

THOMAS CALDWELL



Born: 3 Feb 1842 Scotland

Age: 14

Willie Handcart Company

Thomas came to Utah with his mother, Margaret Ann (age 39); siblings, Robert (16), Elizabeth (11), and Agnes (9); and Christina McNeil (24). Shortly after Thomas's parents joined the Church, his father left for Canada where his parents had moved, and was never heard from again. Thomas wrote:

Mother was anxious to join the Saints in Utah which meant she had to be very frugal in her living needs. She soon saved enough, however, and with the help of the perpetual emigration fund we were able to leave Scotland. My grandmother, Mary Cunnachy McFall, her daughter, Jane, and son-in-law, Thomas Russel, had already joined the Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah. We were all living together in the same house. After their leaving, mother was able to have more roomers.

The ship *Thornton* sailed from Liverpool in May of 1856 with seven hundred fifty souls aboard. We were assigned to lower between decks. As a boy of fourteen I was not too impressed or inconvenienced as I could get around to explore and investigate other parts of the ship. After leaving Castle Gardens we reached Iowa City the 26th of June 1856. Here we were outfitted and assigned to our groups and our handcarts. Our handcarts were of poor description. There were 100 to each group and two persons were allotted to draw each cart. I was to help my mother and Christina McNeil, a young girl who had lived with us in Glasgow, Scotland. [Robert was detailed as a teamster for a provision wagon.] We left Iowa City the 26th of July 1856. Millen Atwood was the Captain of our group of 100. On the 18th of August we left camp [Florence, Nebraska] and set out in earnest on our journey across the plains.

While in Florence, Nebraska, some old Texan cows were bought to milk. This is where I met with an accident. Some girls were trying to hold and milk one of the Texan cows, which was giving them a great deal of trouble. Thinking I could help them out, I offered to try, but when I took the rope, the cow bolted, catching my foot in the rope. I was thrown to the ground until I could let go of the rope. My collar bone was broken. This of course was very painful, especially after gangreen set in. Some days I could push a little on the cart, but mostly I would feel so ill I could only hang on. When we would come to one of the larger streams that had to be crossed it seemed almost too much for human nature. But as we were requested and as there was no other way, we would boldly enter the stream, helping each other the best we could. I would try my best to help my younger sisters one at a time through to the other side. There wasn't much I could really do as the constant pain in my collar bone was almost more than I could bear and seemed to be getting no better. Mother would treat it at night when we camped. I did, however, try to keep my younger sisters encouraged to keep walking. Agnes did alright as she could find friends to walk with. They would figure out some sort of a game or songs to keep their mind[s] occupied and busy. Elizabeth was not as active or sturdy and it was hard for her to keep her feet moving, consequently her feet were frozen.

We finally arrived in Salt Lake Valley the 9th of November 1856. We had endured hardships almost beyond human endurance. My mother was quite fortunate as she came through as well or better than even some of the more sturdy men on the group. We were determined to make the best of it all. We were sent to Mill Creek where homes were opened to us. Food and clothing were given freely. Our wounds were taken care of and my collar bone soon healed. Elizabeth's toes on one foot were amputated, and she soon could walk well.

Soon after our arrival President Young advised all widows and widowers to marry. Mother married Nathaniel M. Bennett who was living in Mill Creek. I went to work for anyone who could afford to give me my board. Later, I was sent by the Church to help subdue the Indian uprisings. I was sent to the Teton Basin in Idaho and the Snake River Valley. The weather was so cold and we were out in it for such long periods of time, I contracted one cold after another until finally I was left with consumption from which I never recovered. While working in Salt Lake, I would try to get to Brigham [City] where my mother and Brother Bennett had moved, to visit with my mother and sisters who were grown up by now. My sister, Agnes, had a very dear friend whom she introduced to me one night at a dance. We fell in love and were later married. The beautiful young lady was Abigail Snow, daughter of President [Lorenzo] Snow and Harriett [Amelia Prichard] Squires. We were married the 17th of Feb 1864. We later went to Salt Lake where we were married in the Salt Lake Endowment House the 16th of July 1864. Twin boys were born to us the 5th of Feb 1866 in Brigham City, Utah." [Thomas died two months later. He is buried in Lorenzo Snow's burial plot in Brigham City.]

Sources: "Life Sketch of Margaret Ann McFall Caldwell," (autobiography); DUP history files, "A Word Picture of our mother, Agnes Caldwell Southworth," by Yeara S. Fife and Jeana S. Miller; "Biography of Agnes Caldwell," (autobiography, with added poem by Rosilla E.S. Osborn); "Short Sketch of Thomas Caldwell," (autobiography); interview with Lorraine Thatcher, January 2003, by Jolene Allphin; interview with Norda Fife Emmett, February 2003, by Jolene Allphin; photos and autobiographies courtesy of Norda Fife Emmett; photo of Elizabeth in DUP files.