

Mary L. Yates



Gallatin History Museum

Bozeman Chronicle
MRS. MARY YATES PASSES AWAY.
May 2, 1907

Mrs. Mary Yates, one of the oldest and most respected residents of Gallatin valley, passed quietly away at the home of her grandson, Yock Miller, on Thursday of last week. Mrs. Yates, who was Miss Mary Wells, was born in Virginia and was married there at the age of 17, to Solonian Yates. She set out at once with her husband and traveled 1,600 miles on horseback to Jackson county, Missouri, where they took up land and started their home. Eleven children were born to them in Missouri. Mr. Yates died there in the early fifties and in 1864 Mrs. Yates and three of her sons started for Montana with an ox team. They settled in Gallatin valley and this has been her home ever since. She returned to Missouri seven times on visits and three of the trips were made by wagon. She had many thrilling experiences and also suffered many hardships on her journeys to and from her old home. One of her sons was killed by the Indians down on the Yellowstone on one of their trips into that part of the country. Mrs. Yates leaves six children to mourn her loss. They are Mrs. Sitton, Mrs. O. C. Collins, Mrs. Sol. Miller, and Sol. Benj. and Geo. Yates. Her oldest daughter is over seventy years of age. She also leaves a long line of descendants. There are about 60 grandchildren, 90 great grandchildren and 11 great great grandchildren. Mrs. Yates died at the age of 93 years and had been blind for about four years. She was a woman of remarkable force of character and at the same time of a kind and lovable disposition. She was much beloved by all who were fortunate to know her. Her funeral was held on Saturday at the Dry Creek Baptist church, Rev. Rickman officiating. The church was crowded to its fullest capacity with friends and relatives. She was tenderly laid to rest at Dry Creek cemetery.

"GRANNY YATES" DEAD.

Pioneer Woman Lives to Advanced Age and is Survived by Four Generations.

Mrs. Mary L. Yates, familiarly known to relatives and friends as "Granny Yates", passed away at the farm home of her youngest daughter, Mrs. Annie Miller, at Little Basin, near the Horseshoe Mountains, Thursday morning, April 25, 1907. Her death was not unexpected, as she had been failing for some time and for three weeks had been confined to her bed. For five years she had been totally blind and on that account was unable to lead the active life she might have lived to the last. On November 13, 1905, "Granny Yates" celebrated her ninety-first birthday anniversary, and was in a remarkably healthy condition for that age. Before her sight failed she would drive and ride horseback and often walk for miles without any trouble.

She was a most industrious woman and a most excellent business manager. Left a widow with seven children when only about forty years of age, she assumed the care and responsibility devolving upon her, and not only successfully reared her own children but assisted in the care of others.

She was a faithful member of the Baptist church, as are many of her children and grandchildren. The funeral took place at noon, Saturday, April 27, from the Dry Creek Baptist church. Rev. M. L. Rickman formerly of this city but now of Helena conducting the services. The stormy day prevented many of the old time friends from being present, but there was a large attendance at the funeral service. The remains were interred in the old Hamilton cemetery where are those of a daughter and other relatives.

Mrs. Mary L. Yates was a Virginian by birth. She spent her girlhood days in that state and was married there, but afterwards moved to Missouri, where her husband died fifty years ago. Mrs. Yates and her children came to Montana in the summer of 1864 and located at Virginia City. In 1875 they moved to the Gallatin valley where Mrs. Yates continued to make her home until her death. She had, however, made several visits to her relatives in Missouri and Virginia, remarking not long ago that she had made the trip thirteen times. She crossed the plains twice with the bull trains came up the Missouri river once by steamboat and traveled back and forth after the railroad was completed.

To Mr. and Mrs. Yates were born eleven children, six of whom are still living, all but one of these in Montana. The three daughters Mrs. James Sitton, Mrs. C. C. Collins and Mrs. Annie Miller all live on farms in Gallatin county; the three sons living are Solomon Yates, Great Falls; George Yates, Billings; Benjamin Yates, Elko, Nevada. Mrs. Yates a few months ago estimated that she had 360 living descendants, and from what information can be gained there is no doubt that she has over three hundred. There are fifty-two grandchildren, most of whom have families and of the great grandchildren two have families, so there are five great-great grandchildren.

Three of the grandchildren of Mrs. Yates live in Bozeman. They are Mrs. Kate Cowan, Mrs. Louis Accola and Mrs. T. S. Stiles. Eight of the great grandchildren live in this city, and only two miles from here is Mrs. Henry Cloninger a great grand daughter whose three children are great-great grandchildren of Mrs. Yates.

Six years ago a photograph was taken which all the relatives prize most highly. It shows five generations, Mrs. Yates being the first, and the oldest daughter of Mrs. Cloninger, now attending school represents the fifth. In the picture Mrs. Yates looks almost as young as her daughter and indeed at that time she was a remarkably vigorous woman for her advanced years. Many have enjoyed hearing her relate her experiences especially of the days on the road across the plains, and the story of the life just ended would certainly make a most interesting book.

Republican-Courier
Bozeman 4/30/1907

HISTORY OF GRANNY YATES

(TAKEN from newspaper clippings loaned to me by Mrs. Rex Duncan, in February, 1959.)

HERE AND THERE

V.T.B.

Mary Wells Yates better known by hundreds of people as "Granny Yates" was a prominent figure in allatin County history. A great many people, also count her as one of their ancestors, and will be interested to hear something of her life. I am not related to her but I found her story intensely interesting, having read the inscription on the headstone of her grave and in the Dry Creek cemetery.

She was born in Virginia Nov. 14th in 1815. When she was 17 she married the widower of her dead sister, George Yates, who had three children, and needed a mother for them. Being strong Baptists and extremely religious the Wells family were not sure it was entirely proper for a sister to marry a brother-in-law. The wedding was postponed while they dilligently searched the Bible for some definite information. They must have found enough to satisfy themselves for Mary and George were married and left for Missouri on horseback. The bedroll was tied behind. 1600 miles were covered in this manner to Jackson County. Mr. Yates had already established a home and his three children had remained there while their father went to Virginia for a stepmother. Nine more children were added to the family. Later they moved to Platte County, Missouri.

