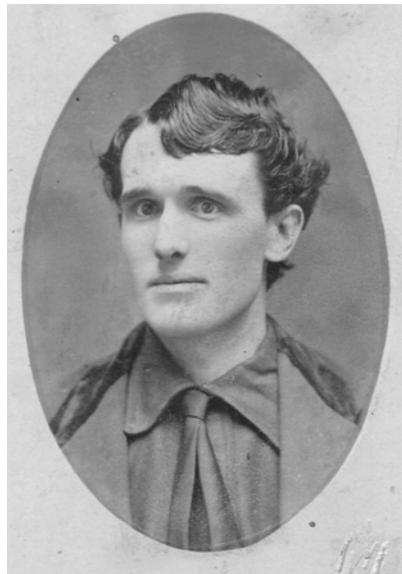


The Life  
of  
**MORONI DUNCAN**

*1850 - 1894*



*Compiled by*  
*Ellen Claire Weaver Shaeffer*  
*1991*

*Re-edit 2009*

## MORONI DUNCAN

Moroni Duncan was born on the 6th of December 1850 in Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland, the son of Alexander Wilson Duncan and Jane Pitcon. Though his father was a poet, he made a living as a bootmaker, "*a profitable way to make a living.*"<sup>1</sup> His mother supplemented the family income by sewing and embroidering for the aristocrats.

Moroni's father, Alexander, was a Freemason, and a seeker of religious truths. "*He was a tireless reader in this search. He was known to have a brilliant mind and to be an excellent Bible student. Little wonder that he so quickly grasped the message of the Latter-day Saint missionaries and knew the Gospel to be the truth!*"<sup>2</sup> After a thorough investigation of this new religion, Alexander and his wife were baptized in the River Clyde on the 14th of April 1848. Then in 1850 their fourth child and first son was born, and was named Moroni in honor of one of the great prophets of the Book of Mormon.

The Duncan family became stalwarts in their new church. Alexander was made "*the presiding Elder, or acting Bishop of the branch in which he lived. He was a very good singer and two of his daughters, Sophia and Agnes were good singers, too. Agnes had an exceptionally fine voice. They used to hold street meetings and sing, often attracting a large crowd. Then [Alexander] would preach the Gospel to the crowd.*"<sup>3</sup>

In 1860 the Duncans began making preparations to depart for the "Zion" of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Utah. Alexander wrote a poem of that hope and dream:

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<sup>1</sup> The Life of Alexander Duncan & His Wife Jane Pitcon, by Hazel Stokes and Agnes Fullmer

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## ZION

*Depart on your journey to Zion,  
Along with the servants of God.  
There you'll receive light and knowledge  
In the Temple that's built to the Lord.*

*Depart on your journey to Zion.  
Unite with the Kingdom of God.  
When you've proved faithful in Zion  
They will send you to nations abroad.*

*Go forth in the power of the spirit.  
Publish glad tidings around  
All that are willing to hear you.  
Point them to Zion's blest ground.*

The first person in the family to travel to the west was Moroni's oldest sister Ellen, age 20, in order to be with her fiancé. She sailed on the ship *Cynosure* May 30, 1863 from Liverpool, England in the George Q. Cannon Company, with 775 emigrant Saints on board.<sup>4</sup> She became part of the Samuel D. White Company that departed Florence (Omaha) Nebraska Aug. 15, 1863 and arrived in the Salt Lake Valley Oct. 15, 1863. A week later she married David Muir. Eventually they settled in Beaver, Utah.

Three years later Moroni, aged fifteen, embarked for Zion along with Alexander, his father and little Sophia, aged eight. His mother and the other children were to follow as soon as funds could be accumulated. Moroni, with his father and sister sailed on the ship *Arkwright* from Liverpool, England on May 30, 1866. Four hundred fifty emigrants bound for Utah were in the charge of Elder Justin C. Wixam. The voyage occupied thirty-six days. The ship arrived in New York on July 6, 1866 where the company was met by Elder John T. Caine and Thomas B. H. Stenhouse under whose direction the emigrants proceeded westward to Nebraska, Wyoming<sup>5</sup> and Utah. They were part of the Daniel Thompson Company of about 500 immigrants proceeding from the west bank of the Missouri River about 40 miles south of Omaha on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1866. They arrived at their destination 29<sup>th</sup> of September 1866.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> British Mission History, 30 May, 1863; Millennial Star 25:394,398,543.

<sup>5</sup> British Mission History May 30, 1866; Church Chron. May 30, 1866; Millennial Star 28:508.

<sup>6</sup> For trail diary excerpt see Endnotes.

