

MARGARET ADELINE KEWLEY

Born: 5 March 1840, Kirk German, Isle of Man

Age: 16

Martin Handcart Company



Margaret was the third of eight children born to James and Ann Karren Kewley. Her parents joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when she was just two months old. Margaret was baptized a member at the age of eight. She was a vivacious and happy girl who loved to pick the abundance of wildflowers near her home in Peel, Isle of Man.

In May 1856, the Kewley family left behind the graves of three of their children who died when they were young. Their two oldest daughters, Ann and Elizabeth, did not emigrate with them. The five Kewley family members who boarded the ship *Horizon* were James (age 54), Ann (41), Margaret (16), Robert¹ (11) and Thomas (3). Elder James Little, one of the missionaries in Liverpool, came to see them off. He would later play an important role in Margaret's family.

The *Horizon* arrived in Boston on July 1 after five weeks on the sea. Seven babies or small children died that first week after arriving in America. Thomas Kewley was one of them. A measles outbreak on the voyage may have been the cause. He was buried in Cleveland, Ohio, on July 5.

From Iowa City to Florence, Margaret walked much of the way barefooted. As she reached each little town in Iowa, she dusted her feet and replaced her shoes so she could walk through the town respectably. The weather was warm and Margaret could still find pretty wild flowers along the way. After leaving Florence, Nebraska Territory, Margaret no longer needed to be concerned about this kind of respectability, as there was little of civilization in this last 1,000 miles of their journey. They passed through Indian and buffalo country, where Margaret could find tiny Indian beads in the anthills and large buffalo chips which were gathered for fuel. As they drew nearer the mountains, the nights became frosty, and the winter weather finally caught them on October 19. They forded the Platte River for the last time on this day.

Margaret's father helped others at this river crossing, carrying some on his back. His legs were wounded by sharp cakes of ice that were floating down the river. Margaret said that the water was up to their waists and when her "father had landed his family over, he rushed back into the stream and saved two poor women from going down the stream." James became weak and ill. Margaret and Robert broke off pieces from their own small "dough cakes" and fed their father.

The Martin company made very little progress in their journey for the next few days and finally came to a halt at an area known as Red Buttes, about 10 miles beyond the Platte crossing. The night before the first rescuers arrived, James laid down to rest and told Margaret he feared he would never get up again. Margaret told about the hope brought back to camp the next day as Joseph A. Young arrived: "When we saw him coming he looked like an angel riding down to us upon a big white horse and said 'Cheer up, provisions and help will soon arrive.' I took my father by the hand and tried to get him to arise but he was too weak and sick, but he smiled up at me for he knew his children would have care and food."

The rescuers helped the beleaguered Saints continue their journey. Near Devil's Gate they had to stop for almost a week, during which time they sought shelter off the trail in a cove in the mountains. Margaret's legs and feet froze, and several of her toes later required amputation. Margaret was often reluctant to speak of these hardships later in her life, though her feet never stopped aching. One of her descendants wrote: "Her natural cheerfulness and good humor made all who knew her revere her. Her childhood love of flowers she kept all her life. She grew many varieties and tended her garden with loving care. She sold bouquets to supplement the budget. She also grew fruits and vegetables. She owned a small greenhouse and there she nurtured many potted plants and seedlings. Margaret had trouble with her eyes, but loved books and was well read. Often she was found sitting by the fire with a reading glass and a favorite volume of Sir Walter Scott."

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One of the rescuers who assisted the Kewley family was John Carlisle. He may have looked a little different, as his coat was lined with newspapers to help him stay warm. However, it is said that he was “a very handsome man with sparkling black eyes under bushy brown brows. He was lean and tall, giving the appearance of strength.”² He and Margaret were married 4 ½ months later. In 1869, Margaret and John moved their little family of five children to Nebraska and became somewhat disaffiliated with the Church. Their oldest son, John E. Carlisle, had been baptized in August of that year by David Hyrum Smith, a son of Joseph Smith, who was on a mission in Utah for the RLDS church. It is not known why the family moved to Nebraska, but seven years later, their friend, James Little, returned to their lives.

In March 1876, James had just returned to Utah from a mission in New York when Brigham Young asked him to come to April conference, ready to go on another mission. This was a serious test of James’ faith, as he was already struggling to make a living when he left for his previous mission and found that his ranch in Kanab had suffered further heavy losses while he was gone. James wrote: “And taking all things into consideration, it was still worse for me to leave home in the spring than it was in the fall before, but I still decided to try to meet his requirements, no matter what the sacrifice, so I determined if possible to be at conference.”

James did attend conference and afterward was appointed to preside in the “North Western States” mission. Brigham Young wrote to James: “In the field of labor to which you are assigned you will find many who have once tasted of the pure principles of the gospel who have turned away from the same, and who delight to argue and cavil with regard to the plan of salvation. Treat such with kindness; present the truth to them in meekness, but avoid all argument and disputation; bear your testimony, proclaim your message and leave the results with the Lord, let his spirit supply the arguments, and when your words reach those truly honest the result will be apparent in the due time of the Lord.”

Margaret and John do not appear to be among those who “turned away” from the gospel, but James’s influence must have had an impact. James wrote: “Friday 16th. [June 1876] I went by railway to Nebraska City, Nebraska, by invitation to visit Brother John Carlisle and family. I found them enjoying much of the spirit of the Gospel. ... 17th. I spent the day mostly in reading and conversation at Brother Carlisle’s. ... 18th. After we had eaten dinner a hymn was sung followed by prayer at the house when Brother Carlisle and family went with me to a place which had been prepared, and baptized five of Brother Carlisle’s children, the oldest eighteen years and the youngest eight years old. We returned to the house where I confirmed those who had been baptized, ordained the oldest an Elder, administered to Sister Carlisle for her health, blessed the babe, and assisted by Brother Carlisle, administered the Sacrament. We were blessed with much of the Holy Spirit and rejoiced together. ... 19th. I spent most of the day at Brother Carlisle’s. I returned in the evening to Council Bluffs.”

The Carlisle family was back in Utah less than two months later. This time, the 1000-mile journey by train took them five days. They went to Logan, where Margaret’s brother, Robert, had settled in 1860. Several other families from Peel were also living there. Margaret’s son, John E. Carlisle, served two missions: first to the Southern States, and later to England, where he was an assistant editor of the *Millennial Star*. When he was older he served for many years in the presidency of the Logan Temple. Margaret died in Logan, Utah, on March 11, 1923, at the age of 83. John died on December 10, 1912, at the age of 86.

Sources: lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/; communication from Mary Lythgoe Bradford, Leesburg, Virginia, 2010; familysearch.org.

¹Robert returned to the Isle of Man in 1880. He paid a visit to the widow of the man for whom his father used to work. Robert wrote: “Mrs. Graves said she remembered very well the last Sunday my father & mother ate supper at their house, and how agravated they was to think they had joined the Mormons. She said my father worked 22 years for them, and a honester man they never saw.”

²Perhaps John Carlisle was the unnamed man that fellow rescuer, Dan W. Jones, referred to as “Handsome Cupid.”

