

## The Kewley Family from Peel and the Martin Handcart Company.

We often hear talk of the good old days. For me the good old days would be in the 1970's when I was a lot younger. Music then was good, and just as my parents used to tell me, "the youth today don't know what good music is"; the summers were hot – we might talk about global warming but I can't recall a summer as long and dry as well as hot as 1976; there was less crime and drugs in society and though there was pollution we did not feel guilty that we were killing the planet. Yes for me these were the good old days but when we speak of the past while we may be speaking about old days we are not always speaking about good days. Sometimes people find the past so bad that they would prefer not to remember it. Today I want to commemorate a tragedy and remember sacrifices that were made 150 years ago and to remember a humble Manx family that most have forgotten.

Suppose you lived on this island 150 years ago and you were LDS what would you be doing? How would you be living? Where would you worship?

150 years ago would take us back to 1856. In 1856 the Isle of Man Conference was closed and Manx Saints<sup>1</sup> were attached to the Liverpool Conference<sup>2</sup>. The Branch President in Douglas was Titus Barlow described as a boatman<sup>3</sup> and a Herring curer.<sup>4</sup> An Elder<sup>5</sup> Dana who visited the Island in July and August describes visiting with the Saints in Douglas and Ramsey.<sup>6</sup> Meetings may still have been held in Society Lane. In 1852 Revd Gray of St Barnabas Douglas stated that we had a place of assembly there and on, a sign-board attached to it, these words painted - 'Latter-Day Saints' Meeting House'<sup>7</sup>. Society Lane has almost disappeared. The lane that is opposite Barclays Bank between Victoria Street and King Street is all that is left of this street.<sup>8</sup> Meetings may have been slightly different. Sacrament water would be passed in a communal cup, the oldest members would be addressed as father and mother as a sign of respect and the theme of gathering to Zion must have been an important one.

What were the members like? They were probably just as dedicated as they are today. They believed in Jesus and his gospel – a gospel where God could communicate with man, prayers were answered and miracles did occur. Only those who could not emigrate because of family commitments, poor health, poverty or lack of faith remained. Emigration had meant that the halcyon days when the Island had 3 branches forming its own conference and with 116 adult members in total were now gone.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> LDS, Saints and Mormons are all terms to denote members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and are used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> Millennial Star 18:394. A Conference was the equivalent of a diocese in a mission area and consisted of a number of units called Branches. Both Branches and Conferences were presided over by Presidents (Presiding Elders) under the authority of a Mission President. The term Conference is no longer used with the term District replacing it.

<sup>3</sup> 1851 census

<sup>4</sup> 1861 census

<sup>5</sup> The LDS Church has a lay priesthood which is only open to males. A worthy male member would be expected to hold an office in that priesthood. The office of Elder is an important priesthood office. Most missionaries would hold that office and male missionaries are titled Elder even if they hold a different priesthood office

<sup>6</sup> Millennial Star 8:524-526

<sup>7</sup> Gray Principles And Practices quoted in The Mormon Missioning of Man and Manx Emigration to 'Zion' by F. Coakley in Proc IoMNH&ASoc XI #2, 2003

<sup>8</sup> "Streets of Douglas – Old And New " by Stuart Slack

<sup>9</sup> Millennial Star 14:15

In 1855 an Elder Little visited Peel and described a family who he said, “are struggling to keep alive in the work in their poverty and isolated condition, for the work is so low in Peel that no meetings are held, or an organization maintained. I would not but deeply sympathize with this brother and sister who are anxiously praying for their deliverance”.<sup>10</sup> It is very likely that this family was James and Ann Kewley who emigrated on 25.05.1856 from Liverpool with Elder Little<sup>11</sup>. James was 54 at the time, Ann 40 and their children Margaret 16, Robert 11 and Thomas 3.<sup>12</sup>

Why were they emigrating now? The Church was always concerned about its poor. It refused to leave them behind in Nauvoo and was not going to leave them behind in the mission field. It had started the Perpetual Emigration Fund to provide financial assistance for poor Mormon emigrants.<sup>13</sup>