Moroni's first winter in America was spent in Brigham City, Utah. When his father heard that a shoemaker was needed in Wellsville, Utah, the three of them went there. Alexander bought a log house on a three-acre lot for six hundred dollars. Alexander raised wheat to make payments on the property, and Moroni worked on the railroad and sent part of his wages to help. Little Sophia, who was almost nine years old when they arrived in Utah, struggled to keep house for the two men, her father and brother. From her granddaughter's biographical sketch we read: *"Grandmother Sophia [was] just a child of nine in a strange country with different surroundings, facing strange people and far different living conditions. All this must have been a very trying experience for a child of nine. Aunt Agnes Fullmer told me that the older women living [nearby] taught her to keep house for Moroni and her father in their log cabin. It was located where Archie Stokes is now <sup>7</sup> building his new home in the southwest part of Wellsville, Utah. Grandmother told how homesick she would get and how lonely and afraid she would be. This poem was written for her mother either by Sophia or her father. It tells of how she missed her mother.:*

### MY MOTHER

*My mother, she is far away,  
And I am in the West.  
The place where she would like to be,  
The land that we love best.  
Hard fortune parted us,  
Drove me across the sea.  
How happy will the meeting be  
When we each other see.*

*She will take her little daughter then,  
And press me to her breast,  
And kiss me o'er and o'er again -  
My mammy I love best.  
My mother, she was kind to me,  
I tried to do her will.  
I will do so in days to come,  
And love my mother still.*

*I'll milk and spin and do her chores  
That she may happy be.  
I'll place her in a rocking chair,  
In Zion's land so free.  
I'll place her by our Ingleside,*

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<sup>7</sup> Date not available

*She'll guide the house so well;  
I'll work for her that she may live --  
I love my mother still.*

Somehow this little girl endured the time until she was reunited with her beloved mother in 1869. Thereafter her life seemed more like normal for the time and circumstances. *"She married John Hunter Stoddard in the Salt Lake City Endowment House on June 27, 1879, [at age 22]. They lived in Wellsville all their lives in the same home as far as I know. It is located two blocks north of the Wellsville Bank."*<sup>8</sup>

The Union Pacific Railroad was organized in 1862 and had about 16,000 miles of track from Iowa and Missouri to the west coast. Thousands of Chinese laborers toiled to push the railroad eastward from Sacramento, California around and through rugged mountains and across the desert lands of Nevada. Other thousands of hardy Irishmen, Scots, Germans and Scandinavians along with thousands of veterans of the Civil War carried the rails of the Union Pacific westward at a speed never before equaled.<sup>9</sup> On May 10, 1869 a golden spike was driven, joining the east and west at a place called Promontory Point north of Salt Lake City, Utah.

Moroni worked for the Union Pacific Railroad in Green River and at Blairtown when the Blair Brothers' mine was in operation.<sup>10</sup> He also worked as a laborer in Salt Lake City according to the federal census of 1870, while the rest of his family was enumerated in Wellsville.<sup>11</sup>

*"Completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 changed economic patterns and institutions in the nation and among the Saints...The Saints participated directly in constructing the railroad and profited through investments in related enterprises. The arrival of the iron horse also hastened immigration, an important element in their continuing efforts to build Zion in the tops of the mountains."*<sup>12</sup>

Three years after arriving in America Moroni and his father had earned enough money to send for the rest of the family. Thus, on July 28, 1869, his mother and siblings Erastus, Agnes, Catharine and Lorenzo started the long trip to this country. They docked in New York August 10, 1869 and traveled by rail from New York to Utah and their new home in Zion. Since the laying of the Golden Spike in Ogden, Utah which joined east and west coasts of the continent, immigrants could now travel by rail all the way to Utah as well as other destinations. It was a joyful reunion of the Duncan family.

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<sup>8</sup> See *Sophia Pitcon Duncan Stoddard*, by Elizabeth S. Stoddard, daughter of William D. Stoddard.

<sup>9</sup> World Book Encyclopedia, Field Enterprises Ed. Corp., 1972, Vol. 16, p.112

<sup>10</sup> Rock Springs Miner, Apr. 5, 1894.

<sup>11</sup> See census photocopies in Endnotes.

<sup>12</sup> *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, J.B. Allen and G.M. Leonard, Deseret Book, 1976, p.292.

A poem written by Alexander expressed the pain of the long absence:

### OH MY WIFE

*Oh My Wife, the mother of my children,  
How I long to see you here  
Where man's labors  
Are crowned with peace and plenty;  
Where the family board is filled  
With the rich fruits of man's own labors,  
Yea, even the produce of the land of Zion.  
Rich country, consecrated  
By the living Priesthood  
Of Eternal Jehovah.*

*This is the place where man can live  
And do all the good he pleases.  
I have a home here in this land,  
All ready and prepared,  
And all I want is you and yours,  
Its bounties to be shared.  
There are women here I know  
Who would not think to scoff  
To share the home that I have now,  
And think themselves well off.*

*But there are none that I have seen,  
With you I would compare.  
You gained my love by acting good,  
With you I'll proudly share.  
This is your land I know,  
With its fat valley's too.  
I have a home, but there's a want,  
A vacant place for you.  
That you may fill that vacant seat  
With a tender mother's care;  
It's all I want, it's all I ask,  
It is my constant prayer.*

The rejoicing of the family, long separated, but now together was warmly remembered for the rest of their lives. By then, Wellsville, sometimes called Scotchtown because of the many converts from Scotland, was a growing little community. Located some eight miles from Logan, Cache County, Utah, there were many ties with the larger community. From the court minutes of March 4, 1867 we read: "*Be it ordered by the court that the rates of toll on the Logan Canyon Road shall not exceed one dollar per load for two pair of animals, and for one pair of animals, 75 cents.*" The city appropriations for that entire year were \$300. <sup>13</sup> A census report for Mar 23, 1872 tallied a total of 1,073 persons living in Wellsville, with 2,033 in Logan. The Cache County total was 9,798. <sup>14</sup> By 1874 the telegraph was operating and in the November 1876 election 2,172 voters balloted to send G. Q. Cannon as a delegate to Congress. <sup>15</sup>

