

HISTORY of JOHN KILPATRICK McDONALD (1797)  
and RACHEL TAAFFE (1806)

In a little town by the seashore named Donaghadee (about 15 miles east of Belfast) in Downshire, Ireland, John Kilpatrick McDonald was born on 5 January 1797. He was the second of three children and the only son. A short synopsis of these children follows:

Jane born 1795 at Donaghadee; married Alexander McWheeney; died in 1833 at age 38.  
John Kilpatrick born 5 Jan 1797 at Donaghadee; married Rachel Burke Taaffe in 1823; 9 children.  
Nancy born 28 Jan 1799; married \_\_\_\_\_ Walker; no other info.

John's parents educated him in hopes that he would become a sea captain. However, John was reckless and nearly drowned several times, so as a change of direction his parents bound him out to learn the cabinet-making trade.

Apprenticeship in this trade was seven years, but John only stayed for two. His mischievous nature got him in trouble with his employer and they scuffled, causing John to run away to sea.

After an absence of two years he returned, but went to Belfast to finish out his apprenticeship. At age 24 he answered a newspaper ad for a cabinet maker in Lurgan, Armaghshire. John became employed there by William Taaffe, who had a 15-year-old sister named Rachel. They became acquainted and in April 1823 they were married. John was of the Presbyterian faith and Rachel was Catholic. (Rachel had been born on 6 April 1806 in Lurgan to John and Ann Taaffe.)

*Nancy Taaffe*  
John worked at Lurgan for several years and he and Rachel had four children (3 who lived) in that area before John's roving disposition gave him the urge to emigrate. In 1831 there was no wood in all of Great Britain lumber was imported from Canada on lumber boats. A cheap fare of \$6.00 was charged for those wanting transportation to Canada. This enabled ships to make money as well as provide ballast for the return trip.

#10  
The McDonald family placed their oldest daughter in a Catholic nunnery and sailed across the Atlantic Ocean to Quebec, Canada with their two sons. John found employment as a carpenter. While living there the deadly disease of cholera broke out. Thousands of people died and were buried in trenches dug for the masses. They survived this crisis and in 1833 their fifth child, Alexander, was born. (He lived only 7 years.)

In 1834 the family journeyed south across the border to the USA and settled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. John worked in the cabinet making trade and became successful. Politics held his interest and he also became involved in the Journeymen Cabinet Makers Association.

Two more children arrived while the family lived in Philadelphia-- Washington (who lived only 12 years) and James.

Again the moving spirit struck John and in 1838 the family (now consisting of six children) ventured west to Pittsburgh. After being in Pittsburgh for about a year, John started his own cabinet business.

Their 8th child, Jane, was born in Pittsburgh in March of 1840. However, in August of that year both Jane and 7-year-old Alexander died. Their last child, Joseph, was born in January of 1842, but died two weeks later.

The religions of that day didn't interest John. However, in 1842 an apostle of the LDS Church, Elder John E. Page, was in Pittsburgh preaching the Gospel. One day John was passing by and stopped to listen to what this street preacher had to say. It was unusual doctrine compared to the norm of that time period. Several times he listened to Elder Page and each time went home and told Rachel about it. A Methodist minister at that same time was visiting Rachel and was admonishing her to join his church. She told him she first wanted to hear what the Mormons had to say.

After they listened to Elder Page several more times, they believed what he was saying was true. In June of 1842 they were baptized in the Allegheny River. John soon became an elder and he too began to preach the gospel. Their desire to be with the main body of the church led them to close up their business in Pittsburgh and head west. (John and Rachel were the only two of 300 members that joined the church in Pittsburgh that did not aposticize.)

In the fall of 1842 the family arrived in Nauvoo, Illinois where they met with some resistance from apostate Mormons. They first rented a house on Main Street near the Prophet's mansion house. (Their children played with the Smith children -- Fred, Alexander and young Joseph.) Later they moved into one of Hyrum Smith's houses and lived there until driven out of Nauvoo. John tried to find work, but none was to be found in Nauvoo in his trade, so after making arrangements with church leaders to watch over his family, he went south to St. Louis, Missouri. Their son, William (now 16 years old) accompanied his father and they secured employment there.

Every two or three months they went back to Nauvoo to visit the family. While in St. Louis John and several other saints organized a branch of the church there.

*June 27*  
On 1844, after a little over a year in St. Louis, John and William were returning to Nauvoo for a visit when they received word that Joseph and Hyrum Smith had been killed. They didn't believe it could be true, but upon arriving they found it to be so. They had already been buried. Rachel and her children had viewed the bodies as they lay in state in the Mansion House. They also spoke of John Taylor being brought home from Carthage Jail pierced by three or four bullets, weak and pale from loss of blood. Also, they remembered Governor Ford coming to Nauvoo at the head of his troop[s] and giving a rousing speach, giving the mob at Carthage a chance to murder the prophet and patriarch.

