

MARY ANN JACKSON



Born: 18 Feb 1818, Liverpool, Lanc., England, daughter of William Jackson and Elizabeth Lloyd
Died: 25 Oct. 1894, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah.

Mary Ann Jackson joined the LDS church in the early 1840s. She was the only member of her family to join. While Wilford Woodruff was Mission President in England she served as a housekeeper in the Woodruff home. She came to America with Phoebe Woodruff and a party of emigrants via New Orleans in January 1846. The voyage was very rough. The missionaries accompanying the group prayed for deliverance in a terrible storm. A large ball of fire rested on the prow of the ship, lighting the rocks just before they were to run aground. The captain steered away and the ball stayed with them until in safe waters. Wilford came home on another ship via New York and Maine. It appears that Wilford took Mary Ann to be his plural wife in 1846.

On June 13, 1847 Mary Ann joined the Abram O. Smoot's company with her 19-day-old son and headed west. Her son later stated, "My heroic mother started the journey with my dear grandfather Aphek with two wagons, two horses, an ox and one

cow. One wagon was loaded with flour milling machinery and the other for the family and provisions." On one occasion Mary Ann tried to jump out of a moving wagon and caught her dress on an implement on the side of the wagon. It threw her upside down and dangled her along-side. She had to keep working her hands so that the wheels did not pass over her, until the wagon was stopped. They met Wilford on his return trip east, near the Continental divide, on Sept. 8, 1847 and arrived in Salt Lake shortly thereafter. Wilford had arranged for two rooms to be built for them in the fort; one for living in and the other for the machinery. When a group of the Mormon Battalion arrived, they futilely tried to set up their tent in a windstorm. Mary Ann had them to stay in the room with the machinery, lit a fire in the fireplace and gave them food. They tried to pay her with gold, but she would not accept it.

Wilford Woodruff, called to serve another mission, did not return to Salt Lake until 3 years later. This estrangement, along with misunderstandings, aggravated by pioneer survival resulted in the dissolution of their marriage. A divorce was granted on May 11, 1848. On Dec. 13, 1853 the sealing was canceled. In April 1857, Mary Ann asked for forgiveness. Wilford said that he forgave her but declined to remarry stating that their experience together showed that "we have not Rendered each other happy." She married David James Ross, a widower with 3 children on Dec. 13, 1857. They had two sons, Will and John, named after Mary Ann's brothers in England. David J. Ross ran a military school in the 10th ward, and was a Colonel in the Utah Militia during the Utah War and subsequent Black Hawk Indian War. In the late 1860s, he had a falling out with Brigham Young over credit extended on a weapons sale which the buyers never paid. Ross fled Utah. Mary Ann never saw him again.

In the 1870s Mary Ann lived with her son, James. Sometime during the 1880s, she went to President Taylor and asked to be sealed to someone. Wilford Woodruff told President Taylor that he wanted to be that person. They were resealed in a secret ceremony. He contributed to her support, but she lived by herself. Her obituary says that she died of paralysis. It also stated, "She died as she had lived, a faithful Latter-day Saint." Wilford Woodruff attended and spoke at her funeral on October 28, 1894. She was laid to rest in the Woodruff family plot in the Salt Lake City Cemetery.

[Alan J. Hill, 5-30-2020]

Sources

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Ancestral file and notes from Lori Stout research.

Discrepancies

There are two baptism dates for Mary Ann Jackson. The first was on July 4, 1841 in Liverpool, England and the other was May 2, 1843. The second date lists her being baptized by Elder William Cooper and confirmed by Elder John Greenbaugh. It is entirely possible that both dates are correct, as it was not uncommon to be baptized and rebaptized in those early days of the church.

FamilySearch uses a marriage date of April 15, 1846 and shows Winter Quarters, Nebraska. This is not possible since both Wilford, his wife Phoebe, and Mary Ann were in Nauvoo, Illinois on that date. They visited the Nauvoo Temple on that date, but there is no record of Wilford being married to Wilford Woodruff on that date. Wilford Woodruff journal does include a reference to a discussion on sealings with Brigham Young, with Mary Ann Jackson present on August 2, 1846 in the Nebraska Territory. Wilford Woodruff drew a large heart with four keys in his journal and wrote, "August 2, President Brigham Young called at my tent and delivered an interesting lecture upon the priesthood and the principles of sealing. Present was Phoebe W. Woodruff, Mary Jackson, Caroline Barton and Sarah Brown."