



Mary Jane Munford

11 April 1872 – 12 March 1913

(Transcription by Floyd Jay Edwards, Great Grandson)

Mary Jane Munford was born 11 April 1872 to Thomas and Elizabeth Gunn Munford, at Parowan, Utah. She was the second child of seven, four sisters and two brothers. She was known as Jane through her life.

Her parents, two grandparents, and one great grandparent were all English converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and immigrated to the United States. They lived in Philadelphia and worked until they got means to cross the plains to Utah. They went by ox train. Jane's father first went to Beaver, but, was later sent to Panquitch, Utah. He was sent also to make friends with the Indians, He was one of many asked to leave because of the Black hawk War. He then went to Parowan.

Her mother was six years old when she sailed from Liverpool, England. Her family first settled on the Jordon River and for a time lived on brown bread and molasses, with sage brush for fire wood. Later, they moved to the Cottonwood Canyons. Jane's mother at 19 years of age met and married Thomas Munford, her father, at the old Endowment House in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was very religious man and very stern.

Mary Jane's childhood home was very primitive. They lived in a one room log house which her father built. It was in this small home that three of the children were born. It was her Jane's oldest sisters, Elizabeth Emma, died at age of 2. Jane was just 4 months old when this happened. On 16 January 1874 Jane became big sister to Rachel Ann. Before the other children were born, her daddy built a larger home and also made the furniture. In the new house, three more children were introduced just two years apart.

On 2 June 1881, Mary Jane became an official member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints by being baptized. She was 9 years old. Two years later, 20 April 1883, her baby sister, Sarah was born. Jane, at 11, was a big help to her mother.

Suddenly, Jane's father passed away. It was 22 July 1884. They said it was appendicitis. He left her mother with six children; Mary Jane, Rachel Ann, Margaret, Sarah, Thomas William and Robert Gunn, Jane was oldest.

Her father wages were hardly enough to feed the family; but her mother did house cleaning, washing, ironing, and what was necessary to make ends meet. Her mother also knitted stockings for the whole family. Two pair would last each child one year. After the death of Jane's father, she and the older children had to get out and help support the family as well. Jane worked for different people in Parowan. On one occasion, she worked all day for a can of molasses. She went to Beaver and worked for Lew Harris and Will Blackner.

Mary Jane loved to sing and had a beautiful alto voice. She also loved to dance and took many prizes for waltzing. At age 18, Jane's sister Rachel married Mahonri Decker.

Rachel was only 16 years old. John Grimshaw and Nephi Edwards were among the boys Jane was dating.

On 16 December 1892, Jane married Nephi Edwards. He was a returned missionary from Beaver for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He was 22 and Jane was 18. They were married in the St. George Temple. It took three days by covered wagon to get to St. George from Beaver. A Beaver girl made the remark 'Why did Nephi marry a Parowan girl? There were girls he could have married in Beaver.'

After the wedding, Nephi got a job with the US Mail. They moved to Orderville, Utah, where he and his brother ran the mail from Orderville to Kanab. While there, Jane had her first baby girl. She was born 5 October 1893. They named her Myrtle Elizabeth. She was given a name and a blessing by her father. In November of 1893, Nephi's father died at the age of 66. One month later, Jane's sister Margaret died. She was only 17 years old. By July of 1894 Jane and Nephi and Myrtle Elizabeth moved back to Beaver where Nephi could help his mother. He was able to get the US mail contract and drove stage from Milford to Beaver. On 11 August 1895, another baby girl, Maggie Luella, joined the family. While in Beaver two more children were born. Zola was born 8 October 1897 and a son, Nephi Delos on 11 January 1900. Aunt Sade (Sarah Munford) went to live with them and help Jane with the house and the children.

Not long after Dee (Nephi Delos) was born, the family moved to Parowan; where Jane's mother was living. Maggie started her first year of school there with her cousin Gertrude Decker. Rachel Ann, Jane's sister, died and left a new baby. Jane stepped in to care for the baby. She was able to help until they moved to a place call Rocky Ford, near Minersville, where they decided to try farming. On 1 April 1902 Little Emma Jane was born, Christmas that year was celebrated at Lincoln Mines where Aaron (Nephi brother) and Mary lived. Myrtle and Garn played Mr. Mrs. Santa Claus; and the children had a great time. This farming stuff didn't seemed to be working out; and by 1904 they were back in Beaver.

On 4 August of that year, daughter Rachel Ann joined the family. A little over a year later, Rachel Ann contracted Scarlet Fever; and she passed away on 30 August 1905.

Jane was well into raising a family when her brother Thomas announced his marriage to Mary Ann Cox Smith on 17 October 1905. Maybe there was a little romance in the air because just a few months later, Jane's sister, Sarah, married Harry Ashton on 29 March 1906.

In July of 1906, Jane introduced another daughter to the family. Albenia was born 13 July in the little rock house at Frog Hollow. A couple of weeks after the baby were born; Zola and Maggie became ill with Typhoid Fever. Zola was just 8 years old and nothing could be done to save her young life. She died 2 August 1906. Jane's husband, Nephi also got the fever and almost died. Jane really had her hands full with a new baby, the death of a daughter, a sick husband and small children to tend and care for.

They moved out of the rock house into a new home near the cemetery where the girls were buried. The kids carried water to the pansies Jane had planted on Rachel and Zola graves. Nephi tried his best to make things better. He even went to Salt Lake City and bought new furniture and an organ, Maggie took organ lessons.

The home was board and room to most of the school teachers, eating place for all traveling men and Church authorities. Tramps or (bums) were never turned away without something to eat.