They were living here when the Civil War broke out and the Yates family voluntarily freed their slaves. George had died in the late fifties, but many of the children were nearly grown; so the family seemed able to care for themselves. In 1863 came the news of the gold strike in Montana.

Mary Yates decided to join one of the wagon trains going west. Three of the older boys accompanied her. They drove six, shod milk cows, which helped pay their way as butter churned readily fastened to the side of the wagon, bumping over the prairies.

When she arrived in Virginia City the cows sold for such a high price that she was able to finance a round trip back to Missouri in 1864 to bring out some more of

ner children. Most of us would have considered one trip in a wagon across the roadless plains and mountains beyond endurance. Mary Yates took a number of them. The second time she took the river trip from Fort Benton. The flat boats were held up by herds of buffalo crossing the river at one point. It was said they crossed for three days and nights along 18 miles of river. It is hard to believe that over a period of a few years trigger-happy hunters could all but exterminate such great herds.

In all Mary Yates made the trip before she died in April, 1907, 13 times between Montana and Missouri. The last time she returned by the way of the Oregon Short Line to Dillon. This must have been a vast improvement over a wagon pulled by cows. On some of the journeys she acted as guide and organizer for the emigrants. The State Chamber should honor her memory as she brought all her relatives and many friends, and was a booster for a new life in the Northwest.

The third trip was made up the Yellowstone, probably in 1866. Camp was always made on a rise; so that a sharp lookout could be kept for Indians. One morning when the stock was being taken to the river for water Indians attacked the herders. Men above in the camp on the bluff, fired and drove off the intruders. A son, Sol Yates, was wounded in the leg, but he managed to jump on a horse and ride to safety. The youngest boy, George, was hidden among the flour barrels after the attack and he rode there until they reached Virginia City.

On another trip through the south pass, near Salt Lake City, she met a stranger coming from the north, who passed without stopping. This behavior was unheard of on the long lonely trail. The next day three Vigilantes from Virginia City rode up and asked if she had met a stranger. He was an escaped murderer heading east. In a few days they returned with their prisoner.

On this trip Mrs. Yates brought back three barrels of apples from Missouri, made pies and sold them to the miners in Virginia City for a dollar a piece. That was quite a price for a pie in the 1860's even in the gold camps. Considering the long haul for the apples the price was not great.

The first time only was made by using cows to pull the wagon. Thereafter good horses and mules were used. The lady, herself rode side-saddle and many

horses in the Gallatin were descended from those she brought across the plains.

Mrs. Yates built some cabins at "Pilgrim's Rest" on Foster Creek where she housed the new comers until they could get located on land of their own. It is strange that she never homesteaded but eventually bought a place.

From her activities it may be assumed that "Granny Yates" was a lady of great character and determination. She accomplished what a great many men could not have done. She had no formal education and could neither read nor write. She was an ardent Democrat and blamed every drawback under an administration of the opposing party on the "Black Republicans". The Bible was her authority and she apparently gained much comfort from quoting, or misquoting from its pages. Any attempt to correct her was met with such indignation that the offender did not press the correction.

She insisted on proper conduct in all those around her and was unyielding even with her grandchildren. In one instance at church she snatched up a child, who was running up and down the aisle, and administered a sound spanking in the presence of his parents, and the ~~con~~ congregation. There was no further disturbance in her presence. Modern day ministers would probably enjoy having her as a member of their congregations!

Mrs. Yates was five feet seven or eight inches tall, sturdily built and well able to take care of herself. A story is told of her ability to make things do. In her later life, a grandson or great-grandson stopped at her home near Belgrade to get her shopping list on a trip to Bozeman. Since in the horse and buggy days sometimes several months went by between trips. One time she ordered a corset and the purchased one brought back was too long. Not wishing to wait for several months until the next trip to have it exchanged, Granny had her own ideas about how to remedy the matter. She took the garment out to the chopping block and hacked it down to the proper size.

~~After all her children were grown and had homes of their own she took an orphaned boy to raise. He was about ten years old and t~~

After all her children were grown and had homes of their own she took an orphaned boy to raise. He was about ten years old and gave her companionship for some years. Even at an advanced age she rode horseback about the valley to visit her friends and relatives. Once she killed a badger with a shovel for molesting her garden.

When her eye-sight failed she sat for hours rocking and talking to herself. Her private conversation should have been most interesting, considering her long life of many adventures but she would not let any one listen in. Once a great grandson attempted to secretly; but he was discovered and driven from the room with Granny's cane in attendance at his rear extremity.

Some of her descendants returned to Missouri; but many are scattered over Montana and other western states. At one time it was estimated that she had 60 grand children and 90 great grandchildren.

One of her sons was killed on the Yellowstone by the Indians in the 1870's. Another was drowned at a point where the Boulder River flows in to the Jefferson.

A son-in-law, C.C. Collins, is supposed to have been present at the hanging of Club-foot George Lane in 1864, and also at the hanging of Captain Slade.

Granny Yates had enough experiences in her life time to fill several books. It is too bad some enterprising individual did not make the attempt when she was here to give first hand information. There are many other pioneers whose true stories would make fiction seem tame by comparison; but those stories are buried with them.

Granny Yates Picnic Held

The annual Granny Yates Picnic was held recently in Three Forks. Following is an account of Granny Yates' travels to Montana.

The article was published in the Three Forks Herald on July 24, 1930. It was submitted by Terry Murphy.

Sunday, more than two hundred and fifty relatives including a few invited guests assembled together at the Burns grove in Manhattan to celebrate the memory of "Granny" Yates who passed away a number of years ago.

This was the fourth annual picnic given in memory of Mrs. Yates when all descendants make an effort to attend or send a member of their family as a representative. At this event relatives meet who have not seen each other for a number of years or since the last annual meeting. Each year some are gone from the midst in death, while always there are new faces in the group, through the birth of children in the past year and others who have married.

This picnic has become one of the largest social events in Gallatin County and no doubt is the largest gathering of any one family and relatives in the state.