“When contributions and loan repayments to the Perpetual Emigration Fund dropped off in 1855 after a poor harvest in Utah, President Young<sup>14</sup> decided to begin using handcarts to cut the costs of the migration. Many of the Latter-day Saints who remained in Europe were...<sup>15</sup> so poor they could not afford to emigrate even with the help of the Perpetual Emigration Fund. “Young proposed the new plan in a letter to Franklin D. Richards, President of the European Mission, in September 1855. His letter was published in the *Millennial Star* (the Church's England-based periodical) of December 22, 1855 along with an editorial by Richards endorsing the project. The cost of the migration was expected to be reduced to two-thirds of the previous cost. The response (unsurprisingly) was overwhelming—in 1856 the Perpetual Emigration Fund supported the travel of 2,012 European emigrants, compared with 1,161 the year before.”<sup>16</sup>

The Kewleys must have seen this as a heaven sent opportunity.<sup>17</sup> They had been some of the first members of the Church in Peel having been members for 16 years<sup>18</sup>, and had joined when Peel had a thriving branch<sup>19</sup>. This they could afford and they were prepared to make the sacrifices it involved. Yet they were leaving behind much. Brother Kewley had regular employment – he had worked at Graves' shipyard in Peel for 22 years<sup>20</sup> but more important their eldest daughter Ann age 22 lived in

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/JamesLittle.php>.

<sup>11</sup> Mormon Immigration Index CD-ROM

<sup>12</sup> Ages taken from genealogical records see <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/>.

<sup>13</sup> Hafen, LeRoy R., Ann W. Hafen [1960] (1981). *Handcarts to Zion: the story of a unique western migration, 1856–1860: with contemporary journals, accounts, reports and rosters of members of the ten handcart companies*. Arthur H. Clark Company. pp. 22-27.

<sup>14</sup> Brigham Young was the second President/Prophet of the LDS Church

<sup>15</sup> This is taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Handcart\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Handcart_Company)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> The Kewley's were not the only ones from the Isle of Man, emigrating with them were the Hunter family viz. James and Catherine Hunter and their seven children and the Brown siblings Esther, Elizabeth and Jane and possibly a brother. More research needs to be done as only sons George and John Hunter and Jane and Elizabeth Brown appear on a list of the Martin handcart company while Esther Brown is listed as part of the Hunt Wagon Company. The manifest of the Horizon also lists the next eight passengers after the Kewleys as from the Isle of Man but this appears to be an error.

<sup>18</sup> See <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/MargaretAdelineKewleyCarlisle.php>.

<sup>19</sup> Peel had a thriving branch from shortly after the first LDS missionaries arrived in 1840. The branch was closed in 1852-4

<sup>20</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/JamesLittle.php>. Frances Coakley identifies the Graves as being the owners of Graves shipyard. <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/mormon/kewley.htm>

England and they had to leave behind another daughter in Peel Elizabeth age 19 who was contemplating marriage. They would never see these daughters again.<sup>21</sup>

At least for them the journey to Liverpool was a simple one but the journey to America was a bit more challenging. Under the leadership of Edward Martin<sup>22</sup> they arrived in Boston on 30 June that is a sea journey of 36 days.<sup>23</sup> One emigrant described the journey as follows

"It was a sailing vessel and there were nearly nine hundred souls on board. We sailed on the 25th. The pilot ship came and tugged us out into the open sea.

I well remember how we watched old England fade from sight. We sang "Farewell Our Native Land, Farewell."

While we were in the river the crew mutinied but they were put ashore and another crew came on board. They were a good set of men.

When we were a few days out, a large shark followed the big vessel. One of the saints died and he was buried at sea. We never saw the shark any more.

After we got over our seasickness we had a nice time. We would play games, and sing songs of Zion. We held meetings and the time passed happily.

