain Haven recorded in his journal: "15 August 1856: A child was buried this morning. The coffin had to be made, which delayed us until about 8 o'clock. We traveled about 13 miles and pitched our tents about half past twelve o'clock, which gave us a chance to wash a little." Paul Gourley wrote in the family Bible: "Our fourth [death in the family, a] daughter, Margaret Glass, died ... between Iowa and Florence Aug 15, 1856. She was buried by the trail in an unmarked grave." (Paul's 1st wife and two other children died in Scotland.) Little Paul also died shortly after reaching Salt Lake City, leaving Ellison bereft of all but her stepchildren. She never had any more children of her own.

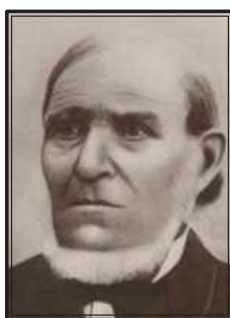
Nicholas Gourley, said to be named after “a Russian Czar,” missed her own mother terribly on this journey. She had clung to an old copper washtub that belonged to her mother. When the captain ordered the loads to be lightened, Nicholas stayed behind with the wash tub, crying and refusing to part with it. Her father finally brought it along, fastened to the back of the handcart. The tub later served the sad purpose of pulling her brother, George, through the snow, as his feet had become frozen. The children’s shoes had become so badly worn that they had to wrap their feet in sacks, and when they took the wrappings off little George’s feet, one of his toes came off in the wrapping. A few days later some more came off. Paul’s feet were also badly frozen, but as soon as he was able to hobble around a bit, he found a job chopping wood and earned a meager existence for his family that winter. Paul later worked as a carpenter on the Salt Lake Temple.

The Gourley family eventually settled in Goshen. At one time, when severe disputes over water rights arose between the towns of Goshen and Mona, the Bishop and entire ward in Goshen were suspended from the Church, with the exception of George Gourley. As a trusted man, George was called to preside over the Goshen Ward until the matter was cleared up. George was called as a counselor to Bishop William Price when Bishop Price was reinstated in 1881.

In 1860, Sidney Teeple came to Goshen to visit his brother. He met Nicholas Gourley there and fell in love with her. They were married in 1861. Not until many years later did they realize that Nicholas was one of the suffering members of the Martin handcart company whom Sidney had helped rescue in 1856. Nicholas lived to be almost 94 years old. When she died, she was thought by some to be the oldest surviving member of the Martin handcart company. She was known for her cheerful disposition. Nicholas was very anxious that no one would blame the members of the Martin company nor any Church leaders responsible for the emigration that year. She said: “Ten years before, the Donner Company in the Sierra Nevada Mountains were trapped in the cold by such a winter and perished. These people would have shared the same fate if it had not been for their resolution and faith in God. We had a man of God at our head who was a master executive and God was on his side. He was not to blame. It was just one of those things that happen. It was purely a miscalculation, a combination of adversities over which no one had control.”

Ellison Gourley raised all of Paul’s children to adulthood. She died at the age of 75. She had been a widow for 18 years. The Gourley children said of her, “She endured with a gentle spirit.” Nicholas named one of her daughters after her step-mother. Ellison served in the Relief Society presidency in Goshen.

Sources: British Mission Record, *Thornton*, p.132; “Goshen Valley History,” p.40; “Personal Interviews, February 23, 1937,” interview with Nicholas Gourley Teeple by Mary Lyman Reeve; “Pioneer Personal Sketches,” interview with Nicholas Gourley Teeple by Mary Lyman Reeve, November 20, 1936; “Nicholas Gourley Teeple,” by Shirley G. Coyne, compiled from Mary Reeve interview and numerous other documented sources; DUP history files; “Biographical Sketch of Nicholaus Gourley Teeple,” interview with Nicholas by Milton R. Hunter, grandson, April 3, 1927; Paul Gourley family Bible, quoted in *Daughters of Utah Pioneers* submission by Barbara Samson, cites “Compiled Family History Book: From Here to Eternity”; “Experience of the Paul Gourley Family 1856 With the Martin Hand-cart Company,” hand written by Nicholas Gourley Teeple; and familysearch.org (updated July 2023)



Paul Gourley



Nicholas Gourley (Teeple)



Janet Gourley (Powelson)