

AARON JOHNSON CAMP #2 DAUGHTERS OF
THE PIONEERS-----MARCH 13, 1930

Robert Lomax Kirkman was the son of John Kirkman and Ellen Lomax and was born January 1, 1823 [1821], at Brightmet, Lancashire, England and his wife Mary Lawson was the daughter of John Lawson and Francis Bradshaw and she was born February 26, 1823, at Harwood, Lancashire, England.

When they had both grown to young man and womanhood they were among the early converts of the Mormon Church, as it was called at that time. After their conversion, both belonging to the same branch of the church, they formed an acquaintance which ripened into love and soon they were happily married, August 17, 1845.

During the next eleven years five sons were born to them and they had a spirit of wanting to go to Zion in America. This feeling existed among the saints in foreign lands, so they decided to leave their native England and sail for the land of Zion. Many of the English Saints had heard some of the pioneers had walked all the way over the plains beside their oxen and when President Young suggested that they form handcart companies with a few wagons to carry supplies hundreds of Saints were anxious to emigrate, especially when it was stated that they could travel all the way from the British Isles to Salt Lake City, Utah for \$45.00.

President Young's advice was to start early and all would be well. My father and mother with their five children, Robert, John, Joseph, Hyrum, and James left their native home in Lancashire, England, May 25, 1856 to start their eventful journey. After five long weeks aboard the old sailing vessel "Horizon" we finally arrived in Boston; then traveled by rail to Iowa arriving the last day of June.

On arriving the saints found a shortage of handcarts and tents. Consequently, they were delayed until more could be provided. There were five companies left with handcarts for Zion. The first three had many hardships but made the journey fairly well. The last two the "Willie" which left Iowa August 19 and the "Martin" which left September 3, 1856 suffered untold hardships almost beyond mortal endurance. It was this last company that my dear Father and Mother and family traveled with. Elder Levi Savage advised the Saints not to undertake the journey so late in the season, as he knew the dangers that would be met, but he was over ruled and he said, "What I have told you is true, but I will go with you and help you all I can."

My father had been offered a position for the winter so they decided to stay in Iowa until the spring; but the Saints came so many times to see them and urged them to travel with them. So after talking it over with Mother, he said, "We'll go with them, live or die." We started on our perilous journey of 1,300 miles with over five hundred saints. Before we had been on the road a third of the distance the handcarts broke down, being made of unseasoned wood and poorly put together and many were overloaded. An early

winter set in, progress was slow, and soon provisions began to give out; smaller grew the allowance and strong men became weak; women suffered something terrible.

Terrible blizzards raged, snow covered the mountains and had to be climbed and in the face of freezing weather, bedding and clothing had to be discarded when it was most needed for loads were too heavy. Every day took its toll of lives and graves had to be dug in the snow. Before we left Iowa, my dear Mother had given birth to a son, Peter. Mother was naturally weak with the care of a nursing baby and five other children to care for. Father was very weak for want of food having denied himself for us children. Each family in our company was being rationed one pint of flour a day and it was made into a gruel for nourishment. The children were so hungry that they would suck the corners of the empty flour sacks for a little more nourishment. When Father would go out to gather wood he would stagger like a drunken man from lack of food and weakness. Then one evening near the Sweetwater River in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, November 11, 1856, he passed away at the age of 33. Our little baby brother, Peter, who was only four months old died the same night. They built a fire to thaw the ground so that a grave could be dug then with my baby brother clasped in his arms they wrapped them in a blanket and laid them tenderly away.

My darling Mother had to take up the journey alone with us five children. Provisions were almost gone and desolation reigned. The Company passed off the main road to what was named Martin's Ravine to escape the terrible blizzards and storms for we had little clothing and had given up all hope; death had taken a heavy toll. The ravine was like an over-crowded tomb. No mortal pen could describe the suffering. President Young, learning of our condition, sent an advance guard of two young men, Joseph A. Young and Stephen Taylor. More welcomed messengers never did come from the courts of glory.

Soon help came with food and clothing. We were still 500 miles from Salt Lake City in dead of winter. It seemed those remaining had received a new lease on life – for one-fourth of the company had already passed away during the journey.

