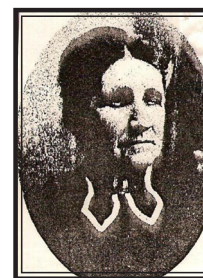


## MAREN JORGENSEN

Born: July 15, 1846, in Falster, Denmark

Age: 9

Willie Handcart Company



Maren Jorgensen was born in Falster, Denmark, in 1846, the second child of Anders and Elizabeth Nielsen Jorgensen. Maren's family was part of a group of about 100 Danish Saints who crossed the ocean to New York City on the *Thornton* and then became part of the Willie handcart company at Iowa City, Iowa. Maren's brothers and sister were Hans (age 12), Anna (8), and Jorgen (3). Their family left Iowa City with their handcart on July 15, 1856, Maren's 10th birthday.

The Jorgensens fared quite well during the first two months of the handcart trek. One of Maren's responsibilities was helping care for her younger brother and sister. She would sing as she carried three-year-old Jorgen on her back. Tired from walking, Anna would often cling to her big sister's skirts.

Flour rationing began in early October and the first snowstorm on October 19. Four days later, the people had to walk 16 miles over Rocky Ridge in arctic conditions. Such extreme labor in such difficult circumstances hastened the deaths of 13 members of the company, who were buried in a common grave. Jorgensen family history tells that Maren's sister, Anna, was "among the frozen group. Her father wouldn't let her be buried. He took her to the fire and rubbed her body until life came back. This was kept up all night until she finally revived." Anna was never very well after that, though she lived another 48 years.

Maren and all members of her family survived the handcart journey. They settled in Ephraim and then in Gunnison, living in dugouts at first. In 1865, when Maren was 18, she married Austin Kearns in her father's home in Gunnison. Four months later, they were sealed for time and eternity in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City. Austin lovingly Americanized his bride's name to Mary.

During Maren's first four years of marriage, the settlers and Indians had many conflicts, and Austin was constantly away guarding and protecting the settlements. Concerning these years, Austin later recalled: "Mary was a loving, patient wife all the time, staying home caring for the children and the home and crops and animals. . . . She never knew when I left whether I would return." Altogether, Maren and Austin had 11 children. When the youngest two were still babies, Austin was called to serve a mission to Missouri. Austin said that while he was gone, "Mary was faithful and hard-working and a very good overseer. She took care of everything. When I returned, the granary was full of grain."

After a full life of service and sacrifice, Maren passed away in 1926 at the age of 80. In her husband's life history, the most common theme is one of tribute to his faithful handcart pioneer wife. Concerning her handcart journey, young motherhood, and their lives together, he recalled: "Such experiences only built her character and womanhood. . . . She toiled and worked, suffered and rejoiced, all for the sake of the gospel. . . . Mary, during all her happy married years, proved herself a noble helpmate, a wise and devoted mother. [She was] ever true and faithful to the religion she espoused in her childhood and for which she suffered and endured. She was a fine Relief Society worker and teacher for thirty-three years. . . . Her whole life was spent in the service of humanity and the Lord. She remained true, staunch, and faithful till the end. For such, in the mansions of our Father in Heaven is a just reward waiting."

Source: Family records in files of Jolene Allphin, courtesy of descendant, Linda Williams Warnock.