

MARY HORROCKS

Born: September 11, 1836 in England

Age: 19

Martin Handcart Company



Mary emigrated to Utah with her older sister, Elizabeth Jackson, and Elizabeth's husband and three young children. They sailed from England on the ship *Horizon* in May 1856 and traveled overland with the Martin handcart company. By the first of October, their provisions were scant. As they reached Fort Laramie, food had to be rationed further in order to make it last as long as possible. Clothing, bedding and other provisions were soon left behind.

On October 19, the company crossed the North Platte River at Red Buttes. Mary's brother-in-law, Aaron Jackson, was very ill with Mountain Fever. Elizabeth Horrocks Jackson wrote: "My husband attempted to ford the stream. He had only gone a short distance when he reached a sand bar in the river on which he sank down through weakness and exhaustion. My sister, Mary Horrocks Leavitt, waded through the water to his assistance. She raised him up to his feet. Shortly afterward, a man came along on a horseback and conveyed him to the other side of the river, placed him on the bank and left him there. My sister then helped me to pull my cart with my three children and other matters on it. We had scarcely crossed the river when we were visited with a tremendous storm of snow, hail, sand and fierce winds. It was a terrible storm from which both the people and teams suffered." Aaron was then put on a handcart and pulled to camp from the river crossing by 15-year-old Josiah Rogerson, whose family shared the same tent with Mary and her sister. Snow started to fall in earnest that night. When Josiah was called to guard duty at midnight, he noticed Aaron had died.

Mary was not much help or comfort to her grieving sister at this time because she had become very ill. Mary was so sick that she even became deranged in her mind, and for several days she ate nothing but hard frozen snow. Elizabeth wrote of her sister: "A few days after the death of my husband, the male members of the company had become reduced in number by death; and those who remained were so weak and emaciated by sickness, that on reaching the camping place at night, there were not sufficient men with strength enough to raise the poles and pitch the tents. ... My sick sister, the first part of the night, climbed up hill to the place where some men had built a fire. She remained there until the people made down their beds and retired, to sleep, if they could. She then climbed or slid down the hill on the snow, to where there was another fire which was kept alive by some persons who were watching the body of a man who had died that night. There she remained until daylight."

Josiah Rogerson also wrote of Mary: "The results of the wading of this river [on October 19] by the female members of our company was immediately followed by partial and temporary dementia, from which several did not recover till the next spring. ... One of the young ladies whose mind became affected by the fatal crossing had left her own campfire immediately after the last relief wagon had rolled out from here [Martin's Cove] in the snow on the morning of Sunday, Nov. 9, apparently in search of some scraps of food or meat, and had got to a fire round a point in the rocks, near to where my brother and I were roasting some pieces of meat and rawhide for lunch. As we arose to go and catch the wagons (divest now of our carts), we caught sight of the young woman sitting at the fire and staring at us with dazed eyes. We tried to rouse her from her lethargy, but she was all childish indifference. Sending my brother ahead to stop the last wagon, he returned, and making a chair of our arms, we carried her a rod or two at a time for a couple of hundred yards, as she was not able to walk, and the teamster coming to our relief, she soon was placed in his wagon. In the early part of our journey she ranked as one of the most beautiful in face, tall and well formed, in the company, and had we not discovered her when we did, the chances are that in less than an hour she would have met her death—as Father Stone did—a feast for the mountain wolves. She was then about 20 years of age. Succeeding in reaching Utah with us, she recovered her mind by kind nursing that winter, and in the spring or summer following married one of the most prominent and well-to-do first settlers of Ogden city."

Mary and her sister went to Ogden to stay with their brother, Samuel Horrocks. Mary married Nathaniel Leavitt, Jr. on April 4, 1857. Nathaniel was noted as an "extremely prosperous" and prominent man in Ogden, and generous to neighbors and Indians alike. He and Mary became the parents of 12 children. Mary was active in the Church all her life. She died in 1908.

Sources: Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; *Leaves from the Life of Elizabeth Horrocks Jackson Kingsford*, Ogden, Utah, 1908, available at Family History Library in Salt Lake; see Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website for trail excerpts of Elizabeth's biography, as well as various writings of Josiah Rogerson; "The Life of Nathaniel Leavitt," at <http://leavittfamilies.org>.