Sunday, six generations were present, the oldest "Uncle" Sol Yates, a son of Mrs. Yates, 86 years old, and the youngest was year old Lloyd Cox, son of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Cox.

A bountiful dinner was served by the ladies, who had brought baskets loaded for the occasion. Cold drinks of lemonade and punch was served in the shade of the trees. The menu consisting of all the season's fruits and vegetables was greatly enjoyed. Cake, ice cream, fruits and chicken being a portion of the menu.

Guests were noted from all parts of the state, some coming from Missoula, Butte, Deer Lodge, Helena, Great Falls, Bozeman and all the nearby towns.

Mrs. Yates, in whose honor the gathering is held each year came to Montana in 1864. Mrs. Yates had experienced some unusual events in her life and had performed deeds that now would be considered almost impossible, for instance after her marriage to Solonian Yates when she was only 17 years old in Virginia, she went with her husband to Jackson County, Missouri traveling over 1,600 miles on horseback. They made their home on a farm in that county. Eleven children were born. In the early fifties Mr. Yates died and in 1864 Mrs. Yates and three of her sons started for Montana with an oxen team. They were ninety-eight days making the trip from Fairview, Gentry County, now Denver, Missouri. Arriving at Virginia City they unloaded and stayed there that year. Three wagons were in their party.

The next year they returned to Missouri. Mrs. Yates and her two sons Sol and George, the daughter Anna being married to Mr. Sol Miller and the other son remained in Montana. Mrs. Yates and her two sons returned to Montana in 1866, and this time there was a large train. The Yates went to bring back cattle and farming

implements. They came over the new route and "Uncle" Sol when speaking of the trip, stated that this time they were in danger of being attacked by Indians. They were met by Jim Bridger at Fort Laramie near Fort Reno and here were guided over the Bridger trail by way of the Big Horn and Powderville on to Bozeman.

Mrs. Yates went on to Virginia City and stayed with her daughter, Mrs. Sol Miller, now well known as "Aunt Anna" and residing near Belgrade.

Mr. Yates kept his cattle at the mouth of Willow Creek. Mr. Yates then ran a 'Bull Train' from Fort Benton to Gallatin to Ogden and to Helena, on to Fort Benton and to Kansas. Later he located on a ranch near Great Falls and moved to Belgrade about twenty-two years ago and lives with his brother, G.L. Yates on Foster Creek out of Belgrade.

"Uncle Yates" relates in a most interesting manner the early day life of Montana. He is failing in health, but enjoyed mingling with the crowd, and meeting the members of the large family. Mrs. Miller who is past seventy is in good health and was present to greet the large throng of visitors who came to the grounds all day long.

Granny Yates was 92 years old when she died.

HISTORICALLY Speaking

Lyle K. Williams

IN MEMORY OF GRANDMOTHER

YATES

*May 17
New York Herald 1892*

In the several newspaper articles which have been published relating to the life and death of Grandmother Yates, a few errors in dates, number of descendants, etc., have been made. The following facts have been given to the writer by one of her daughters and will be gladly received by her friends and relatives as being authentic.

Mrs. Mary L. Yates passed away at the ranch home of her youngest daughter, Mrs. Annie Millie on Thursday morning, April 25, 1907. Her death was due to general debility resulting from old age. It was not her lot to have to suffer from any pain racking disease, but a gradual giving away of her vital strength and her death was as peaceful as falling asleep. The funeral took place at 12 p.m. on Saturday, April 27, from Dry Creek Baptist Church, Rev. M.L. Rickman of Helena conducting the service. The church was crowded to its fullest capacity with friends and relatives. She was laid to rest in the Dry Creek Cemetery.

Miss Mary L. Wells was born in Lee County, Virginia, on November 12, 1815, passing her childhood and growing up to woman's estate under the parental roof. At the age of 19 she was united in wedlock to Solomon Yates, a young man of excellent qualities and together they set out on the self same day for the state of Missouri. The entire distance, some 1000 miles, was traveled on horseback; time required to cover the distance was 37 days. The new home was reached with out a mishap of any kind. They lived in several counties in Missouri, finally moving in to Gentry County, where the husband and father was stricken with illness from which he could not recover and crossed the dark valley of death, leaving his wife and children to mourn his loss. With a fortitude rarely seen in women today, Mrs. Yates took up the battle of life for self and children, which was bravely and successfully fought. Of the family of eleven children, six boys and five girls, two of the children died in childhood.

In 1864, Mrs. Yates and her unmarried children came to Montana and located at Virginia City. In the fall of 1865 she went back to Missouri where she remained during the winter, again returning to Montana the following year. In all she journeyed across the plains thirteen times and as the trips were made before the advent of the "iron horse" and the luxurious Pullman, she showed that fortitude and endurance it was her fortune to possess.

In 1873, one son, Samuel P., was drowned in the Jefferson River

while driving a bunch of cattle across the stream. Another son, Zacariah, while on a prospecting trip in the Black Hills in 1875, was killed in a fight with a band of marauding Indians. Her six surviving children are: Mrs. J.M. Sitton, Mrs. C.C. Collins and Mrs. Annie Miller, all living on ranches in Gallatin County. The sons living are: Solomon Yates, Great Falls; George Yates, Billings; Benjamin Yates, Elko, Nevada. She leaves beside her six children, thirty-nine grandchildren, 112 great-grandchildren and eleven great-great-grandchildren.

For seventy-three years she was a faithful member of the Baptist Church, accepting the teaching of that dear old book, her family Bible.

For several years before her death, she was totally blind, but through that affliction she bore up bravely, as she always had through the many other afflictions of a useful life. What a consolation to her loved ones to know that she is now in that land where the blind can see, and how forcibly these words come to us, "Precious in the sight of the Lord are the death of His saints." Her family Bible was a precious book to her and is reverently looked upon by the younger generations of the family as an almost precious treasure in the way of an heirloom. It was printed nearly two hundred years ago and has been in the family about 140 years. She was a woman of remarkable force of character and was always true to her friends and loved ones. She showed genuine loyalty to her husband as she never remarried, but remained a widow fifty-two years, remaining true to her first love.

