

Edward H. Callister: A Biography

The people of the Isle of Man were noted for their superstition about elves and fairies. These superstitions harken back to the old pre-Christian days when the tribe of Dan was said to have occupied the island. There are many quaint customs relating to the fairy folk.

Here my grandmother's father owned the farm called Glen Ellen, one of the finest of the isle. Here she played and worked as a child, in circumstances far more favorable from an economic standpoint than she, her brothers, sisters and parents were to experience here in America. As to her religion, I know it was Christian and they were good devout people; but Christian churches in those days were not entirely as they are today. Teachings by ministers were burdened with fear and superstition.

It is an interesting story of the conversion of my grandmother Callister's family, whose maiden name was Cowley, she being a daughter of Matthias Cowley. Her mother's maiden name was Quayle. This is how the name "Quayle" came into the names of some of her posterity.

John Taylor, the first missionary into this little island, was married to a girl from the Isle of Man. She was closely related to both Grandma Callister and her husband. I have wondered if this wasn't the string that drew him to the island and gave him entry into the homes of his wife's relatives. There seemed to be a very close relationship between my grandmother's family and Thomas Quayle and his family. They were extremely fond of one another.

The Mormon missionaries were called "dippers" because of the manner of baptizing converts and this was the title given to John Taylor and his missionary companion by the people on the isle.

I remember my grandmother's story of how the "dippers" were invited into their homes, more from curiosity and amusement than sincere investigation. It seems that John Quayle, my grandmother's uncle, was the first one who believed in their message and invited the missionaries to hold a meeting at his home. Grandma's mother sent her brother, John, around the neighborhood inviting them to this meeting. Brother Taylor and his companion so overwhelmed them with the truths of the gospel and proved their points of doctrine from the scriptures, that eight of them were baptized that night, in a beautiful stream that flowed through the field of the Quayle farm.

Ridicule by the neighbors and relatives was immediately poured down upon them and it was soon voiced around, how they had been taken in by the "dippers"; and to make it worse, "one was a blooming Yankee". Her father's brother was extremely angry and invited her father, in no uncertain terms, to come to his senses; and especially were he and their relatives angry when it was learned they had decided to sell their farm, one of the finest on the island, and emigrate to America. And so with these two families, as many others, the seed of the gospel of Jesus Christ was planted in their hearts and grew

till they were ready to leave all that had been so dear to them – security, home and friends – and come to join with the saints in America. Grandma Callister was only fourteen years of age at the time she was baptized. She was born at Cronk Bane on a little farm four miles from Peel, September 18, 1825. No doubt ridicule which engendered unpleasant feelings between my great grandfather, Matthias Cowley and his brothers and sisters, hastened the selling of his farm and leaving the Isle of Man with his little family. This has been the way with so many who have joined the Church.

I remember grandmother telling of the long trip across the Atlantic. They sailed on the Rochester, a sailing vessel that had been chartered by the Church officials to bring the saints to America. The Cowley family together with the Quayles, left their quaint little isle, never again to set foot on its shores or see their Manx relatives again. I look back at the courage of these folk for they were leaving security and all that was most dear to them. They were not driven out as were many religious sects who came to these shores; they gave up voluntarily to gather with the saints.

I believe it was the second vessel chartered by the Church. Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, George A. Smith and Willard Richards, returning from their missions, were among the passengers. They sailed from Liverpool, April 21, 1841, and arrived in New York one month later, May 19. I remember grandmother telling how each family took its own food and cooking utensils; and arrangements were made so each family could have its turn in cooking on stoves which were furnished by the captain of the ship.

In World War I, I crossed the Atlantic on the Susquehanna; eleven days seemed an eternity on this crossing. Nearly thirty days of sailing must have been very tiresome. However, I believe there was little complaining. In fact, it must have been a very pleasant journey with so many of the missionaries returning with them.

On arrival in New York they went up the Hudson River by steamboat to Troy; then westward by canal boats. At Utica they were delayed for six weeks by an epidemic of measles. They then proceeded to Lockhart, then by wagon to Buffalo, and through Lakes Erie, Huron and Michigan by steamboat to Chicago which was only a small village at that time. Then overland again to Peru, down the Illinois River to Peoria and overland to Nauvoo. My, what a trip, for it consumed the better part of three months. Today the trip can be made by auto in three days.

