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Biographical Sketch

of

William Walker Robinson

by Rose Penrod

Pioneer Year [unknown]

John B. Walker Company

Born: 8 Mar 1833, Manchester, England

Married: Harriet Wood

William Walker Robinson, the subject of this sketch, was born March 8, 1833, near Manchester, England.

He was the son of George Robinson and Sarah Holt who joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in their native land. The mother having embraced the gospel readily upon hearing it and the father after having been prompted to attend a meeting while along the street became a staunch member also.

He received the Priesthood and was very devoted to his church duties until he was stricken blind seventeen years prior to his death, but never wavered in his faith.

Brother George Robinson was our city's first choir leader and many is the time he has arranged concerts and programs and other musical entertainments for our town folks in early days.

William W. Robinson joined the church at the age of eight years old when thirteen years old he left England, in Sept., 1846 with his parents and the following brothers and sisters: Joseph, Eliza who was married at that time, Samuel, Elizabeth who was afterward married to Joseph Shelley, and James.

The ocean voyage was a rough one and required a period of five weeks and the high winds and dashing waves caused them much fear for several days. There were three hundred Irish on board who felt they were surely doomed to destruction and many of them went wailing and moaning to the captain who only asked, "Have you said your prayers?" But the Robinson family with their faith in the Gospel made their troubles seem lighter and to renew courage sang hymns such as "How Firm a Foundation", which seemed to aggravate the Irish a great deal. But the captain did not stop them, in fact he seemed to encourage this happy mood. However, this same ship on its return trip broke in is said to have broken completely in two and sank.

After leaving New Orleans they sailed up the river for ten days and landed at St. Louis, but on account of the cholera at this place the family went to Council Bluffs, Iowa, and established themselves in Winter Quarters at this time.

At Winter Quarters the people built log cabins and dugouts, and planted crops, for it was the plan of Brigham Young to use this temporary location as a half-way settlement until he had succeeded in transporting all his people to their indefinite homes near the Rocky Mountains.

A flour mill was built to grind their corn, and they also manufactured washboards and willow baskets and sold them in the nearest Missouri towns. But, nevertheless, life was a difficult one. The lack of vegetables resulted in black leg scurvy; provisions were scarce, and the prospect of getting fresh supplies before crops could grow were slight.

And so, in the Spring of 1852, this family along with others went to Independence, Missouri, where they remained for some time, but on account of the hostility of those against them, it was feared there might be serious trouble so they continued their journey which was a long, tiresome one, across the plains. They were members of the Fourteenth Company and under the leadership of John B. Walker.

Besides the ordinary discomforts of this one-thousand-mile journey, the frequent rains of the early spring subjected them to floods, swollen streams and high rivers, impossible to cross at times, until they had subsided. There were long miserable delays in rain swept camps with nothing to do but wait and try to keep dry. During their travel by ox team they had many thrilling experiences – for example, while bathing in the Missouri river, William heard a terrible noise, and looking up toward the bank, saw a herd of buffalo, probably a hundred or more, stampeding into the water. You may be sure he lost no time in trying to give them room, and he took refuge in the nearest tree, leaving his clothes on the river bank until they were through drinking and had disappeared.

At another time, he was on the verge of being taken by the Indians, and before the wearisome travel was over, he no doubt wished at times, they had captured him. But struggling on as this train of emigrants slowly wended their way over the blazoned trail in spite of the hardships endured, Bro. Robinson has often spoken of as being the happiest time of his life. And one can imagine the wild

turkeys, the prairie hens, and the deer brought the hunters and the inspiration of youngster of sixteen years would get while traveling through this new wild country. Then again, the days of almost starvation would surely leave a lasting impression on their minds.

It was October when they arrived at Salt Lake City and after resting a few days, Pres. Brigham Young sent them to settle in American Fork. They took up the east side, the land near Adams and Singletons, but as the Indian trouble grew worse they moved from their farm, settling in the center of town and aided in building up the old fort wall and were compelled to stand guard against the enemy.

The next year, 1853, William Robinson was sent to Nephi where help was needed to guard against the Indians. He, in company with John T. Shelley, was sent to Fort Bridger for church supplies. He assisted in building the canal from Cottonwood canyon to Salt Lake City. From this canyon he quarried rock to be used in building the Salt Lake temple. He has often told of how, when they went to Fort Bridger, they built fire to melt the snow to rescue a handcart company who were caught in a snow storm and were at the point of starvation.

William W. Robinson has always been a tiller of the soil and has owned a great deal of land in and near American Fork. He took great pride in keeping it clean and raising the best of crops. He was a lover of flowers, especially in his later years. Very seldom could a weed be seen in his garden. His lawn and flowers were spoken of as one of the most beautiful in our city.

He was in the furniture business for many years, he with his brother Joseph who was also a carpenter, made much of the furniture used by our grandparents in the '50's. He served as policeman in American Fork, along with Charles Roberts. He carried the mail for Uncle Sam having the contract for twenty-five years. He was also a member of the first brass band in American Fork.

He, in partnership with Ebenezer Hunter, took a contract to build a road in Echo canyon, but on having no horses took James Chipman Sr. as a third partner who furnished the horses. Mr. Chipman proved a faithful friend, so much so that upon losing a

horse at one time he bade Mr. Robinson to take his pick from his animals.

It might be said there was no labor he would not attempt to do. In the early days in American Fork canyon, when work was scarce, if a cook was needed he was a cook; or, if a blacksmith was needed, he was a blacksmith and he invariable made good.

He received a call for a mission but was unable to go on account of caring for his father who was blind and his aged mother.

He was of a cheerful and jovial disposition man and a keen observer of the beauties of nature.

Whenever pain or sorrow came he would try to pass it off with an old familiar song. In a cozy corner of the living room, he kept by his side a hymnbook to "while away the hours," or to amuse his grandchildren who came to beg for a song or a story.

He married Harriet Wood, a daughter of John and Rose Dashly Wood, who came across the plains in 1851 in the Alfred Cordous Company. To this union were born eleven children, four of which died in their infancy. Those that lived were William Wood, John Alma, George Edward, Harriet E., Ephraim, Alfred, and Rose Wood. In 1867, he married Sarah Eckersly (11 years his junior) who bore him five children, four girls and one boy: Sarah Ann (our ancestor), Hannah Elizabeth, Fannie, Lott and Melinda. Besides being the father of sixteen children, he had at the time of his death, seventy-five grandchildren, and sixty-one great grandchildren.

William served as Elder, Seventy, and High Priest and took pride in the fact that he was a member of the church for eighty-two years, having died in his ninety-first year. He died on September 21, 1923, age ninety years, six months and fourteen days.