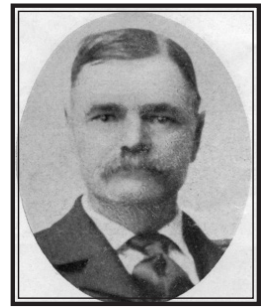


RICHARD GODFREY



Born: 11 Mar 1835 Hanbury, Worcester, England

Age: 21

Willie Handcart Company

Richard was one of nine children of Thomas and Elizabeth Ainge Godfrey. He was a handsome young man with dark hair and dark eyes. He was fortunate enough to be able to attend school as a boy and when he was old enough to learn a trade he went to work in a salt mine.

Richard joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in January 1856 in Stoke, England. Four months later he was on his way to Utah. His parents and at least two siblings also immigrated to Utah later and settled in Clarkston, Cache County.

On July 15, Richard and the Willie handcart company left Iowa City, Iowa, with their handcarts and hopes. The Willie company journal records a marriage for Richard on that day:

Tuesday July 15th [1856], We finished weighing the luggage today. Sister Eliza Hurren was delivered of a daughter about 6 a.m. yesterday; also Franklin Richins was born this day to John and Charlotte Richins of the Cheltenham Conference, & Richard Godfrey of Worcester Conference was joined in matrimony to Ann Herbert of the same branch by Bishop Tyler. We started out a short distance this day and encamped for the night, all in first rate spirits.

In the Willie Company were two sisters, Ann (26) and Hannah Herbert (16). Ann also had her 3-year-old son, Charles Martin Herbert, with her. None of the biographies of Ann, Hannah or Richard mention this Iowa City marriage. It appears to have been a marriage of convenience only. Ann married Andrew Jackson Rynearson in March 1857. Hannah also married soon after reaching the Valley.¹

As the Willie company began to cut their rations and suffer from cold weather, Richard dug some roots one day and began to cook them. Richard's daughter, Comfort, later related:

The Captain came along and looked into my father's kettle that he was using to cook supper. He asked what he had there. Father told him that they were some kind of roots, and the Captain wanted to know if he was going to eat them. When he told him that he was, the Captain said that they were poison parsnips and would kill him. My father told him that he had eaten some before and that they had not killed him yet, and that he might as well die eating them as to die starving.

This event was also told by 13-year-old Elizabeth Smith of the Willie Company:

One evening we camped near a marshy meadow spring. Poison parsnips grew there in plenty. Everybody was elated. We had found something to cook and to eat! By this time, our ration was four ounces of flour a day, and neither salt nor soda. ... We cooked and ate our fill of poison parsnips. I confess we felt like we had been eating rocks, so heavy they lay upon our stomachs. The whole camp ate of them. Our captain arrived late at the camp that night, and when he found what we had been eating, he groaned aloud and cried, "Put them down. Every one contains enough poison to kill an ox." He said, furthermore, that it would be one of the providences of the Almighty if we were not all dead by morning. However, many were glad that they had eaten of them before they knew. We did not realize the truth of his words until the next morning when one brother died—a Scandinavian. We supposed that he had eaten them after he knew they were poison.

Richard survived the poisonous food, but his feet were badly frozen on his journey and caused him suffering for the rest of his life.

Richard took part in the Echo Canyon Campaign when Johnston's Army arrived in Utah. He also helped with work on the Salt Lake tabernacle, temple and the tithing office. When the first railroad came to Utah, he cooked for the men who worked for the railroad.

¹ New research indicates that Ann obtained a divorce from the state of Iowa prior to her marriage to Andrew Rynearson.

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Richard married Jane Jolley in 1859. They became the parents of 12 children. He also married Jane's cousin, Mary Ann George, in 1865, and they had 4 children.

Richard was active in every community that he pioneered. He helped to build the Taylor flour and grist mill in Riverdale. In 1870 he moved to Newton and then Clarkston, where he served as ward clerk, town trustee and clerk, postmaster and manager of the cooperative mercantile. He later owned a store and had the post office in his house. He was a good butcher and performed this service for many people in the community. Richard lived to be 77 years old.

When Richard left his native England in 1856, he composed the following poem:

THE MORMON'S FAREWELL

Farewell my former friends, farewell
Since you have proved unkind
Altho you persecute me
You cannot change my mind.

I've set my heart to serve the Lord
Whatever may oppose
Tho all the world deride me
Tho all my friends turn foes.

Thru Babylon's delusions
I've spent my early years
And practiced her religion
Thru constant doubts and fears.

But now I've found the gospel
Joy thru my heart doth flow
God's method of salvation
With certainty I know.

To hear the holy priesthood
Deep mysteries unfold
The past explained the future
As prophets did of old.

And feel the Spirit witness
That what they say is true
Gives me the power to bid
My friends and Babylon adieu.

Great Babylon the counterfeit
To punish and perplex
To destroy her arlon priesthood
And break up all her sects.

And while the wicked murmur
And still more wicked grow
The glories of affection
Will monarchies o'erthrow.

The ocean will the mighty fleets
Of Babylon devour
And wealth for ages heaped on wealth
Shall perish in an hour.

As direful scourges waste the earth
The Lord will separate
The wicked and his people
Whose blessings will be great.

We'll build a temple for him
To which he will come down
And with Celestial bodies
The Saints salvation crown.

And all the Saints are gathering
With this great end in view
But hypocrites will linger
And hope it is not true.

The spirit bids me leave this land
So joyfully I'll sing
The Saints shall be my kindred
And Christ shall be my king.

Sources:

"History of Clarkston—The Granary of Cache Valley 1864-1964," by Ben J. Rausten and Eunice P. Rausten;
"History of Richard Godfrey" by Dolores R. Godfrey;
"Richard Godfrey" by great-granddaughter Ella L. Loosle;
familysearch.org.