

Mary Alice Backhouse Ward

Born 14 March 1848
Blackburn, Lancashire, England
Died 29 Sep 1935
Provo, UT

Married Edwin J. Ward
11 Feb 1864
Pleasant Grove, UT

This history written by Suzanna Mae Clark Grua
Granddaughter

This history was obtained from the Daughters of Utah Pioneers Museum in Salt Lake City, UT in July of 2007 by Roger E. Grua , great, great grandson. It was digitized and placed in family records by Roger E. Grua. The photo was also added at that time. It was also posted on www.rogergrua.com under Backhouse and Ward.



Mary Alice Backhouse Ward, daughter of James Backhouse and Jane Williams, was born March 14, 1848 in Blackburn, Lancashire, England. When a child she attended the parish school until 12 years of age.

In the year 1861, Mary left England with her parents to sail for America. The family were converts to the Mormon church and they traveled with a company of LDS immigrants, crossing the Atlantic Ocean in the sailing vessel "Manchester." After many weeks on the water, they landed at Castle Gardens, New York in May 1861, with the Horace Eldredge Company of Saints. Leaving New York by train, the party traveled by Niagara Falls and were permitted to take time to view this beautiful site. On their train were many other saints all the goods and equipment, as

well as oxen with which to continue their journey to the West. Reaching Illinois, the party traveled on to the Mississippi River and went to see the abandoned city of Nauvoo with its Temple. Arriving near St. Louis, they began their journey across the plains, following the Missouri River for a long distance.

When they reached Florence, Nebraska, they stayed for a number of weeks to get acquainted and to wait for other emigrant wagons to join the party for the trip to the mountains. While in Florence, Mary hired out to work for another family for some weeks as a nurse girl. She walked most of the way across the plains and into the valley of the great Salt Lake.

The family was made very sad during their journey across the plains when the baby sister, only 10 or 11 weeks old, sickened and died. The father tried to get lumber to make a casket, but none was available. He found a piece of hollowed out tree trunk, which it seemed was placed near for the his purpose. The dead child was laid in this make-shift casket and a piece of wood from a wagon box was used for a cover. In this crude blogs the child was buried beside the Platte River near their camp. After this incident the family moved on, a kindly man carrying the grief stricken mother across the river on his back. Mary spoke of this this death is the saddest part entire journey from England.

(Editor note: this child was Sarah Jane Backhouse who died 16 August 1861 along the Platte River – see *Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel (1847-1868* available at www.lds.org REG).

To help out the immigrants in the group, Mary's mother of all the women how to make yeast cakes. She gave all that she had made away to those who asked for them, thinking that she would be able to get plenty of material for more when she reached the valley. This did not prove true and it was some time before she able to again make good yeast cakes. The main ingredients of these yeast cakes were hops and cornmeal.

Every night in the camp, Mary and other young people had to gather buffalo chips for the campfires and help with the smaller children. There was often so much excitement when cattle stampeded or there was word of Indians coming. All along the way pioneer immigrants met parties of workmen putting in poles and stringing wires for the first telegraph line to the west coast. The pioneers held meetings in the evenings and sang songs and heard preaching, which helped to keep their spirits up and made their days brighter as they told of experiences and shared experiences with others.

The only place where they stopped for any length of time along the way was at Fort Bridger. They crossed the Green River on the ferry boat which was pulled by long ropes. The Eldredge party arrived in Salt Lake City (in) the latter part of September 1861, and after a few days visiting in Salt Lake, the Backhouse family moved on to Pleasant Grove with their ox teams hauling all their possessions.

