

Mary Jane “Marie” Hill Gerrans

Mary Jane Hill was born 10 May 1871 in Kea, Cornwall, England. She was the daughter of James Hill and Mary Ann Martin.¹ Her family lived in Kea, Cornwall, England, where her father was a tin miner. He had immigrated to America in 1870.² Mary, her mother and her brother immigrated in 1876, sailing from Liverpool to New York on the ship “City of Chester”.³ She was naturalized as a citizen in 1877.⁴ On the 1880 census, Mary was living with her parents and brother in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory.⁵ As a girl, she sang at the Citizen’s Hall in Silver Reef, often singing *Sweet Belle Mahone*.⁶

Mary’s father died when she was ten years old,⁷ but her mother never remarried. Mary married John Gerrans about 1890 in Utah Territory; they had one daughter. John died of consumption in 1892 in Salt Lake City and was buried in Mount Olivet Cemetery.⁸ He left Mary with an infant daughter. Mary continued living in Salt Lake City and then moved to New York for several years to take vocal music training under the noted master, George Sweet. She began using the name of Mrs. Marie Gerrans. She returned to Salt Lake City in October of 1899 and opened her own vocal studio. Her specialties were voice placing and tone formation, but she was open for engagements in choir and concert work.⁹

On the 1900 census, Marie was a vocal music teacher, living with her mother and her daughter in the home of her aunt in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah.¹⁰ She went to Paris in 1902 and taught vocal music and did concert work for four years. On her return to Salt Lake City, she opened her studio again on Third North for voice training and interpretations of different languages.¹¹ In 1910, she was living on her “own income” with her mother and daughter in Salt Lake City.¹² She continued living with her daughter’s family in Salt Lake through 1920¹³ but by 1930 they had moved to Los Angeles, California.¹⁴

Marie died 16 May 1933 in Los Angeles.¹⁵ She was said to have had a “delightful dramatic soprano voice”¹⁶ and she shared her talents at recitals, benefits, clubs, church services, and in masonic halls.¹⁷

¹ *Familysearch.org*

² New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957.

³ New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957.

⁴ United States Census, 1920.

⁵ United States Census, 1880.

⁶ Silver Reef Personalities Legends, by Mark A. Pendleton, 1940, p. 11B.

⁷ Utah Death Registers, 1847-1966.

⁸ Utah Cemetery Inventory, 1847-2000; Salt Lake City Cemetery Records, 1848-1992; Utah Death Registers, 1847-1966.

⁹ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 1 October 1899, pp. 5, 10, 14.

¹⁰ United States Census, 1900.

¹¹ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 9 September 1906, p. 20; 13 September 1906, p. 12; *Deseret Evening News*, 8 September 1906, p. 18; 6 September 1907, p. 5; Intermountain Catholic, 23 November 1907, p. 8.

¹² United States Census, 1910.

¹³ United States Census, 1920.

¹⁴ United States Census, 1930.

¹⁵ California Death Index, 1905-1939.

¹⁶ *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, 31 July 1910, p. 28.

¹⁷ *Salt Lake Herald*, 3 February 1899, p. 8; 25 December 1898, p. 16; 13 May 1900, p. 4; 16 June 1907, p. 3; 8 December 1907, p. 19; *Deseret Evening News*, 15 September 1900, p. 5.

[371]

Sweet Belle Mahone.

The Music of this Song can be had of HENRY J. WEHMAN, Song Publisher,
No. 50 Chatham St., New York, or will be sent to any address,
post-paid, on receipt of 40 cents in postage stamps.

Soon beyond the harbor bar
Shall my bark be sailing far ;
O'er the world I wander lone,
Sweet Belle Mahone.
O'er thy grave I weep good-bye—
Hear, oh, hear my lonely cry ;
O, without thee what am I,
Sweet Belle Mahone ?

CHORUS.

Sweet Belle Mahone,
Sweet Belle Mahone ;
Wait for me at heaven's gate,
Sweet Belle Mahone.

Lonely like a withered tree,
What is all the world to me ?
Life and light were all in thee,
Sweet Belle Mahone !
Daisies pale are growing o'er
All my heart can e'er adore ;
Shall I meet thee, ever more,
Sweet Belle Mahone ?—*Chorus.*

Calmly, sweetly, slumber on,
(Only one I call my own !)
While in tears I wander lone,
Sweet Belle Mahone.
Faded now seems everything,
But when comes eternal Spring,
With thee I'll be wandering,
Sweet Belle Mahone ?—*Chorus.*

H. J. Wehman, Song Publisher, 50 Chatham St., N. Y.

Mary sang Sweet Belle Mahone as a girl in Silver Reef (Image from library.duke.edu)

Research by Elaine Young, Silver Reef Foundation historian, 2016
Please email eyoung@youngzones.org for additions and corrections