

THE LIFE OF JOHN KILPATRICK McDONALD

Excerpts taken from the history written by his son,
John Taaffe McDonald, December 11, 1896

John McDonald No.1 was born in Ireland on the fifth day of January 1797 in a little town called Donaghee on the sea shore. His parents educated him in hopes that someday he might become a sea captain, but as he grew up he became very reckless and came very near being drowned several times. His parents became alarmed and changed their minds, and bound him out for seven years to learn the cabinet making trade, but he only stayed about two years as he was always in mischief. He got in a row with his boss, knocked him down a flight of stairs and ran away to sea, and was gone about two years.

He then went to the city of Belfast and served out the balance of his seven years apprenticeship. He was about twenty-four years of age at that time, and seeing an ad in a newspaper, "A good cabinet maker wanted by William Taaffe in the town of Lurgan", he started for that place and went to work for Mr. Taaffe. It was there that he first met his wife, Rachel Taaffe, my mother, a beautiful young girl, and as good as she was lovely. He must have worked for my Uncle for several years as my mother had four children born in Ireland...Elizabeth, two Williams and myself.

Being of a roving disposition, he started for America about the year of 1831 and landed in Canada and went to work in the city of Quebec at his trade.

He moved to Philadelphia in the year 1834 with his family and got work at his trade and did well and made money. In the year of 1838 he moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Father never took any interest in the religions of the day. He always said they were a "lot of humbugs"; that they did not preach the doctrines that Christ taught, so he would have nothing to do with any of them. I think it was in the year 1842 that John E. Page, one of the Apostles of the Mormon Church, came to Pittsburgh, and preached the Gospel according to the Mormon faith. Father happened to be passing by and stopped to hear what he had to say. I remember when Father came home in the evening, he said to mother he had stopped to hear a fellow preach and he preached the strangest doctrine he had ever heard. He went to hear Mr. Page several times, and at last came to the conclusion that it was the first time he had ever heard the Gospel of Christ preached in his life. Father kept mother well posted in what Mr. Page said and she came to the conclusion that she would go and hear him preach. Just as she had made up her mind to go, a Methodist Minister called on her and plead with her to join his church, but she told him "no", as she wanted to hear Mr. Page first, what he had to say, so she went with father to hear him preach. As soon as Mr. Page commenced to speak, mother got a testimony that he was a servant of God and that he preached the true Gospel of Christ. In a very short time, father and mother were both baptized in the Allegheny River.

As soon as father was ordained an Elder, he started out to preach the gospel. He went over into Allegheny County and down through Ohio.

The next thing that struck him was the spirit of gathering with the Saints at Nauvoo, the Zion of the last days, the home of the Pure in Heart, so he closed up his business in Pittsburgh and started for Nauvoo. I think we arrived there in the fall of 1842. The next thing to do was hunt for work, but there was no work at his trade to be had in Nauvoo, so he came to the conclusion to leave mother and us children in Nauvoo and go down to St. Louis to work, so he had a talk with Joseph the Prophet and his brother Hyrum, and when he got us fixed for the winter, he and my brother William started for St. Louis and had no trouble in getting work at their trade, as they were both first class workmen. Father and William worked in St. Louis for over a year, but they came up to see us every two or three months.

Father, hearing of the trouble at Nauvoo, started up the River for home, but had not got far on his journey until the word came aboard the boat that a mob had killed Joseph the Prophet, but father could not believe it. He thought it impossible for them to kill a Prophet of God, but the further he came up the river and landed at the little towns on his way, the same news came on board. But, he only smiled at it. But, when the steamer landed at Quincy, Illinois, all the particulars of the murder of Joseph and Hyrum were told. Father began to think there might be something in it, so he went into his state room on the boat and asked the Lord in prayer if it was true that they had killed the Prophet. The answer came from some person in the room saying, "Which of my Prophets have they not slain?" He turned around to see who spoke, but could see no one. He jumped to his feet and exclaimed, "My God, they have killed him." Father did not arrive in Nauvoo until after Joseph and Hyrum were buried.

Those were dark days and days of mourning for the Saints. Think of it! The Prophet and Patriarch of the Church dead, and many of the men who stood shoulder to shoulder with them in life turned traitors to them and apostatized from the Church. John E. Page, one of the Twelve Apostles, who brought father and mother into the Church apostatized and went back and tried to persuade father to go with him. He said it was all over with the Church; that they had all been deceived. Father asked him if he did not bear his testimony to the truth of Mormonism and that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God while at Pittsburgh, and told father that if he would join the Church that he would receive a testimony for himself, that Joseph was a true Prophet of God. Father told John E. Page that he had received the testimony that he promised him that he should receive and that he now knew for himself that the work he had embraced was the work of God, and that Joseph Smith was a true Prophet.

After the Prophet's death, father stayed in Nauvoo and went to work on the Temple at carpenter work and worked on it until it was finished, and received his Endowments in it, and had mother sealed to him. Those were pretty tough times; men had to work late and early to get the Temple finished at the time appointed, and they had to keep their guns and ammunition under the benches as they did not know the hour that the mobocrats who were always prowling around would come down on them.

Then word was received from President Young that the Saints must prepare to travel to some place in the far west in the Rocky Mountains. It was then that the great Moses of the last days, Brigham Young, led out and established association wagon and blacksmith shops to make wagons to move the Saints to the West, away from their enemies where they could worship God without molestation. Father and my brother, William worked in one of these shops for about a year, without any pay except a little corn meal and occasionally a little meat.

Our little team did very well. Although we helped others up hills, we did not have to be helped up a hill once on the whole journey. Father stopped at Bonaparte, Iowa for some time and got work at wagon making and got a good outfit to continue his journey to Council Bluffs, where we built a log cabin and stayed for the winter. My brother, Washington, died there. Father made him a coffin out of his wagon box, and he and my brother, William, carried him on their shoulders across the Missouri River on the ice and buried him in the burying ground where a great many of the Saints were laid to rest, to await the resurrection of the just

HIS HISTORY CONTINUES . . .

1. Arrival in the valley on September 15, 1850.
2. Called on a five year mission to Ireland in 1852.
3. Crosses the plains again, going eastward this time.
4. Travels without money in his pocket.
5. Providential intervention in his behalf.
6. Reached Ireland and preached the Gospel.
7. "Baptized a few of his relatives".
8. Goes to England to continue his mission.
9. Crosses the plains again after his mission.
10. Kept handcarts in state of repair on the plains.
11. Arrived home in the Salt Lake Valley in fall of 1857.
12. Called to go guard Echo Canyon from Johnston's Army.
13. Passes away on August 31, 1874.

"MY FATHER DIED AS HE HAD LIVED, A TRUE LATTER-DAY SAINT NEVER ASHAMED TO DEFEND THE PRINCIPLES OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST"

John Taaffe McDonald