

# Mariah Mendenhall

*Pennville, Jay County*

May 2, 1813 – May 19, 1911

Mariah Bowerstock Mendenhall was born May 2, 1813 in Adams County, Pennsylvania, and was the daughter of Jacob and Mary Bowerstock. She was raised in Columbiana County, Ohio. She was married in 1831 to William Parrington, with whom she had seven children. They left Ohio and moved to Jay County, Indiana, in October 1838, settling on an 80-acre farm in Jackson Township. After her second marriage to William Mendenhall in 1844, she and her new husband moved to a farm in Penn Township where they raised sheep and flax.

She was a midwife for 60 years from 1840 to 1900. In addition to midwifery, she would nurse neighbors through illnesses. Mariah could not read or write because her school attendance was limited to no more than six months. However, while serving as a midwife, she kept remarkably accurate records on each birth she assisted with. To do so, she relied on others to make her entries. In a historical account of Adams, Jay, and Randolph Counties, she stated,

My first call as a midwife was by a family by the name of Whitacre in the year 1840. Since then up to this date (1890), I have attended 980 cases. In all these cases I have never had a woman to die while under my care. In two instances, I have waited on three generations, grandparent, parent, and child. I always went when called upon. Went through rain and cold, many times wet to the skin.

She died on May 19, 1911, and is buried in West Grove Cemetery in Jay County, Indiana.



Photo Courtesy: Indiana Historical Society

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*References will be published at the end of Women's History Month.*