After arriving in Salt Lake City, which was on November 1856 we were met by William Clyde with ox teams and taken to Springville, staying one night with the Bishop of American Fork and receiving great kindness. The next day we arrived in Springville and how kind the people were to us half-starved people. Some of the children's feet were frozen so badly they had to lie down all the while. My brother James, lost half of both his feet, and Robert lost two toes from one foot. When his stockings were taken from his feet on the one foot, the two toes stayed in the stocking from being frozen so badly and they suffered terribly.

The good people of Springville will never be forgotten for their kindness to us and my darling Mother. Father Bird who was our family doctor came to our home every day for months and dressed the wounds on the feet of my brothers with the help of Mother.

Brother and Sister Devenish, William Huntington, Bishop Aaron Johnson, Benjamin Blanchard, with many others supplied all our needs. Mother's time was taken up caring for the family. In the spring of 1857 Mother married Charles Hulet. He was a widower and he was a very find man and father to us children. He provided us with a good home and took very good care of us. Mother had two daughters by him, Margaret and Francis. My mother and stepfather and us children lived very happily together for six years. Charles Hulet died May 9, 1863 at Springville, Utah, but is buried elsewhere. On March 12. 1864 mother married Joseph Wood Cook, and they had one daughter named Viola, but they were divorced before she was born. Viola later married Myron L. Crandall.

Mother was a good, kind, devoted mother; full of faith and in spite of all her suffering and sacrifice she never uttered a complaint. There was one thing she never could endure and that was the sight of a handcart. It brought back such sad memories of the past and she could never be induced to join in any handcart parades.

Her life in Springville was of the noblest; she took part in church work; particularly in the Relief Society and was always loving and sympathetic to those in need. When the Primary Association was organized in Springville, November 23, 1878 she was selected as President of the Second Ward Association and chose as her counselors, Sarah Manwaring and Elizabeth Brammall with Susanna Wakefield as Secretary. She held this position until December 1, 1880 resigning to do work in Relief Society.

Mother passed away March 10, 1899 at the age of 76 years, after a well spent life. She was mother of nine children. Her posterity numbers 42 grandchildren, 140 great-grandchildren, and six great-great-grandchildren, a total of 198.

Why should I not call Springville my home town? It has so many things that are dear to me. Mother laid to rest here; two brothers; one half-sister; and our stepfather, Charles Hulet, who was so kind to us and gave us a good home, helping us in time of need; and many other old friends and neighbors whom I labored with.

Margaret, this is an additional note you may add to the history:

In the Martin Handcart Company were 576 persons, 7 wagons, 1 carriage, 1 Church wagon with freight when they started on the perilous journey of 1300 miles. They reached Council Bluffs and went up near the ferry over the Missouri River and camped on Pigeon Creek below the Old Mormon Saw Mill in Winter Quarters near Florence, Nebraska. They rested three days. They were informed by President Franklin D. Richards of the probability of encountering snow storms before they would reach Salt Lake City. They were then three weeks late in starting the journey. With uplifted hands they consented to go on and take the risk. Traveling was slow, some days only 16 miles and Indians were numerous. On Sept. 24, fifteen head of oxen were stolen by Indians. On October 8, they camped in sight of Fort Laramie and October 19 they left Deer Creek and crossed the North Platte River.

Robert Lomax Kirkman was a saddle maker and had been offered a position for the winter, so they decided to stay in Iowa until the spring, but the saints came so many times to see my parents and urged them to travel with them, so Father talked it over with Mother and he said, "We'll go with them, live or die."

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We started on the perilous journey of 1,300 miles from Florence, Nebraska, on August 25 with over 500 saints. Before we had been on the road a third of the distance the handcarts broke down, being made of unseasoned wood and poorly put together and many were overloaded. Winter came early on the high plains of Wyoming and on October 19 the first big storm hit just as they were crossing the Platte River near Casper. As winter set in progress was slow and provisions soon began to give out. The food allowance grew smaller and strong men became weak and the women suffered terribly.

