

# Calamity Jane and the Black Hills Expedition

Mrs. Oglio rushed out the back door. “Jane! Where you at? Those clothes need cleanin’.”

“I’m practicin’ my shootin’,” Jane yelled back.

“Well, get in here. I’m not payin’ you to shoot. I’m payin’ you to clean clothes.”

Jane grumbled under her breath and went back to work. “I’ll find me a way to get out of Virginia City. This ain’t my kind of life. Bein’ a laundress ain’t for me.”

Every day, Jane looked out for any news that came to the city. Finally, it came.

“Mrs. Oglio! Mrs. Oglio!” Jane ran into the shop. “I’m a-goin’ on an expedition! I’m joinin’ me the Newton-Jenney Party and goin’ into the Black Hills of South Dakota.”

Mrs. Oglio shook her head. “You’re a crazy woman. That’s not woman country. This here’s 1875. You can’t go roaming over the country alone. There be hostiles and beasts and such. Besides, what you goin’ do in the expedition?”

A smile as big as Montana spread across Jane’s face. “I don’t care what I do. I’m a-goin’.”

The next morning, Jane packed her bag and jumped on her horse. She patted his neck. “Let’s go, Jim. We’re on an adventure!”

Jane rode hard and after a couple of days, she arrived at Fort Laramie, Wyoming. It’s here she met up with geologists Henry Newton and Walter P. Jenny, the leaders of the expedition.

“Well, howdy,” said Jane as she burst into Colonel Dodge’s office. “I’m here to enlist in this fine expedition to Black Hills. I can ride and scout with the best of em’. What we goin’ for anyway?”

Newton, Jenny, and Colonel Dodge stopped their conversation. Eyes wide open, they looked at Jane.

“You’re a woman!” stated Colonel Dodge. “I’m in charge here. And, if we allow you to go, you’ll be a laundress.”

“No I ain’t.” Jane stormed out of the room.

Jane waited until the party left and followed behind. She made herself noticed by hunting and bringing deer and antelope back to the camp to share with others. She also helped the sick soldiers and miners, nursing them back to health. She was soon part of the expedition and made friends with fellow expeditioner, Dr. Valentine McGuillicuddy.

“Hey, doc. What’s this expedition for anyway?”

McGuillicuddy tugged on his vest. “We’re mapping the Black Hills and figuring out just how much gold is in this here region. Now, I want to ask you a question. Why are you so loud and rough and dress in men’s clothes?”

Jane pulled her hat down, making it more secure on her head. “Just the way I am, I guess.” She jumped on her horse and rode out to hunt more deer and antelope for the camp.

**Questions**

1. What did Jane work at the beginning of the story?
2. When Jane said, "This ain't my kind of life," what do you think she meant?
3. How did Jane become a part of the expedition?
4. What was the purpose of the Black Hills expedition?