

Mary Fields

(c 1832 – 1914)

Stagecoach Mary

First Black Woman to Deliver Mail for the United States Postal Service

Mary Fields, known as “Stagecoach Mary”, was a cigar-smoking and “crack shot” who was as tough as any man around.

She was born into slavery around 1832 in Hickman County, Tennessee. After she became free Mary went to work for St. Peter’s Catholic School in Montana. She provided protection for the nuns, drove the supply wagon, and made necessary repairs to keep the school running.

Mary was known for her kind heart, but she had a temper. When she had a confrontation with a man that ended with her shooting him in self-defense, she was fired by the Bishop.

Mary relocated to Cascade County and opened a restaurant. The restaurant soon failed. Mary was not a good cook and fed too many people who could not pay. She then opened a laundry. The people in the town were fond of her. When the laundry burned down the townspeople pitched in and helped her reopen it.

In 1895 Mary got a job delivering mail for the United States Postal Service. She was sixty years old at the time.

Mary drove the mail stagecoach and delivered mail between Cascade, St. Peter’s Mission and remote homesteads until she was almost seventy. She never let the weather or the rugged trails keep her from doing her job.

Mary died of liver failure in 1914.

