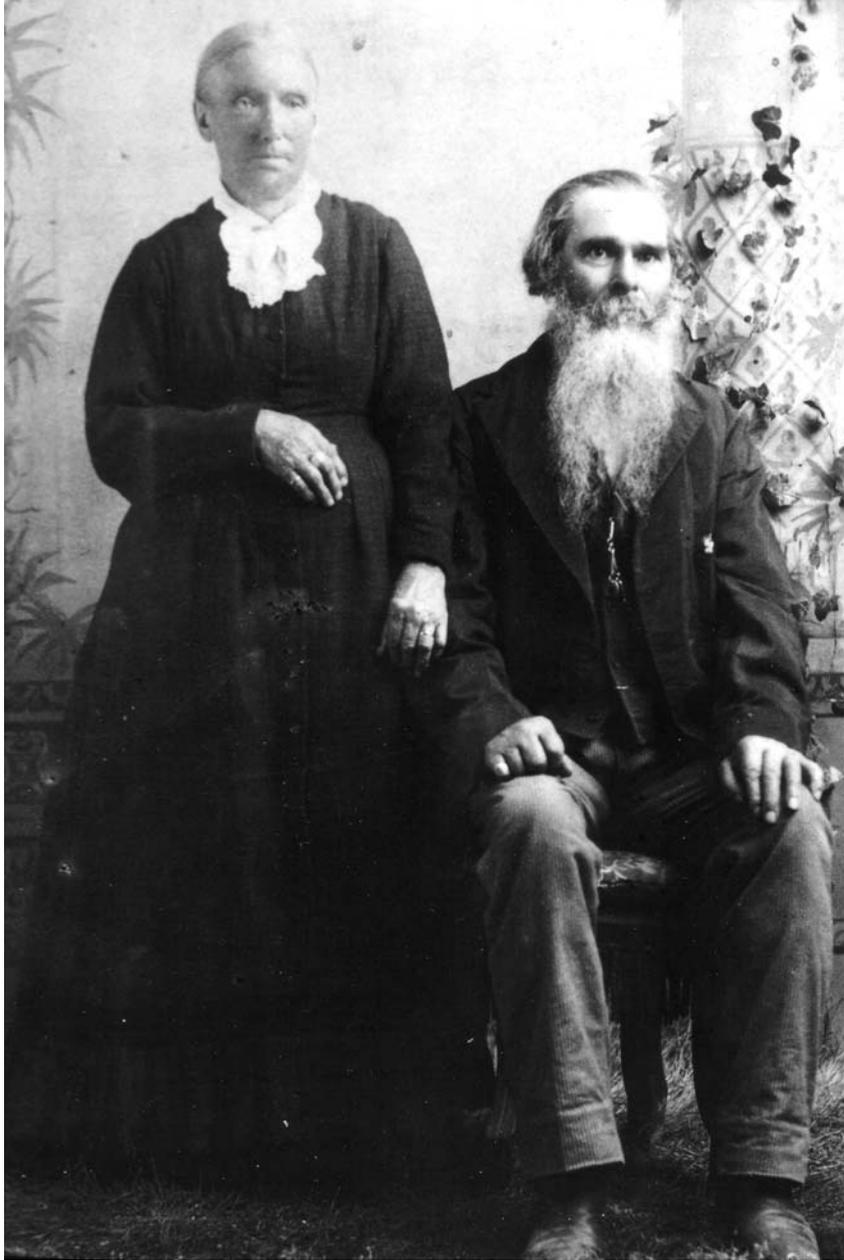


The Life of
of
ALEXANDER DUNCAN
1818-1899
and his wife
JANE PITCON
1820-1902

By

Hazel Stokes and Agnes Fullmer



Jane Pitcon and Alexander Duncan

THE LIFE OF ALEXANDER DUNCAN AND HIS WIFE JANE PITCON

Alexander Wilson Duncan, son of Andrew Duncan and Catherine Hill, was born in Kirkoswald, Ayr, Scotland on the 24th of October, 1818. He received a good education in the schools in this vicinity, which was noted for its educational advantages. The city of Glasgow, second in size to London, is a seaport on the River Clyde, famous for the steel steam ships made there. As a youngster, Alexander used to go down to the docks where his father worked to watch the ships come and go on the sea which he loved so well. When he had finished his schooling he was apprenticed out to a bootmaker to learn the trade. It was considered a real art to make a boot to fit the foot. It was also a profitable way to make a living.

He married Jane Pitcon 10 July 1840. She was born 7 May 1820 in Maybole, Ayr, Scotland. She was a good cook of meats and bread, and made her living in the old country by sewing and embroidering for the aristocrats. She made especially fine baby clothes. She had been accidentally burned when she was a child and had a scar across the lower right-hand side of her face.