When we were sailing through the banks of Newfoundland, we were in a dense fog for several days. The sailors were kept busy night and day ringing bells and blowing fog horns. One day I was on deck with my father, when I saw a mountain of ice in the sea close to the ship. I said, "Look, father, look." He went pale as a ghost and said, "Oh, my girl." At that moment the fog parted, the sun shone bright till the ship was out of danger, when the fog closed on us again.

We were on the sea six weeks, when we landed at Boston".<sup>24</sup>

Overall it was a good journey with only one storm to endure.<sup>25</sup>

After all the checks in Boston were completed they were ready for the next stage. This was a train journey that would take them on a journey of 1500 miles to Iowa. Train journey, well that's not too bad you might think, but their third-class seats were made of two-inch plank with no backs and there was little room to move about. It was summer and hot. They used luggage and trunks to sit and sleep on. And they encountered a lot of hostility from the locals at the towns along the way<sup>26</sup>.

---

<sup>21</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/KewleysinOhio.php>

<sup>22</sup> An early convert to the Church in Preston Edward Martin had crossed the plains as part of the Mormon Battalion. He had now just finished a mission to England.

<sup>23</sup> Mormon Immigration Index CD-ROM

<sup>24</sup> Death Strikes the Handcart Company by Mary Goble Pay see <http://mldb.byu.edu/mgpay.htm>

<sup>25</sup> Mormon Immigration Index CDROM

<sup>26</sup> For much of the information about the train journey see the James Little account in <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/JamesLittle.php>. Also [http://www.thetimecapsule.org.uk/TimeCapsule/1800s\\_E6116468E54E4159B37133BA73BD\\_A58F.htm](http://www.thetimecapsule.org.uk/TimeCapsule/1800s_E6116468E54E4159B37133BA73BD_A58F.htm) has a few other details.

Some 55 years later, John Southwell recalled that the company had arrived in Cleveland on the morning of July 4<sup>th</sup> and that most of the company waited out a "great rain storm" in a large barn, which had been secured. It was on this day that 3-year-old Thomas Kewley died of cholera<sup>27</sup>. This was not the first heart break that the family had endured, for three small children, William, James and Emily, had died as babies and were buried in the Isle of Man<sup>28</sup> - a fact which must have made leaving the Island that much harder. Now they had to do it again and this time it would have had to be a quick burial for they could not take Thomas' body with them.

To make matters worse for them in their loss "that night an anti-Mormon mob gathered around the barn, howling and bombarding it with stones ...(etc) for several hours until a local authority persuaded them to go home, leaving the occupants 'in a state of terrible excitement. Not a person closed an eye that night in sleep.' Early the following morning they caught their connecting train."<sup>29</sup> When they finally arrived at Iowa City they met a hold up, as their handcarts were not ready.

With slow communications in the era before the transatlantic telegraph church agents in Iowa City who had thought they were finished for the season were not at all prepared for the unexpected arrival of the converts. They hastened to make contracts to buy and build handcarts, but because of the short notice, only green lumber could be obtained<sup>30</sup>. Critical weeks were spent hastily assembling the carts and outfitting the companies making it late in the season to travel over the Rocky Mountains. However, the Martin Handcart Company were determined to complete the journey<sup>31</sup>.

According to Wikipedia "Built to Young's design, the handcarts resembled a large wheelbarrow, with two wheels five feet (1.5 m) in diameter and a single axle four and 1/2 feet (1.4 m) wide, weighing 60 pounds (27 kg). Running along each side of the bed were seven-foot (2.1 m) pull shafts ending with a three-foot (0.9 m) crossbar at the front. The crossbar allowed the carts to be pushed or pulled. Cargo was carried in a box about 3 feet by 4 feet (0.9 m by 1.2 m), with 8 inch (0.2 m) walls. The handcarts generally carried up to 250 pounds (113 kg) of supplies and luggage, though they were capable of handling loads as large as 500 pounds (227 kg). Carts used in this first year's migration were made entirely of wood ("Iowa hickory or oak"); in later years a stronger design was substituted that included metal elements. The handcart companies were organized using the handcarts and sleeping tents as the primary units. Five persons were assigned per handcart, with each individual limited to 17 pounds (7.7 kg) of clothing and bedding."<sup>32</sup> Imagine, that after a lifetime of accumulating possessions, many of which would represent important memories, being allowed out of necessity only to take 17 pounds in weight of them with you. "Each round tent, supported by a center pole, slept 20 occupants and was supervised by a tent captain. Five tents were supervised by the captain of a hundred (or "sub-captain"). Provisions for each hundred emigrants were carried in an oxen drawn wagon, and were distributed by the tent captains"<sup>33</sup>.