The following extract, given in her own words, is an interesting account and related a few of her many thrilling experiences:

"I was born Sunday, November 12, 1815. I was married in Lee County, Virginia and started in at pioneering as soon as the ceremony was concluded, as I left the church on horseback and rode all the way through to the far west, as it was then, arriving in Jackson County, Missouri October 26. We remained there for two years and then moved to the "Platte Purchase," settling near Platte City, where we lived several years. From there we moved to Nodaway and Andrews Counties, where we lived for 15 years. From Andrews County, we moved to Gentry, where I buried my husband and struggled through the great Civil War. Constant discouragement made me conclude to tear away from the fond attachments of thirty years; leave the land I had found a wilderness and seen blossom as the rose, and again seek frontier life still farther west.

May 5, 1864, with my unmarried children, I started for Virginia City, Montana. I came up the South

Platte, through old Forts Kearney, Laramie, Hotleek and the Bitter Creek Valley, on the California overland route. Our train being a large one, the Indians gave us no trouble, nor did we have any serious ill luck, with the exception of our cattle becoming "alkali'd." We were comfortably outfitted and provisioned for a year. I made and sold butter all the way across the plains. I also had fresh eggs on this trip as I had a number of chickens along. When the wood was plentiful we tied an ample supply under the wagon beds to last over the desert places and were always providential. A train just ahead of us had its stock stampeded, two men killed and two women captured. We hauled the families to Deep Creek station but had to leave their supplies on the road. I suppose the Indians took what they wanted and burned the rest. A party from Illinois travelled with us a few days but concluding that we went too slow, pulled on three miles beyond where we camped at Cold Springs. They stopped to feed at noon, when the Indians ran their stock off and killed two men. Our men followed and recovered all of the stock they could, also buried the dead, the late Rev. Mr. Bird of Bozeman officiating. It was a wholesome lesson for us. Nearly every accident on the plains of that nature was the result of foolhardiness or carelessness. A train afterwards overtook us and we were informed that they had found two empty graves and two nude corpses near the graves. The Indians had evidently been watching, and saw us roll the dead in their blankets.

The next camp was a stage station. A lot of emigrants had been there the night before and engaged in a warm political discussion. Argument ran high for a time; then blows followed, when one Reuben Cox, now of Idaho, single handed, cleaned out the whole of one faction. The station was kept by half breed Indians, and it was laughable to hear them tell of the fight. On a few long hills we had to double team. I remember one mountain where the timber was very dense. It was almost dark and we were in terror of Indians, for we had noticed them following us some miles back, before entering the timber. Some girls went into the bushes to pick berries and being out of hearing we were sure the Indians had gotten them. Their parents were almost frantic until they were found. We came on through Echo and Weber canyons to Ogden, then a little Mormon hamlet. Then we passed up Gear River where we had the finest fishing I have ever seen. Forward we went across to Snake River over the sand holes route. This trail was so called because you could did holes in the sand and find water anywhere, but we had to hurry in getting water or the holes would be gone. It filled right up again with sand without leaving any trace of the hole. On, up what is known as the old stage route, we pushed, arriving in Virginia City October 7th.

A few families were already there when we came, and later some others; we had quite a village. I brought 30 head of cattle with me and we never lost one all winter.

The day I got to Virginia a man was hung. He had been mining with a partner and ran away with the proceeds. The Vigilantes followed him down toward Utah, catching him in Red Rock. They brought him back and tied him to the fatal tree - for example to all evil doers. The winter of 64-65 was a red letter year for Utah. A freight blockade brought necessities up so high that the people forgot all about reasonable prices, and that territory shipped nearly everything in the fruit, vegetable and flour line. The latter sold for \$1.00 a pound, potatoes 60 cents per pound and everything else in proportion. The merchants were holding flour for higher prices, when the miners held a meeting and agreed to give them the above price and distribute it among those who needed it. Which they did.

September '65, I took one of my boys and started back to Missouri with a mule team, joining a train of 30 wagons. Not being loaded, we made a quick trip, reaching home before cold weather. Going down the Platte we came to a station where some men had been attacked and had killed two Indians. One woman went to her mess box, took out a long butcher knife and scalped one of the Indians from his eye brows to his back bone, rolled it up to take home with her. She remarked that she intended to show the people that she had been been to Montana in vain. I stayed on my farm that winter and in May started back to Virginia with a married daughter and her family. We crossed the Platte at the old California crossing and came up through Ash Hollow, headed for the Yellowstone route, a long and tedious drive. We had our daily Indian scares and the birth of my granddaughter to relieve the monotony. Further we fell in with Mr. Rich bringing thirteen wagon loads of guns and ammunition to Fort Ellis. Just this side of the Big Rose Bud we found two new made graves and a wagon. An old man, by the name of Howell and a Dutchman had been killed while fishing. We struck the Yellowstone at Benson's landing, expecting to find a boat, but it had broken loose and gone down the river the day before. So we had to pull up to the present site of Livingston and ford. We raised our wagon beds on ox yokes and got over very well, but the water was very swift and deep. One wagon was capsized and all of its load of merchandise was lost or damaged. We came on through old Fort Ellis to Bozeman, which was then composed of three cabins. We camped where main street now is. The next morning we crossed the West Gallatin about where the crossing is now, and on up the road through Red Bluff, arriving in Virginia City, September 11. The mines in Alder Gulch begun to be worked out and new ones being discovered elsewhere, people began to scatter, a great many going to Helena to Last Chance and Confederate gulches.

In '68 I took my cattle to South Boulder and took up a ranch. In '69, I sold out and with my two boys started to go back to Missouri to stay. I took a team to Fort Benton intending to sell it, but not being offered enough took it on the boat with me as far as Sioux City, Iowa. Here I started my boys across the

Three Forks Here

life, she lived most of the time with her daughter, Mrs. Annie Miller, moving from Dry Creek to Sixteen remaining there three years, then going to her former home in the Little Basin, near the Horseshoe mountains. There she died, April 25, 1907, at the age of 91 years, five months and 13 days.