The first job offered this family after they reached Pleasant Grove was never forgotten by Mary. The whole family was hired to clear a large lot of weeds, so that the owner could begin building a house. They were promised a dinner set of dishes for this task. They worked hard for a long day and when they finished were given a large box of dishes. Delighted, they took the box home intending to set their supper table with the new dishes. Much to their dismay and great disappointment, when they opened the box, it was found to contain not nice dishes, but a set of unglazed pottery bowls. The heart ache and hurt they suffered was terrible to them. So this was Zion! They had left all of their nicest things in England to come to live in Zion and these crockery bowls looked terrible to them. Not a piece of this set was ever placed on the table. Mary's mother said they could not forget the disappointment and hurt if they had to look at these crude bowls at every meal. Another job, in which the entire family participated, was that of stripping sugarcane. They had to wear very heavy gloves keep from cutting their fingers, leaves were so very sharp.

All during their first winter in Pleasant Grove, Mary helped her mother to spin yarn, card wool, and make the wool into batts for quilts. These materials they sold to get money for other things the family needed. They also did a great deal of knitting and spinning for people.

Marry often worked away from home in order to earn money. She worked for a low weight of one dollar or two dollars a week. She worked for a family in Alpine, Utah, for about two years. This family had a large herd of sheep and Mary often took her wages in sheep, thus earning a nice small herd for her father.

At the age of 17, Mary was married to Edwin J. Ward, also a convert from England. The marriage took place in Pleasant Grove, February 11, 1864. Of this union there were born 12 children all but two of whom grew to adulthood and married and have families of their own.

When they had but one small child, they were many times forced to hide and sleep in their cornfield because of the troublesome Indians. Just before their son Joseph was born, they moved to Jordan and bought a home on the State Road, where Edwin J. Ward was employed as a builder Bishop Archibald Gardner. They lived in this home for almost two years before moving back to Pleasant Grove. All their children, except Joseph, who born in Pleasant Grove and all were christened in the Old Meeting House which stood in the southwest corner of the present Pleasant Grove city park on Main Street.

After leaving Jordan, the Wards moved back to Pleasant Grove, and they built a small home. At each of these homes, Edwin Ward had a planning mill and carpenter shop where he made furniture of all kinds and did the carpenter work on many of the homes being built in the town. At the last home they built in Pleasant Grove, they also built and operated a small store with her eldest daughter of May (Mary Ellen), making hats and ties and many other novelties and selling them there. The Wards owned one of the first sewing machines.

In the fall of 1889 they moved to Provo where the father and sons established a planning mill and lumber business. Here Mary and Edwin Ward spent the remainder of their lives.

Mary Backhouse spent a very useful and busy life. She was blessed with very good health and with a family of fine healthy children. She was always an expert housekeeper and an excellent cook. All of the family clothing was made in the home by Mary and her daughters. Each girl was taught to sew extremely well and each was taught cook very good meals. The Wards owned the first sewing machine in Pleasant Grove and they owned the first organ, outside of the church organs. All the family were taught to sing and to enjoy music. Evenings and Sunday afternoons were devoted to group singing, and with father and mother leading, the family and a happy hour with their music. Several of the boys learn to play the guitar and mandolin, and they played violin, flute, and organ. Each of the girls learn to play the organ and the piano. Not own family, but often friends and neighbors as well, came to enjoy the evening musicals and look forward to them as a relaxation from the day's work. These evening sings were more often than not end with popcorn ball partly or a candy pull for there was always recreation in the evenings in the Ward home. The strong ties and wonderful respect that grew out of the family affairs was evidenced in the respect that the father and the sons always displayed for the mother and sisters. The boys made it a point to see that their sisters had a chance to attend the social affairs of the community, and the girls always spoke of having a better time when their brothers were along than otherwise. In this happy home, obedience to the parents was taken for granted and the parents always welcomed the friends of their children into the home. The sons were handsome, stalwart young men, [and] the girls all [were] very beautiful and young women. Of this fact the parents were justly proud.

Mary Ward lived to be more than 87 years of age. What a march of progress she witnessed. Often she spoke of the march of time and of development that she had seen. Her keen mind made her quick to appreciate all of the changes that took place in the world during her lifetime.