When they left Iowa City the Martin handcart company that the Kewleys were part of were still not on the Mormon Trail proper. It is on this part of the journey before the Mormon Trail started that family records record "Margaret swung her shoes over her

---

<sup>27</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/MargaretAdelineKewleyCarlisle-shorthistory.php>

<sup>28</sup> see <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy>

<sup>29</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/JamesLittle.php>.

<sup>30</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/MargaretAdelineKewleyCarlisle.php>

<sup>31</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Handcart\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Handcart_Company)

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

shoulder and walked along the dusty trail barefoot, smiling happily that at last they were on the way. As each town was reached, she dusted her feet and replaced her shoes so she could walk through the town respectably. Then on the other side off would come the shoes and on she would go barefoot."<sup>34</sup> To get to the start of the Mormon Trail the Kewleys and the rest of the handcart company, first had to cross Iowa "following an existing road about 275 miles (443 km) to Council Bluffs,... (then) after crossing the Missouri River, they paused for a few days at... Florence, Nebraska (modern-day Omaha) for repairs"<sup>35</sup>,— this is where the Mormon Trail began. Florence had originally been a Mormon settlement called Winter Quarters and was the last town for 1,030 miles.

As the Martin handcart company arrived in Florence on the 22 August the company ahead of them the Willie<sup>36</sup> handcart company had just left. In the Willie handcart company there had been a vigorous debate as to the merits of continuing so late in the season. This debate applied even more to the Martin handcart company but the Martin Company were obedient to the counsel of their church leaders - a decision that would cost many lives. Franklin D. Richards on his way to Salt Lake caught up with them at this point and inspired by his words, resupplied and rested, the Martin company was now ready for its long march to the Salt Lake Valley.<sup>37</sup>

The following are quotations from articles by Historynet<sup>38</sup> and Wikipedia on the Martin Handcart Company: "Each cart had an extra 100 pounds of flour--communal provisions and not just for the particular party that provided the space. As dawn broke on August 25, the last handcart company of 1856 lined up in Florence and began its trek to the Promised Land...

As the handcart companies progressed across the Plains, the dull routine of camp life continued. Each morning, the dreaded bugle signalled the beginning of another day of toil and sore feet. After the evening prayers, the bugle announced time for the company to retire. During the first few weeks, a musician or two would join in to get the people to dance and enjoy an evening of music and fun; then, as their feet and muscles became more and more sore, the people had little time or energy for dancing...

The farther west the company marched the more problems they had with axles and wheel hubs. In the humid Midwest, the climate better preserved the green wood, but as the air became drier, the unseasoned material dried too quickly and cracked. Also... (they) unwittingly added grease to the wooden axles to stop the loud, irritating squeaking noise the wheels made. The grease collected dust, which became almost like sandpaper and severely eroded the axles and hubs. The extra weight from the abandoned supply wagons also contributed greatly to the many breakdowns. ... Predictably, the calamities of frontier travel first claimed the weak and the old...