SOLOMON YATES

First Generation

1. Solomon¹ YATES, son of William YATES and Celia (Seley?) Yates, was born in Lee Co., VA 1802. Solomon died circa 1857 in Gentry Co., MO.

He married twice. He married Rachel WELLS in Lee Co., VA, 1825. Rachel was born in Lee Co., VA 1803. Rachel was the daughter of Zachariah WELLS II and Rebecca SHEPARD. Rachel died 1833 in Jackson Co., MO, at 30 years of age. He married Mary Lavina WELLS in Lee Co., VA, September 9, 1834. Mary was born in Lee Co., VA November 12, 1815. Mary¹ was the daughter of Zachariah WELLS II and Rebecca SHEPARD. Mary died April 25, 1907 in Gallatin Co., MT, at 91 years of age. Her body was interred April 27, 1907 in Belgrade, Gallatin Co., MT, Dry Creek Cemetery. On 5 MAY 1864 Mary Wells, with several of her children, joined a wagon train, bossed by Solomon Hill Miller headed for Virginia City, Montana. She also brought with her six shod milk cows and several chickens that provided eggs during the journey. (Later she was credited as the first to bring Plymouth Rock Chickens into the Montana Territory.) The trip was made up the South Platte through old Fort Kearney, Laramie, Halleck, and the Bitter Creek Valley on the California Overland Route.

Solomon YATES and Rachel WELLS had the following children:

- 2 i. William H.² YATES² was born in Lee Co., VA circa 1826.³ William died December 14, 1885 in Andrew Co., MO, at 59 years of age.⁴ He married Angeline SHEPARD March 15, 1848.⁵ Angeline was born 1833. (Additional notes for Angeline SHEPARD.⁶)
- + 3 ii. Rebecca YATES was born December 12, 1827.
- + 4 iii. Isaac Jefferson YATES was born March 20, 1832.
- + 5 iv. George Anderson YATES was born July 1832.

Solomon YATES and Mary Lavina WELLS had the following children:

- + 6 v. Rachel E. YATES was born May 25, 1835.
- + 7 vi. Lavina YATES was born April 12, 1837.
- + 8 vii. Benjamin Franklin YATES was born February 16, 1839.
- + 9 viii. Evaline YATES was born April 22, 1841.
- 10 ix. Elizabeth A. YATES⁷ was born in Andrew County, MO June 24, 1844. Elizabeth died June 4, 1870 in Clay Co., MO, at 25 years of age.
- 11 x. Solomon YATES Jr.⁸ was born in Albany, Worth Co., MO June 11, 1845. Solomon died February 11, 1931 in Bozeman, Gallatin Co., MT, at 85 years of age.⁹ His body was interred February 13, 1931 in Gallatin Co., MT, Dry Creek. Sol was wounded by an Indian's arrow on one of the trips from MO to Montana. One morning on the Yellowstone when the stock was being taken down to the river for watering before starting on the long day, Indians rose out of the tulies and attacked the herders. The men on the bluff immediately fired and drove off the attacking Indians. Sol was wounded in the leg -- the only injury from the attack. Sol managed to jump on the back of his brother Ben's horse and they returned safely to camp. His leg was bound and splinted and tied to the wagon braces. He recovered without any infirmity of any kind.¹⁰ For awhile he drove freight from Virginia City to Fort Benton. He was a wagon boss for George Samples, made one trip for the old Diamond R Transportation Company, and for a long time was in the employ of I.G. Baker & Co. of Fort Benton. Much of his work carried him through Indian Country and into Canada, but he was embittered against the Indians and

1. Notes of Ellen Byrne from Yates Publishing Co.; *Generations Pay Honor to Memory of a Real Pioneer Mother*, Great Falls Tribune 8/12/29; and 1860 Gentry County, MO Census roll 620 book 1 page 855.

2. Personal Correspondence on file from Mary DeCristoforo Portland, OR.

3. Personal Correspondence on file from Mary DeCristoforo Portland, OR.

4. Personal Correspondence on file from Mary DeCristoforo Portland, OR.

5. Personal Correspondence on file from Mary DeCristoforo Portland, OR.

6. Personal Correspondence on file from Mary DeCristoforo Portland, OR.

7. Personal Correspondence on file from Mary DeCristoforo Portland, OR.

8. Death Certificate Gallatin Co., MT Book 3 p. "Y"; and 1860 Gentry County, MO Census roll 620 book 1 page 855.

9. Age 85 years, 8 mo.

10. Ref. Davis, p. 2.

he finally quit teaming at Calgary after he had been warned by Joe Kipp that the Indians had threatened to kill him. He returned to Fort Benton where he was made a deputy by Sheriff Black of Choteau County. Yates went to Great Falls when it was first laid out, hauling for James J. Hill and Paris Gibson from Fort Benton to Great Falls and on various other trips in the territory. When Cascade County was created, taking its land primarily from Choteau County, C. P. Downing was appointed Sheriff and he made Sol one of his deputies. Later he served as city jailer under the reign of George Streit and John Guerin, and when H. E. Benner was elected Sheriff, Yates was made county jailer, serving through the four years of Benner's two terms and through part of the succeeding two terms under Sheriff Ed Hogan. Because Sol had long ago lost the sight in one eye and the vision in his other eye was failing, he left the County service in 1919 and returned to the Gallatin Valley to make his home with relatives.¹¹ Solomon Yates, Jr., never married.

- + 12 xi. **Lucie Anne (Annie) YATES** was born October 1, 1847.
- 13 xii. **Samuel P. YATES**¹² was born in Savannah, Andrew County, MO 1849. **Samuel** died June 20, 1872 in Jefferson River, Jefferson Co., MT Territory, at 22 years of age. He drowned in the slough where the Jefferson and South Boulder Rivers meet while taking cattle across the river. He panicked during efforts to make his horse swim to shore, became entangled in the trappings of the horse, and both rider and animal drowned.
- 14 xiii. **Zachariah YATES**¹³ was born in Missouri November 21, 1853. **Zachariah** died April 12, 1874 in Big Horn Co., MT, at 20 years of age.¹⁴ He was killed by Indians on the Little Big Horn River.
- + 15 xiv. **George L. YATES** was born November 30, 1855.

