

Mary Butler

16 May 1785 – 1 August 1856



Everyone has a story to tell, unfortunately some never get told. Everyone has a legacy that they leave behind, but sometimes that legacy goes unrecognized. Everyone whoever lived is precious in the sight of God and He knows the desires of their hearts, the trials and hardships they persevered, and their good deeds as well as their failings. One day each of us will stand before the Father of us all and give an account of our time on this earth. Everyone will have a chance to tell their story.

Until then, many, many stories will go untold. The total existence of some lives well lived end up only a name on a pedigree chart with only a few cold statistics documenting their existence. Hidden between a date of birth and a death date, a life well lived is concealed. The love of their life is disguised as a marriage date accompanied by the name of a spouse. Joyous occasions may be detected in the names and birthdates of children. Sorrows and tragedies are hidden beneath the death dates of parents, spouses, and children. Hints about the events that transpired during their lives are obscured by the places associated with the dates that mark the parameters of their lives.

Such a story that goes untold is that of Mary Butler. What can we learn about her life by digging beneath the statistics. What can we learn from her life?

Mary Butler was born on May 16, 1785 in Waterbury, New Haven County, Connecticut to Solomon Butler and Rebecca Gibson. This was shortly after the American War of Independence. The United States was a fledgling nation of thirteen states held together by the Articles of Confederation. When Mary was a small child, this nation went through an marvelous transformation as the Constitution was crafted

and ratified by the states. She was nearly three years old when George Washington was elected the first President of the United States.

In those early times, she was born with a great heritage as she was a product of the colonization of the New World. Her fourth great grandparents, John and Mary Bigelow Butler left England and came to the new world sometime before 1630. They and the rest of her ancestors had been in Connecticut for more than a hundred and fifty years before she was born. It is entirely possible that her father served under George Washington during the Revolutionary War.

Mary had a younger sister, Rachael (about 1787), and a younger brother, Solomon (about 1789). Her sister lived to adulthood and had a family of her own but nothing more is known about her brother. Her father lived to be 75 years old but it is unknown how long her mother lived. Perhaps her life was cut short. It was not uncommon for a young mother to die in childbirth. Only speculation can entertain the notion that her mother and baby brother were taken from them at the same time, leaving her father to raise his two daughters alone.

Whatever the family circumstances of her childhood and youth, she probably received some degree of education. More than likely she worked to help support her family. At some point in her young life, her family moved to Oneida County, in central New York. Congress made land in Central New York State available to Revolutionary War veterans from New England in lieu of payment for their service. Perhaps that is what brought them there. At that time the region was the frontier and they would have experienced the toil and hardship associated with the pioneer life.

When Mary was twenty years old she married Daniel Cooley on March 5, 1806 in Paris, Oneida County, New York. Daniel was born around 1781. One account gives his birth in Oneida County but another suggests that he too was born in Connecticut. They made their home in Oneida County where their first two children were born, Mary Ann (6 Jan 1807) and Charles Rancler (1809). Mary Ann lived to adulthood and had a family of her own but nothing is know of Charles beyond his birth.

Sometime after Charles was born, after Charles was born, Daniel and Mary

moved to New Haven, Oswego County, New York where two more children were born, John William (29 Nov 1811) and Lucy Ann (about 1813). John grew to adulthood but nothing more is known of Lucy. Nor is there anything, more concerning Daniel. Perhaps he died at a young age leaving Mary to raise Mary Ann and John on her own. It appears that they moved to Cramahe, New Castle District, Upper Canada (now Northumberland County, Ontario) on the north shore of Lake Ontario. at some point because Mary Ann married William Francis Liddle on March 5, 1832 in Cramahe and John married Hannah Gould on January 10, 1836 also in Cramahe. All that is known of Lucy and William from this time is that they had a son, Donald Sidney who was born on April 25, 1840 in Quebec.

On the other hand, there is a lot of information about John William and her moves shadow his for the rest of her life. John and Hannah had a daughter, Gennette (30 Dec 1836), who was born in Cramahe, New Castle District, Upper Canada. They were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on November 12, 1838. In 1840 they moved to Nauvoo, Illinois where they lived for the next six years. In 1843 Hannah, who was expecting, and little Gennette went to Cincinnati, Ohio to visit her parents. While there Hannah was involved in a carriage accident, causing her to deliver her baby and taking her life.

It is not known if Mary was baptized at the same time as John. Neither do we know if she moved to Nauvoo at the same time. Perhaps after Hannah died, she moved to Nauvoo at that time to help John raise Gennette. The only information there is that places Mary in Nauvoo during that time is the fact that she received her endowments in the Nauvoo Temple on January 5, 1846. That indicates that she was baptized sometime prior to then, but there is no record of it, other than she was baptized by proxy in the Salt Lake Temple on May 3, 1832.

When Nauvoo was evacuated in 1846 John was called by Brigham Young to establish a mill northeast of Winter's Quarters in Pottawattamie County, Iowa. A settlement of several families known as Cooley's Camp or Cooley's Mill was established around the mill. Mary went with him. We know this because she is listed in

the 1850 census as living in Pottawattamie County, Iowa.

It was there that in 1849 John married Susan Jane Hunt. Two children were born to them while living in Iowa, Marietta (8 Sep 1850) and Samuel William (2 Aug 1852). Mary most likely helped with the work in the household, caring for the children and whatever had to be done.

In April of 1853, the family prepared for the long trip across the plains. The wagons assembled at "Six Mile Grove" on June 9, 1853, under the able leadership of John William Cooley and John Miller. A total of 282 souls and 70 wagons commenced the long journey. According to the company register, accompanying John and Susan were Gennette, Marietta, Sammie, and Mary Butler Cooley. There was much heartbreak along the trail. During the night of July 9, 1853, Sammie, died and was buried at Shepherds Creek. They pressed onward and the company arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on September 9, 1853. For the first couple of years, they resided at Cottonwood (now Holiday, Utah) where they were sent to settle. However, they were not there long and in 1855 they moved to Grantsville, Tooele County. It was in Grantsville that Mary Butler Cooley died on August 1, 1856 at the age of 71. In one final shroud of obscurity, she is buried in an unmarked grave in the Grantsville Cemetery.

So, Mary does have a story to tell after all. To hear her tell her story, one has to listen very carefully as her voice is drowned out by the cold hard facts on the pedigree chart marking her life. At times it is difficult to make out what she is saying, but there is enough, with a little conjecture thrown in, to get a good idea of the life that she lived.