

## ELIZABETH (or Eliza) JENKINS

Born: 9 Aug 1842 Llansaint, South Wales

Age: 13

Hunt Wagon Company



Elizabeth was the oldest child of her parents, Morris and Margaret Reese Jenkins. In 1856, they were both 34 years old. Elizabeth and her brothers, John (10), David (7), and Thomas (4), were all born in Wales. After Eliza's family was taught the gospel by the missionaries, they joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and their desire was to emigrate to Zion. A young lady by the name of Ruth James (21), was working for the Jenkins family when they heard the Gospel and wanted to go to the Salt Lake Valley with them.

On April 19, 1856, all but one of the Jenkins family joined with many other converts and sailed from Liverpool, England, on the ship *Samuel Curling*. David was left behind with his aging Jenkins grandparents as a comfort and help for them.

Most of the Welch Saints on the *Samuel Curling* continued to Utah with the Bunker handcart company, which left Iowa City on May 23, 1856. The Jenkins family crossed the plains with Captain John A. Hunt's wagon company, which didn't get away from their Iowa City campground until August 1. They were directly behind the Martin handcart company. By the end of October, they were encountering the same hazardous weather and deprivations. From the journal of a fellow traveler, James Cantwell, we read, "Several men from the [Salt Lake] valley came out to assist us in. They counseled an immediate start, which was complied with, and we traveled on day by day, in snow storms. Our cattle continued to drop down in the yoke one by one every day, and sometimes five or six would die in a day, until ... we arrived at Devil's Gate, on [November] 5th.

"To give any just description of the 6th, 7th and 8th of November, the times we stayed at [Devil's Gate], would be impossible. It was a combination of wind, hail, snow, and cold in terrible reality. Many of the remaining cattle died, and our traveling power fell so short that it was deemed advisable to leave one half the wagons behind and all the freight and take nothing except our food and clothing. A company of about 20 young men was left behind to guard the property."



Ruth James

The Jenkins family did not arrive in the Salt Lake Valley until the middle of December of 1856. All of Elizabeth's family, and their young friend, Ruth James, survived this trek. Their journey had taken 8 months altogether. They went directly to Spanish Fork, where many of their friends and former neighbors lived.

Ruth James married William Roach that next August. Their first home was a little dugout where their first child was born. They later built a small two-room adobe home. They were the parents of ten children. In 1882, the children all had typhoid fever, but all got well through the nursing care of their mother and the help of the Lord.

Elizabeth Jenkins married Thomas Charles Martell at the age of 16 in the Endowment House. Elizabeth was reportedly gentle and loveable, industrious and neat, kind and happy, and loved to have young people come over to her home. Thomas claimed she was the most beautiful woman that he had ever seen. The family went through trials and hardships in settling a new land, making a home and rearing a family. Elizabeth was religious and took part in auxiliaries of the Church. Thomas served a mission to Wales, leaving Elizabeth and her five children, ages seventeen to two, on their own for a time. Elizabeth eventually had ten children, but never fully recovered from the birth of her last child and passed away on October 2, 1880 at the age of thirty-eight. Her descendants wrote: "These faithful pioneers left a great legacy of strength in following their religious convictions, a heritage they proudly left for the generations who have followed them."

Sources: Daughters of Utah Pioneer history files; diary of James Cantwell; familysearch.org.