

JANE BRICE

Born: 7 June 1846 Littlerock, Shropshire, England

Age: 9

Martin Handcart Company



Jane Brice was baptized by her father in May 1855, when she eight years old. Her childhood covenant seems to have strengthened her when she faced the trials that would soon come her way. One day Jane ran into the house from playing outside and told her mother that she was hungry. Her mother responded by handing Jane something to eat and saying, “No, my child, you are not hungry, but you will be before you get to Zion.” The family had been planning their emigration since Jane’s parents joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1846. They sold what belongings they could in order to help pay their way. Jane was broken-hearted when she had to part with a much loved wax doll that had been a gift from her sister, Emma.

Jane celebrated her 10th birthday aboard the ship *Horizon*. She also had the measles aboard ship. She sailed with her parents, Hannah Edwards¹ (Ledder) (50) and Richard Brice (51), and her brother, John (11). Her older siblings were opposed to this venture and did not go with them. All the Brice family members celebrated birthdays during their emigration except Jane’s mother, Hannah, who died on the trail, possibly on November 12, near the “Three Crossings” of the Sweetwater River. Hannah had already experienced the most difficult parts of the journey, crossing the Platte River and being stranded at Red Buttes; and crossing the Sweetwater and spending 5 days in Martin’s Cove. On the journey, Jane’s shoes wore out and she had to tie rags around them for protection. She never had feeling in her feet again in her life. To keep her hands from freezing, Jane would put them in her thick long black hair.

The handcart company arrived in Salt Lake City on November 30, 1856, a full six months after sailing from Liverpool. Jane’s father became discouraged and disillusioned with what he termed “a God-forsaken desert” and decided to return to England.² He and John left Utah in the spring of 1858. Jane did not want to go back with them so she hid in a pile of wood until she was certain they were gone. Jane stayed with two different families for the next several years, working very hard to earn her keep. She married James Welsh on April 11, 1870.

One of Jane’s granddaughters said, “Her life was never easy, and she had many hardships and heartaches throughout her entire life. ... James Welsh owned a sawmill in the South Fork of Weber Canyon, about 25 miles from Coalville, Utah. The sawmill furnished timber for the silver mines at Park City and for settlements along the road to Coalville. He donated lumber from this mill for the Coalville Tabernacle.”

Jane became the mother of six children. James and one of the sons served missions. With special empathy, Jane cared for the seven living children of James’s second wife when she died after childbirth. Jane finally got a letter from her brother in 1868. He had learned to read and write by attending night school after working in the mines all day. He excitedly told his sister, “By mine own hand I write this.” Jane died of pneumonia on January 3, 1924, at the age of 77, at her daughter’s home in Carey, Idaho. She had been a widow for 24 years. Rhea Murdock wrote of her, “Grandma was a very wonderful woman & I greatly admire & love her.”

¹Edwards is Hannah’s maiden name. She and her husband both had previous marriages with children.
²Jane said, “When Mother died, Father’s faith must have died also. I don’t know why my brother, John, went back unless of his habit of obedience to Father.” A note in the Brice family’s Perpetual Emigrating Fund record states: “Richd Brice wishing to leave the Territory. Prest. D.H. Wells remitted his indebtedness, and let him go.” (PEF Ledger B, p. 151)

Sources: Daughters of Utah Pioneers history: “Family history compiled by Emma A. Anderberg & Rhea W. Murdock, as given orally to them by their mothers, Emma J. Welsh Armstrong & May Welsh Wilde, while Jane Brice (Welsh) was still alive & residing with one or the other of her daughters.”; “The story of Jane Brice Welsh,” as dictated April 1916 by Jane Brice Welsh to granddaughter Blanche Armstrong Heilbut, typescripts by Dennis Carl Riggs, and Sherrie L. Heilbut Summers; photo of Jane courtesy Sherrie Summers.