They lived in Kirkoswald, Glasgow, Barony, Lanarkshire parish. Their children were Ellen Duncan, born 13 February 1843; Cathren Duncan, born 16 February 1845 and died 29 September 1845; Catharine Hill Duncan, born 21 October 1846; Moroni Duncan, born 6 December 1850; Lorenzo Snow Duncan, born 26 April 1853; Erastus Snow Duncan, born 2 May 1855; Sophia Duncan, born 14 June 1857; and Agnes Duncan, born 17 November 1862.

Alexander Duncan belonged to the Masonic Lodge, of which he was the secretary. The Masonic emblem always hung on his wall. He was very religious and sifted through the principles of many creeds seeking the truth. 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! What a great blessing it was that the Lord's latter-day message reached his eager ears! The first time he heard the missionaries preach the Gospel he became interested. He attended their meetings, prayed, studied and talked with his family. Finally he and his whole family were baptized in the River Clyde.

He 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 he would preach the Gospel to the crowd.

In 1860 he began making preparations to come to Zion. Of Zion he wrote:

*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.*

Alexander Duncan, his boy Moroni, and his daughter Sophia came to America on the ship "Arkwright" 30 May 1866 and docked in New York, July, 1866. They made a short stop there and then came to Brigham City, Utah where they spent the winter. Alexander heard that a shoemaker was needed in Wellsville, Cache County, Utah so he went there in the spring. On April 8, 1876 he bought a three-acre lot from Walter Glenn on which was a two room log house for the sum of six hundred dollars. He had three years to pay for this property. He raised wheat and sold it to Walter Glenn to make the payments. His boy [Moroni] also helped him by working on the railroad and sending him part of his wages.

The following poem was written for his daughter Sophia:

("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 ¹ 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.)

¹ Date not available

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

Three years after arriving in America he and his boy, Moroni, had earned enough money to send for the rest of the family.

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.*

Thus, on July 28, 1869, his wife and children Erastus, Agnes, Catharine and Lorenzo started the long trip to this country. They docked in New York August 10, 1869 and travelled by rail from New York to Utah and their new home in Zion. Alexander's daughter, Ellen, who was the first in the family to come to America embarked May 30, 1863 on the ship "Cynosure," and docked in New York July 19, 1863.

Jane Duncan's pioneer cabin was described as a picture of good housekeeping. The walls were whitewashed, and in the living room a large woven rug covered the floor. Small braided rugs covered the board floor of the bedroom. Her bed covers and curtains were hand embroidered. Their furnishings were few and hand made by local carpenters who had exchanged their goods and services for boots or shoes.

Mother Duncan, as she was called, made very good yeast and exchanged it with the townspeople for sugar. She had a deep and serene faith which brooked no

arguments. She often chided Grandfather about arguing so much about the divine religion which they had accepted. However, in his desire to know all that could be found out about each principle, he often took up the side contrary to his belief just to find out all that was in the other person's mind about the subject.

Alexander Duncan was a well versed man. He had his standards and lived up to them regardless of who it displeased. He did a lot of poetry writing. Robert Ingersol was a favorite of his, and Alexander knew Robert's kin and clan in the old country. Although Robert Ingersol was severely criticized for some of his thoughts and actions, nevertheless Alexander Duncan admired him.

He loved his native country and honored it, but when he came to America he gave the same allegiance. He was very proud to be a citizen of the United States. One of his most treasured possessions was his citizenship which he received September 5, 1882. He loved the land as he had loved the sea. Still in his heart were fond memories of beloved Scotland and her beautiful lakes and highlands, but he had no desire to return.

Of his Scottish home Alexander wrote:

*This is the place where first I learned
In youth, to bow my knee.
Before that God that's ever near
The Infinite forts to see.
This is the place I spent my days
In youthful early life;
This is the place I like to see
In Manhood's active might.
These glens and braes are dear to me,
In fancy I oft see.
And I can trace each knoll and place,
Where in youth I ran so free.
These heath-clad hills
And woods and rills,
In youth they all knew me.
On that shore I often soar,
In midnight reverie.*

But here in Utah, he possessed the land - only a small lot, to be sure - but it was a kingdom to him. On the corner of his lot he built a small shop in which to carry on his work as a shoemaker. At one time he and his friend Robert Baxter, who was also a shoemaker, opened a shop in town in co-operation with the other merchants in order to participate in the United Order. It was successful for a time, but was later abandoned. Alexander then returned to his own shop where he continued his trade until his hands became so crippled with rheumatism that he could no longer work.

He had a beautiful white beard of which he was very proud. He washed it, braided it and rolled it up under his chin and pinned it there. This made it look like a short beard and did not interfere with his work. On Sunday he took it down, unbraided it, and combed it out. Those who remember him say it was a beautiful beard. Alexander Duncan was ordained a High Priest September 19, 1869.