---

<sup>34</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/MargaretAdelineKewleyCarlisle.php>

<sup>35</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Handcart\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Handcart_Company)

<sup>36</sup> Equally affected with the Martin Handcart Company by the early snows were the Willie Handcart Company and the Hodgett Wagon Company and the Hunter Wagon Company. Almost 1500 people were travelling altogether. Sixty seven died in the Willie Handcart Company and 135-200 in the Martin Handcart Company

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.historynet.com/exploration/westward\\_expansion/3035001.html?featured=y&c=y](http://www.historynet.com/exploration/westward_expansion/3035001.html?featured=y&c=y)

(On arriving at Fort Laramie a trading post and the halfway mark for the journey) they found no flour to buy, so rations had to be cut again...<sup>39</sup>

"To lighten their loads, the Martin Company cut the luggage allowance to 10 pounds (4.5 kg) per person, discarding clothing and blankets that soon would be desperately needed."<sup>40</sup>

"Ominously, the first snow of the season fell as the Martin group was just a few miles past Fort Laramie. The first snow did not seem formidable, but soon the freezing temperatures began to take a toll.

Each morning more and more people would be found dead, frozen in their sleep. The low rations, miserable cold, and constant struggle to make good progress each day were now taking their toll on the men in the party more often than on the women and children... More snow made the road slushy, slowing travel to a near-crawl. The dwindling food supply, freezing temperatures, and the constant strain of pulling the carts through 6 to 8 inches of snow took a heavy toll. The morning prayer meeting became a morning funeral service as more and more dead were collected from the night before. The losses provided more food for the living but reduced manpower for the handcarts. Many of these contrivances were abandoned."<sup>41</sup>

150 years and 3 days ago, on 19 October "the Martin Company was...making its last crossing of the North Platte River near present-day Casper, Wyoming."<sup>42</sup>

This crossing is recorded by Margaret's descendants in a web article about her: "When the handcarts arrived at the bank, one poor fellow who was greatly worn down with travel exclaimed: "Oh dear, I can't go through with that!" James Kewley tried to help different members of the group and carried many on his back across the river. His shins and limbs came in contact with sharp cakes of ice, which inflicted wounds on them, which did not heal until long after reaching the valley. These hardships depleted his strength so that he became very ill."<sup>43</sup> Another family account states that "when they forded the Platt River the water was up to their waists and she (Margaret) remembers when her father had landed his family over he rushed back into the stream and saved two poor women from going down with the stream"<sup>44</sup>. Returning to the main family account "Clothing and bedding were soaked. That night as they were making camp on the open plain, a bitter wind arose. Morning found the ground blanketed with white. Several of the older and weaker ones had died. Others were ready to give up. Margaret Kewley's feet and legs were frozen and she was unable to walk. But with heroic courage, leading spirits in the band called for them to struggle on through the snow. The train was strung out three or four miles. There were old men pulling at their carts, many [of] which were loaded with sick wives and children. As night came on, the mud and snow froze to their clothing. Food supplies rapidly vanished and there was no chance to replenish them. The destitute sufferers, unable to continue their journey farther because of sheer exhaustion, established camp about sixteen (16) miles above the North Platte crossing. They were still some 365 miles from the Valley. They sought shelter in hollows and willow thickets and waited whatever fate was theirs. Margaret's father said, "I cannot go any farther."... Four

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid These quotes are actually talking about the Willie Handcart company but they apply equally as well to the Martin

<sup>40</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Handcart\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Handcart_Company)

<sup>41</sup> [http://www.historynet.com/exploration/westward\\_expansion/3035001.html?featured=y&c=y](http://www.historynet.com/exploration/westward_expansion/3035001.html?featured=y&c=y)

<sup>42</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Handcart\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Handcart_Company)

<sup>43</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/MargaretAdelineKewleyCarlisle.php>

<sup>44</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/JamesLittle.php>

ounces of flour per day were at first doled out to the famished people but finally food supplies were completely exhausted. Deaths were so frequent that a burial squad was appointed. Fifty-six saints died after crossing the river. They were in a deplorable condition. The survivors were so cold that they huddled together and sat on and around the bodies of the deceased until the heat had left them."<sup>45</sup> Margaret later spoke of the lack of sufficient food "when the dough cakes were made each child would break off a small piece off from theirs and give it to their father so he would be able to keep up the travel with the loaded handcart. She said that the men at times would sit around the camp fires and roast bits of raw hide and chew it they were so hungry"<sup>46</sup>