On Feb. 2nd, 1875 Moroni married Jane Owens Wardrop, daughter of Robert Campbell Wardrop and Margaret Evans Owens. Most of Jane's growing up years were spent at Wellsville. Her father, who was a master stone mason had worked on the Salt Lake Temple and also the Logan Temple, moved his family to Wellsville in 1863. Little is known of their courtship, but their children and grandchildren were all great conversationalists and perhaps Jane was attracted by Moroni's literary skills. The couple was married in a civil ceremony by Thomas Bradshaw, Justice of the Peace. Moroni was 24 years old, and Jane was almost 16. Three and a half years later their first child, Margaret [my grandmother] was born in Wellsville, Cache County, Utah on the 13th of July, 1878. On November 18, 1888 the couple received their endowments and were sealed for time and eternity in the Logan temple.



Moroni continued his work as a bootmaker, and did writing in his spare time. *The Logan Leader* of Nov. 2, 1888 printed an interesting observation written by Charles C. Shaw regarding the development of Wellsville and the surrounding area. "I must not forget Mr. M. Duncan, the Wellsville poet; but the readers of the *Journal* will soon form their own opinion of this gentleman's merit as he promises to favor its columns with notable sentiment of the art divine."

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<sup>13</sup> Cache County Court Records 1857-1878, FHL film #0431089, p.115.

<sup>14</sup> Op. cit. p. 184

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit. p.294.

Five of the six children of Moroni and Jane were born in Wellsville. They were Margaret, born 1878, then Ellen, born 1880 but she only survived six months. Next was Sidney, 1882; followed by Minnie, 1885; and Clarence, 1887.

The family subsequently moved to Rock Springs, Wyoming where Bob was born in 1890. Moroni continued working at his trade of shoemaker as well as writing for the local newspaper. He loved the literary life and he tried to set up a newspaper of his own, *The Rock Springs Review*.<sup>16</sup> This was not a successful venture, so he returned to his staff duties at the *Rock Springs Miner*, where he had been employed since 1890.



Sidney, Jane Margaret, Moroni  
Minnie, Bob, Wardrop, Clarence, Duncan

In March of 1894 Moroni obtained a homestead. The Homestead Act, passed by the federal government in 1862, provided that any person over 21, who was the head of a family, and either a citizen or an alien who intended to become a citizen, could obtain the title to 160 acres of public land if he lived on the land for five years and improved it.

<sup>16</sup> See letter to D. Thompson of April 20, 1991 outlining the unsuccessful search for copies of The Rock Springs Review.

Anxious to see his new land, he set out immediately:

*"Mr. Duncan had taken up the Gap, his trip being for the purpose of looking over the ground with the view of moving his family there as soon as the roads and weather would permit. During a storm which must have overtaken him, he wandered to the right of the road and got lost... On the morning he left, he was cheerful and said he would 'make the Gap if it took him a week.' He was warmly clad having on two suits of woolen underwear and an overcoat, and he wore a pair of army brogans [shoes] without overshoes. In his lunch sack were two currant loaves and about four pounds of cooked meat. Tied to his saddle was a small sack of oats for his horse." <sup>17</sup>*

*"In riding out to the Gap, at the fork he took the right instead of the left hand road and being not acquainted with the country and being in addition overtaken by three days blizzard which swept over this section, he lost his way and perished....Mr. Duncan was kindly advised by his loving wife not to risk the trip, and many of his intimate friends pointed out the dangers he would encounter, but he felt restless at delay and to the Gap, upon which he had filed and intended to cultivate, he was bound to go." <sup>18</sup>*

Moroni had started out on his last journey, Sunday morning April 18th, and his frozen body was not located by search parties until Saturday morning April 30th, 1894. *"About five o'clock on Saturday afternoon, Andrew Spence and Albert Meredith, the advance runners of the searching party, returned to town with the report that the body had been found that morning on an exposed ridge, close to the big cottonwoods and not far from W. H. Mellor's summer ranch....The following is the message Mr. Duncan left behind him, verbatim as it was written in his little pocket book: -*

*'Sunday March 18th, left home for Gap Homestead. Early in afternoon got to the place where the 7 or 8 cottonwoods are. Left after feed and got a few miles further. Monday started out and got back to 7 or 8 cottonwoods. I have lost my reckoning and will wait for clear weather. Did not sleep any last night but kept fires on. Fell right now but will do my best to keep awake.' The pencil was left within the folds of the little book where the above was written. It was damp when opened, the coloring of the pencil having dyed the leaves. The writing down to the work 'reckoning' is written with a blunt pencil while the balance appears to have been written with a newly sharpened pencil which explains the cause of his knife being found open in his pocket. The last few lines indicate that he was in distress,*

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<sup>17</sup> Rock Springs Miner, March 29, 1894, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Rock Springs Miner, April 5, 1894, p. 1

*several words being imperfectly written. The marks on the leaves show that it was snowing while he was writing his last 'copy' on earth."* <sup>19</sup>

The entire account of the tragic event was carried in the newspaper for which he had worked, and follows. Many of the search party belonged to the Rock Springs Caledonian Club, of which Moroni was a member and secretary. Caledonia, the ancient Roman name for Northern Scotland, later became the poetic name of all Scotland. Caledonian clubs were formed as associations of Scottish immigrants in the United States, and were sometimes cultural or literary organizations.

