

## **Mary Shields** **First Wife of James Bevan**

Mary Shields was born October 29, 1827 in Glasgow, Scotland to John Shields and Primrose Cunningham Shields. The family heard the Gospel while in Scotland. Mary was baptized October 29, 1841 at the age of fourteen. She attended church and often bore her testimony.

The Shields family sailed with a group of converts February 15, 1849, on the ship "Hartly" for America. They arrived in New Orleans where they boarded the river boat "Lightfoot" for the trip up the Mississippi River to Nauvoo, Illinois. In Nauvoo they found many more immigrant converts like themselves, who were being organized and outfitted for their journey across the plains to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. The Shield family was very eager to join the main body of the Saints in Utah. They were fortunate to be assigned to the Albert Merrill company and were soon on their way west. They crossed Iowa and stopped for a time in Council Bluffs to restock and get ready for the three and a half month trek across the plains to Utah.

In 1846 James Bevan had made the historic 2000 mile march from Council Bluffs, Iowa to California with the Mormon Battalion and had joined the Saints in Utah following his discharge from the Battalion, July 16, 1847. In 1848 he was asked by Brigham Young to return to Council Bluffs to aid other Saints traveling to Utah. While there he became acquainted with the John Shields family and in particular, with their daughter Mary. John and May were married May 9, 1850 in Council Bluffs. They remained in Council Bluffs until after their first child was born. He was named John A. Bevan, after Mary Shields' father. Soon after his birth they returned to Utah and settled in Tooele, Utah, in what was then called Settlement Canyon. Mary Shields' parents also came to Utah and settled in Tooele. The children of James and Mary loved to go to Grandfather Shields' home because he was a musician and had many musical instruments. They loved to play and sing with him. He became Captain John Shields and the leader of a local Tooele band,

James was a kind man but stern and somewhat sober in nature. Mary added a bright playful cheeriness to the union and was loved and admired by all for it. After coming to Tooele Mary had 9 more children by James. Violet Jane Bevan was her last. August 7, 1874, 18 months after Violet's birth Mary died while giving birth to her 10<sup>th</sup> child. The baby also died.

Isabel McPherson was a childhood friend of Mary's in Scotland. They had lived in the same tenement across the hall from each other. When the McPherson family came to Utah Mary was overjoyed. In those days worthy men in the Church were encouraged to live the law of plural marriage and take additional wives. Mary told Isabel that she would be happy to have her marry James and join their family so that they might all be happy together. James Bevan took Isabel as a second wife November 3, 1859. Mary did much of the courting herself and even borrowed a pair of pants for James to wear at the wedding. They became a united happy family and children from both mothers grew up together.

James and Isabel had 12 children plus raised two others. After Mary's death her oldest daughter Mary and Isabel ( aunt Bell as she was known by Mary's children) raised Mary's family. Isabel and James added 10 more children to the Bevan family. Amos Bevan, who's home in Tooele occupies the site of James Bevan's first log home, was last child born to James Bevan.