But a rescue effort was already two weeks in progress. "On October 4, the day before the general conference<sup>47</sup>, Apostle<sup>48</sup> Franklin D. Richards had arrived in Great Salt Lake City. He had made a courtesy call on Brigham Young and reported on his mission to Britain. During the conversation, Richards mentioned that two handcart companies and two ox trains were on the Plains still en route to Zion. Young was aghast, knowing full well the hazards of such a journey so late in the year.

The next day, Mormons from all over the territory gathered to hear the sermons at the conference. Apostle Richards, still oblivious to the precarious circumstances of the handcart companies, said in his address that the Lord would "overrule the storms that may come in the season thereof, and turn them away, that their path may be freed from suffering more that they can bear."<sup>49</sup> Fortunately, Young had no illusion as to the realities of a thousand people walking in the snow across the unforgiving land that would become known as Wyoming.

There was no better forum for the immediate call for goods and volunteers. In sharp contrast to Richards' optimism, Brigham Young called for 60-65 horse teams, 12-15 wagons and 40 teamsters to haul 12 tons of flour and clothes, to include "hoods, winter bonnets, stockings, shirts, garments and almost any description of clothing. You may rise up now and give your names." Young had hardly finished his remarks when hundreds stood and volunteered.... With Franklin Richards sitting in the

---

<sup>45</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/MargaretAdelineKewleyCarlisle.php>

<sup>46</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/JamesLittle.php>

<sup>47</sup> "The General Conference is a semi-annual meeting where...Church leaders preach sermons and give guidance to the Church. It is held on the weekends containing the first Sunday in April and the first Sunday in October. The April meeting is known as the *Annual General Conference*, and includes annual statistical and financial reports not included in the October meeting, which is called the *Semiannual General Conference*. Both conferences in a given year are identified by the number of years since the Church was founded in April 1830; thus the April 2006 meeting was the 176th *Annual* General Conference, and the October 2006 meeting was the 176th *Semiannual* General Conference" Taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LDS\\_General\\_Conference](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LDS_General_Conference). The October 1856 meeting was the 26<sup>th</sup> *Semiannual* General Conference.

<sup>48</sup> "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints...believes that the authority of the original twelve apostles is a distinguishing characteristic of the true church established by Jesus. For this reason, it ordains Apostles as members of its Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, second in authority to the Church's First Presidency which is led by the senior Apostle similar to Peter leading the twelve disciples." See <http://www.answers.com/topic/twelve-apostles-1>. The senior apostle is the President of the Church and is regarded as a Prophet. The LDS Bible Dictionary states "The calling of an apostle is to be a special witness of the name of Jesus Christ in all the world, particularly of his divinity and of his bodily resurrection from the dead (Acts 1: 22; D&C 107: 23)."

<sup>49</sup> What happened was the complete opposite heavy snows and extreme cold weather set in much earlier than had been the case for many years previously.

congregation, Brigham Young publicly denounced the tragic decision to urge the companies to make the attempt that season. Although Richards was never dropped from his position in the Church, he would suffer Young's wrath and never again have the full confidence of the councils of the church."<sup>50</sup>

"On the morning of October 7 the first rescue party left Salt Lake City with 16 wagonloads of food and supplies pulled by 4-mule teams and 27 young men serving as teamsters and rescuers.... Throughout October more wagon trains were assembled, and by the end of the month 250 relief wagons were on the road."<sup>51</sup> But it was not till October 28 that scouts for the rescue party "located the Martin and Hodgett companies, both stranded for days in the snow"<sup>52</sup>