Moroni Duncan was a man of varied but significant talents. That he was highly esteemed by his peers was evidenced in the newsclippings that are included below. If there are other sources of information available about his life, especially his early life and schooling, it is unfortunate that we have not been successful in locating such. Nevertheless it is a great satisfaction to know that we are descended from a man of letters and a man of courage.<sup>20</sup>

Both parents outlived him.

Right: Jane Pitcon and Alexander Duncan



Moroni Duncan died at age forty-three, leaving behind his loving wife and five children, one child having preceded him in death. His oldest child, Maggie, or Margaret [my grandmother] was just sixteen, and Robert, born in Rock Springs was four.

Jane took the children and moved to Bennington, Bear Lake County, Idaho to be closer to some of her family members. Three years later she met and married James Jones Collett, a widower with four children. But that is another story<sup>21</sup>..... life goes on.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Norma Gayle Duncan Roberts

<sup>21</sup> See Jane Owens Wardrop Duncan Collett, edited by Ellen Claire Weaver Shaeffer

Two of Moroni Duncan's poems follow. They were provided to Norma Gayle Duncan Roberts by Minnie Duncan Bordges, daughter of Moroni. It is interesting how closely his poem *Adventure* prefigured his own death.

## ADVENTURE

*He lived within a village,  
Where life had not a thrill;  
Where nothing ever happens,  
And nothing ever will;  
Yet everyday he wakened  
With undiminished vim,  
Believing that Adventure  
Would somehow come to him.*

*He was a home-kept plodder,  
Bound close by family ties,  
Who could not seek the open road  
Or roam beneath the skies;  
Yet still within his bosom  
He kept the fancy sweet,  
That someday he would meet Romance  
Upon the village street!*

*Though one day and another  
Were very much the same,  
Within his eyes that eager hope  
Burned with a joyous flame;  
And though his joints grew creaky,  
And though his hair turned grey,  
He knew - - He knew Adventure  
Was coming down the way!*

*His great Adventure found him;  
Death came and took him hence  
To roam tremendous spaces  
To seek vast firmaments;  
Because no blighting circumstance  
His home and faith could shake  
His soul hobnobs with Boone and Scott,  
With Frobisher and Drake!"*

The following poem needs no explanation:

***THE CURSE OF DRINK - Moroni Duncan***

***You call me a friend, yet  
Would ask me to take,  
What contains more rank  
Poison than deadliest snake.  
That robs me of reason, of  
All self control,  
That blights fair creation  
And ruins the soul.***

***Oh pause and consider  
My friend ere you drink,  
That the goblet you hold  
In your hand is a link;  
In the cold chain of death,  
That was forged as a spell  
To lead to the dark dreary  
Regions of hell.***

***Just look at the drunkard  
Go reeling along,  
With a leer on his face;  
On his lips a rude song.  
Conceive if you can,  
That once free from alarm,  
He nestled with love  
In a fond mother's arms.***

***But the tempter crept  
Into that Eden of joy,  
And held to the lips  
Of the innocent boy  
The cup of pollution  
That sealed his sad fate,  
And filled his young life  
With the demons of hate.***

***What a dreary existence  
Of sin and of guile.  
Not one friend in the Wide World  
To cheer with a smile.  
For the mother who bore him***

*Lies low in the sod,  
Broken hearted, she fled  
From the earth to her God.*

*But he drowned sorrow,  
His shame and remorse  
In his passion for drink  
Treads the same downward course.  
Fallen low from the heights  
Of the happiest station,  
A wreck in the mire  
Of his self degradation.*

*How sad is the fate  
Of the once happy youth,  
Whose heart was a fountain  
Of goodness and truth.  
'Til the sirens of pleasure  
With wreath covered bole,  
Caused the poison of hell  
To corrupt his pure soul.*

*My friend, in the glass,  
You hold to my view,  
Dark demons are lurking  
Of deadliest hue.  
I would rather my eye  
Closed in death's dark eclipse,  
Than drink the foul liquid  
You hold to my lips."*

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## NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS:

From either the Rock Springs Independent or the Green River Star, but 1894 editions of both of these papers are unavailable.<sup>22</sup> The following clipping comes from family sources:

### "MORONI DUNCAN MISSING

*"Many wild rumors were afloat yesterday afternoon and this morning regarding the absence of Moroni Duncan, who left this city last Sunday for the ostensible purpose of making a few improvements on a ranch which he had recently taken up about forty-five miles south of this city. He bade his wife and family goodbye with the understanding that he would return not later than Tuesday night. But he did not return in the time promised, and as yet no tidings have been received from the wanderer.*

