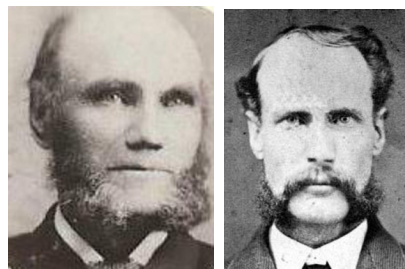


CHARLES WILKINSON

Born: 1816 England

Age: 40

Martin Handcart Company



Charles and Joseph Thomas Wilkinson

Charles and Sarah Hughes Wilkinson rented a Railway Arch in Manchester, England, where Charles set up a blacksmith shop. They heard the gospel from Apostle Franklin D. Richards who was presiding over the British Mission. They were baptized by Elder Edward Oliver on September 14, 1854. They sailed on the ship *Emerald Isle* to America with their three children: Joseph Thomas (age 9), Sarah Jane (7), and Mary (4), arriving in New York November 30, 1855. (They arrived in Utah exactly one year later.) Charles obtained work and began saving for means to cross the Plains.

In the early summer of 1856, Charles and his family left New York by train to go to Iowa City. They found shelter in a broken railway car and during the night their little daughter, Mary, died. A few days later, Sarah Jane also died and was buried in the same grave as her sister.

Charles was given the opportunity to use a wagon and four yoke of oxen to cross the Plains if he would deliver books which belonged to Franklin D. Richards. The bereaved family gathered their meager belongings and hurried to catch up with the Martin handcart company. After traveling about twelve miles, their wagon capsized. Repairs were made, they had retrieved their oxen, and again hurried to catch up with the handcart company. They experienced many trials on their journey. Sarah was required to get off the wagon and wade across the waist-deep freezing waters of the Platte River on October 19. The first snow fell the next morning and Sarah became very ill again. After their rescue, Charles and 10-year-old Joseph went on to Provo to provide a home for their family while a Sister Heywood took good care of Sarah. Six weeks after their arrival, Sarah passed away on January 15, 1857. The following life sketch is given of Charles and Sarah Wilkinson:

It would seem that Brother and Sister Wilkinson had been tried in the furnace of affliction sufficient for one lesson at least. But God's ways are not man's ways, and he doeth all things for the best. [While on their trek], the oldest child [Joseph] was still very ill, and his life was despaired of by all, or nearly all, who saw him. Holes were eaten into his tongue by canker, and scarlet fever was burning in his veins. Well-meaning people from the city nearby urged the parents to have the services of the doctor, offering to pay the bill for them as the parents were without means to do so, but Brother and Sister Wilkinson put their trust in God and in His Holy Ordinances. The Elders came frequently to administer to the little fellow, and he had the most unbounded faith in their administration. While affairs were in this condition, Brother Wilkinson himself was stricken with so vigorous an onslaught of the destroyer that the strong healthy man was soon reduced to a state of utter helplessness.

One day as his faithful wife sat by his bedside, watching and weeping as the flickering spark of life seemed to come and go, he aroused from his lethargy, and speaking her name in a stronger voice than he seemed able to do, he told her he was going to die. He gave her directions with regard to her sick boy, recommending to her to be faithful, and told her to make her way to the home of the Saints as soon as she could. Then he asked her to kiss him, which she tearfully did, then he bade her goodbye and sank back dead - dead to all human appearances. How long he remained in that condition, we have no means of knowing, but he was aroused from it by the weeping of his wife and her calling upon the Lord in prayer, telling Him that she could not spare her beloved husband, that everything she had was laid upon the altar, but she could not give him up. Brother Wilkinson spoke to her and asked her why she was so much grieved for he had no recollection of the afflicting scene through which she had passed. She recited to him the words which he had spoken to her and what had followed. "Well," he said, "the Lord has answered your prayers, for while I lay there just now, two angels came to me and laid their hands on my head and blessed me in the name of the Lord. They told me that I should recover."

Soon after this, two Elders approached the tent where Brother Wilkinson was lying. He saw them through the open door and exclaimed, "There are the two angels that I saw a short time ago." The Elders came in and laid their hands upon his head, used the same language and made him the same promise that the heavenly visitants had done previously. From that time he began to mend, and ere long was restored to health, though it was many weeks before he had his usual strength. In the meantime, the boy also was recovering, due to his great faith, as the Saints who were with him all agreed.

Sources: Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website.