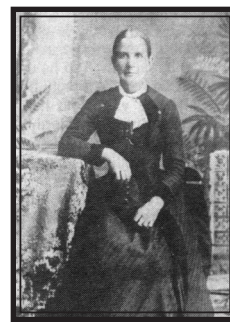


JANE BITTON

Born: September 3, 1836 in London, England

Age: 19

Martin Handcart Company



Jane came from a large family of 10 children. Her father, William, who had been injured in an accident at sea, lost his eyesight and the children had to work to help provide for the family. Jane went to work as a nursemaid at the age of nine years. Later she worked with a milliner and learned to braid and sew straw to make hats. She learned many crafts such as sewing, knitting, netting and embroidery which helped her prepare for hard times in later years.

William had a brother who attended a meeting where the Mormon missionaries preached. He went home and told Jane's parents that he had found just what he had been looking for. Jane's family embraced the gospel. Jane was baptized in 1851 at the age of 15, a year before her parents. The minister where they had previously attended church felt Jane's father had lost his mind and said to him, "William, you have been temporally blind and now you are spiritually blind as well!"

Jane's older brother, John, married Sarah Susannah Wintle on May 13, 1856. Twelve days after their marriage, Sarah and John set sail from Liverpool, England, on the vessel ship *Horizon* for their Zion in America. Jane traveled to Utah with them on this "honeymoon" voyage and trek.

At Iowa City, Sarah and Jane helped with the sewing of the tents while John helped build handcarts. They left Iowa City on July 28, 1856, with the Edward Martin handcart company. After being on the trail about six weeks, Jane's new sister-in-law, Sarah, found herself expecting a child. Going through all the hardship and suffering they endured by being so late getting started, it is remarkable that she never lost this child. (See John Bitton story in *Tell My Story, Too*.)

They had to cross the icy streams and rivers filled with sharp cakes of ice which cut into their legs. The food rations were cut to four ounces of flour a day per person, but soon that was gone and they had to depend on the half-starved animals they could kill. It was after the last crossing of the N. Platte River that the Martin company became stranded and Jane felt her time to die had come. She said that if she was going to die, she would die clean. She took clean underwear and went to the nearby river and washed herself in its icy water. As she was dressing, she heard a great commotion and shouting from the camp. Hurriedly she finished dressing and started back when she met an elderly Scotsman who was crying and asked him what was wrong. He answered, "Aye, lassie, we're saved! We're saved!" Jane replied, "Then what in the world are you cryin' for?"

Jane and John and Sarah were assigned to the John R. Poole rescue wagon. Upon arrival in the Valley, Mr. Poole gave them shelter in his home in Ogden. The following year Jane married John Poole. They had nine children. In his later years, John jokingly said that he had rescued Jane from a snow bank so he felt he had a right to marry her. Jane stated that indeed, she had left many a bloody footprint in the snow. With her brother John's help, Jane's parents and sister, Harriet, also emigrated in 1863. Harriet also married John Poole and they had eight children.

Jane lived to be 85 years of age, after a widowhood of 27 years. A granddaughter, Vendla Richardson Duffin, wrote of her, "Jane had a strong testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and remained true to her faith. She never forgot how hungry she got while on the plains. If she had a small piece of bread left when she finished a meal, she would wrap it in a napkin, take it to her room, and tuck it in the corner of her bureau drawer. Her daughter Mary Ann would often find it much later, all dried out."

Sources: "History of Jane Bitton Poole" by her daughter, Mary Ann Poole Richardson; History of Idaho by Hiram T. French, vol. 3 p 1213; family history by granddaughter, Vendla Richardson Duffin; "History of John Evington Bitton," by Dee. F. Bitton (Grandson); Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files.