

## ISABELLA MCMURRIN

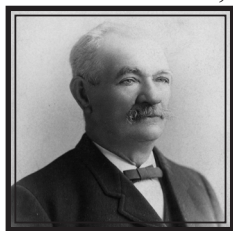
Born: November 23, 1838 in Scotland

Age: 17

Martin Handcart Company/Hunt Wagon Company



Isabella was the youngest of a large family of fifteen children. Her parents were Joseph McMurrin and Margaret Irvine. Isabella joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the age of thirteen and in her enthusiasm to emigrate to Zion indentured herself to the owner of a mill in Hollyoak, Massachusetts, where she operated a steam loom. She left Scotland on her own on December 14, 1855. In June 1856, Isabella's brother, Joseph (age 33), and his wife, Margaret (32), along with their children, Margaret (10),<sup>1</sup> Mary (7) and Jeanette (1) came to America. Isabella's mother, Margaret (61), came with them as well. As the McMurrins passed through Massachusetts on their way to Utah, Joseph and his mother paid off Isabella's indenture and she was able to join them.



Joseph McMurrin, Jr.

Joseph was a cooper, fitting iron tires to the wheels of handcarts, so the McMurrin family did not leave Florence, Nebraska, for Salt Lake until September 2, insuring a very difficult journey through snow. It appears they traveled first with the Martin handcart company. They did have a wagon in which to haul Joseph's equipment. Later, as their cattle began to suffer from lack of feed and the cold weather, they joined with the Hunt wagon company, but still followed the Martin handcart company closely, carrying much of their belongings and assisting in every way they could. One of these times of great trial and need was the last crossing of the Platte River on October 19, when some of the men of the Hunt company crossed as many as 75 times, carrying the beleaguered Martin handcart pioneers through the icy water in the first early winter storm. They suffered along with the handcart pioneers as their oxen gave out and food had to be rationed. Isabella walked the entire distance. It was a miracle that this entire family, including Isabella's mother, made it safely to Zion. They did not arrive in the Salt Lake Valley until December 14, 1856, a year to the day that Isabella, had left Scotland.

Isabella found work to support herself and her mother by caring for George Sims, his ailing wife, Caroline, and their four children. Isabella married George as his second wife in polygamy one month after her arrival in the Valley. Caroline Sims died shortly thereafter and Isabella raised her children. She had three children of her own; Hester, Joseph, and Caroline (named for George's first wife). Five years after their marriage, George was called on a mission to Great Britain, leaving Isabella to carry on with her now large family of children and step-children. He was returning home after serving an honorable mission for four years when he was drowned in the North Fork of the Platte River. Isabella remained a widow for four and one-half years.

In 1870, Isabella married Adam B. Smith, said to be the best dancer in Pine Canyon, Utah. She had six more children, but her descendants report that "the marriage was not a love match." She returned to Salt Lake City for her later years.

Her family says that she was an accomplished knitter, providing for the many children she raised alone by selling her needlework as well as working in homes. She wrote poetry for her own satisfaction. She never had it published. She raised nine children of her own, four stepchildren, and one grandchild. She was a very devoted daughter in caring for her mother in her declining years.



Margaret McMurrin  
(Lee)

<sup>1</sup> Margaret later became the grandmother to LDS Church President Harold B. Lee.