

Hugh and Julia Sophia (Raymond) McKee

Hugh McKee:

"Hugh and his brothers Thomas and James were stalwart and trustworthy members of the Church, and were well known by the Prophet Joseph Smith and his family. After Joseph Smith was murdered at Carthage, Hugh and his brother were given the assignment to assist in transporting the bodies of Joseph and Hyrum to Nauvoo. After assisting in gently wrapping the bodies in linen, they hid the bodies in a load of hay or brush, as there were many that wanted to further disrupt and injure the Church by stealing the bodies. They were successful, and the bodies were delivered to a safe burial place."

Hugh McKee was born November 2, 1824 in Slippery Rock, Butler County Pennsylvania. His parents were David Albert McKee and Mary Tweed McMillian. The McKee name is Scotch, but both his parents were born in Ireland. The McKee's immigrated from The Sheringshire and Galloway Shire area of Scotland to Northern Ireland in the 17th century. Hugh's grandfather, "Big David" McKee lived in County Downs, Ireland, and was said to be the largest man in all Ireland. Hugh's Father, along with nine brothers, immigrated to America, settling in Pennsylvania.

One of the traditions among the different branches of the McKee family in Pennsylvania is that all the McKee men who came from Scotland to Ireland were of giant stature and great strength. This characteristic seems to have prevailed for more than two centuries in Ireland and all the pioneers that came to America were men marked for their size and physical endurance.

Historically the McKee's were gentlemen farmers, that is, renters of estates, school teachers, preachers, doctors, lawyers, businessmen and manufacturers. They had considerable part in the affairs of the land, as evidenced by the frequent appearance of the name on the public records. In religion they were originally Presbyterians and Covenanters and many of them were persecuted during the reformation.

Hugh was the fifth child and fifth son born into his family. Following him were two additional brothers and four sisters, making eleven children in all.

Hugh and all of his brothers and sisters were born and raised in Butler County. Three of his older brothers married three sisters of the surname Sweat, and two of his younger brothers married sisters of the surname Dunton.

Hugh's parents were early converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, having been baptized together on May 15, 1837. His parents were also sealed in the Kirtland Temple on June 1, 1837. Although we have no detailed record of his childhood, it is likely that Hugh's family followed the body of the Church from Ohio to Missouri after being driven out by the mobbings and destruction of property by bands of bigoted religionists. The family likely endured the similar mob violence that drove the members of the Church from that State to Illinois, where the small community of commerce was built into the great City of Nauvoo by the Saints. Hugh was baptized a member of the Church on July 1, 1839, at the age of fifteen.

Hugh and his brothers Thomas and James were stalwart and trustworthy members of the Church, and were well known by the Prophet Joseph Smith and his family. After Joseph Smith was murdered at Carthage, Hugh and his brother were assigned to assist in transporting the bodies of Joseph and Hyrum to Nauvoo. This they did on June 28, 1844. After assisting in gently wrapping the bodies in linen, they hid the bodies in a load of hay or brush, as there were many that wanted to further disrupt and injure the Church by stealing the bodies. Also participating in the retrieval of the remains was Elder Willard Richards, who rode "shotgun" on the wagon. They were successful in their somber mission, and the bodies were delivered to a safe burial place, from which they were relocated after the threat of desecration subsided.

Hugh and his family were again driven from their home in Nauvoo, and followed Brigham Young and the Church west toward Utah. After traveling almost three hundred miles across Iowa to Council Bluffs, Iowa, Hugh waited for his opportunity to join a company of pioneers bound across the plains. Here Hugh met and fell in love with Julia Sophia Raymond.

Julia Sophia Raymond:

Julia Sophia Raymond was born 9 Feb 1831 at Hempstead Queens, Long Island, New York. In describing her childhood, she says:

"My father's name was Samuel James Raymond and my mother's name was Elizabeth Dean. My father was not a religious man, but my mother was a Methodist and in my early childhood I was taught that religion.

At the age of four years, I attended Sunday School, and at the age of seven, as I was returning home from Sabbath School an incident occurred which caused me to reflect in after years.

I was attracted by seeing a man standing on the frame of a building which was being erected, and a large concourse of people surrounded him. I heard him prophesy that a disease would come upon the inhabitants of that village which would cause the death of many children and that also a strange doctrine would be preached among them and many more things, and then he got down and disappeared.

