

DUP AF Book 1 page 187

Biographical Sketch

of

William S. Robinson

by Himself

Pioneer Year 1849

*Talk given by Wm. S. Robinson at a meeting of the Daughters of the Pioneers, at the home of Mrs. Jane C. Robinson, June 15, 1922.*

My sisters, if I brag you up this afternoon more than I do the men folks, I do not want you to feel too big over it, however I want to say something this afternoon that will help you the rest of your lives, something that is good for that is what I am here for. I want to tell what I Know about the settling of this country.

I have been here since '49 and helped to settle this Provo Valley, for that is what it was called. I helped to build cabins, helped to split the logs to build the cabins to keep the wolves out of the milk. But I want to start farther back than that, back to when the Church was organized 92 years ago. You sisters all know, no doubt, how many members there were at first; there were 3 Smiths, 2 Whitneys, and Oliver Cowdery.

Now I will take you back to England, for many of you are English and show you the pioneer work that was done in England. The Mormon Church was organized in 1830, the same year, and nearly the same months as steam went on the rail from Manchester to Liverpool in England. I often regret that I did not ask my father more about these things. I was with him all the time from the time I was born till he was 88 when he went to "sleep".

In England, Brigham Young was there in 1840, preaching the gospel. My mother was in the Church before my father and my father told me that once I was sick, and sitting on my mother's lap and that Brigham Young came and administered to me. That was in 1840, I believe. I got better at once, and am here now before you at 872, and it might have an effect even now, I don't know.

I knew Brigham Young as well as I know the bishop and our own people, here. My father was one of the youngest men to go on the cars, and many times when the elders got on the train, he let them ride free though he didn't belong to the church, himself. "Keep you mouth shut and sit still," is what he'd say. And he'd take them to the tailor shop and order clothes for them.

Now I'll bring you to America. It was hard work for the Mormons to settle this country. When Columbus started from the

Old World, an old woman put up her jewels and fitted out his boats. The crew put in at the Canary islands, and the sailors wept at the sight of land. And they still steered to the west, with the sailors rebelling and Columbus begging and praying to go on. My faith is that he was inspired. And you can find no better land than this country of ours. You sang about the pure water. (An old friend of mine once said to me in Salt Lake, "You can get good water here, but not in Arizona.") Well, to go back to Columbus. The sailors turned mutiny, and Columbus begged them to let him stay two more days on the water. That night they saw fire, and Columbus knew why he had begged to stay, for he had seen dust flying in the air. When they saw the fire, they were satisfied, and knelt and kissed his garments, and Columbus walked out and kissed his Mother Earth.

Now the people who came to America, were taken from factories and everywhere, it was hard for them to get used to the rough way of living. Many died from eating the corn, etc. Some got excited over minerals and sent a carload back to England only to have it dumped into the ocean as worthless. There was a Captain Smith who wanted to explore for rivers. He was captured by the Indians and took into camp. They held a meeting and decided to kill him. Pictures in the histories show him with his head on the block, and the little girl Pocahontas who threw herself down to be killed in his place. It was something greater than the spirit of the Indians in her that told her to do that History tells how she listened at night to the chief's calculations to exterminate Smith, and how she went in the middle of the night and told him. Do you think a little girl could do that unless inspired of the Great Master? Many think she married him, but no, he was wounded one day and then returned to England. She married Rolfe who took her to England. They fed her on all the rich food, and she died, killed with kindness.

This shows you now at times the Lord worked with the young people rather than the old. You remember how the Master strayed away from his parents and when they found Him how he said, "Do you not know I am on my Father's business?" It looks unreasonable to many that Joseph Smith was chosen because of his extreme youth.

Now to come back to America. The people came as weavers, from the potteries, etc. and I want to show you how my father told me that when the English people landed in Nauvoo, they weren't used to chopping the big logs of wood and didn't know how to turn them over. The Yankees knew how, though, and showed them how to do it.

When we started from the East to come here, across the plains, it was 1846. Some stopped on their journey here, and from these people the government demanded 500 men. I don't believe there are nay of these men alive now, they would have to be at least 95. Some of the Battalion members were in California during the gold rush of 1849, which they have just celebrated in a big pow-wow now.

My folks left England in 1842, and came to Burlington, being on the way 9 weeks. You can now make it in 7 days; We are living in a fast age. We went to Burlington, as I said. I don't remember Joseph Smith when alive, but I remember seeing him when he was dead. My father knew him, and I remember seeing him when he was dead. I was lifted up to see him and Hyrum laying side by side, sleeping.

My father couldn't get anything for his house in Nauvoo as my mother had died, and the house had not been cared for. He let it go for a span of horses and we moved to Burlington. The people soon found out we were Mormons. We lived by an asylum, and a fellow would stick his head out of the window and call, "You Mormons, going to California." We stayed there two years after the Saints started for Zion.

You can go north of here 75 miles and you are right on the backbone of the continent. Aren't we in the tops of the mountains? We are here exalted above the hills. I am satisfied we are located in a place in fulfillment of the Scriptures. I remember that Burlington was a good place for poor people to live in. We were poor by then, and had no money to come West. We lived in a packing house, and could go there with a basket and get all the pork meat we wanted for 1 penny a pound. We could go to the mills and get bran for 1 penny a bushel. I remember father giving 10 cents for 10 bushels, and the miller said, "Fill up your wagon."

