

MARY JANE CUTCLIFF

Born: July 5, 1835 in England

Age: 21

Hunt Wagon Company



Mary Jane was the eighth child in her family. From her infancy she had a great liking for holy things and formed the habit of prayer. She was blessed with many spiritual gifts. When she was 14 she had a dream in which she saw a man who had the true and everlasting gospel. A few months later she heard a man had come to preach in the area. When she heard the preacher, Mary Jane believed and she was baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Mary Jane's relatives were wealthy and tried to persuade her to leave the Church. However, her faith only grew stronger every day. In April 1856 she left Liverpool, crossing the ocean on the ship *Samuel Curling*. Upon arriving in Iowa City, most of this company of immigrants continued on to the Salt Lake Valley. However, Mary Jane stayed behind, possibly to work, and became a member of the last wagon company of the season. Although she did not pull a handcart, she walked most of the way, especially after the ox teams started to give out.

Mary Jane's company, as well as the Hodgett wagon company, the Willie handcart company and the Martin handcart company, all ran into problems with severe winter storms and lack of food. The Willie company was about two weeks ahead of the other three. Rescuers came with help at the end of October, and the emigrants were finally ushered into the Salt Lake Valley, the Hunt company arriving by the middle of December.

Mary Jane was taken to the home of Daniel Spencer to regain her health. Daniel's son, Claudious Victor Spencer, was among the rescuers who had found Mary Jane and brought her into the Valley. Mary Jane married Daniel Spencer a few weeks later on December 27, 1856. Daniel was 62 years old and she was 21 years old. On that same day, Daniel also married Elizabeth Funnell (23) who had been rescued with the Willie company. They lived in an adobe home with Daniel's other wives.

Shortly before Mary Jane's first child was born in October 1858, she became blind, but after the birth she regained her eyesight. On two separate occasions, she helped restore life to her children. At the tender age of 1 year, one of Mary Jane's daughters fell into a well and when rescued, the toddler appeared to be dead. Mary Jane continued praying over her and working with her until the child again showed signs of life. Mary Jane and Daniel had six children, including twin boys who were stillborn. Daniel died in 1868.

Mary Jane brought many babies into the world as a midwife. She never thought of financial pay. She was an excellent milliner and dressmaker, and was adept at making soap. She made dozens of candles which she shared with her neighbors. She was also a good carpet weaver, sewing the rags and weaving them into carpets for herself and others. She was very proficient at dyeing and making cloth, doing every step of the process herself.

Mary Jane married Ulrich Aver on February 18, 1873, and they had more children of their own. Mary Jane died at the age of 74.

Source: Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files.