

ARCHIBALD MCPHAIL

Born: 11 May 1816 Scotland, died Nov. 6, 1856, Echo Canyon
Willie Handcart Company



Henrietta McPhail (Eckersell)

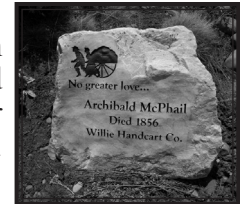
Archibald celebrated his 40th birthday aboard the *Thornton*. He was with his wife, Jane (age 36), daughter, Henrietta (14), from 1st wife (deceased); and Jane [McDonald] (3), recently adopted from Jane's sister, Catherine McKinnon McDonald. Archibald's son, John (14), had died on Christmas day, 1854.

Archibald kept a diary on board the ship. He wrote that at 3:00 a.m. on Friday, the 23rd of May: It began to blow very hard and continued to increase until it blew a complete gale and continued on till Monday morning about five o'clock when afterward it cleared up a fine day with not so much wind as would blow out a candle. ... During the gale the water stove in the glass window that was in the hatchway and came down where we were in the lower deck in torrents until it went over our shoes and with the rocking of the ship it would carry with it pots, pans, kettles, and waterpots with great fury, but was moving about such as heavy chests, trunks, boxes, etc., which we had to lash up tight or have our legs broken. There was one by the name of [James] Laird thrown up against a chest and got his leg out of joint but got it put in the next day and is getting better very fast. This day, Monday the 26th, being very fine, all the women were called up on the deck and heard a good sermon while the men stayed down below and cleaned out the ship. (Transcription available at <http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/>)

Archibald was responsible for a group of immigrants which included the twenty people who shared his tent. Two of these were older women who constantly lagged behind the others. After struggling with his handcart in a blizzard, Archibald reached the camp at Rock Creek Hollow and found that only one of these women had arrived at camp. It was late at night when Archibald went back on the trail four miles and found the missing woman on the other side of a frozen creek. He tried to convince her to come across the ice to him but she refused. She felt that she was dying anyway and did not want to risk the ice breaking. Archibald finally crossed the creek to get her. He picked her up and was in the process of bringing her across when the ice broke and Archibald fell through up to his waist. With his shoes and clothing frozen to him, Archibald was somehow able to get his charge back to camp. He arrived very late at night.

Henrietta McPhail, in later years, described that night to her daughter, Rachel Eckersell Minson, who wrote: "By the time they returned to camp [Archibald's] clothing was frozen on him and he was taking heavy chills. The air was cold and wet and the men were so weak and hungry they could not go in search of dry wood to make a fire; so without anything warm to eat or drink, he was placed in a cold bed [under a handcart] ... Henrietta sat by his bed brushing the snow from his face."

On the night of November 6, 1856, Archibald's wife sat lovingly with his head on her knee and prayed that a small piece of tallow candle she had burning might last until Archibald passed away. Her prayer was answered, for the light of the candle and the life of her husband went out at the same moment. Archibald had made the ultimate sacrifice.



Archibald's wife remarried shortly after reaching the Salt Lake Valley. Henrietta was cared for in Brigham Young's home until she was able to work for room and board at Anthony W. Ivins's home. Henrietta married James Burrows Eckersell and they became the parents of ten children, faithfully moving and pioneering new communities whenever called on to do so. Jane McPhail also grew up in the Zion of her father's dreams, married Alma Peart, and gave birth to ten children.

The same faithfulness exhibited by Archibald McPhail was later reflected in Henrietta's life. Her son, Archibald, and his wife and some of their children fell victims to a criminal act in which they all died. Henrietta's daughter, Rachel, wrote: "In Henrietta's great sorrow she was asked to drink a cup of tea to quiet her nerves but she refused by saying, "I must depend on the Lord for help and not on that which He has forbidden." The Lord did bless her. She was privileged to live to see her children enjoy that which she had sacrificed so much for."

In later years, Archibald's wife stated that she would gladly go through all her trials again for the Gospel. Jane cleaned schools in order to finance her children's education. She was set apart to be a midwife by Wilford Woodruff and practiced obstetrics for more than 30 years, never losing a mother or a baby. (Sources: "History of Archibald McPhail and Jane McKinnon McPhail," from Patty Lichfield, 2004; familysearch.org; DUP history files; British Mission Record for *Thornton*; "Interview with Jane McPhail Peart, July 21, 1938;" "Robert Love Baxter," in *Windows of Wellsville*; "Archibald McPhail Research Notes of Roland and Carol Minson," Nov. 2006; "Sketches from the Life of Henrietta McPhail Eckersell," by Rachel Eckersell Minson; memorial stone photo by Jolene Allphin. See *Follow Me To Zion* by Andrew Olsen and Jolene Allphin, *Deseret Book*, 2013, for artwork and more McPhail family stories.)