11. Great Falls Tribune 8/12/29.

12. *Avant Courier*, Bozeman, Gallatin Co., MT Obituary of Samuel Yates, Thursday June 27, 1872 p. 3 col. 4; and 1860 Gentry County, MO Census roll 620 book 1 page 855.

13. 1860 Gentry County, MO Census roll 620, book 1, page 855.

14. *History of Montana 1739-1885* (Warner, Beers & Company, 1885), pg. 81-85.

MARY WELLS (GRANNY) YATES

Mildred Watson relates the following history of this well-known pioneer:

"Mary Wells Yates, who later became known as Granny Yates, was born in Lee County, Virginia on November 12, 1815. Her father's name was Zacharia Wells.

"On September 9, 1834, she married Solomon Yates who was born in 1802 and was the widower of her sister, Rachel. He had four children, William, Rebecca, Isaac and George Anderson, who needed a mother. Solomon and Mary rode horseback to the Far West, her new home in Missouri, in 37 days. The distance was about 1600 miles.

"Mary and Solomon lived in Jackson County about two years before moving to the Platte Purchase in Northwest Missouri, and then to Nodaway and Andrews Counties where they lived about 15 years. Nine children were born to them there; Rachel, named for Mary's sister, 1835-1910 - Lavina, 1837-1917 - Benjamin Franklin, 1839-1929 - Evaline, 1841-1875 - Solomon, 1845-1929 - Ann Lucy, 1847-1936, Samuel P., 1849-1872 - Zachariah, 1853-1874 and George L., 1856-1934.

"Mary's husband, Solomon Yates, died of typhoid fever in Gentry, Missouri in 1858. Mary struggled during the early Civil War years. News came in 1863 of a gold strike in Montana. On May 5, 1864, she joined a wagon train with three of her older boys. She drove six shod cows which she milked and made butter as the utensil bounded along the rough trail. She had eggs because she also took chickens with her. Later it was said she brought the first Plymouth Rocks to the Montana Territory.

"When she reached Virginia City, Montana, Mary sold the cows at a profit which financed another trip back to Missouri in 1864. This time she brought more of her children and came up the Missouri River to Fort Benton.

"On some trips, Mary drove horse or mule teams. She crossed the plains between Missouri and Montana thirteen times. On several of the later trips, she served as guide or organizer for emigrant parties. She brought all of her relatives and friends from Missouri and any others who wanted to come.

"On one trip, Mary brought barrels of dried apples. She made and sold apple pies to the miners for a dollar apiece. She seemed capable of surviving the frontier life she chose. She was said to be about five feet seven inches tall and weighed 160 pounds. She often rode horseback. She brought 30 head of cattle and didn't lose one during the winter. During the winter of 1864-65, flour sold for \$1.00 a pound; other staples were in proportion.

"Mary set up some of the newcomers in cabins she built. They could use these until they found a place of their own. This place was called "Pilgrims Rest" and was located on Foster Creek where it runs into Smith Creek.

In 1865, Mary took one of her boys and started back to Missouri with a mule team, joining a train of 30 wagons. These were not loaded so made a quick trip and reached home before cold weather. In May she started back to Virginia City with a married daughter and her family. A granddaughter was born on the way. They had to ford the river at Livingston. They came

through old Fort Ellis to Bozeman, which consisted of three cabins. They camped where Main Street is now. The next morning they crossed the West Gallatin and went on to Red Bluff, arriving in Virginia City, September 11.

"In 1868, she took her cattle to the South Boulder River Valley. After selling out in 1869, she started back to Missouri with her two boys to stay. She took a team to Fort Benton intending to sell it but since she couldn't get what she wanted for it, she took it on the boat to Sioux City, Iowa. Here she started her two boys across the country horseback for home and she went by train to St. Joe.

"In the Spring of 1870, she started back with her entire family. She planned to sell out at Omaha and travel by rail but couldn't get what she wanted so she and some others decided to charter three cars and all 33 people left together with 17 horses, seven wagons and seven wagon loads. They got everything in but three wagon wheels, which they had to pay freight on. They arrived at the mines at Radersburg, Montana where she stayed for two years before returning to Missouri. Her son took her and Rev. Stateler to the railroad.

"Mary returned to Radersburg for a year and then moved to the North Boulder River Valley where she obtained a ranch. At this time her son, Samuel, drowned in the Jefferson River. This happened in 1872. That Fall she returned to Missouri on business and got back to her ranch in May, 1877.

"Son, Zachariah, was killed in an Indian attack on the Yellowstone Expedition in 1874.

"In August, Mary sold out and moved to Dry Creek, north of Belgrade, Montana. She remained there except for two short trips to Missouri, coming back once via Nevada.

"The last twelve years of her life, Granny Yates lived mostly with her daughter, Mrs. Annie Miller, moving from Dry Creek to Sixteen where she remained three years, then went to the Little Basin in the Horseshoe Hills. There she died April 25, 1907, at the age of ninety-one years."

PIONEER

Granny Yates

Mary L. Wells began her long and colorful life on November 12, 1815, in Lee County, Virginia. Her father, Zachariah Wells, had immigrated from Wales in 1762 and her mother Rebecca had come from Ireland in that same year.

Mary's sister Rachel married Solomon Yates, the owner of an estate in Missouri. When the sister died, Solomon returned immediately to Virginia to marry Mary. The Wells family was a strict family who lived completely by the Bible. They did not know if it was proper for a sister to marry her brother-in-law, so the wedding was postponed until the Bible had been searched for answer. On September 9, 1834, Mary and Solomon were married in Lee County, Virginia. The nickname Polly appears on the marriage license.

Immediately after the ceremony, the couple left for Missouri, and home to Solomon's three children, Idsac, Anderson, and Becca. The sixteen hundred mile trip was covered in thirty-seven days of steady riding. The weary horseback riders reached their destination in Jackson County, Missouri, with no mishaps.