In 1847 my father married my brother Heber's mother. She wasn't my mother, but she was a good woman. She took up with the family, and was a good hand to take care of us. I remember our place was low down in the Mississippi River, and we took chills. She pulled me out from under the stove where I had crawled to get warm, and gave me a dose of quinine which I'd throw up, and then get a good licking for it.

In 1849 we started West. There was a blind man named Leonard who came along with us, and I believe he helped the people. My step-mother baked up bread and dried it out and filled sack after sack with it. We soaked it up in milk to eat it. We came singing songs. Some claim to be pioneers who came in arms. I was 9 years old, and really remember more. I saw the buffalos on the hills and they looked like a bunch of cedars. We gathered buffalo chips to make the fire to cook with and they were good fuel.

I remember crossing the streams. They sent one wagon across with a young man on the first yoke, and if there was any quicksand all the rest would give their cattle to pull the wagons across. I can't remember much about the Indians on the plains. They had buffalo robes sewed together to make tents. We got along first rate on the plains. My stepmother had a beautiful baby while crossing. (It went to "Sleep" when it was about five years old.)

You have heard about the hardships in Zion, but we got along well. Two or three families would put in together, and it took a lot to feed the bunch of boys. I don't want to tell you we suffered, for more people die from eating too much than not enough. We stayed on John Taylor's farm. I was better acquainted with the old leaders of the Church than I am with the new leaders. When they would come to our towns, we would know of their coming, and would build boweries for them and their horses to rest under.

Do you want to hear about the Indians? We had to behave ourselves for they outnumbered us, and they always carried something to take life with. The women folks did the work and the men out in their time fixing their arrows and guns.

The low hills were filled with deer, and when the roads started to be built, the blasting kept the game back. We gave the Indians bread and they had their own meat. We sat in camp for hours watching them prepare skins to make their clothes, and making arrows.

You have heard of the death lock. That is when two male deers lock their horns together in fighting and die.

The Indians liked the Mormons better than they did the transients. They told Brigham Young to tell his people to let their hair grow so they could tell them from the others. They tried not to kill the Mormons. Whenever an Indian was killed, they always tried to get a whiteman and kill him to pay for it.

They knew we fed them for the great Pioneer told us to feed them for he said it was easier to feed them than to fight them. It was a beautiful council he held then. The Indians could easily have come in and killed us all.

Let me tell you about a female Indian I knew. We could talk to each other well enough to get along. I said to her, "How old are you?" and she said, "I don't know but was about ten when Brigham Young came." She said, "When you folks came here you were good, now you have your homes, your horses, and you are no good. You've all gone democrat." I said, "No, not democrats, but Republicans." I then said, "Don't condemn us. You have been white and you will be white again." She then said I was a fingerlength ahead of the others.

I want to brag you up. The females are better than the males. If the males were worthy of being looked up to, there would be no trouble. I want to show you the difference between the little boy and the little girl. I was walking along one day and came upon two little children playing. They were eating some berries. The little girls said, "Won't you have some? But I'm afraid they're dirty." And she went and washed me some.

Again, a little girl and boy were playing in my yard. He jerked my hat off, and the little girl ran and put it back on my head again. That's the difference.

A relative of mine brought a book from Arizona which said that the Indians had had inspirations before the whitemen ever found them. It said that the Indians had described the fireboat (Steam engine) 50 years before a whiteman came. It told of an incident where an old grandma of the tribes would not camp in a certain place they had picked out, and that night another party camped there and they were all killed.

The Indians call this earth Mother Earth, and the Sun Father. They say they plant the seed in the Mother Earth and the Father warms it up. They say we are different from the Indians in this way, when an Indian gets enough to be comfortable, he quits and leaves some of the wealth for others.

The Navajo Indians believe the city of Eden was where the Gulf of Mexico now is, and that it was taken up and set in the Pacific Ocean, somewhere.

When we came here, we heard that a great monster was in the lake. We asked the Indians about this big reptile and he said it was a fish, and told how four of the Indians were in swimming and heard a noise and saw this big fish following. It swallowed them and they had a knife and cut themselves out of the fish. You can connect that story with the story of Johan, which I think it is handed down.

Some of the pioneers don't agree about the sagebrush that was here. Some say it was all covered with sagebrush, but I remember how my brother John cut hay on the dry farms in those days, and how 1000 herd of cattle came and wintered on the bench, and how nearly 10,000 sheep went down to the bottoms to winter and nearly one-half of them died.

I ought to say something more about the women in those days and brag them up. They weren't educated in music, but they knew how to make their own clothes, and how to make bread. True, they didn't look as beautifully dressed as the young women today, but they looked beautifully to us then.

And wealth don't keep man and wife together. Man is that he may have joy. What made him happy? He was filled with love for His Father. We must work to be happy, work for God and His Son, if

we work for them we will be happy. I pray we may have the love we should. Shame on the land for its divorce. We couldn't find one divorced pair among the bunch that was married when I was. Having children and enduring poverty ties the families closer together. If we would only live as we teach, the world would flock to us as birds to a stack of straw.

I pray that the world will come to one Truth "for except you are one, you are not mine." God bless you, Amen.