

MARY ANN SYER SMITH WHITE HILL

Born: 1793 England
 Age: 63
 Hunt Wagon Company



Mary Ann's mother died when she was three years old. Her father remarried, and it seems Mary Ann was afraid of her stepmother. On one occasion, when in fear of punishment, she hid in a grandfather clock. Another time she hid in the attic. It is said she had very little love and attention. In 1820 or 1821, Mary Ann married William Smith. The marriage was not a happy one, as he drank and was cruel to her. She had five children by him. The only one to live to maturity was Emma. The marriage ended.

Mary Ann then married William White. This was a very happy marriage. Three children were born to them. William died after only five and one half years of marriage.

After William died, Mary Ann married her third William—a Mr. William Hill. He seems to have run through all the money she received from her affluent husband's estate. No more mention has been made about him.

Mary Ann was an independent and shrewd business woman. When her fortunes were at a low ebb one time, she established a hand laundry for special laces and dainty clothes. She hired a number of women to help her and carried on a successful business.

Mary Ann and her children joined the Church in London in 1854. The family left Liverpool for America on May 24, 1856, on the ship *Horizon*. They then joined the Hunt wagon company in Iowa City that year, but Mary Ann still walked most of the way to Utah. With her were her sons, Barnard White (16) and Richard White (13), her daughter, Elizabeth (18), and her married daughter and husband, Eliza and Edmund J. Brooks. The daughter, Elizabeth, was known for her cheerfulness. Someone in the company wrote this poem about her:

While some were discouraged, downhearted and sad, Kind words were spoken which made their hearts glad, By little 'Miss White', for that was her name, "Twill be brighter tomorrow, so do not complain."



Elizabeth White

Elizabeth also wrote about many of their experiences. When they reached the last crossing of the Platte River, the weather had turned very cold, and the first storms of the early winter had reached them. She told how the able-bodied men helped carry the Martin Handcart women and children over the Platte River. "Some of our men went through the river seventy-five times. ... Our company assisted them all they could." By the time the company was close to Devil's Gate they were nearly out of provisions. Elizabeth wrote, "Our dear mother said she had never seen her dear family want for bread, but said the Lord would provide." About midnight, a relief team arrived with some food. Elizabeth continued, "They were loaded with all kinds of provisions ... but all frozen so hard. ... I remember we had to cut everything with the hatchet, but oh how thankful we all were that the Lord had answered our prayers and saved us all from starvation."

When Mary Ann arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, she was taken to the home of a kind family in Draper. She eventually married again - this time to John Pannell Wright, "a fine ... and good man." However, she always said that William White was the husband she wanted for eternity. She lived to be about 90 years old, and was faithful to the end.



Richard White



Barnard White

Sources: *I Walked to Zion*, by Susan Arrington Madsen, 1994; Daughters of Utah Pioneer history files; Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website.