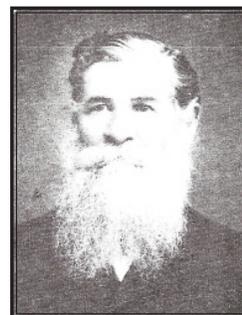
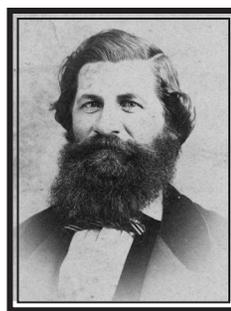


J.D.T. McALLISTER

Born: 19 Feb 1827 Lewis, Sussex, Delaware

Age: 29

Rescuer



John Daniel Thompson McAllister, often known simply as J.D.T., was born in 1827 in Delaware to William James Frazier and Ellen Thompson McAllister. At the age of one year, his parents took him to the city of Philadelphia. It was in Philadelphia that John eventually became acquainted with members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He investigated the gospel and was subsequently baptized by Alvert Lutz, President of the Philadelphia Branch, on October 12, 1844. At least two of his siblings also joined the Church and came to Utah.

In the General Conference held on April 8, 1853, in Salt Lake City, John was appointed to serve a mission to England, leaving behind his wife, Ellen, and two young sons, Moroni and John. He was also commissioned to take a stone from the Territory of Utah which was to be placed in the Washington Monument at Washington, D.C. In describing this beautiful block of stone, John said that it was three feet long, two feet wide, and six and a half inches thick. In the center stood the beehive, the emblem of industry. Over it was the motto, "Holiness to the Lord." Above this was the all-seeing eye with rays, and beneath the line was the word "Deseret."

John arrived in Washington on September 23rd and presented the stone to the committee. "They received us in a very kind and affectionate manner," he said. John then served his mission in the British Isles where he was successful and very appreciative of the faithful saints. The handcart mode of traveling across the plains to Utah was introduced in late 1855, and the missionaries began to preach it to the people. From Belfast, Ireland, Elder McAllister wrote on Dec. 31, 1855: "The priesthood and members feel alive in Mormonism and from the oldest to the youngest all feel Zionward and are at the present time rejoicing in the anticipation of pulling or pushing a handcart to their home in the West. Tobacco smokers have resolved to quit and put their savings in the Pioneer Emigration Fund, and those who have quit drinking tea will put their savings in the same."

In the fall of 1856, John was journeying home in the company of Franklin D. Richards and other returning missionaries and arrived in Salt Lake on October 4, 1856. They passed the Willie and Martin handcart companies along the way, overtaking the Martin company on September 7 and spending a few hours with them. Two days later, John wrote: "On the morning of September 9th, we met with two brethren from Brother J. G. Willie's handcart company in search of 30 head of cattle that had strayed from their camp about 50 miles in advance. On the 12th we overtook and camped with Bro. Willie's . . . at the North Bluff Fork of the Platt. The next day we forded the Platt and Bro Willie's Company followed. It was a soul stirring sight. Several of the carts were drawn by women."

The day after the arrival of this group of returning missionaries in Salt Lake City, Brigham Young called for the first of many rescue efforts to go back and bring the last companies of the season in to the Valley. Later, on the 23rd of November, John and others answered a call to go break a road through the snow over the Big Mountain for the Martin Company. On the 27th of November, John was selected to take an express message to the first rescuers who had now been out almost two months. He found them the next day, camped in the first cottonwood grove on East Canyon Creek, twenty-five miles from Salt Lake City. On Saturday, November 29th, John reported, "Very stormy, Brother E. Hanks and I was sent over the Little Mountain to prepare

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a camp ground for the night. About dark all the company was in camp.” On Sunday, Nov.30th, the company “started a little after day break, and arrived in the city at noon.”

John D.T. McAllister is the author of the well-known “Handcart Song.” It was written and taught to the immigrants before the first handcart company under Edmond Ellsworth left Iowa City and it was very popular. Even today, the children of the Church love to sing its lively chorus along with the shortened and simplified verse to go with it. Originally there were 6 verses. (See the complete song at the end of this book.)

John H. Latey, who was an emigration agent at Florence, Nebraska, wrote a letter to Elder John Taylor, reporting on the arrival of the first two handcart companies there. Latey stated in the letter that “[they were] in fine health and spirits, (singing, as they came along, Elder J.D.T. McAllister’s noted handcart song – ‘Some must push and some must pull,’ &c.) One would not think that they had come from Iowa City, a long and rough journey of . . . 300 miles, except by their dust-stained garments and sunburned faces. My heart is gladdened as I write this, for methinks I see their merry countenances and buoyant step, and the strains of the hand cart song seems ringing in my ears like sweet music heard at eventide or in a dream.” When the 3rd handcart company under James Willie departed from Florence, Latey wrote that he “saw them off in good earnest to the tune of ‘Some must push,’ &c., (can’t move without that.)”

John McAllister loved music and was a member of the Ballo Brass Band. He had a magnificent voice and a gift for acting and so it was natural that he should be a part of the cultural activities of the Church. John was a member of the Deseret Dramatic Association, played on the stage of the Salt Lake Theater and was the leading soloist for the Tabernacle Choir for many years. John later was called to serve in the St. George Temple as a counselor to Wilford Woodruff and then later served as the President of the St. George Stake. He also became the President of the St. George Temple. He served faithfully for 16 years and when the Salt Lake Temple was dedicated he went to Salt Lake to attend the temple dedication. At that time he was then called to become the President of the Manti Temple, where he served faithfully for another 14 years.

One can readily appreciate the moments of tender loneliness and homesickness experienced by John when he penned this poem entitled “To My Wife” during his mission to England:

To My Wife

Can I forget the hours of bliss
That I have spent with thee?
Can I forget the parting kiss
Which sealed thy faith to me?
Can I forget the fond fond sigh
That breathed thy last adieu?
The tear that gem’d thy soften eye
Like showers on violets blue?
Can I forget the sleepless nights
That you have spent for me?
Can I forget those darling eyes
That laugh upon thy knee?
Can I forget the happy hours
We’ve passed in our dwelling?

Can I forget those praterlers
Moroni, John, Ellen?
I never can forget thee, Dear,
And what thou has’t endured
Your name is mentioned in my prayer
When calling on the Lord
For his spirit to be with you,
Your steps to guide aright,
And endow your mind with wisdom
With knowledge, love, and light,
To preserve you from all danger
And in every circumstance of life
Bless you with health and strength
That you may be content.

Sources: Numerous Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; “Short Bio of John Daniel Thompson McAllister” by Becky Pope.