"The group had consumed the last of their food supply a few days before help came. The children were eating bark of the trees to prevent starvation when an advance party sent ahead to encourage the people until the rescue party arrived appeared on a distant hill. When they were sighted, shouts of joy rent the air and strong men wept until tears ran freely down their furrowed and sunburnt cheeks."<sup>53</sup> Margaret Kewley said they looked like "angels riding down to us upon white horses."<sup>54</sup> According to family accounts the night before the first rescuers arrived James Kewley had declared "I cannot go on any farther."<sup>55</sup> He feared that when he lay down to rest "he would never get up again."<sup>56</sup> One account states that the rescuers told them to 'Cheer up, provisions and help will soon arrive'.<sup>57</sup> And that Margaret stated "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."<sup>58</sup>

Two of the scouts "left the Martin Company to find the Hunt wagon train, still two days east. After finding and getting the Hunt Company moving, they returned and helped lead the hand carters struggling up Avenue Hill toward the Sweetwater River one of the scouts. Jones captured the scene in his own words: "A condition of distress here met my eyes that I never saw before or since. There were old men pulling and tugging their carts, sometimes loaded with a sick wife or children--women pulling along sick husbands--little children six to eight years old struggling through the mud and snow. As night came on, the mud would freeze on their clothes and feet. There were two of us and hundreds needing help. What could we do?"<sup>59</sup>

"Three days later the main rescue party met the Martin Company and the Hodgett and Hunt wagon companies and helped them on to Devil's Gate...At Devil's Gate the rescue party unloaded the baggage carried in the wagons of the Hodgett and Hunt wagon companies that had been following the Martin Company so the wagons could be used to transport the weakest emigrants. On November 4 the company had to cross the Sweetwater River, which was about 2 feet (0.6 m) deep and 90 to 120 feet (27 to 37 m) wide. The stream was clogged with floating ice. The young men of the rescue party spent much of the day pulling the carts and carrying many of the emigrants across the river. The severe weather forced the Martin Company to halt for

---

<sup>50</sup> [http://www.historynet.com/exploration/westward\\_expansion/3035001.html?featured=y&c=y](http://www.historynet.com/exploration/westward_expansion/3035001.html?featured=y&c=y)

<sup>51</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Handcart\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Handcart_Company)

<sup>52</sup> [http://www.historynet.com/exploration/westward\\_expansion/3035001.html?featured=y&c=y](http://www.historynet.com/exploration/westward_expansion/3035001.html?featured=y&c=y)

<sup>53</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/MargaretAdelineKewleyCarlisle.php>

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

<sup>55</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/MargaretAdelineKewleyCarlisle-shorthistory.php>

<sup>56</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/JamesLittle.php>.

<sup>57</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/MargaretAdelineKewleyCarlisle-shorthistory.php>

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> [http://www.historynet.com/exploration/westward\\_expansion/3035001.html?featured=y&c=y](http://www.historynet.com/exploration/westward_expansion/3035001.html?featured=y&c=y)

another five days at Martin's Cove, a few miles west of Devil's Gate. On November 18 the backup party met the Martin Company with the greatly needed supplies. At last all the members of the handcart party were now able to ride in wagons. The 104 wagons carrying the Martin Company arrived in Salt Lake City on November 30; at least 145 members of the handcart company had lost their lives. Many of the survivors had to have fingers, toes, or limbs amputated due to severe frostbite.”<sup>60</sup> Margaret Kewley was amongst them as she lost some toes<sup>61</sup>

“After the companies arrived in Utah, the residents generously opened their homes to the arriving emigrants, feeding and caring for them over the winter. The emigrants would eventually go on to Latter-day Saint settlements throughout Utah and the West.”<sup>62</sup> According to Margaret’s son Heber “When arriving [in Salt Lake] they were taken up to Farmington [and?] lived with Danial Miller for two weeks when a friend Mr. John Kelley<sup>63</sup> took them to Salt Lake City where her father [James Kewley] got a job for the city.”<sup>64</sup>

