

## MARY MURRAY MURDOCH

Born: October 13, 1782 in Scotland (Died Oct. 3 on the trail)

Age: 73

Martin Handcart Company

Mary was born to John and Margaret McCall Murray. On January 10, 1811, at the age of 28, she married James Murdoch. They became the parents of eight children. Two of her children died in childhood. Her husband was employed at the Lime Works in Gaswater, Scotland, and lost his life on October 20, 1831, while trying to rescue a man who had become a victim of poisonous air in a mine shaft. Mary and her children were already accustomed to hard work. Her energy and thrifty disposition were a great help to her in raising and providing for her fatherless children.

Mary's son, John married Ann Steele. Ann's brother, James Steele, visited from England and shared his message about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. After he returned to England, he sent missionaries to Mary's home. The family was baptized on December 22, 1851. Mary was 67 years old. John and Ann emigrated to Utah in 1852. It was a difficult journey for them and their two young children both died. In 1856, John sent money for his mother's fare to join him in Zion. She was 73 years old, but she bravely sailed on the ship "Horizon" in May 1856. She traveled with James Steele, his wife, and two young children.

Mary had a great deal of "Scottish" determination to undertake such an adventure at her age. She was known as "Wee Granny" as she was only 4 feet and 7 inches tall, and weighed only about 90 pounds. The anticipation of seeing her son, John, and his family after four years must have surely helped to motivate her.

After arriving in Iowa City, Iowa, from New York, Mary received her handcart and supplies to cross the plains under the direction of Edward Martin, who was just returning from a mission to England.

Mary and the other handcart travelers met many trials in their journey. They left very late in the season and ran into severe winter weather. They didn't have enough warm clothing and bedding for the cold temperatures. Due to scarcity of food, they were becoming weaker. They were so weak at one point that they couldn't even drive the stakes into the ground in order to put up their tents for protection against the elements. The company had to camp at Chimney Rock, Scottsbluff, Nebraska, for a few days because so many were too weary and sick to travel.

On the morning of October 3, 1856, word was sent through the camp that sister Mary Murray Murdoch and many others had passed away during the night from these hardships. Her spirit was strong, but her body was not able to finish the journey to Zion to join her son, John. Mary would have been 74 years old in ten more days. She died just a couple of weeks short of the first debilitating winter storm of 1856 and was thus taken home by a kind Heavenly Father who spared her the further trauma that was just ahead for the Martin Handcart Company.

Mary's death was attended to by James Steele and his family. The last words spoken by Mary were a plea that her faithfulness and love would be made known to her son. She said, "Tell John I died with my face toward Zion".

James Steele, who had been such a faithful friend to the Murdoch family, also succumbed to death a few weeks later. He died on November 10 near Bitter Creek. Upon arriving in the Valley, John and Ann Murdoch took James' widow and her children into their home and cared for them until she remarried in July 1857.