Alexander and Jane had long looked forward to the time when they could go to the temple and receive their endowments. This desire was granted on Sept. 20, 1869, when they went to the Logan Temple and did this work. Thus he lived the Gospel which he believed and of which he wrote:

FAITH AND WORKS

*Faith and works do go together,
They'll carry you across the stream
Unto the shores of endless life
To love and dwell with Elohim.
Now if this faith ne'er in you grew,
You will be tossed to and fro
Upon the billows of fear and doubt,
And the shores of life
You'll ne'er find out.*

CATHERINE

*Catherine, daughter, how I love you,
Better far than tongue can tell,
Because you are your mother's counsel,
And to them younger than yourself'.
Oh, great honors do await you;
The heavens smile upon you now.
Cultivate God's spirit daily;
A crown shall rest upon your brow.
A princess you were created -
God rewards for good, not ill.
You've chosen the road that leads to glory;
He directs your mind and will.*

*Catherine, daughter, do not weary
In the path of right to go;
Light and truth that flows from Heaven
Will direct in things of woe.*

Alexander Duncan loved roses and cultivated many kinds. He had a rose arbor from his house to his gate which was famous for its beauty. He raised a Lady Blush rose which was greatly admired. He gave many starts of it to his friends and neighbors. This variety is still treasured by his family.

Father and Mother Duncan were well taken care of in their later years by their children. Alexander died on August 31, 1899. Jane then went to live with her daughter, Sophia Stoddard. She died three years later on November 15, 1902.

* * * * *

Written by Hazel Stokes, a granddaughter of Erastus Duncan, and by Agnes Fullmer, a daughter of Sophia D. Stoddard *Transcribed by E. C. (Weaver) Shaeffer, g.g.gr.dau.*

SOURCES:

From Church Emigration of 1858 to 1869 Volume 3, we find the following:

Duncan, Alexander

1866, May 30 - Sailed on ship "Arkwright" (page 6)

Moroni Duncan, Sophia Duncan

The ship "Arkwright" Capt. Daniel P. Caulkin sailed from Liverpool, England May 30, 1866 with 450 L.D.S. emigrants in the charge of Elder Justin C. Wixam. The voyage occupied 36 days. The ship arrived in New York July 6, where the company was met by Elder John T. Caine and Thomas B. H. Stenhouse under whose direction the emigrants proceeded westward to Wyoming and Nebraska. For a full list of passengers on the ship "Arkwright" see British Mission History under date of May 30, 1866; Church Chron. May 30, 1866, Millennial Star 28:508.

Duncan, Jane

1869, July 28 - Sailed on ship "Colorado."

Catharine Duncan, Lorenzo Duncan, Erastus Duncan, Agnes Duncan. "Colorado" Captain John E. Pace arrived in New York August 10, 1869. The steamship "Colorado" left Liverpool, England July 28, 1869 with 365 Saints. The ship arrived at New York Aug. 10, and they continued the journey by rail, in charge of Capt. Pace. The company arrived in Ogden, Utah, Aug. 20, 1869. For history see British Mission July 28, 1869, Pages 1,2,&3 card index. For roster of company see Journal History, July 19, 1869, Deseret News, Vol. 18, pg.337, library book no.1041, pages 61-76.

Alexander Duncan, Sophia & Moroni arrived in New York, NY 6 July 1866. They crossed the plains with ox-team in Daniel Thomson's train. According to LDS church chronology by Andrew Jensen, "Captain Daniel Thomson's oxtrain of immigrants which had left Wyoming 25 July with 84 wagons and about 500 immigrants arrived in Great Salt Lake City 29 Sep. 1966."

Duncan, Ellen

1863, May 30 - Sailed on ship "Cynosure." (pg.16) The packed ship "Cynosure" [with] Captain J. Williams sailed from Liverpool, England May 30, 1863 with 775 emigrant Saints on board. The company was organized by Pres. George Q. Cannon as president. On July 19 the ship "Cynosure" arrived in New York and was brought up by tug to anchor close alongside the ship "Amazon." Bro. Wm. C. Staines, the Church agent in New York, came aboard. For a full roster of passengers on the "Cynosure," see British Mission History under date of May 30, 1863; Millennial Star 25:394, 398, 543. Some of the emigrants who crossed the Atlantic on the ship "Cynosure" made the journey across the plains in Captain Thomas E. Rick's oxtrain.

Also see: The Life of Moroni Duncan, compiled by E.C. Shaeffer, 1991

Note: sent one copy to Acquisitions, FHL and two copies to J. Duncan Shaeffer to share with family members in Tempe, AZ on September 28, 1991.