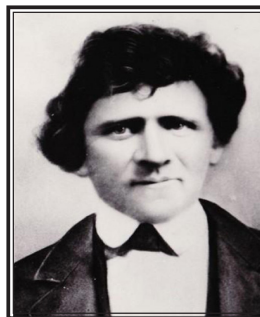


## PETER HOWARD MCBRIDE

Born: May 3, 1850 in Scotland

Age: 6

Martin Handcart Company



Peter Howard McBride



Margaret Alice McBride

Peter came to America with his family, consisting of father, Robert (age 52) and mother, Margaret Howard (41), and five children, Janetta Ann (16), Heber Robert (13), Ether Enos (8), Peter (6) and Margaret Alice (3).

From Peter's journal, written later in his life, we read: "My grandfather [McBride] was a sailor. I have heard him say that he had landed in every port that a ship could stick its hull. I well remember when he anchored his ship close to our home on the Isle of Bute, launched a boat with his effects and rode toward shore, got a wheelbarrow and piled his things on it. He placed me on top of the load and we hurried for the house. A wave struck, and by the time we were up the hill the water stood thirty feet where we had just been. My grandfather had a fine home in Ireland, but he was seldom there."

Peter's family had also lived in England where his father was baptized in the River Ribble at Preston by Orson Hyde on August 1, 1837. This was just two days after the baptism of George D. Watts, the first person in the British Isles to be baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For this honor, George Watts had won a foot race to the water's edge, beating another man. Deeply religious, Peter's parents had heard Heber C. Kimball speak in the Vauxhall Chapel, headed by Reverend Fielding, and felt to embrace his teachings. The McBride's always welcomed the missionaries in their home. They came often, held meetings there, and were always provided food and lodging. Peter's mother provided the items for the sacrament.

Peter's father became a leader and missionary for the Church in England. The children also often participated, by spending Sunday afternoons passing out missionary tracts. The family prepared for many years to be able to emigrate and gather to the physical "Zion" in Utah, as the call was at that time. From Peter's and his sibling's writings, we pick up some of the stories of what they experienced on their heartbreaking trek across the Plains:

"We had to burn buffalo chips for wood, not a tree in sight, no wood to be found anywhere. Just dry earth and rivers. We children and old folks would start early so we wouldn't be too far behind at night. A great many handcarts broke down, oxen strayed away, which made traveling rather slow. Quite an undertaking to get nearly one thousand persons who had never had any camping experience to travel, eat, and cook over campfires. It took much patience for the captain to get them used to settling down at night and to get started in the morning.

"We saw a great many buffalo as we traveled up the Platte River. The people were forbidden to kill them, as it made the Indians angry . . . one time our company met three thousand Sioux Indians, all warriors all in war paint. Our people were much frightened, fear held the whole camp in its grip as they all expected to be annihilated. But their fears were groundless. They told our interpreters they were going to fight the Pawnee tribes. They wouldn't hurt us because we were mostly squaws and papooses. It would be cowardly to fight us, so they gave us the road. . . .

"My baby sister and I were . . . really hungry. Our teams gave out and died, and we were glad to eat the meat. I remember some men passed us one day and stopped to talk. They gave my baby sister some cookies. She carried them in her little pocket, and I was always with her and would tease for a bite. She would give me a taste once in a while, and it was so good. No cake I



Cookies In Her Pocket

© Julie Rogers

used by permission

ever tasted since was ever so good. The exposure to cold, rain, snow, and ice, pushing carts all day, the scarcity of food and wood caused many strong men to perish.

“A man by the name of Cyrus Wheelock, just returning from a mission to the Eastern States, was riding a horse. He carried some of the children across the river, even helped pull some of the handcarts by a rope fastened to his saddle. One time he had three little boys on his horse, one in front and two behind him. I was the last boy on that side of the river and tried to wade across. He told me to climb up behind the last boy behind his saddle, which I did. We crossed the river all right, then the horse leaped up the steep bank, and I slid off in the shallow water. I held on to the horse’s tail and came out all right.”

Peter’s mother had become ill on the journey after they left Florence, Nebraska. She soon was unable to help pull the handcart and could only walk a short distance. She would then be placed on the handcart and the rest of the family would pull her to camp. Peter’s youngest sister, Margaret Alice, would also ride on the handcart because she was too little to walk much. Of this Peter writes: “My mother was sick all the way over, and my sister, Jeanetta, had the worry of us children. She carried water from the river to do the cooking. Her shoes gave out, and she walked through the snow barefoot, actually leaving bloody tracks in the snow. Father was a good singer. He had charge of the singing in our company, and the night he died he sang a song, the first verse that reads ‘O Zion, when I think of you, I long for pinions like a dove, And mourn to think I should be so distant from the land I love.’” Peter’s father truly did dream of being in Zion. As a token of his dreams, Robert had carefully stashed away in the corner of his cart, a masonry trowel with which he hoped to help build the Temple in Zion.

