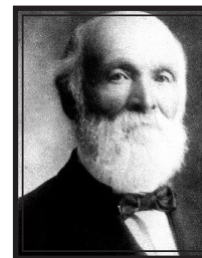


JOHN COOPER

Born: 27 May 1834 Loughborough, Leicestershire, England

Age: 22

Hodgett Wagon Company

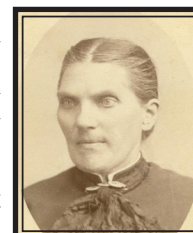


John's father was killed in a train accident when John was only two years old. When John was about eight years old, his mother sent him to live with his wealthy bachelor uncle, Charles Cooper. It was felt that Charles could give John many advantages, such as an education and a trade. John did become very skilled in shoe making and repair. He made dance shoes and velvet slippers for the young ladies, and later his own daughters, as well as making special shoes for those with crippled feet. He also used this trade extensively while serving his second mission to England.

Although he was gifted in his trade, John didn't care much for that line of work. He had a brilliant mind and it was said that he could add four-digit columns of numbers a page long in his head. John was also very athletic and was one of the fastest foot racers in England. After winning one particular race he was presented to Queen Victoria. He was also very musically inclined and participated with the young singers of England. His family belonged to the Church of England.

One day when John was out walking with some friends he noticed a crowd of people on a street corner listening to the preaching and singing of two young men. John and his companions listened for awhile and then distanced themselves from the crowd while they composed a little parody to the song they had heard, then returned to chant and sing and mock these two preachers. In spite of their fun, John couldn't get the song and the things he'd heard these preachers speak out of his mind and soon found himself sneaking out to listen to their sermons. John soon embraced the Mormon religion and was baptized in 1849 by Elder Langley Allgood. When John's Uncle Charles learned of John's baptism, he disinherited John and reportedly never spoke to him again.

John served a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1854 to 1856 in England. He then left England for America to join his fellow Saints in their "Zion" in the Rocky Mountains of Utah. At Iowa City, Iowa, John served as an assistant emigration agent to Daniel Spencer. John left Iowa City as a member of the Hodgett wagon company, which followed closely with the Martin handcart company and Hunt wagon company, the last companies of that emigration year. Also traveling in the Hodgett company was Mary Ann Lewis (22), a young lady John had converted while on his mission. John and Mary Ann were engaged, waiting to get to Zion to be married. On the trek, Mary Ann suffered from frozen feet.



Mary Ann
Lewis

John and Mary Ann were separated in early November as John was selected to remain at Devil's Gate with 19 other men to guard the season's freight that was unloaded there. This was done in order to speed the emigrants along as quickly as possible, thus saving many lives. John spent a long winter at Devil's Gate, several times nearly starving to death. He did not make it to the Valley until June 6, 1857. He and Mary Ann were married two days later.

John was called to leave his family and return to England for another mission from 1880 - 1882. During this mission he presided over the Leeds and London Conferences. John filled many positions of importance, civil and ecclesiastical, in Fillmore, Utah, where he died at the age of 87. At that time he was the father of 12 children, 64 grandchildren, and 60 great-grandchildren. His daughter, Emily C. Johnson, said of him, "*I do not know of a man who has lived a fuller life than my father.*"

Sources: Letter from Patricia Sessions, July 2002; "History of John Cooper," by unnamed grandchild; "John Cooper [and] Mary Ann Lewis Cooper," by unnamed grandchild; "Life of John Cooper," by Emily C. Johnson; Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files.