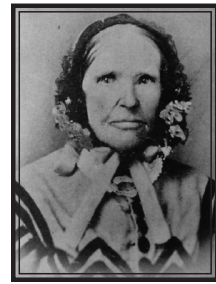


JOSEPH MCKAY

Born: 1799 Ireland

Age: 57

Willie Handcart Company



Martha Blair McKay

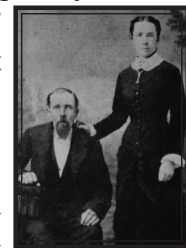
Joseph McKay was born in Ireland on February 12, 1799. He was married to Martha Blair. All of their children were born in Ireland. In 1843, the Smith family moved to Johnstone, Scotland. Joseph worked as a blacksmith and agricultural laborer. When the Church opened a branch in his town in 1848, Joseph and all of his family joined. For the next 8 years their dream and plan was to go to America and join with the Saints in Utah. When enough money was saved for one person to emigrate, Joseph left his family and traveled to America to prepare the way for the rest. He sailed from Liverpool aboard the *Thornton*, accompanied by Andrew Smith (age 19). Andrew was engaged to Joseph's daughter, Jane. Joseph and Andrew began their handcart journey at Iowa City, 1300 miles from their destination in Utah.

Winter came suddenly on October 19, the same day the Willie company distributed the last food rations. At noon on this day, express riders met the company, with the glad news that rescue wagons were not far behind. They finally met these rescue wagons on October 21.

On October 23, the next major obstacle was Rocky Ridge. It stood between them and their next camp 15 miles away at Rock Creek Hollow. The majority of the rescue wagons had been sent on to aid the Martin, Hodgett and Hunt Companies. Joseph's strength was depleted and he struggled to survive. He finally collapsed. Andrew Smith was the one who lifted and carried his future father-in-law through on this day.¹ Joseph thanked God for Andrew Smith and always remembered that Andrew had literally saved his life.

When Joseph reached Utah, his hands and feet were frozen. They eventually healed and after three years he had earned enough money to help 18 members of his family come to Zion. In 1859, Joseph's wife, four unmarried daughters and one married daughter with her husband and children sailed on the *William Tapscott*. They crossed the plains with the 8th handcart company, led by George Rowley. In 1860, the same ship brought Jane and Joseph to America. Their 21-year-old brother, James, apparently had second thoughts after he boarded the ship. The British Mission Record for the *William Tapscott's* list of intended passengers shows the following entry next to James's name: "not going." One family record shows James as "drowned at sea" with no date. One record shows a death date of 1890 with no other information. It is not known at this time what happened to Joseph's son, James McKay.²

Joseph's family settled in Salt Lake City, Heber City, and Wellsville, Utah, and in Malad, Idaho. Martha died in 1869. Joseph subsequently married sisters, Nancy and Jane McClelland. From Joseph's family histories: "Joseph was exceptionally proud of his vegetable garden which he watered from his flowing well. Wilford Woodruff, in passing one day, noted Joseph drinking from the cold flowing water while he was perspiring from hoeing his potato patch. 'Be careful, Joseph. You ought not to drink from that cold stream while you are so warm. You may die with your boots on.' Joseph was 77 years old and needed those words of caution. Some weeks later, he came in from the garden in physical distress. Jane struggled to get his boots off, but the distress was fatal. His obituary states that he died of 'the cramp.' He was buried June 18, 1876, in Salt Lake City, Utah."

Joseph McKay
Jane McClelland

Sources: "Joseph McKay & Martha Blair," by Ila May Maughan (Fisher), 1967, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU; "The Hero of Linister," by Solomon F. Kimball, *Improvement Era*, January 1913; "Andrew Smith," by Andrew Smith Jr.; "Letter to M. Blair Smith," from his father, Andrew Smith, Jr., 1937 (concerning the life of his mother, Jane McKay); photos and family histories from Nathan McKay Smith, Provo, Utah and Nathan L. Smith, Perryton, Texas.

¹It is an assumption by Jolene Allphin that this event occurred on October 23, based on the history of Andrew Smith.

²McKay family history indicates that James never married, "according to the 'Aunt Martha' letters. ... The long years without him, especially when all the other children were married by 1862, left an emptiness in their hearts that never could be filled."