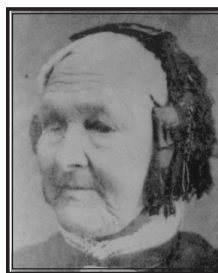


## JAMES KIRKWOOD

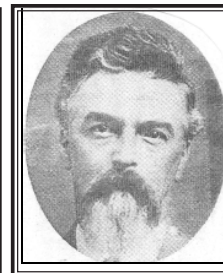
Born: 1845 Scotland (Died Oct. 24, 1856, Rock Creek)

Age: 11

Willie Handcart Company



Margaret Campbell  
Kirkwood



Robert Kirkwood

James and his family were among the first converts in Scotland in 1840. Their home was always open to the missionaries. James was baptized by Elder James MacGregor on April 28, 1856, just prior to sailing for America. James's father and two sisters had died in 1852, but his determined mother gathered her four sons and set her sights on Zion. Margaret sold precious possessions, including her beautiful handwork to help with finances. Margaret's prominent family were fabric designers who had disowned Margaret for joining the Church.

Robert, the oldest son (age 21), wrote of leaving Scotland for Liverpool and of the arrival in America: "Slept none all night being so busy making preparations ... took passage per steamer for Liverpool. Had a pretty rough passage, mostly all the passengers were sick. Our family was all sick for some hours except Thomas [age 19]. He stood the sea best of any although he had not been out the house for nearly six years before, being poorly with ulcers in his legs which arose from a hurt job by a carriage running over his foot when about six years of age. ... New York was everything that the heart of man could wish. All nature seemed to smile with pleasure on the newcomers. ... We had great cause to be thankful to God. ... The appearance of the country with the sweet anticipation of being privileged to set my feet in the Land of Promise tended to Strengthen my body."

Robert and his mother pulled Thomas in the handcart for over a thousand miles. Robert wrote: "Thomas was rather poorly from the mode of conveyance, being hurt in the handcart." James was primarily responsible for his younger brother, Joseph Smith Kirkwood (age 5). One night Margaret put their only loaf of bread in bed with them to protect it from freezing. Joseph knew not to touch it, but was so hungry he began to pinch off small pieces. "The temptation was too great for such a hungry [five]-year-old and by morning, Margaret and her sons' day's rations had disappeared."

On October 23, the Kirkwoods journeyed across Rocky Ridge in a storm. Margaret had one eye freeze. She was blind in that eye the rest of her life. James and Joseph became separated from their mother and fell behind. Margaret waited for her sons by a small fire until late that night. James finally brought his little brother into the camp at Rock Creek and collapsed from exhaustion. With determination, he had faithfully carried out his task and saved his brother. The biography of Joseph by his daughter, Mary, states: "Next morning when arriving in camp the brother James fell dead due to starvation and cold. He was buried on the banks of the Sweetwater in a grave with twelve others."<sup>1</sup>

When Margaret Kirkwood (Wood) died in 1893, Robert wrote the following for a *Deseret News* article: "Mother and I pulled our handcart the farthest of any, and we would have come in with it to Salt Lake City but that Peter McCue (then Bishop) sent his team to help us. The relief met us on Bear River hill, I think. I know that day we had waded thirteen streams, and got into camp after midnight. [Nov. 6-7] We made this long pull to save my brother Thomas's life, for had we crowded him into the wagons that first met us he could not have lived to come into the city.



Staves from the Kirkwood's  
covered handcart



Wrapped in one of  
Margaret Kirkwood's  
shawls

Sources: Interviews and family histories from Michael Kirkwood, Lori Gilles, Suzanne Fairy, LaRita Evans and Ron Myers; "A Veteran Passes Away," *Deseret News*, July 6, 1893; autobiography of Robert Kirkwood, obtained from LaRita Evans; photos by Jolene Allphin and Andrew Olsen. Pictured with Margaret Kirkwood shawl brought across the plains in 1856: Sheryl Fowers and Jolene Allphin. See [tellmystorytoo.com](http://tellmystorytoo.com), and *Follow Me To Zion* by Andrew Olsen and Jolene Allphin, *Deseret Book*, 2013, for artwork and more Kirkwood family stories.

<sup>1</sup>Mary identified and donated many Kirkwood artifacts, some displayed on this page, to her neighbor, Ron Myers. Ron's mother and Mary Kirkwood were close friends. Among the items not pictured is Joseph's guitar that he played in a dance band in American Fork. A few of these items are currently owned by the LDS Church History Museum.