What happened to the Kewleys? Ann Kewley died within three years of arrival in Salt Lake City in 1859. In 1861 James Kewley married another Manx convert and emigrant a widow Elizabeth King nee Creer. He died in 1867, also in Salt Lake City. Robert Kewley served a mission for the Church visiting the Island in 1880. Margaret Kewley found herself courted by one of her rescuers John Carlisle. She married him only a few months later in the April. She was always reluctant to talk about the hardships she had experienced, saying that they were too horrible to recall and better forgotten. Both Robert and Margaret died in 1923<sup>65</sup> after years of faithful service in the Church<sup>66</sup>

So why do we remember the Kewley’s and other handcart pioneers. The tragedy that befell the Martin and Willie handcart companies was manmade - Apostle Franklin D. Richards probably bears most of the responsibility.<sup>67</sup> He seems to have believed that if they had sufficient faith God would intervene. Brigham Young probably would have been more in agreement with a quote attributed to St Augustine “Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.” In actuality only a minority of those caught in the tragedy blamed their church leaders and to be fair to Elder Richards once the Saints left New York it was hard to stop them for nowhere else did the Church have the resources to accommodate and supply them. The authoritarian way in which the Church ran emigration companies had developed to save lives – church emigration was far saver than any other.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Handcart\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Handcart_Company)

<sup>61</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/getperson.php?personID=I354&tree=>

<sup>62</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Handcart\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Handcart_Company)

<sup>63</sup> John Kelley is presumably John “Bookbinder” Kelly who was previously Isle of Man Conference President see also <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/mormon/jbkelly.htm>

<sup>64</sup> <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/JamesLittle.php>.

<sup>65</sup> Genealogical information can be found at <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy> and Margaret’s reluctance to talk about her experiences at <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/MargaretAdelineKewleyCarlisle.php>

<sup>66</sup> This is a fair assessment though Margaret and her husband lived in Nebraska for a while and there is evidence that for part of this time they were associated with the RLDS church see <http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/history/JamesLittle.php>.

<sup>67</sup> This is certainly the view of Linda Carter, a trails historian who is soon publishing a book on this disaster

<sup>68</sup> The Ensign July 1998 pages 40-43 has an article by Susan Easton Black and others entitled “Do we know how many Latter-day Saints died between 1846 and 1869 in the migration to the Salt Lake Valley?” It discusses the death ranges involved in the migration and

This was the only disaster that befell LDS emigration parties. The reason though that we remember them is because their suffering and their faith reflects at a greater level the suffering and faith of all Mormon pioneers. They believed building Zion was important. They believed the risks and effort that emigration involved were worth it. We too have a call to build Zion- not a Zion in the West of the US but a Zion based on Temple attendance and a Zion based on Christ like lives. Are we prepared put in the same effort that the Kewleys and other Manx converts did? We certainly don't have to take the same risks or make the same sacrifices. Arthur King Peter summarised the importance of this part of Mormon history

“This heroic episode of Mormon history exemplifies many of the enduring qualities of nascent Mormonism itself: thorough organization, iron discipline, unswerving devotion to a cause, and limitless self-sacrifice ... the true Mormon Trail was not on the prairie but in the Spirit.”<sup>69</sup>

May we too be pioneers in Spirit.

---

see note n for the point on the comparison with non-Mormon pioneer death rate.  
[http://www.lds.org/portal/site/LDSOrg/menuitem.b12f9d18fae655bb69095bd3e44916a0/?vgn\\_extoid=2354fccf2b7db010VgnVCM1000004d82620aRCRD&locale=0&sourceId=aa9f605ff590c010VgnVCM1000004d82620a\\_\\_\\_\\_&hideNav=1](http://www.lds.org/portal/site/LDSOrg/menuitem.b12f9d18fae655bb69095bd3e44916a0/?vgn_extoid=2354fccf2b7db010VgnVCM1000004d82620aRCRD&locale=0&sourceId=aa9f605ff590c010VgnVCM1000004d82620a____&hideNav=1)

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Handcart\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Handcart_Company) from “Seven Trails West”