No one knew whither he went nor whence he came. About that time I commenced my school days, and my parents were working people and my education was limited to a district school. Nothing of importance happened until I was ten years old when a disease named Scarlet Fever broke out and caused the death of many of my companions. But the Lord, in his goodness preserved my life from this disease. This was in the winter and the following spring the village was all excited over the announcement that a Mormon Elder was going to preach in the bar room. These were the predictions fulfilled which was made by that strange man three years before.

I have, many times since I became acquainted with the Book of Mormon, thought this stranger was one of the three Nephites. I remember my father leaving my mother to go to hear this strange doctrine and finally my mother consented to go with him and it was not long before she embraced the gospel. My father was bitterly opposed to it at first but it was not long before he could see the

truth. It was at that early age my persecutions commenced. After my parents embraced the Gospel, my companions at school began to ridicule me and would not associate with me. They told me all manners of stories about Joe Smith, as they called him, and the Golden Plates.

They would not allow me to join them in their amusements that winter. I had more time to study and I received a certificate that winter to attend a high school, but my parents could not afford to send me to boarding school, and that ended my education. Four persons were all that joined the church at that time in that large place. My mother did not urge me to go to the Methodist Church. She gave me the liberty to go to the church that I wished. I attended the Episcopalian Church for about one year. By that time a branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints was organized about six miles from our place over which my father presided. By this time I was old enough to be taught the gospel.

I never regretted attending Sabbath School. I learned scripture which I never forgot. The Lord gave me an understanding heart. On the 4th of March 1845, I was baptized by Elder Theodore Custer. Shortly after that my father was called to Nauvoo to assist in building the temple. My mother and myself were left to work to get means together to go to Nauvoo with the Saints. We had to work hard but the Lord provided and blessed our labors and we sold our household goods at auction and left our native place and dear old grandmothers, which were our only near relatives and started from home the last of October.

We took the train to Brooklyn and crossed the ferry at New York. I went to Brother Orson Pratt's office and got our pass and he informed me which train to take to join the Saints we were to travel with. We went on the train feeling very lonely; my mother's brother and myself. We knew no one but we had not gone far when a gentlemen asked us if we were Latter-Day Saints going to Nauvoo. Mother told him we were and we joined the rest of the Saints and had a good time singing, praying and bearing testimonies.

We arrived at Albany the next morning and there we went on board the canal boat and proceeded to Buffalo and then we crossed Lake Erie on a steam boat. Many were sea sick but I escaped that, being on the lake thirty six hours. We arrived at Cleveland, Ohio. We next boarded a steam boat for Cincinnati and there we boarded a steamer for Keokuk, Iowa by way of St. Louis. We traveled the rest of the way by wagon. The distance not being far, we arrived at our destination 21 Nov 1845. There I spent the happiest days of my life among the youth of Zion. It was a privilege I enjoyed very much.

It was the next spring and the Saints had to leave Nauvoo. The Brethren went to work to make wagons and form companies in hundreds and fifties. Captains and guards were placed over each company. My father was called again to leave us and we were to follow. My mother and myself took very sick. We had to send for him and he came home for one night. We were so much better that he went again the next morning. The Saints started on their journey to the west. We remained where we were until May, and when we left we had very short notice to go. We did not have any more things then than what we could put in a sack and forty pounds of corn meal that was bread in those days.

With that outfit, we started out a little after sunrise and once more bid adieu to friends we never saw again. Many remained behind and many fell by the way. That night we started for camp and reached there as strangers in a strange land for not one family of our acquaintance came in company with us. The next day being Sunday, we were all called together to hold a worship meeting. We had no house nor bowery. We met in the open air and most of us sat on the ground and I believe we enjoyed ourselves as well as the Saints do today amidst their abundance, for the Lord was with His people to bless and strengthen them and he certainly did increase our provisions.

I never lacked for food and none of the company wanted for bread. We stopped at that place, waiting to get rested up and to get fully organized. I had no idea where we were going. I had not heard then of the Rocky Mountains but I knew the Lord was our guide and we were willing to follow our leaders. When we got within five miles of Farmington, on the Des Moines river, the Brethren took a contract to fence and plow a large farm known as Todd's Farm that took most of the summer and enabled us to go to the city and get work for provisions and clothing.

Mother went part of the time and I went part of the time. One of us took care of my little brother but through the blessing's of the Lord, we made a living and saved enough to journey on. It seems a miracle now how we could do it. I was only a child and all I could get was fifty cents a week and mother a dollar and a half. The Lord blessed and increased our labors of our hands and while I write this, I realize it more and more. I enjoyed camp life and that summer being just the right age to drive dull cares away. We danced on the ground; we waxed the floor with shovel and hoes; we held meetings every Sunday and sometimes during the night. I made many new friends but was separated from them all. It seems that I had to make new acquaintances wherever I went.