John then stayed in Nauvoo and worked on the Temple to its completion. John reportedly built a spiral staircase in the temple out of hardwood which had no support except at the top and bottom -- said to be a creation of great beauty. Constant awareness of mobs in the area made it difficult to work on this project. The workers had to keep their guns and ammunition under their benches for protection. However, in 1846 the temple was completed and Rachel and John received their endowments there.

President Brigham Young had previously counseled the saints to be prepared to leave Nauvoo, and organized the Association Wagon and Blacksmith Shops to make wagons to enable the Saints to move West. John and son William worked in one of these shops for a year without pay (except for an occasional cornmeal and meat ration). All these men were promised a good outfit with which to move West, but never got it.

John feared late in 1846 that he was going to be left, so he started making himself the running gears to a wagon. He then sold all of his valuable books and everything they could spare for a yoke of wild three-year-old streers. Young John had a yoke of yearling calves which they also used to pull the wagon.

*Missouri*

Word came early in 1846 to leave and they loaded up their possessions and headed toward the Mississippi River. The journey went better than expected. Stopping at Bonaparte, Iowa, John worked at wagon making and built another wagon.

After arriving in Council Bluffs, he built a one-room log cabin where the family stayed for the winter. It had no roof, but was covered with willows, then dirt. *shingles but* Everyone suffered from illness. John had severe fever (ague); the others got scurvy and black leg. Their 12-year-old son Washington died there in 1847. John made a coffin from his wagon box and he and son William carried it across the frozen Missouri River to be buried at Winter Quarters.

Times were hard. The saints died off by the hundreds with black leg and scurvy due to lack of vegetables. The McDonalds had very little to eat but parched corn. Securing his family at Council Bluffs for the winter, John went south and found work at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, becoming a foreman at a government wagon shop there. The next spring he returned to Council Bluffs to move his family to Kansas. After about a year they all traveled back to Winter Quarters where they made preparations for their trek west.

After being persuaded to trade off his outfit to an old gentleman for his farm, John was again without money or wagon to make the trip; so he and son William again worked at wagon making.

Finally, on June 13, 1850 the family of John, Rachel and their three children, ages 14 to 26, left Winter Quarters for the Great Salt Lake Valley with the Warren Foote Company. By June 30th they had traveled only 11 miles. John became very dissatisfied with the order of travel, as well as the spread of cholera. On August 31st, John and several others left the company and went on ahead. They arrived on 15 September 1850; the others followed 11 days later. John worked in the Public Works on the Temple Block. He hauled wood out of the canyon during the day, and played his fiddle for dances at night.

John soon purchased a lot in the 13th Ward where he and his two sons built a small adobe brick cottage (249 E. 1st South) where John & Rachel lived until their deaths.

Incidentally, this home was in back of the brick barn where the mules who pulled the early streetcars were housed (47 South 2nd East). Started in 1872, from 400-500 people rode for a 10 cent fare. The company put out a schedule, but the weather and mood of the mules determined when the streetcar would arrive.

*In 1851*  
After a short time John's oldest son was asked by Brigham Young to go to California's gold fields to work, as the Church needed cash. After so working for a time, he was ordered to go to San Bernadino to help colonize the Church there. His brother John, Jr. joined him there. *Wm* William opened the town's first mortuary. When he was subsequently ordered back to Salt Lake, he refused and aposticized. He remained for the rest of his life in San Bernadino, except for a short period when he fled to Los Angeles after he killed a drunk in self-defense. He was acquitted of the murder charge.

*Wm lived in L.A. from 52 to 60 at least. 6 kids born there. #7 James Dady was born Nov 64 at San Bernadino.*

In 1852 John Sr. was called on a five-year mission to Ireland. Heading out without any money and just a light wagon and two horses, he and his companion went about 500 miles when a horse died. They then had to go on foot for another 500 miles to the Missouri River. He traded his rifle for food and a little money and they continued on their way.

Traveling to St. Louis and then Cincinnati by steamer he finally arrived in Pittsburgh. He contacted some of his old friends there and then headed for Philadelphia. Money was scarce but he somehow managed.

As an answer to prayer, enough money was provided for his ship passage to Liverpool, England. After a perilous voyage across the Atlantic Ocean they all arrived well and several years were spent in Ireland where he became president of the Belfast and Londonderry Branches. This was at the end of the potato famine in Ireland and half the population died. John discovered most of his family had succumbed. He searched desperately for his daughter Elizabeth who was now a nun and visited her at the Catholic Abbey. He baptized a few of his relatives there, then finished his mission in England.