Robert became increasingly weak and sick and was unable to help the family as much. It was very difficult for this young family of children to take care of each other, as well as their sick parents, and the brunt of the responsibility fell on the two oldest siblings, Janetta and Heber.

On October 19, 1856, as the company crossed the Platte River for the last time, it began to snow. Peter’s father made the supreme sacrifice here. Even in his weakened condition, he worked all day pulling, pushing, and wading through the icy water. He made an estimated 25 trips across the river, helping to get all the people and carts across. By the next morning there was 6 inches of snow on the ground. Peter’s father was so ill he could hardly sit up. Peter’s brother, Heber, wrote of that morning, “We had to travel that day through the snow and I managed to get Father into one of the wagons that morning. That was the last we saw of him alive. We only made one drive, as it began to snow very hard. When we camped, the snow was getting very deep. My sister and I had to pitch our tent and get some wood . . . After we had made Mother as comfortable as we could, we went to try to find Father. The wind was blowing the snow so bad, we could not see anything and the wagons had not yet come into camp. It was then after dark, so we did not find him that night. The next morning, the snow was about 18 inches deep, and awfully cold. While my sister was preparing our little bit of breakfast, I went to look for Father. At last, I found him under a wagon with snow all over him. He was stiff and dead. It felt as though my heart would burst.”

Heber then had the task of breaking the sad news to his mother and the rest of the children. Robert McBride was buried on October 20, 1856, reportedly in a common grave with 14 others who had died. When Peter saw them bury his father, he ran out and started crying. Someone stopped him and tried to console him about his father’s death. He cried more. He walked to the place where they had buried him and said, “My father had my fish hooks in his pocket and I want them.”

The rest of Peter's story is also told best in his own words: "We camped at the Sweetwater River. A meeting was held. It was decided that we could go no further, the snow so deep and no food. We were doomed to starvation. They gave me a bone of an ox that had died. I cut off the skin and put the bone in the fire to roast. And when it was done some big boys came and ran away with it. Then I took the skin and boiled it, drank the soup, and ate the skin, and it was a good supper."

"The next day we had nothing to eat but some bark from trees. Later we had a terrible cold spell; the wind drifted so much I knew I would die. The wind blew the tent down. They all crawled out but me. The snow fell on it. I went to sleep and slept warm all night. In the morning I heard someone say, 'How many are dead in this tent?' My sister said, 'Well, my little brother must be frozen to death in that tent.' So they jerked the tent loose, sent it scurrying over the snow. My hair was frozen to the tent. I picked myself up and came out quite alive, to their surprise.

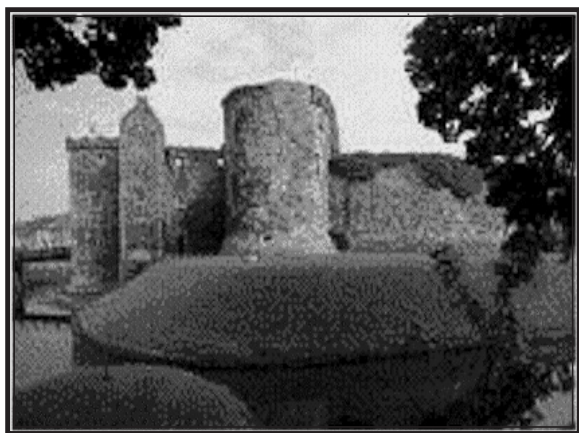
"That day we got word that some teams were coming to meet us from the Valley. Three teams came that night. No one but a person having gone through what we had suffered can imagine what a happy moment it was for this 'belated handcart company.' Men, women, and children knelt down and thanked the Almighty God for our delivery from certain death. It put new life into all the Saints. The next day several more teams arrived, and there was room for all to ride.

"We finally arrived in Salt Lake City, November 30, 1856. Our teamster took us to his sister's place, where we were kindly treated . . . All my life I have worried for fear my children might get as hungry as I was, but thank goodness they have never wanted for food."

Peter's family settled in Ogden first, then later in Eden, Utah. He grew up and became the father of 22 children. Peter was very musically talented - he sang, composed humorous songs, and played numerous instruments. He was called by President Brigham Young to "help promote music and singing" in their area. This "mission" lasted throughout his lifetime. He later moved his family to Gila Valley, Arizona, where they had a 160-acre farm and he taught vocal classes at the St. Joseph Academy in Thatcher. He served in the bishopric for twenty years.

Sources: *Chariots of Hope*, by Darvil McBride and Bruce McBride, 1983; Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; familysearch.org; see trail excerpts at Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website, see also mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu.

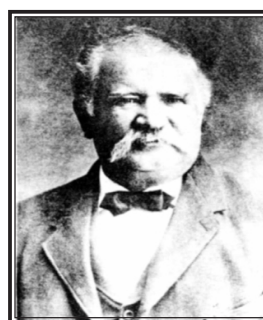
Rothsay Castle, near McBride home in Scotland



Robert McBride



Margaret Ann Howard McBride



Ether Enos McBride