Father joined us just as we were starting out on our journey. He had been at Missouri working to help families who had got to winter quarters. Well, we started. It did not take many weeks until we arrived at Mount Pisgah where the pioneers stopped to regroup. Some had built log houses and some had raised vegetables which they did not gather and we were delighted to find potatoes, beans, turnips and other vegetables left there.

Camp only stayed there one day as it was the last of September and the Brethren wished to get into Winter Quarters before cold weather. I, with the rest of my family, stayed at Mount Pisgah, waiting for a brother to take us to Missouri. Our provisions were getting low and we had to go where we could work for more so we concluded to go to Council Bluffs, a city in Missouri. As we were going there, we met a man who was acquainted with my father. When he heard that we were going to stop at Missouri, he was pleased and gave us a house to live in and hired my father to make him a suit of clothes and paid him in provisions for which we were truly thankful. We lived in this man's house, away from everybody, all winter. I never saw a young girl all that winter. It was in my sixteenth year.

The next spring we moved into the city where we met a family of Saints. We became acquainted with these people and they had a young girl and it did not take long to become acquainted. It was not far from the woods and my friend and I had a good time roaming in the forest and by the river. The Grand River is a beautiful one.

We did not have the privilege of attending meeting that summer but the Lord blessed us and we had good times. We saved a good supply of provisions that summer such as wheat and bacon.

When my father sent to the camp for Saints to move us to the bluffs, the Missourians began to persecute us. One man managed to get 20 bushels of our wheat. He said my father owed him that much but he didn't. They raised quite a mob to follow us when they got the wheat, but after obtaining the wheat, they went away in peace. It took three weeks from where we were to go to the bluffs. One day we travelled all day long and saw nothing but grass and when the wind blew over it, it looked like waves of water. We had time to view our surroundings.

We didn't travel then as we do now. We had very slow ox teams and when we got tired of going slow, we walked on ahead and that was a rest. We saw some very pretty views in our travels and going slow, we had time to view our surroundings. We passed some settlements, but they had very few inhabitants. We were told that they had left for fear the Mormons would kill them. We arrived at our destination in due time for it was a place where the Saints were getting ready to cross the plains. That was in 1847. The most of the Saints were on the opposite side of the river from where we were. The place is now called Florence, Nebraska.

That fall, President Young came back from the valleys. It was at that meeting, held in the log tabernacle to Kearnsville where Brigham Young was acknowledged as President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints; Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards as counselors.

In the spring of 1848, the Saints located at Winter Quarters on account of the Indians. we all had to move on the same side of the river as fast as they could get an outfit ready. As fast as outfits left us, new ones were coming in. we had some very good times there that winter."

While at Winter quarters, Julia, now a young woman of 17 met Hugh. After a short courtship they were married on November 22, 1847. Julia describes the events following their marriage:

"Shortly after we were married, my husband went to Missouri to work to get money to go to the valley. He was gone a year. In that time I endured many hardships. Grain was very high and money was scarce. Father could not always get work. Mother was sick all winter. In the spring she got able to help me take care of the baby but on the second day of Nov 1850, mother took sick at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and died before morning, leaving a little girl fifteen months old. That was the first real sorrow I had known. I took care of the baby which father gave me as my own.

That winter my husband came back and we expected to start for the valley in the spring but circumstances would not permit until another year. During that time my first child [Mary Elizabeth McKee] was born but it died a short time afterwards. In the spring of 1852, by the providence of the Lord, we were permitted to leave the states and come to the Rocky Mountains. We crossed the Missouri river on the 15th of June 1852. There we waited three weeks for the rest of the company, then started on our journey. The first month was very pleasant. We held our meetings and we gathered together and sang the songs of Zion. We would stop one day every two weeks and repair and clean the wagons.

At the end of the first month, disease came in our midst. Cholera broke out. Many were laid in the grave, timber to make coffins---we had none and they were wrapped in blankets and laid to rest . It was a dreadful sight. Well do I remember of seeing three little children playing. One took sick and died. The other two were carrying it to the grave. They took the disease and died in a few hours. You never knew, when you got up in the morning, whether you would live to see the sun go down or not. But I feel very thankful for the blessings and mercies which were shown to me and my family.