The couple lived in Jackson County for two years before they were drawn by new land in Platte County. After ten years, they sold this farm to Lish Arrington who paid part of the purchase price in slaves. Solomon and Mary packed up their belongings, their growing family, and their slaves, and moved to Andrew County. They purchased a bigger farm in Andrew County. Two years later they sold out and moved to Gentry County. It was in Gentry County, Missouri, where Mary's husband died and was buried.

Mary Yates was left with nine living children and three step-children. The children were Idsac, Anderson, Becca, Benjamin, Rachel, Vina, Solomon, Evaline, Zachariah, Samuel, Anna Lucy, and George L. Two children, Willie and Bettie, died in infancy.

The entire family stayed in Gentry County until after the Civil War began. Mary was quite capable of taking care of her large family. While still living on the farm, she had trouble with guerrilla forces. One day a group came and stole a barrel of her good meat. As the soldiers left, she told them she had "pizened" the meat. Later, she recovered the meat where the soldiers had dumped it.

Mary heard about the opportunities to be found in the West. She sold her land, freed her slaves, and joined a wagon train heading for

Montana. The train left from Denver, Worth County, Missouri. The boss of the large emigrant train was Solomon H. Miller, whom Anna Lucy married three months after the wagon train reached Virginia City.

On the first trip west in May 1864, Mary brought only her three oldest sons. The other children remained in Missouri with relatives. With the money from the sale, Mary purchased a team of oxen and six shod milk cows. The oxen were used to pull the wagon and the cows were used for fresh milk. They had fresh butter as the butter was churned while fastened on the side of the wagon. The wagon train arrived in Alder Gulch on September 1, 1864.

Mary sold her cows for such a high price in Alder Gulch that she was able to finance a round trip back to Missouri in 1865 to bring out her other children. Granny Yates, as she became known, was to cross the prairie thirteen times. Six times she returned to Missouri where she persuaded friends and relatives to travel to Montana. She acted as guide and organizer for these journeys and was a booster for a new life in the West. Some people say that she actually became the boss of these emigrant trains.

On the trips back to Missouri, she crossed the plains twice with bull trains, went down the Missouri River by steamboat, and traveled back and forth after the railroad was completed. On the return trips, she used horses and mules to pull the wagons. Oxen were used only for the first trip to Montana. She rode a good portion of the distance that she traveled by side-saddle. She felt that Montana needed plain home folks to mingle with the miners, gamblers, and outlaws. This was her way of helping to stock Montana with settled home folks.

Granny Yates had many experiences during her travels back and forth across the continent. The second time she took the river trip from Fort Benton, the flat boat was help up by herds of buffalo crossing the river. On her third trip up the Yellowstone in 1866, she met Indian trouble. When the train was attacked, she grabbed her youngest son George L., who was about nine, and put him into a flour barrel. She took her gun and joined the men to ward off the Indian attack. Her son Solomon was wounded in the leg, but he jumped onto a horse and rode to safety.

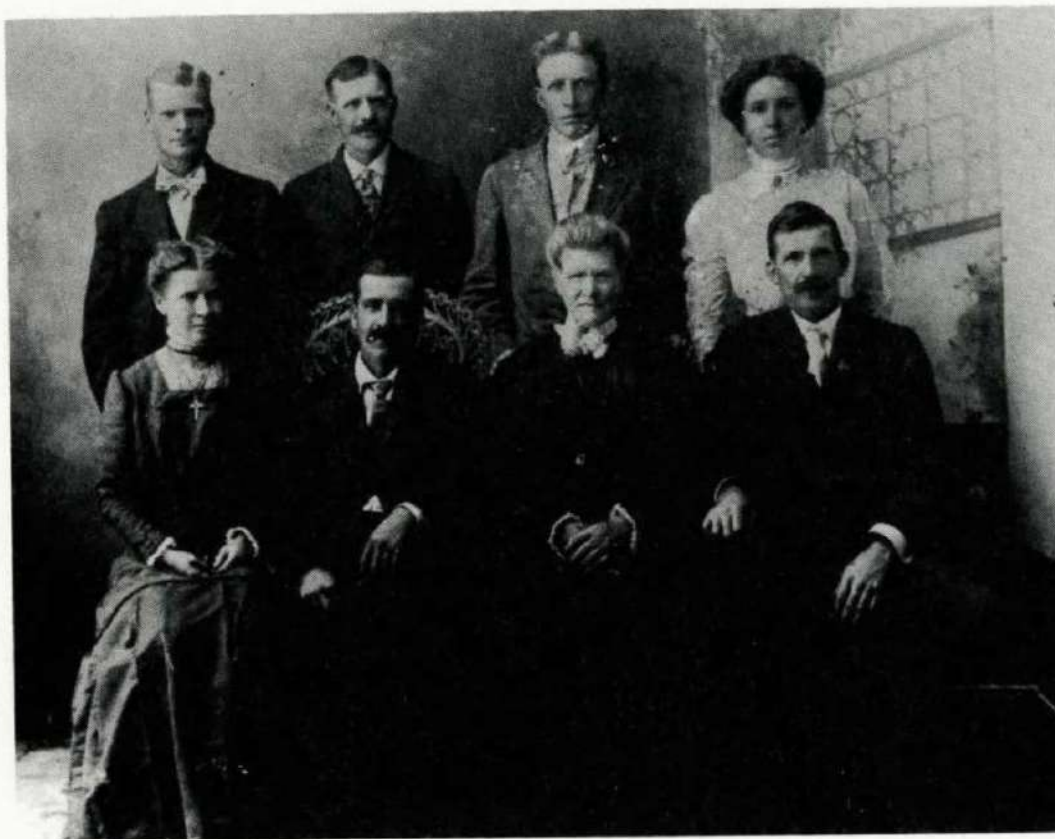
On another trip, she was going through the South Pass near Salt Lake City when she met a stranger who did not stop and talk. The next day she was asked by the Vigilantes if she had seen a stranger. Three days later, the Vigilantes returned with the prisoner who was an escaped murderer.

