

JANE ANN STEWART

Born: 27 December 1824 in Aberdeen, Scotland

Age: 32

Willie Handcart Company



Jane was orphaned at age seven. She believed that she didn't have any living relatives until she found an uncle, her mother's brother, and felt it was a direct answer to prayer. She was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in August 1843 by the president of the Sterling Branch, Charles R. Minges. This upset her foster parents so much that they placed her clothing and other belongings outside the door and told her to find a new home. Jane's faith never wavered and she began saving money for her emigration. She saved for 13 years.

Jane fell in love with a man named Stephen Cornelius. However, she refused his marriage proposal because he "could not believe in the Gospel as she did." He pleaded and promised her that after their marriage, their daughters could join her church and their sons could join his church. It was a difficult decision for Jane to refuse marriage, as she had known loneliness from the time she was a child.

Before Jane left England, Stephen presented her with a bottle of perfume. While Jane was on board the *Thornton*, she took a slip of paper and wrote "Jane and Stephen" on it, put it in the perfume bottle, sealed it securely and cast it into the ocean.

Jane also had the opportunity to abandon her goals while traveling through Iowa with the Willie handcart company. At one place, she became acquainted with a well-to-do lady who wanted Jane to live with her. After much persuasion and many rosy promises, Jane decided to stay. That night she was given a nice bedroom with many comforts. She fell asleep quickly but awoke at 2 a.m. "with a most dreadful feeling, and she thought she would give everything to overtake the Company, and travel on with them to Zion. Her hardships and privations were forgotten. She got up and dressed herself hurriedly and left the room as quietly as possible. At the gate entrance, she passed a guard who said, 'Who goes there?' Jane Ann answered, 'A friend sir.' He let her pass. She walked and ran the rest of the night. It was just breaking day when she overtook the Company, tired out but overjoyed to be with the Saints again."

Jane arrived safely in the valley and found work in Sessions Settlement. She married Ira Stearns Hatch on March 20, 1857. They had three children: Wealtha Ann, Gilbert Stewart, and Stephen Cornelius, named after her first love. Jane was left a widow when Stephen was only 6 weeks old.

Jane loved books and did a great deal of reading when her eyesight permitted. Due to an accident, Jane had lost the sight in one eye when she was four years old. In 1882, Jane had another accident that caused the loss of sight in her other eye, leaving her completely blind.

Jane struggled throughout her life from the effects of the handcart trek. Her feet were painful, and exposure to the freezing weather had caused some deafness. She was very gifted in doing handwork and supported her family by making bedspreads, table covers, curtains, collars and doilies. She won a blue ribbon at the County Fair for her work.

It is said that "Although blind and deaf she could carry on a conversation wonderful beyond description, by asking questions and receiving an answer by the pat of the hand for yes or the rub of the hand for no. ... She was a woman of extremely fine character, gave close observance to her own affairs, was honorable, full of inspiration, very energetic, and of great determination."

In November 1940, Jane's posterity numbered 145.

Sources: "Biography of Jane Ann Stewart Hatch," by Clara R. H. Egan; Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files.