Although we had but two meals a day, our provisions were scarce. We were comfortable anyway.

We arrived in Salt Lake City the 16th Day of September, 1852. We were three months crossing the plains. After our arrival, the next thing to do was to find work and shelter for the winter. We ate dinner with an old acquaintance in the city then we thought we had better go south. We went as far as Cottonwood. There we found a friend who very kindly offered us a house to live in. However, we thought we had better go further south so we went as far as the point of the mountain and camped. It snowed not far from us that night and not being used to seeing snow in September, we went back and took the house that was offered us and thankful to get it.

We gave part of our team for some land. We seen very hard times that winter. I was taken sick in December and was not able to sit up until May. Most of the winter my life hung on a thread, as it were. We had very little to eat. The next spring my husband got in a little grain but the grasshoppers got most of it but we had enough left for our bread. In the fall we built a new log house. By this time I had gained health and was able to take my share of the burden.

The next year my second daughter [Julia Alvira] was born, in June [June 2]. Shortly after, we had a very heavy hail storm which took all of our wheat, but there was plenty in the valley and we did not want. We went further south, as far as Spanish Fork and there put in a crop. That was the grasshopper year.

We lived on weeds and milk. The Lord blessed us. Our cows gave more milk and weeds grew where they never did before. All that time my children never asked for bread and in the fall of that year my third daughter was born. That winter we had very good times and plenty to eat and thanked the Lord for the preservation of our lives through our hardships.

That was a year of plenty but our peace did not last long. When we were celebrating the 24th of July, news came to us that the U.S. Army was coming to destroy us."

Hugh and his family were in Spanish Fork during what came to be referred to as the Echo Canyon War, or the Utah War.

On July 24, 1857, the inhabitants of Salt Lake City were celebrating both independence day and the tenth anniversary of their arrival in the valley. Many of them had gone into one of the mountain canyons adjacent to the city for this purpose. In the midst of the festivities, a dust-laden and weary horseman hurriedly rode to Brigham Young's tent. He brought ominous news. The President of the United States was sending an army to crush the Mormons! At least that was the story they heard from the soldiers, who boasted of what they would do when they reached Salt Lake City.

This had come about largely because two disappointed applicants for government mail contracts had sent to Washington stories that the Mormons were in rebellion against the United States. As was later proved, their stories were absurd. Yet, on only the thin fabric of their tales, the President had ordered twenty-five hundred soldiers to put down a "Mormon rebellion."

Though Brigham Young had properly been installed as Governor of the territory, he had been given no notice of the coming of the troops. Not knowing what to expect, the Mormon leaders made preparations. They determined that no other group, armed or otherwise, should again inhabit the homes which they had built. They concluded that if it became necessary they would return Utah to the desert it had been before their arrival.

Men were dispatched to do what they could to delay the advance of the army. The bridges which the pioneers had built were burned, the fords dredged, and the prairie burned, but no life was threatened or taken. Because of this carefully executed plan, the army was forced to winter in western Wyoming.

Influential friends to the Church, such as Colonel Thomas L. Kane who had become acquainted with the saints during their trek across Iowa, successfully petitioned the President of the United States to send to Utah a "peace commission" instead of an large armed contingent in the spring of 1858.

Brigham Young agreed that the army should be permitted to pass through the City, but should not camp within it. And lest there should be any violations of this agreement, he put into effect the plan originally decided upon.

When the soldiers entered the Salt Lake valley they found the City desolate and deserted except for a few watchful men armed with flint and steel and sharp axes. The Homes and barns were filled with straw ready to be fired in case of violation, and axes were ready to destroy the orchards. The excavation for the foundation of the temple had been filled, and no evidence of that structure could be discerned by the eye.

Some of the officers and men were deeply affected as they marched through the silent streets, realizing what their coming had meant. Colonel Philip St. George, who had led members of the Mormon Battalion, was among the soldiers, and knew of the wrongs previously inflicted on these people. He bared his head in reverent respect.

The army moved on, camped forty miles southwest of the city and the former residents of Salt Lake City were able to return home.

Referring to the Saint's following the council of the Prophet through this trial, Julia said:

"They did as President Young told them and proved to be a blessing to the people after, in a good many ways. In the fall of 1858 [9 October], my fourth daughter [Pervis Minerva McKee] was born. We felt to rejoice. We had plenty to eat, but clothing was scarce. I had a new lawn dress for Christmas and was nicely dressed."