

Travel Through History

1856, May 1 - Martha Canary is born in Mercer County near the town of Princeton, Missouri. She was to become the eldest of six siblings.

1865 - Martha moves with her family to Virginia City, Montana Territory.

1866, spring - Martha's mother, (Charlotte M. Canary) dies in Blackfoot City mining camp, Montana Territory.

1867 - Martha's father (Robert Willson Canary) dies in Utah orphaning the Canary children.

1868 - Martha arrives in the Wyoming Territory and begins exploration within the area.

1873 - Captain James Egan allegedly christens Martha Canary with the nickname "Calamity Jane" after she saved his life during an Indian campaign at Goose Creek, Wyoming.

1875, May-June - Newton and Jenney Expedition leaves Ft. Laramie to the Black Hills. Calamity Jane accompanied expedition without proper authority and was forced to return.

1875, fall - Gold discovered in Whitewood Creek and adjacent tributaries.

1876, June - Calamity Jane leaves Ft. Laramie and heads for the Black Hills with many famous Deadwood legends, including James Butler Hickok, Colorado Charlie Utter, and White-Eyed Anderson.

1876, August 2 - Wild Bill Hickok is murdered by Jack McCall in the No. 10 Saloon.

1878 - Calamity Jane nurses many people when the small pox epidemic hits the Black Hills.

1879 - Jane works as a bullwhacker, driving teams between Pierre, Fort Pierre, and Rapid City, Dakota Territory.

1891 - Calamity Jane marries Clinton Burke (Burk), a hack driver in El Paso, Texas.

1896 - Calamity Jane tours with Kohl & Middleton throughout the United States. An autobiography titled *The Life and Adventures of Calamity Jane by Herself* is published. Many speculate that it was written by a ghostwriter.

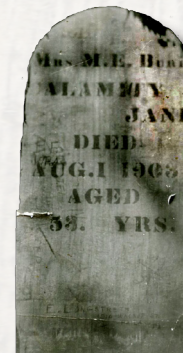
1901 - Calamity Jane performs in the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York.

1903, August 1 - Calamity Jane dies in Terry, South Dakota, at the Calloway Hotel. She is buried beside James Butler Hickok at Mt. Moriah Cemetery in Deadwood, South Dakota.



Portrait of Martha Canary circa 1880-1882 while she was living in Miles City, Montana Territory.

Visit the grave of
Calamity Jane
at Mt. Moriah Cemetery in
Deadwood, South Dakota



City of Deadwood
Historic Preservation Office
108 Sherman Street
Deadwood, SD 57732
Tel.: (605) 578-2082
www.cityofdeadwood.com



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DEADWOOD Martha Canary



CALAMITY JANE

May 1, 1856 - August 1, 1903

HistoryLink

A TRAIL TO DEADWOOD'S PAST



Calamity Jane and photographer John B. Mayo pose in front of Wild Bill's grave at Mt. Moriah Cemetery.

1856 - Martha "Calamity Jane" Canary - 1903

Controversy and speculation have clouded the life and times of western legend "Calamity Jane". Stories told about her range from the verifiable to far-fetched fabrications. The truth of this Deadwood legend may never be known, but many historians agree upon some facts.



Mercer County, Missouri to Virginia City, Montana Territory in 1865. Within two years of this move, Martha and her siblings were left orphans with the passing of her mother in 1866 and father in 1867.

Parentless in a wild frontier, Martha Canary relocated to the Wyoming Territory where she worked as a dance-hall girl, waitress, laundress, and prostitute at the railroad camps and military posts along the Union Pacific Railroad. By wearing men's clothing, Martha would disguise her gender. This choice in dress would eventually define her persona later in life.

The future "Calamity Jane" was born Martha Canary in 1856 near Princeton, Missouri to Robert Willson Canary and Charlotte M. Burge. Martha was the oldest of six children born to Robert and Charlotte. Little is known about Martha's childhood other than the family's relocation from

Martha also acquired her nickname "Calamity Jane" during this time. The how and why the name was given remain elusive; however, one account stated Captain James Egan proclaimed at Goose Creek, Wyoming, "I name you Calamity Jane, heroine of the Plains!"

Martha Canary would gain regional and national notoriety through the newspaper articles, dime store novels, books, and even an autobiography. Through these exaggerated publications, Calamity Jane was portrayed as an expert scout, bullwhacker, teamster, crack shot and western heroine. The reality though was she had many unfortunate faults. Alcoholism is a possible explanation for Calamity Jane's fanciful yarns and numerous love affairs including one with western gunfighter James Butler Hickok.

When not on the open road, Calamity Jane could be found at the local saloons drinking, chewing tobacco, and being the boisterous life of the party. Calamity Jane also had a good-hearted and caring side not often seen by the general public. When the small pox epidemic hit the Black Hills and Deadwood, she helped people with the illness without concern for her own well-being.

Calamity Jane's life of adventure ended at age 47. Weary and ailing, Martha boarded a train headed for Terry, South Dakota. Upon arrival, she rented a room at the Calloway Hotel and died on August 1, 1903.

Aged beyond her years, she died of a combination of inflammation of the bowels and pneumonia. She was buried in Mt. Moriah Cemetery beside Wild Bill Hickok, reportedly her dying wish.