

# “Brothers”

Margaret Kirkwood was born August 9, 1809, in Kilbarchan Scotland and joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints April 1, 1840. By the time Margaret departed Scotland for America she had already buried her husband and two of her six children, both daughters. Margaret and her boys arrived in Iowa City June 26, 1856 and were organized into the Willie Handcart Company. Margaret “sold most of her precious belongings...to obtain money for her handcart and supplies.”



As Margaret joined up and came across with the Willie Handcart Company, she did so with four sons, Robert 22, Thomas 19, James 11 and Joseph 4. Some years before, her second son Thomas had been injured on the streets of Glasgow and was unable to walk. He was pulled in the handcart by his mother, a frail petite woman of only five feet in height, and by his older brother Robert. When winter snows caught the Kirkwood family and the Willie Company along the Sweetwater River in Wyoming it made an already heavy burden unbearable. Then came the ordeal of Rocky Ridge.



October 23, 1856, the Willie Company was forced for their own survival to march fifteen miles up and over that awful and exposed summit in the face of a terrible winter storm. With Thomas in the cart, Margaret and Robert struggled all that day and into the next to reach the camp at Rock Creek Hollow. Meanwhile, the lads, James 11 and Joseph 4 fell behind. When little Joseph could no longer walk, his brother James picked him and carried him on his back the remainder of the journey. They would not reach camp until the following morning. It is reported that upon reaching camp, James Kirkwood set his

little brother down by the fireside. Then James, "having so faithfully carried out his task, collapsed and died from exposure and overexertion."

What is remarkable is that devotion of two older brothers who would labor so long and hard to carry their younger brothers. One would live, Thomas (but only for 2 more years), while the other would not, James, but they live on in cherished pioneer remembrance. I can't help but think, two brothers who carried their younger brothers. Where did they learn such a thing? This was a mother who somehow in some way taught her children to take care of each other to the last extreme.



And one more thing that is not generally known "When the Kirkwood family became members of the... Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,] Margaret was disowned by her prominent family in Scotland, who were fabric designers, and also by [her husband's family] the Kirkwood family. Mrs. Kirkwood made the statement many times that if it were necessary, she would go through all the hardships and heartaches again for the gospel sake."



Source:

<https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/K243-15C>

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