Terrible blizzards raged and snow-covered mountains had to be climbed, all in the face of freezing weather. Bedding and clothing had to be discarded when it was most needed, for loads were too heavy. Every day took its toll of lives, and graves had to be dug in the snow. For days the snow fell, most of the time blowing in their faces. They arrived at Red Bluff and stopped four days at this camp where the snow was from one to two feet deep.

Before we left Iowa, my dear Mother had given birth to another son, Peter. Mother was naturally weak with the care of a nursing baby and five other children to care for. Father was very weak for want of food, having denied himself for his wife and sons. Each family in our company was being rationed one pint of flour a day which was made into gruel for nourishment. The children were so hungry that they sucked the corners of empty flour sacks for a little more nourishment. When Father would go out to gather wood he would stagger like a drunken man from lack of food and weakness.

On November 4 the company went across the Sweetwater and went up to what was called Martin's Cove or Ravine to escape the terrible blizzards and storms. There were protective pine and cedar trees in the ravine. They had little clothing left and had given up all hope. Death had taken a heavy toll and the ravine was like an overcrowded

tomb. The terrible strain of the journey was too much for Robert and on the night of November 11, 1856 Robert Kirkman died at the age of thirty-three and his four-month-old baby, Peter, died the same night near the Sweetwater River in Sweetwater, Wyoming. They built a fire to thaw the ground so that a grave could be dug. Then, with my baby brother clasped in his father's arms, they wrapped them in a blanket and laid them tenderly away. Mary Kirkman, with her remaining five sons, was left to carry on alone.

My darling mother had to take up the journey alone with her five children. Provisions were almost gone. Desolation reigned. The company passed off the main road to what was named Martin's Ravine to escape the terrible blizzards and storms, for we had little clothing and had given up all hope. Death had taken a heavy toll; the ravine was like an over-crowded tomb. No mortal pen could describe the suffering.

On October 4 President Brigham Young was informed of the dire circumstances of the handcart companies still on the plains and he sent an advance guard of two young men when he learned of the pitiful conditions, Joseph A. Young and Stephen Taylor [One account says Joseph A. Young, Dan Jones and Abe Garr] came to them and told them to travel thirty miles further west where they would be met by ten wagons from Utah with provisions and others supplies. More welcomed messengers never did come from the Courts of Glory. We were still 500 miles from Salt Lake in the dead of winter, but it seemed those remaining had received a new lease on life to continue on. One fourth of the company had already passed away during the journey.

On November 2 they camped at Devil's Gate. The snow was deep and it was very cold. While they were snowbound several prominent members of the relief party from Salt Lake City who had crossed the plains ten or fifteen times said they had never seen a company of Mormons in such a pitiful condition, and their hearts were filled with gloom and some doubts as to their being able to live.

On Sunday, November 23, they were close to the old Fort at Fort Bridger, Wyoming. It was one of the most severe nights they experienced on the entire journey. They camped on the Muddy River eighteen miles west of Bridger on November 24. On November 26 they were at Echo Canyon and on November 27, with snow falling fast, they crossed the big mountain and camped at the head of Emigration Canyon. They reached Salt Lake City on Sunday, November 30, 1856, a little before noon. Snow on Salt Lake Main Street was three feet deep. One-fourth of the company, 150 people, had passed away during the journey.

After arriving in Salt Lake City, Mary Kirkman and her family were met by William Clyde with ox teams and taken to American Fork. They spent one night with the bishop there and received great kindness. The following day we arrived in Springville. How kind the people were to us half-starved people. Some of the children's feet were frozen so badly they had to lie down all the while. My brother, James, lost half of both his feet, and Robert lost two toes from one foot. When his stockings were taken from his feet on the one foot, the two toes stayed in the stocking from being frozen so badly. They suffered terribly.

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[The account: Autobiography of Mary Lawson Kirkman Hulet was COMPILED by John Kirkman, her son]

[Another account shows: WRITTEN by Patriarch John Kirkman, a Son and Read in a Meeting of the Aaron Johnson Camp, #2, Daughters of the Pioneers on March 13, 1930]