

JESSE SOAR TAYLOR

Born: 1845 England

Age: 10

Martin Handcart Company

Jesse's mother, Mary Soar Taylor, was widowed six weeks prior to Jesse's birth, so Jesse never knew his father. His first recollection of his childhood was of running away to "infant school" in his night clothes when just four years old. He was afterward allowed to attend this school. He loved to play marbles and would often win from his playmates. He and his brother, William, who was two years older than Jesse, would help their mother sew the seams up the backs of stockings that were sent to them flat woven. In this way, the Taylor family earned their living.

Jesse went to work when he was eight or nine years of age in a coal pit for his Uncle John Clifford. He used to tap the walls as he went along the way to see if there was any danger of them caving in on him. His brother, Will, was working at the side of a man one day who had been killed this way, so Jesse was extra careful and fearful. One day Jesse had an accident at work which hurt his back and finger. His finger was crooked for the rest of his life.

Jesse's mother joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when he was about three years old. Jesse was happy to contribute to the family's savings so they could emigrate to Zion. However, his grandfather's family was very much opposed. They offered Jesse a pony if he would stay in England with them. An aunt threatened that the family would freeze and starve. Nevertheless, Jesse's family continued to prepare until the way was opened up for them in 1856 to go by handcart. Jesse's farewell was heartbreaking to him. He never used the word *goodbye* since that time in his life and taught his children never to say it.

Jesse and his mother, Mary (age 31), and brother, William (12), sailed on the ship *Horizon* in May 1856. The crossing took six weeks. Jesse and the other children enjoyed playing about the ship and watching the fish jump out of the water. They helped the sailors pull the ropes in adjusting the sails and sang this little song as they pulled in rhythm:

There was a man came riding by / And they say so, and they hope so / Says one old man "Your horse'll die / And they say so and they hope so / "If he dies I'll tan his skin / And if he lives I'll ride him again." / Poor old man.

After leaving Iowa City with their handcarts, Jesse cut his knee with a hatchet one day. This made it hard for him to walk at all, but he kept going. At one farmhouse they passed, a man offered to keep Jesse and give him a home and an education if he would stay with him. Jesse stayed with his mother and brother.

Jesse slept in the tent where James Stones was the captain, next to a 52-year-old man named Charles Woodcock. Charles was ill with dysentery. On the morning of October 20, Jesse's mother woke him up with the sad news that Charles Woodcock had died during the night. Jesse usually liked to sleep as long as possible, but he jumped right up. That morning there was also several inches of snow on the ground.

Jesse told of an experience two weeks later when the company was "in a little cove called Martin's Hollow." Here Jesse remembered seeing "15 of his fellow travelers buried in one grave in Martin's Hollow. One young man named George Padley came to his mother and said, 'Mary, I feel so weak, will you make me a little gruel?' She said, 'Yes.' Her feet were frozen so badly the

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captain insisted on young Padley getting his own fuel to make enough fire to prepare the meal. He did so, drank it, retired and died during the night.¹ It was a terrible experience for [Jesse] to see his mother suffer so. He was unable to help her, but he was spared the suffering himself. He came through unharmed.”

William became very ill with mountain fever and Jesse had to help his mother pull him in the handcart. As the days and nights became colder and food was rationed, Jesse assumed even more responsibility. His mother’s feet became frozen. The flesh fell off her toes and the side of her left foot. The protruding bones were removed with scissors. Rescue finally came and the Taylor’s were taken to Payson, Utah, to be nursed back to health by kind families there.

Jesse’s mother married John H. Moore in 1858. William never fully recovered from the mountain fever. He died in 1860.

The first three summers Jesse lived in Payson, he worked herding sheep. He only lost one lamb to a coyote. In the spring, Jesse and the other boys played a game called town ball. Jesse sang in the ward choir with his mother from age 13. At age 16, he was sustained as a Sunday School teacher. At the age of 17, Jesse worked for a wagon company, bringing emigrants to Utah from the plains.

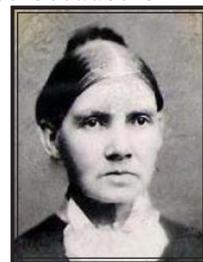
On Christmas day, 1864, Jesse married Sarah Almira Marsh. Jesse had been saving his wages from his work on the farm with his stepfather, Mr. Moore, and his Uncle Levi Colvin. He had earned a cow, bought a slip stove, a home near the meetinghouse, and 10 acres in what was referred to as the “poor field.”

In 1868, Jesse and Sarah left Payson to serve in the Muddy Mission for 2 ½ years. This was a very difficult mission. The rest of his life he was a successful farmer and became a beloved and influential man in the community. He lived up to the expectations of his mother. She wrote her autobiography in a letter to her grandson, John Cyprian Taylor:

I have written this sketch of my life as stated for the benefit of my grandchildren and others and I also add my testimony of the divinity of this work. I know that it is the work of God and hope and trust that any of my posterity that may come in possession of this may be strengthened in their faith by it, and be worthy of such parentage for truly we suffered much for the truth’s sake, but the reward of the faithful is sure.

Jesse and Sarah became the parents of 13 children. Jesse held many responsible positions in the Church, including Bishop. He also held many important positions in the community, including School Trustee (21 years), Building Superintendent, Street and County Roads Supervisor, City Councilman (20 years), Watermaster and Justice of the Peace. It was said of him that his word was as good as his bond. The Taylor School building in Payson was named for Jesse because of his integrity in the cause of education. He died in 1933 at the age of 88.

Sources: “Old Letters: To a Grandson,” *Our Pioneer Heritage*, compiled by Kate B. Carter, Daughters of Utah Pioneers publication, 1958-77, 3:247-49; “Mary Soar Taylor,” family history; interviews with Donna Jean Millar, 2003 & 2011; “Biography of Jesse Soar Taylor: Came to Utah in 1856, written by Ethel Taylor Page, His Daughter,” [written while Jesse was living.] *Show Me Your Rocky Mountains*, by Thelma Hatch Wyss (published by *Deseret Book*), is a novel about the Taylor family that will provide further reading enjoyment and understanding.



Mary Soar Taylor

¹George Padley was engaged to Sarah Franks. Sarah was traveling with the Stones family and was in the same tent with them and the Taylors. It is likely that George Padley was also housed in the same tent. The strength of the able-bodied men was distributed evenly throughout the camp as much as possible.