

## MARY HOPKIN

Born: 1849 Wales

Age: 7

Hunt Wagon Train



Mary's parents were Hannah Williams and Morgan Hopkin. Mary "Polly" Hopkin was born on January 21, 1849, in St. Thomas, Swansea, Wales. She was an only child. Her father died in 1854. Mary's mother's sister had also died, so these two families united and Mary's uncle, Elias Jones, was now her stepfather. (See Elias Jones in *Tell My Story, Too* for more information about Mary's journey.) This large family sailed on the ship *Samuel Curling* in 1856 from Liverpool, England, with nine children and their Uncle John Jones.

From Iowa City their family was well equipped with eight oxen, two cows, two wagons and a horse and buggy. The children usually rode in the buggy with a family servant, Nanson (Ann) Rees. When the weather was severe they bundled down in a wagon under buffalo robes. The cows which supplied them with milk and butter had learned to follow the buggy. A number of times they were stolen by settlers along the road, but they had learned to come when they were called and several times they were rescued by calling. This would have been along the 300-mile portion of the trail between Iowa City and Florence, Nebraska. Other settlers along this portion of the trail were kind and helpful to the immigrants. One day the cows were presumably stolen and could not be found. The Jones family had to go without their milk and butter for the rest of the journey.

By the time they reached Devil's gate, the storms had become very severe, and the Martin handcart company that had been traveling close to the Hunt company, went into a nearby cove for shelter. It was determined that in order to get the weak and sick to Salt Lake quickly, they should leave as much of their freight and personal belongings as possible at Devil's Gate for the winter. From the journal of James Cantwell, we learn of this difficult time: "To give any just description of the 6th, 7th and 8th of November, the times we stayed at [Devil's Gate], would be impossible. It was a combination of wind, hail, snow, and cold in terrible reality. Many of the remaining cattle died, and our traveling power fell so short that it was deemed advisable to leave one half the wagons behind and all the freight and take nothing except our food and clothing. A company of about 20 young men was left behind to guard the property."

Mary's family had brought three large boxes lined with tin and covered with leather. The leather was for shoes for the family after they arrived, and the tin for household utensils. However, these items became ruined during the winter.

The family arrived in the Valley of their hopes the middle of December. Their last few days on the trail is also described by Cantwell: "In our ascent and descent over the big mountain we encountered a formidable amount of snow. At the summit we found a depth of about 18 feet. It took about 60 of us to dig our way through it, occupying about two hours. The cold was intense, and when the passage was made, the people was hurried over as fast as possible. I verily believe a person would have frozen to death, if they had remained there five minutes, without being securely wrapped up."

Mary's family settled in Spanish Fork. Mary married John Forsyth Beck in the Endowment House in 1868. They were the parents of fourteen children, eleven of them living to maturity. It is said that Mary always cared for others when needed, as well as her large family, and was always willing to help her neighbors. She lived to be 73 years old.

Source: *Discover Your Heritage*, by Ray H. and Patricia Banks, 2006, pgs. 28-34, 38-39; Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; family histories from Mrs. Robb Smith, September 2007; "Llewellyn Jones," Sons of Utah Pioneer history files.