*"Friday evening the anxious wife reported the matter to the officers, stating that as the weather was fine when he left last Sunday, he had not been prepared for the severe snow storm which enveloped this country last Monday and Tuesday. He left horseback, without either overcoat or overshoes, no doubt expecting to be favored by pleasant weather. If this is true, he certainly struck the blizzard which raged Monday and Tuesday, and not being familiar with the country, the odds were greatly against him, and the worst fears concerning him may be realized.*

*"This morning a hunting party, consisting of Messrs. Pickering, Garrison and Cunningham started in search of the missing man, and later in the day a supply wagon was equipped and started in pursuit of the searching party.*

*"Many wild rumors are reported, but as yet none of them have been authenticated, except that Mr. Duncan seems to be lost, and owing to the severity of the storm, the chances for life are against him."*

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The Rock Springs Miner, Rock Springs Wyoming, Thursday, March 29, 1894. Vol. XIV, No. 13; p.1; Wyoming State Archives and Historical Dept.:

### "STILL MISSING

*"Moroni Duncan, who started for the Gap on Sunday morning, March 18th to be absent about two days, has not returned nor has any trace of him been found beyond the recovery of the horse which he rode. Little uneasiness was felt on account of his absence until Wednesday, when Mrs. Duncan sent out Peter McMahan to Kent's ranch to inquire if*

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<sup>22</sup> See letter dated April 22, 1991 from Wyoming Archives & Hist. Dept.

he had been seen. Mr. McMahon returned the same evening with the news that M. Duncan had not been seen by anyone at Kent's farm. Next morning he set out for the Gap and returned on Friday evening late without Mr. Duncan and unable to give any information except that he found some tracks on the road on the south side of Quaking Aseph and there was no signs of anyone being at the Gap. The Caledonians immediately interested themselves in his recovery and within three hours George Pickering, John Garrison and John Cunningham started on horseback and on Saturday morning they were followed by John D. McArthur, Andrew Spence, Alexander Fletcher and Isaac Fletcher, the two former in a wagon carrying the necessary provisions. On Monday evening John Garrison came back with the news that near Mellor's Summer ranch Mr. Duncan's horse had been found with a small piece of rope round his neck, but nothing further than Mr. Duncan's tracks could be seen. The horse was in poor condition, his appearance indicating that he had been tied and had but recently broken loose. On Tuesday the searching party returned with the horse, but with no additional information about poor Duncan. The snow is very deep where the horse was found and, as their provisions ran out, they came back for a fresh supply and re-enforcement.

"This morning John McArthur, Andrew Spence, John Cunningham, Ed Soulsby, Alexander and Isaac Fletcher, well supplied with horses and provisions started out and it is earnestly hoped they will be successful in finding him. They will Camp at the timber, close by where the horse was found and scour the surrounding country from that point.

"Mr. Duncan had taken up the Gap, his trip being for the purpose of looking over the ground with the view of moving his family there as soon as the roads and weather would permit. During a storm which must have overtaken him, he wandered to the right of the road and got lost. There is yet a chance for his life and until the worst is known we will feign hope against hope. The awful suspense is most trying to Mrs. Duncan and her children to whom the sympathy of this community goes forth and many kind friends are around them with comforting words. On the morning he left, he was cheerful and said he would 'make the Gap if it took him a week.' He was warmly clad having on two suits of woolen underwear and an overcoat, and he wore a pair of army brogans [shoes] without overshoes. In his lunch sack were two currant loaves and about four pounds of cooked meat. Tied to his saddle was a small sack of oats for his horse. Most of the men who have gone out are Mr. Duncan's personal friends and they will leave nothing undone to find him."

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The Rock Springs Miner, Rock Springs, Wyoming, Thursday, April 5, 1894, Vol XIV, No. 14, page 1; Wyoming State Archives and Historical Dept.:

#### "CARD OF THANKS

"I Fail to find words to express my appreciation of the kind hearts that administered to my wants and to those of my fatherless children, and gave words of hope and

*consolation to cheer me on over this gloomy path which has been my sorrowful lot to travel. Especially do I feel grateful to the brave men who periled their own lives, so that I might be comforted. God bless my friends to whom I bequeath a widow's gratitude and blessing.*

*Mrs. Moroni Duncan*

*"PEACEFUL REST.*

*"The worst was feared, and the worst has been realized. The remains of Moroni Duncan lie in yonder graveyard, the victim of the unconquerable elements.*

*"Moroni did not deserve such a fate. His mission to the hills was for the betterment of himself and family, but fatal was the result, which cast a gloom over this community, and brought sorrow and tears to the home where happiness and joy were wont to dwell.*

*"About five o'clock on Saturday afternoon Andrew Spence and Albert Meredith, the advance runners of the searching party, returned to town with the report that the body had been found that morning on an exposed ridge, close to the big cottonwoods and not far from W.H. Mellor's summer ranch. The position of the body was almost horizontal, face upwards, the right hand over the heart and the left arm bent with the hand uplifted, as if his last moments were spent in prayer. His head rested on a bunch of sage brush. There was snow underneath the body and his feet pointed towards the fire, which, however, must have been very small, as only a few charred sticks could be found. His overcoat and undercoat were unbuttoned and the handkerchief, which he intended to wear around his ears, was loosely tied around his throat. The body was in a good state of preservation, the only disfiguration being part of the right cheek eaten away by some wild animal. His hat was found at a short distance from the body; the saddle and saddle blanket were also within a short distance from him and a part of the rope, with which his horse was tied, was found around some brush, only a few yards from the body. It is evident he fell exhausted and, getting benumbed, slept away into eternity.*