The new house was near a building used by the school and Church for meetings. Nephi would take care of heating the building for meetings. Jane looked out the window one morning, and noticed smoke coming from the roof of the school building. She ran to notify the teacher. Jane and Nephi had three children in school that morning and one of their daughters was one of the last in line to get out as the roof fell in.

On 14 November 1906, the family joined in celebrating the marriage of Robert Munford to Flora Irene Cox. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple.

It was not long after that when Jane and Nephi and their little family moved again. This time they decided to take up sheep ranching with Nephi's brother David. They went to a dry farming town with home scattered over an area of ten miles. It was called Buck Horn Springs. They moved into a six room house with a living room, dining room, three bedrooms, a kitchen, a large pantry and a back and front porch. Jane served meals to traveling men who couldn't make it from beaver to Panguitch in one day with horse and buggy. Nephi took care of their horses. They had turkeys, geese, chickens, and ducks. Jane plucked the ducks and geese and made feather pillows. They had cows, horses, pigs. The children learn to ride horses, plow, milk cows and pitch hay.

On 27 September 1908 Thomas Bennett made his entrance into the family. Jane was not well and almost died. The doctor had to come from Beaver to care for her. Thomas Bennett was just two when another baby boy was stillborn. Jane was now 38 years old. In just two years 20 August 1912, Jane delivered another son whom they named him Floyd Devaun. He was the tenth child born into the family. After his birth, it was discovered that Mary Jane had a heart condition. She lived through the fall and winter but finally developed pneumonia for which nothing could be done. On 15 March 1913 she died. She left her husband and seven children. The youngest baby was just seven months old.

Mary Jane was buried by the side of her children in the Mountain View Cemetery, Beaver, Utah.

Daughter Emma Jane Edwards Huddleston shares the following:

'Lest We Forget the Pioneer Christmas''

In the early days of our pioneer parents, the Christmas holidays were duly celebrated. Although they were poor in material things, the true Christmas Spirit was manifested. No gifts as we have them today, but there was the larger thought of good will and mutual helpfulness.

The Pioneer Christmas was one of Thanksgiving. Every one willing to help and to share, the finer instincts of religion and morals were manifested in clan thought and charitable deeds. So little in this world' good but rich in faith and so busy in laying the foundation of a new commonwealth.

A loaf of white bread, a roasted rabbit, potatoes and molasses ginger bread made Christmas dinner, which brought gratitude and cheer to any Pioneer home... A few years later, the men killed a deer or wild fowl and some had a fat pig to kill. With doughnuts, squash pie, molasses cookies and candy with some sweet cider, the Christmas festival was made of rejoicing.

In those far-gone days, children were taught to appreciate any little gift. There were no stores full of toys as we have them now, neither was there money with which to buy them. The modest gift was always the expression of the great love of the giver. There was no selfishness, no envy, no bigotry. All shared and neighbors were invited to partake. There was social equality and regard for one another were sincere.

Children were pleased with any little gift found in their stocking on Christmas morning. And while every little whim could not be satisfied, they manifested a joy in living and when they prayed they felt God's watchful care.

From the earliest days of Pioneer life, the people provided amusement for themselves. The dance played the most conspicuous part, particularly on Christmas and New Years. In these more remote sections, of the Territory, the Pioneers naturally did something to relieve the strain of hard work. Drones had no part of life. Every body cooperated in creating some kind of recreation for all. The favorite was dancing.

Great preparations were made for the Christmas dance, if much snow had fallen, people from a distance came in bob-sleighs or the family wagon. The rough floor of a humble log house was prepared for the dance by process of glazing with wax.

There was always the fiddler and the little later the accordion. Then the organ was added. The fiddler must be paid, therefore admittance fees were collected, which was paid for generally in kind, such as squash, potatoes, cabbage, meat or the skin of some fur bearing animal. This was collected at the door.

After the opening prayer by the Bishop or some one in authority, the fiddler struck up a signal for the march to begin. Round and round in different figures the couples marched. Many of the

dances of those days have gone out of date, but how they were enjoyed. Chief among these were the quadrilles, polkas, Scotch Reels, Minuets.

A caller, who had a voice that could be heard above the din of music and dancing, stood in an elevated position where he could shout or sing out the calls, - 'All set' was the signal for the music to begin.

'Circle all', 'Grand right and left', 'Four ladies change', 'Doe see sough, -a little more dough', 'Swing your partner' and 'All promenade, to you know where, ETC...'

Then the floor was cleared for a step dance and a stump speech.

Once in a while a waltz was indulged in, to the melodies of Ilean Lanna, My Irish Rose, Nellie Gray, or Home Sweet Home. However, the round dance was generally discouraged by Church authorities.

Often a lady was compelled to leave the floor, for her baby was crying, No mother remained at home on account of the children, except in cases of sickness. Babies were brought along and beds were arranged on seats, with coats and shawls for covering.

On such Occasions as Christmas, the supper or picnic served at the dance was the main consideration in celebrating. One hour was set apart for eating and no one went away hungry. Those dances often kept up till early morning hours.

The Pioneer Fiddler was a very good sport and would play nearly all night for a nominal fee consisting of squash, a sack of potatoes and a bottle of sweet cider.

As the Pioneers began to prosper, the tickets to dances, concerts and plays could be paid for in grain, eggs and butter. In early days they danced in school houses, Church buildings and sometimes in their homes if a room was large enough for the quadrille. Then later when barns were built with a floor, they were often used for summer dancing.

The dance hall was lighted by large pine logs in the fireplace and homemade candles. – Then was when joy and thanksgiving filled the hearts of all who lived for the common cause.