Anyone having seen Nauvoo can imagine the gratification of those early pioneers in arriving in this beautiful wooded area, surrounded on both sides by the Mississippi River. Nauvoo, the town, is built on land that extends out into the big bend of the river – forests covering all the adjoining land, down to the very water's edge. The place was quiet and peaceful with deep rich, black soil in abundance. Being a farmer by vocation, it was only natural that great grandfather Cowley yearned to plow and plant seed in this rich soil. He secured a farm about four miles from the city. Here, he settled his little family and again began to enjoy the comforts of home life; but it wasn't to last long for they were soon

driven back into Nauvoo by mobs that terrorized the saints on the outskirts of their beautiful city.

There were the days when many in high standing in the Church had apostatized and became the Prophet's enemies. Dissension within the Church was one of the prime reasons for the persecution. Ambition for power and greed caused the falling away of many. It was a time when a great sifting had to take place.

The Cowley family became very well acquainted with both Joseph and Hyrum Smith. I have heard my grandmother tell of the friendliness and kindness of the Prophet, he was so kind and considerate of children; of how her father hid her in his corn field one night when he went to protect the Prophet and at another time he gave his savings to him because the Church was in dire need. I understand a blessing was given to her father by the Prophet, which included his posterity.

They experienced their full share of the troubles which culminated in the martyrdom of the Prophet and his brother Hyrum; and which ended in the driving of the Mormons from Nauvoo in the autumn of 1846. They suffered with those who were exiled to the Iowa side of the river, enduring hunger and cold. Finally they made their way to St. Louis. Here they secured employment. My grandmother worked making ladies' hats and bonnets.

It was here she met Edward Callister who had just arrived from the Isle of Man. He was the only one of his family to accept the gospel and had come alone to America to be with the saints. Naturally, coming from their native land, he was welcomed into their home. They fell in love and were married in St. Louis by Thomas Caine, November 1, 1851. Their first child died and was buried in St. Louis. Death struck again, for her father died during the cholera epidemic and was buried there also. No doubt the hardships encountered by great grandfather Cowley in Illinois and Iowa shortened his life for he and his family were unaccustomed to the brutality that accompanied the mobs in their orgies of terror.

Money was saved by grandfather and grandmother Callister from their labors in St. Louis to provide for the trek to the Salt Lake Valley, to again join with the saints. They left St. Louis on the 28th of May, 1854, going by river steamboat to where Leavenworth, Kansas now stands. Here they were detained by a cholera epidemic that broke out among a group of emigrants traveling west from New Brunswick. On June 19, the trek overland began and grandmother, with a babe in her arms, started westward in a wagon pulled by oxen. Nineteen wagons under command of Isaac Groo comprised the train. She and her husband, her brothers, sisters and mother braved the 1,200 miles through hostile Indian country where wild life, especially buffalo, antelope and wolves roamed the wastelands. I have heard her tell of the great buffalo herds that sometimes delayed them from moving onward; but of their hardships, and no doubt they had them, she seldom talked. I can picture their joy in coming out of Emigration Canyon September 19th and looking over the valley – no trees of any size as yet, for the valley was almost treeless when the first pioneers came in 1847. Sagebrush, oakbrush and greasewood in all directions met the

eye, with small farms down in the valley. Salt Lake was just in its infancy with log cabins and adobe houses set back in the lots of a well-laid out town.

It was to be their home. Here was a land away from persecution and mobs. In the distance a large lake skirted the western part of the valley, with mountains surrounding the whole on every side. How different from the green little isle they left some years before. How strange, for here they were literally in the tops of the mountains, no large rivers as they were accustomed to in Nauvoo and St. Louis, only a desert floor, the remnant of an ancient lake bottom. But their hearts were here; here they would be with the saints to worship in freedom.

Her Uncle Thomas Quayle helped them secure a lot; and here they began the building of a home – an adobe, three room house. Acquaintances and relatives offered their support and help to get them established in this new land. I often heard her tell of the kindnesses of Heber C. Kimball and others.

Grandfather Callister was a tailor by trade; but homespuns were the fashion in most all Mormon families. I know he was never very prosperous at his vocation. I often have heard my father tell how kind he was to his children and often went without to give to them. He worked at his trade or any other labor he could secure to provide for a growing family. And so nine children were born to this union – three girls, Ann, Mary and Alice; six boys, John, George, Richard, Edward, William and Alfred. The three girls died early in life – one, I believe, reaching eleven years. George also died as a young man.

Heartaches were many in the early days. Typhoid, cholera, diphtheria and smallpox were the killers then. Medical science was in its infancy – no vaccinations or antibiotics to help nature fight the ravages of disease.

Grandfather Callister died at an early age and left his wife with five small boys. Necessity required them to work and help provide for the wants of the family. Provisions became extremely scarce many times, but the blessing of the Prophet on her father's head never failed her and her family of boys.