*"In riding out to the Gap, at the fork he took the right instead of the left hand road and being not acquainted with the country and being in addition overtaken by three days blizzard which swept over this section, he lost his way and perished. Every year a warning of this kind is given us but it seems it is forgotten or utterly disregarded. Mr. Duncan was kindly advised by his loving wife not to risk the trip, and many of his intimate friends pointed out the dangers he would encounter, but he felt restless at delay and to the Gap, upon which he had filed and intended to cultivate, he was bound to go. Poor Duncan! His anxiety, not to be a minute too late, cost him his life.*

*"About 9 o'clock on Saturday evening the body was brought in by John McArthur, John Cunningham, Alexander Fletcher and Isaac Fletcher. On their first trip, when the horse was found, John Cunningham rode past only a few yards from the body, but it was completely covered over with snow. When they reached the same place on Saturday, all the loose or newly fallen snow had melted away, exposing nearly the whole of the body.*

*"Previous to their arrival preparations had been made for the care of the remains.*

*"The personal friends of the deceased, and members of the church of Latter Day Saints, took the immediate charge of the burial arrangements, and he was buried on Sunday afternoon, from the Mormon Church, in full communion with that church in whose principles he was a firm believer.*

*"The handsome silver mounted casket was literally covered with flowers. Among the floral decorations were a wreath from Mr. T.O. Minta, wreath from Mrs. Ludvigsen, cross from Mr. and Mrs. Robert Smith, wreath from the Caledonian club, etc. In the church appropriate hymns were sung by the choir and Lewis Davis, W. B. Rae, Andrew Spence, Joseph Soulsby and Wm. Stringer assisted in the services. The church was unable to hold half the people who assembled to join in mourning for the dead. At the grave the choir sang "Nearer my God to Thee" and Lewis Davis offered up a fervent prayer, when all that was mortal of the affectionate father, the true husband and faithful friend was enveloped in the darkness of the earthly tomb, but not to there remain. No; Moroni Duncan lived a life which has won for him a crown of glory. To write his obituary is a sad duty for the MINER, as it was in this office, four years ago, he first learned the cases,<sup>23</sup> and he was associated with this paper at the time of his melancholy death. We knew him as he lived; the few words he wrote in his little book showed he died a man, and today he is sitting before the throne of grace. While on earth he bore malice to no one, upright in his dealings, faithful to every trust confided to him, loving and loved he was a man among men, always avoiding evil and trying to do good. Without ostentation or outward show, his heart was a jewel which scattered its rays within the circle in which he moved. He was a devoted father, an exemplary husband and an honorable citizen. This office will miss his congenial companionship; this community will greet his cheerful face no more, and upon the vacant chair at home will drop the family tear.*

*"He was an active member in the Rock Springs Caledonian Club and from its institution performed the duties of secretary. Ever ready to assist a fallen clansman, his sad end appeals to the little band that's left in a way more touching than the choicest words.*

*"Moroni Duncan was born in Scotland. He crossed the Atlantic with his parents, when he was sixteen years old. His early days in his adopted land were spent in Utah and along the line of the U. P. road, having worked in Green River and at Blairtown, when the Blair Brothers' mine was operated by them. He was a shoe-maker by trade, but he was literary inclined and possessed a poetical genius, which gave to the world many beautiful stanzas. Some of his poems are of a very high order and may yet find their proper place in book form. He was the originator of the Rock Springs Review, but as a business venture it was not a success. Returning to the MINER office, he was on our staff up to the Saturday evening before the fatal Monday. He was forty-three years old on the 6th of last*

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<sup>23</sup> Case = A shallow, divided tray for type, often arranged in pairs, the upper case containing capitals, accented and marked letters, etc., the lower case containing the small letters, figures, etc.

December, and was married on the 1st of February 1875 to Jane Wardrop who survives him. He leaves behind him five children, Maggie the oldest, aged sixteen and Sidney, Minnie, Clarence and Robert, the youngest, four years.

*"His aged father and mother are still alive in Wellsville, Utah, to whom his death is a heavy blow, also he has several brothers and sisters in Utah and Idaho.*

*"Upon the widow rests the responsibility of raising this family, and may God in his goodness assist and bless her. Words fail to express the sympathy this community feels for her and hers, and language cannot in its kindest application soothe the aching heart, but may consolation come to the afflicted ones from the 'Giver of every good and perfect gift.'*

The Rock Springs Miner, Rock Springs, Wyoming, Thursday, April 5, 1894, Vol XIV, No. 14, page 1; Wyoming State Archives and Historical Dept.:

#### *"MESSAGE FROM THE DEAD*

*"The following is the message Mr. Duncan left behind him, verbatim as it was written in his little pocket book: - 'Sunday March 18th, left home for Gap Homestead. Early in afternoon got to the place where the 7 or 8 cottonwoods are. Left after feed and got a few miles further. Monday started out and got back to 7 or 8 cottonwoods. I have lost my reckoning and will wait for clear weather. Did not sleep any last night but kept fires on. Fell right now but will do my best to keep awake.' The pencil was left within the folds of the little book where the above was written. It was damp when opened, the coloring of the pencil having dyed the leaves. The writing down to the work 'reckoning' is written with a blunt pencil while the balance appears to have been written with a newly sharpened pencil which explains the cause of his knife being found open in his pocket. The last few lines indicate that he was in distress, several words being imperfectly written. The marks on the leaves show that it was snowing while he was writing his last 'copy' on earth.*

*"MEMORIAL [for] M. Duncan, by John Stringer*

*"How bright was the day, and how cheerful the man,  
With a heart in his breast as true as his clan;  
On his charger set out, to brave the wild hills,  
Where snow thick and white melts in clear crystal rills.*

*"How he lov'd the fair vale, and wild mountain pine,  
The sage and the heather, and the creeping vine,  
The rocks on dark ridges, green grown with old time!  
There his soul was enrapt 'midst mountains sublime.*

*"He spurr'd on his charger, nor thought his time come,  
With joy in his heart for his lov'd ones at home;  
He climb'd the dark ridge and view'd the Wild West-  
Alas! 'twas his fate there to lie down to rest.*

*"The sunshine was golden, the day bright and clear,  
Till then the stout heart never once thought of fear;  
Then swept o'er his broad brow a swift blast of wind,  
And quickly he woke from the dream of his mind.*

*"He look'd to the south, and the sky was blue bright;  
Then he look'd to the north, a clear sky met his sight:  
One glance to the west told the sky was so black,  
That he know ne ne'er would retrace the same track.*

*"With weird whirl and hiss broke the winds all around,  
A moment before was the stillness profound;  
A brave heart within, though so frail was his form,  
Where both there engulfed in a wild mountain storm.*

*"Ah! Who the tale shall tell from this to the end,  
The mind of our hero, our brother, our friend?  
Our bosoms so heave, like billows of ocean,  
Hearts almost burst with o'erwhelming emotion.*

*"Alone on the mountain he watched his red fire;  
The storm, it was pitiless, murky and dire:  
And darkness intense, -how deep darkness thrills,  
Alone; oh, what awe in our mind it instills!*

*"His charger he tied to a bush with a rope,  
And shiv'ring, essayed with the elements to copy;  
The trackless he wander'd, his heart still aglow,  
In blackness of night, made his pillow of snow.*

*"The snow falling fast in the darkness of night,  
Enshrouded our friend in the purest of white;  
Preserving him too, as a treasure thus hidd'n;  
'Til his friends should come near in sorrow unbidd'n.*

*"Farewell to thee Duncan, Farewell to thy lyre!  
The songs which thou sang had both spirit and fire;  
We implore the great Giver of peace for thy wife,  
For thy children, besides, the blessings of life.*

*"Though we love the wild west, its free mountain sod,  
May we aye remember its maker is God;  
May we ne're forget to honor His treasures;  
Bow meek in submission to all His pleasures.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## ENDNOTES:

The following excerpt from the trail diary of James Gale gives great insight into the life of the immigrants while on the Mormon trail with the Daniel Thompson Company of which Moroni Duncan, his father and sister were a part. James Gale made a round trip in his efforts to assist others:

Gale, James, [Reminiscences], in Mae Gale Wilkins McGrath, *The Ancestors and Descendants of James Gale* [1957], 32-34.

<http://www.lds.org/churchhistory/library/source/0,18016,4976-6204,00.html>

I was called to fill a mission to drive four yoke of oxen across the plains to the Missouri River at Nebraska City for the poor Saints whom the Church was helping to reach Salt Lake City.

On the 13th of April, 1866 I started with a company of nine of the Beaver [Utah] boys for Salt Lake City. Here we were organized into ten companies with ten Captains, 456 teamsters, 49 mounted guards, 89 horses, 134 mules, 3042 oxen and 397 wagons, with Daniel Thompson as our Captain. President Brigham Young paid us for hauling some oats to Hams Fork mail station. That was the first money that I ever had and my first trip away from my parents and the family. Fifty miles from Salt Lake City, in Echo Canyon, we had to stop on account of stormy weather.

While there, I spent my 20th birthday on the 6th of May 1866. We were compelled to keep day and night guard because of the marauding Indians that were so bad. Our train, one of eight, each containing 50 to 80 wagons, made the trip that year. We reached Wyoming landing 8 miles north of Nebraska City, on the Missouri River, on the 20th of June 1866. With seven other teams, I was sent up the river one hundred miles to cross the river at Platt's Mouth on a stream ferry. We went into Iowa returning with flour for the emigrants. It being early in July the weather was very hot. We had to travel up the Missouri River bottoms which were very sloughy and all took sick on the trip or soon after returning to the main camp. The emigrants began to arrive about the 15th of July with 82 wagons and 520 passengers.

