

Ephraim Robison

Life history of Ephraim Robison, son of Alexander Ephraim Robison, 86, was born in Franklin County, Penn., February 28, 1844. He is one of the sturdy early pioneers and pathfinders of Utah, Morgan County having been his home for a great many years.

He married Mary Elizabeth Simmons in November 1869. Their family consisting of eight children, four boys and four girls. Mrs. Robison died in Ogden. Mr. Robison's life portrays a story of hardships incident to crossing the plains pulling a handcart in 1860. I have been told said he that Brigham Young remarked that all those that pulled handcarts across the plains would get a through ticket to Heaven. I hope we get the ticket because we surely earned it. It wasn't uncommon to see young girls harnessed up pushing the cart as many as four or five were attached to each cart where the roads were extremely hard and the load large. Leaving his Pennsylvania home May 7, 1860, Mr. Robison and others of the family made the trip to Missouri by rail and water, a distance of 2000 miles. They started across the plains with a handcart company under the captaincy of Daniel Robison a brother of Mr. Robison. In the company were 240 people, 40 carts, 10 tents, 6 wagons, and 36 oxen. In the company was a "grumbler" duty bound to settle differences that arose, and had the ability to make more noise- than ten mad geese, Mr. Robison says. Mr. Robison worked on a cart with his sister and her husband who had seven children. Provisions rationed once a week. Canteens of water hung on the side of the cart. Water was scarce in some sections and it became necessary to dig shallow wells along the way. Sometimes such water was filled with alkali and hardly drinkable as the women wore long aprons and they journeyed along the road they filled them with buffalo chips for the campfire at night. Wood was scarce and for many miles you wouldn't see any. The buffalo chips would make more smoke than fire and turn the bread yellow, giving it such a flavor that it could hardly be eaten. At night the carts and wagons were formed in a circle making a corral to hold the oxen. The stock were turned out on the commons to graze and carefully herded by male members of the company, changing shifts during the night and bringing the oxen in at an early hour of the morning for another days travel. The company made the green river crossing by ferry except that the oxen had to swim. At sweet water, near the continental divide in Wyoming, the streams were teeming with fish; the company faring well, quite different from eating bacon. Provisions did run short and some feel from exhaustion and hunger. Relief finally came from Salt Lake and the company moved on reaching Salt Lake City August 27, 1860. Mr. Robison and his brother-in-law moved to Farmington and rented a small adobe house which he describes as follows: one room and one small window, a small fire place on one side, furnished with one old table, homemade. We fixed up the little shack the best we could, built a bunk on one side of the room out of small poles, willows and straw, and made our beds out of old quilts and truck, nearly worn out through crossing the plains. He adds that it was a cold winter and "I recall that many a night we would get up and stir the fire, sit on boxes putting the bedding and the few rags around the children, most of the time we lived on boiled potatoes and salt. There being no chairs, we stood around the table while eating. Where ever we worked we got store pay or grain, not a cent of money, not even to buy a two cent stamp.

Mr. Robison and his father and mother moved to North Morgan in 1864. The oldest brother of the family was the first settler there. Mr. Robison says that he aided in the erection of the second log house in that place. Shanties were built in those days, being built of small poles, willows, and wheat grass straw. Small holes were cut for glassless windows and a hole in the wall served for a doorway, an old piece of carpet or a quilt covering it. A bunch of fine willows would be tied chairs were made of split blocks of wood together to serve the purposes of a bro with holes bored in the bottom in which to place sticks for legs and bunks made of poles.

“In a rainstorm, which seemed to be a rare thing in those days,” Mr. Robison explains, “we were about as well off outside as in, as the rain fell through readily.” There were few stoves then and only light was furnished by the tallow candle or dip not even coal oil lamps being known to the settlers. Clothing was so scarce mothers often stripped the children of their clothing, put them to bed, and spent

the night washing, ironing and mending. It is said that the first grain in Morgan was threshed out with oxen on a clay floor and, when there was sufficient wind, the chaff would be blown from the grain. The fruit of the day was wild berries. Mr. Robison’s mother would make wild currant pies—“So damned sour it would turn our faces crooked, no sugar being available.” One pie, consequently, would last the whole family a week. A little amusement in the winter time consisted largely of parties at private homes, one room being, cleared to dance one set of the old-fashioned quadrille... Holes were bored into which candles were placed, and the violin triangle notes sounded like “someone was filing a saw,” Mr. Robison says, but the parties were much enjoyed. People generally enjoyed good health, but, Mr. Robison Declared, “finally the doctors began to slide in on us the people began to get sick and they have been sick ever since.” Mr. Robison took up residence in Croyden in 1877, living there until he came to Ogden in 1916. At that time game was plentiful in Morgan County and Robison often hunted for deer before breakfast with his old rifle. He did considerable trapping and claims that he killed more deer in Morgan County than any other man.

Mr. Robison lives at 3037 Wall Avenue. Passed away Nov 25, 1932 at age 88.