In 1856 Rachel wrote son John Taaffe in San Bernadino, *(or L.A.?)* California, that John, Sr. was on a mission, leaving her and son James (15) with no means of support. They were hungry and destitute, and in danger of losing their home unless they could pay a tax of \$100 for the wall Brigham Young had built in downtown Salt Lake as a protection from Indians.

John Taaffe immediately sent her money and started for Salt Lake with two sacks of flour and cash, accompanied by a friend. They stopped at Mormon Rocks at Kaahoon Pass at which time John's horse fell backward on top of John, causing severe injury. John Taaffe insisted they continue their journey to save his mother and brother James. They were confronted by hostile Indians who wanted to kill them, and starving Indians so hungry they would follow you 20 miles for one cracker! They lost their horses and had their food stolen, but finally arrived at Rachel's home. Her son had been gone only four years, but had suffered so much that Rachel didn't recognize him! He remained in Salt Lake with them.

*a year later*  
Upon returning home from his mission *in Eng in 1856* John, Sr. stopped in Council Bluffs to work making handcars for emigrating saints. *(Who did? Martin Cook)* He then joined Capt. Edward Bunker's Handcart Company and headed west once again. He not only walked all day along the journey, but kept hand carts in repair all the way across the plains. He arrived home in October of 1857.

In early 1858 John was called upon to help guard Echo Canyon from Johnson's Army, after which he moved his family south with the rest of the saints for their protection. They returned to their home later that year. John Sr. and John Taaffe opened a cabinet shop which later became McDonald's General store.

Also in 1858, John Taaffe (age 28) made a trip to Pleasant Grove to see his girlfriend, Eleanor Crossland (age 16), who had been evacuated from Salt Lake due to fears of Johnson's Army. The young couple wanted to marry, so received permission to ride John's horse along Lehi Road to meet his Bishop (who was moving his herd of sheep) and have the ceremony performed. They met him along the way and he agreed to the wedding and told them to get down from the horse. They told him "No, we did our sparking on this old horse, we were engaged on him, and now we want to be married on him." So they joined hands and were married while seated on the horse. They said later it was a lovely wedding with quite a number present: The bishop, one of his sons, his clerk, and about 300 head of dirty sheep!

The newlyweds spent their wedding night in the back of the McDonald General Store. They used boxes for chairs and a table, and fixed up a straw bed on the floor. For some time they lived this way, using two wagon hubs for chairs and two old knives and forks, and two cracked plates for their meals. In recounting these days, John Taaffe later wrote, "Don't laugh, please; for those were the happiest days of our life."

This same Eleanor was to become an expert candymaker and later she would ask John Sr. and her husband to bring chocolate from Chicago when they sent wagons East for metal hinges and drawer pulls needed for their cabinet building. That's how the McDonald candy business began. Much later, her son James Gailard (J.G.) became head of the J.G. McDonald Candy Company. (During the depression, J.G. went broke and eventually sold the company to Sweets.)

Rachel died at home on 29 April 1863 at age 57, leaving her husband and four children: Elizabeth (the nun in Ireland), Wm. Taaffe (age 36), John Taaffe (age 33) and James Kilpatrick (age 27).

One year later, James was killed by Indians in Wyoming on May 17, 1864. He was a guide on a wagon train that was attacked by Sioux. Two others were also killed and a child kidnapped by the Indians. This Caucasian girl later became the chief's squaw and was subsequently rescued as an adult and wrote a book entitled My Life Among the Indians.

John embraced polygamy after Rachel's death. For a history of his subsequent life and marriages see "History of John McDonald, Sr.'s marriages to Sarah Johnson, Clara Marsden and Harriet Zelnora Marsden."

John Sr. died on 31 August 1874, revealed as a very prominent pioneer and stalwart church member.

Elizabeth, the nun, died at the Abbey in Ireland in 1890, and son William (the apostate) died in San Bernadino, California in 1901.

In 1910, John's last remaining son, John Taaffe, died of Cholera in Salt Lake. This peniless newlywed (recounted earlier) had built a huge mansion on 4th South and Main Street. President John Taylor and several apostles hid in a secret room at the back of John Taaffe's house while in exile over polygamy. (For 3-1/2 years during this period no general authority attended general conference for fear of arrest.) Since John Taaffe chewed tobacco and smoked cigars and sold tobacco to "Gentiles," the Feds never suspected he would hide Mormon leaders and never searched his home.

It is said that John Taaffe worked very hard; and every year he held a huge birthday party for himself and invited 80 to 100 of Salt Lake's most prominent church leaders and affluent citizens.

NOTE: For an account of the polygamous marriages of John Kilpatrick McDonald, see histories of his marriages to Sarah Johnson, Clara Marsden and Harriet Zelnora Marsden.