Started our trip on July 24th. During the first day of our journey to Salt Lake City, we traveled eight miles. My! What rejoicing from the Saints as they were going to Zion—and on foot! All had to walk that was able. The next morning after prayers and before starting, we buried an old gentleman who had just died. We continued traveling at about 15 or 20 miles each day, but some days had to drive farther to get suitable watering places. We had to gather wood as we could find it but used buffalo chips most of the time. Our road was on the old Pioneer Trail up the north side of the Platte River. We were inspected in several places by U.S. Government officers. To prepare against Indian attacks we had to stand guard about every third day or night around the camp and the cattle. It was quite trying when our turn came to stand guard after walking all day.

We had a prosperous trip and there was not much sickness. I did get quite sick with bowel trouble but my passengers of eight women and three children took all the care of me they could. They had formed an acquaintance on shipboard and had stuck together all the way. I was relieved of my sickness by eating wild cherries that we got at Cherry Creek. Every time we camped at night the train was corralled. One half of the train would make a circle to the right and the other half would circle to the left which formed a hollow circle. The inside of the wagon circle was used as a corral for the cattle with the wagon tongues on the outside. We all prepared the food as best we could with fires on the outside of the circle.

On crossing the Platte River which was from a mile to a mile and a half wide and quite quick sandy, the passengers would join hands and wade the water, which was from one to four feet deep, fifty in a line, so the stronger ones could help the weaker ones. Sometimes it was very dangerous. At Fort Larima [Fort Laramie] we received letters from home. When we got to Independence Rock we saw

a large lake that looked like ice, but we found it to be "saleratus" like crystals. We gathered many sacks full to take on the road to use in raising our bread. In traveling up the Sweet-water, many of our cattle got alkali and many of them died. At Little Sandy River, we saw the ashes and irons of the government wagons that were sent to Utah with provisions for the U.S. soldiers that were sent to destroy the Mormons at Goose Creek. At one place our train was stampeded just as we were all hitched up and ready to start. Two wagons were crushed in the four mile race. At Echo Canyon we saw the fortifications that were built to defend the Mormons from Johnstons army. The soldiers were held out until peace was established.

We entered Salt Lake October 5, 1866 and unloaded our passengers at the Tithing Yard. We drove out to the Church pasture but were soon asked to load the wagons with some cotton factory machinery that was to be taken to Dixie, Washington, near St. George. I got the load and started for Beaver and on the 21st of October my parents and the family met me at Wildcat Canyon, north of Beaver. I was soon home after making a trip of 2200 miles with three yoke of oxen and one wagon in six months and seven days.

\* \* \* \* \*



SCHEDULE 1.—Inhabitants in Wellsville, in the County of Pack, State of Utah, enumerated by me on the 11th day of June, 1870.  
 Post Office: Wellsville W. B. Mullins, Asst Marshal. 117

1	2	3	4			7	8		10	11			14	15	16	17	18	19	20
			4	5	6		8	9		11	12	13							
1		Wm. J. Johnson	21	M	W	Farmer			England	1	1								
2		— Mary	17	F	W	Wife			England	1	1								
3	117104	Wm. J. Johnson	21	M	W	Farmer	200	1500	England	1	1								
4		— Sarah	20	F	W	Wife			England	1	1								
5		— John	14	M	W	At home			England	1	1								
6		— Sarah	14	F	W	At home			England	1	1								
7		— Joseph	12	M	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
8		— William	11	M	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
9		— Frank	7	M	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
10		— Maria	5	F	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
11		— George	2	M	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
12		— Thomas	12	M	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
13	117110	Wm. J. Johnson	21	M	W	Farmer	200		England	1	1								
14		— Maria	17	F	W	Wife			England	1	1								
15		— Joseph	12	M	W	At home			Missouri	1	1								
16		— Mary	10	F	W	At home			Missouri	1	1								
17		— Sarah	7	F	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
18		— William	5	M	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
19		— John	2	M	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
20		— Martha	2	F	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
21	117111	Wm. J. Johnson	21	M	W	Farmer	1100		England	1	1								
22		— George	19	M	W	At home			England	1	1								
23		— Sarah	17	F	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
24		— Joseph	11	M	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
25		— Mary	10	F	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
26		— Sarah	7	F	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
27		— David	7	M	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
28		— Sarah	6	F	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
29		— Mary	4	F	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
30		— Ann	3	F	W	At home			Utah	1	1								
31	117112	Wm. J. Johnson	21	M	W	Farmer	140		England	1	1								
32		— John	17	M	W	At home			England	1	1								
33		— George	17	M	W	At home			England	1	1								
34		— Sarah	16	F	W	At home			England	1	1								
35		— David	15	M	W	At home			England	1	1								
36		— Ann	8	F	W	At home			England	1	1								
37	117113	Wm. J. Johnson	21	M	W	Farmer			England	1	1								
38		— Ann	18	F	W	At home			Missouri	1	1								
39		— George	18	M	W	At home			Missouri	1	1								
40		— Ann	14	F	W	At home			Missouri	1	1								

No. of dwellings, 5. No. of white females, 16. No. of males, foreign born, 10.  
 " " families, 5. " " colored males, " " females, " " 4.  
 " " white males, 24. " " females, " " mixed, " "

United States Census 1880, Wellsville, Cache County, Utah

Note that the Moroni Duncan family is living next door to Jane's parents, the

