

CRAMPTON, MARTHA JONES

Martha Jones was born in Utica, New York in 1849, and attended school there and was enrolled in college until her mother died. She then moved to New York City, and began working to support herself as a teacher. There she met and married Robert Crampton, a house painter, and they had three children together.

Mr. Crampton wanted to homestead, and came to Montana first, settling on a property 12 miles north of Billings in 1883. Martha followed him later, bringing three young children and a canary on a strenuous cross-country journey from Jersey City to Billings. Her responsibilities now included all the work of a busy ranch life. There were few other women in the area at the time. Martha once told a women's group that it was a year and three days after arriving at the ranch before she spoke with another woman, and that woman

told her it had been over two years for her. They had plenty of wild game, a cow provided milk and butter, and their chickens gave eggs, but fruits and vegetables were scarce and missed. Additionally, as there was no school closer than Billings, she also taught her three children herself.

The family gave up the ranch in 1889, moving into Billings, where Crampton resumed work as a painter. Martha no longer taught her children, but was still very interested in education. In November of that year, Martha was elected as the Yellowstone County Superintendent of Schools. Quite remarkably, she was nominated for the position by both the Republican and the Democratic parties. Running only against herself, she was elected for a three-year term, and later re-elected for another term.

When Martha took office, all of the official county school records were handed over to her in a small cardboard box. The county did not provide her an office in the courthouse for the first two years. At the time she took office, the one Billings school had a principal and three teachers, and there was a total of 12 schools in the county. The county then was considerably larger than it is now, containing much of what is now Stillwater County. When she left office in 1895, there were 28 schools in the county.



Martha kept busy, being involved with her family and her church, and as a campaigner for women's suffrage and the temperance movement. She was a busy volunteer for the YWCA, and belonged to the Eastern Montana Pioneers society and the Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic.

Mr. Crampton died in 1931, and Martha moved in with her daughter until her own death in 1940 at the age of 91.