

MARY SHIELDS

Utah Pioneer of 1850

Written by her granddaughter, Dora Bevan Wright, June 5, 1947

Mary Shields was born in Renfrewshire, Scotland, on October 29, 1827, the daughter of John Shields and Mary Cunningham. The family heard the gospel preached while living in Scotland, and Mary was baptised 29 October 1841, at the age of fourteen. She attended church regularly and often bore her testimony. On one occasion, after baring her testimony, she composed and recited the following poem:

How happy are we, the children of God
When we meet, each from our employment to have a retreat.
Oh yes, we are happy, its far to excell
The rich and the noble, though in mansions they dwell.

The Lord a commandment has given to us
Insist to love one another and surely be blessed.
For have we not felt in our meetings it shared
Oh yes, in our meetings it has been declared.

Then what kind of people ought we to be
Being we live in an age for to see
The Gospel as it was revealed before,
And as we go on He will bless us the more.

Then brothers and sisters, I feel to go on
In the glorious gospel that I have begun.
So may I prove faithful and true to the end
Is the humble desire of your sister and friend.

Mary Shields
Age 19

The Shields family sailed with a group of converts to the church on February 19, 1849 on the ship Hartley for America, arriving at New Orleans, from where they sailed again, this time on a river boat called the 'Lightfoot' bound for Nauvoo, where they arrived at a time when people were assembling from all over the world, and where the Saints were making plans for their journey across the plains. The Shields family were eager to join with the other Saints, and were soon assigned to the Albert Merrill company. On the way west, they stopped for a time at Council Bluffs, Iowa, where they met a company of English Saints.

James Bevan had crossed the plains as a member of the Mormon Battalion, and in 1848, had been sent back to Council Bluffs to aid other Saints to move on to Utah. He became acquainted with the Shields family, and in 1850, a year after Mary had left Scotland, she and James Bevan were married in Council Bluffs on May 9, 1850. They lived there until after their first child John Alexander, was born. His birth occuring on February 4, 1851. Soon after his birth they traveled on to Utah, staying in Salt Lake for a short time, then moving on to Tooele. At Tooele they settled for a time in the mouth of Settlement Canyon.

Mary's parents came too, and later when they moved into Tooele, Grandfather Shields' home was a place where all loved to go, as he had musical instruments and they could play and sing. However, when it became his bedtime, he sent everyone home.

At one time, when it was raining, someone came to James and Mary Bevans home and found her sitting under the table, where it was dry, and singing, "How Firm a Foundation". She and James were very happy, she being a person who was inclined to be cheerful, while James was of a rather more sober disposition.

The following children were born to them in Tooele: Mary Ann, 1851, Primrose, 1855, Elizabeth, 1856, James Franklin, 1858, Heber James, 1860, JOSEPH Shields, 1862. Eliza, 1864, Margaret, 1866, Archibald, 1868, Violet 1862, and Ellen, 1874.

When Isabella Mcpherson came to Tooele from Scotland, Mary was overjoyed, as they had been friends there, having lived in the same tenement house, across the hall from each other. As James had been advised to take another wife, Mary told Isabell that she would be very happy for her to marry James, so that they might all be happy together. Mary did most of the courting herself and even borrowed a pair of pants for James to wear to the wedding.

They became a united family, and the children all grew up together.

Mary and James were endowed and sealed together on September 10, 1859. Mary died August 7, 1874, at the age of forty six years and ten months. Her young family were cared for by their sister Mary Ann with the help of another sister, Aunt Bell.

Mary Shields was sealed to her parents August 29, 1923.

Lines by Mary Shields - written in 1848.

Enwraapt in thought, I stood one day of late,
Reflecting on the glories of our future state,
No tongue can tell nor pencil's art reveal,
The peace, the joy of heart I then did feel;
It was as if it passed before my view,
The glories of a thousand years below.
I felt the spirit of the Lord within,
For all was tranquil, joy, and peace of mind,
I stood as in the silence of repose,
And viewed the stakes of Zion as they arose,
Cities, temples, towers, grand was the sight,
It filled my soul with joy, yes, pure delight.
It was not only one that I beheld, or two,
but countless, splendid buildings lay in view,
Gardens with fruit trees laden to the ground,
All, all was peace and harmony around,
No thorns, no briars, nor weeds were growing there,
No filthy smoke nor foul distemper air,
But soft, refreshing was the gentle breeze,
That wafted 'mong the foliage of the trees.
The grape, the fig, the box tree and the pine,
Grew tall before the cold, clear, crystal spring,
The "Tree of Life" with all its kind were there.
The perfume of its fruits, I thought embalmed the air,
There was no tyrant near to mar their happy hour,
No hungry beasts of prey was prowling to devour,
The beasts of every kind and myriads of the air,
All seemed to harmonize, all seemed to have a share.
Confusion was not there, nor jealous strife,
Pure love beamed forth from every eye, all endless life,
The Saints, and only they with pure delight
were there to enjoy the splendor of that sight.
With these few lines I close--I only felt to write,
When heaven revealed in vision the spirit did endite,
Imagination some may say and memories their stories upturned,
To me it was delight and with joy my bosom burned.