On one of the later trips, she had to stop long enough to deliver a baby, her granddaughter Jenny Collins. On another trip, she brought

back three barrels of Missouri apples. She made homemade pies and sold them to the miners in Virginia City for one dollar. On the last trip, she returned by way of the Oregon Short Line to Dillon.

Granny and her family remained in Virginia City until 1875. During the eleven years spent in that town, the family witnessed many historical events. Her son-in-law, C. C. Collins, was present at the hanging of Clubfoot George Lane in 1864 and the hanging of Captain Slade. She witnessed the lawlessness of Henry Plummer's gang and the work of the Vigilantes. During this time, Granny remained a "hard shell Baptist" even though there was no Baptist Church in Virginia City. There was only a Methodist Church and to Granny, a Methodist was no good and almost as bad as a "Black Republican."

Tragedy struck Mary Yates and she lost two sons within two years. In 1873, her son Samuel P. drowned in the Jefferson River while driving



Standing: Samuel Patton Miler, Zachary Miller, Lemuel Price Miller, Emma Miller Durham, Seated: Mary Ellen Miller Stiles, Jacob Fray Miller, Anna Lucy Miller, George Levy Miller

a herd of cattle across the river. In 1875, her son, Zachariah, was killed during a fight with a band of marauding Indians. He had been prospecting for gold in the Black Hills.

In 1875 Granny moved to the Gallatin Valley. She built some cabins on Foster Creek, north of the present day Belgrade. These cabins, appropriately called "Pilgrim's Rest," were built for the use of new comers to the Valley who did not yet have homes. During all this time, Granny never homesteaded, but, instead, bought a place which was about eight miles north of the present site of Belgrade. She lived there until she was unable to live by herself.

Granny Yates was about five feet seven inches tall and was sturdily built. She was not only physically strong, but also strong-willed. After her marriage, she never heard from her parents. She had no idea even when they died. She had no formal education and could neither read nor write. She lived by the Bible and got comfort from quoting and misquoting it. If anyone tried to correct her when she misquoted the Bible, she became indignant. She did not like to be corrected.

Granny was a strong Democrat and if something went wrong in an administration, she would blame it onto the "Black Republicans".

She was a believer in proper conduct. One Sunday morning during church services at the Dry Creek Baptist Church, she demonstrated this. A little child was running up and down the aisle during the service. She snatched up the child and administered a spanking in front of the parents and the congregation. After this, there was no further disturbances made in Granny Yates' presence. She believed her children should act properly and so should everyone else's. She insisted on this, when she raised a ten-year-old orphan boy after her own children were grown. Using that principle, she had raised her thirteen children by herself. She never remarried. The only way that she would have remarried was if he had been a southern general.

Granny Yates was an ingenious person. People in the Dry Creek area traveled to Bozeman to do their shopping. This trip was taken once every few months. One day a grandson stopped by and got Granny's shopping list. On this list was a new corset. The grandson got the corset, but it was too large. He had miscalculated Granny's size. When the boy returned that evening, Granny discovered the error. She needed the corset and could not wait for another trip to town. She took the corset to the chopping block and hacked it down to fit her.

She was totally blind five years before she died. This curtailed Granny's activities somewhat, but did not stop her completely. She could still see, even though she had lost her eyesight. One day at

church, Granny was all dressed up and was holding her great-granddaughter. As she sat there, Granny felt the little child's face and said, "Ain't she purty."



Anna Lucy (Yates) Miller
and daughter Mary Ellen

Granny used to sit and rock for hours thinking about her earlier days. During this time, she would talk to herself. This was precious time to Granny and she did not want anyone to hear. One day, her great-granson, Harold Miller, decided to hide in the room. Granny somehow discovered him and drove him from the room with her gold-headed cane in attendance at his rear extremity. The great-grandson did get revenge one day when he had to walk Granny to the bathroom behind the house. He deliberately walked her into the clothesline and "tried to string her up." During her blind days, Granny always carried a cane hooked onto her arm. When this little great-grandson teased her, she would hook him with the end of her cane. That can is now in the possession of great-great-grandson Dave Miller.

Even at an advanced age, Granny rode by horseback to visit her neighbors. One day she killed a badger with a shovel for molesting her garden. She remained extremely independent. She was confined to bed for only three weeks before she died.

Mrs. Mary L. Wells Yates died at the home of her youngest daughter, Mrs. Annie Miller, at Little Basin near the Horseshoe Hills north of Belgrade on April 25, 1907. She was ninety-one years, five months, and thirteen days old. The funeral took place at noon on Saturday, April 27, at the Dry Creek Baptist Church. The Reverend Rickman of Helena and one-time pastor at the Dry Creek Baptist Church conducted the services. Burial was in the family plot at the Dry Creek Cemetery.

At the time of her death, Granny had six living children. Three daughters, Mrs. James Sitton, Mrs. C. C. Collins, and Mrs. Annie Miller, all lived on farms in the Gallatin Valley. Her son Solomon lived in Great Falls; George lived in Billings; and Benjamin lived in Elko, Nevada. In addition she was survived by sixty grandchildren, three of whom lived in Bozeman: Kate Cown, Mrs. Louis Accola, and Mrs. T. S. Stiles. She was survived also by ninety great-grandchildren and eleven great-great-grandchildren.

She had spent most of the last five years of her life with her daughters, Mrs. C. C. Collins and Mrs. Annie Miller. At the time of her death, she was living with her daughter Annie and Annie's son Jacob. Upon Granny's death, her things were distributed to various family members. The one prize possession was the family Bible. The Bible was printed about two hundred fifty years ago and had been in the family 143 years at the time of Granny Yates' death. The Bible was given to the granddaughter, Mrs. Mary Ellen Stiles. At the time of Mrs. Stiles's death, the location of the Bible was unknown.

Six years before Granny Yates died, the family had a five-generation picture taken. This picture included Mary (Polly) Yates, her daughter Mrs. C. C. Collins (Vina), her granddaughter Mrs. Jim Ballard, her great-granddaughter Mrs. Henry Cloninger, and her great-great-granddaughter Carrie.



Five Generations

History submitted by:

Mary Ellen (Miller) Fitzgerald

Great-great-granddaughter
Relationship to pioneer