

## Heritage Gateways

1860 (age 29), Robison, Daniel (Captain of 9th Handcart Company)

Daniel Robison was captain of the ninth handcart company to cross the plains to the Great Basin. He left Florence, Nebraska June 6, 1860 in charge of 235 souls and reached Salt Lake Valley August 27th of that year. Six wagons accompanied the train. Quoting Captain Robison. "Although it was one of the last handcart companies it was one of the most successful in its journey." Daniel was born in Franklin county, Pennsylvania March 21, 1831, the son of Alexander Robison and Nancy Ellen Wagoman. In young manhood he married Rachel Smith and the following account of their conversion to Mormonism, the trek to Zion, and their subsequent life in the valley is taken from her writings:

I was born November 19, 1836 in Franklin county, Pennsylvania. Little of my life is remembered, or of much importance until I was married, at the age of sixteen, to Daniel Robison in the year 1852. Life's routine was much the same as other young married couples were in those days, we were very happy in our little home. Our little daughter Agnes was born in the year 1852. Life now was fuller with the new and added joy our little daughter brought with her to us. Until 1854, we lived, the three of us inseparable in thought and action, my husband at this time heard a strange new creed preached by some missionaries from that foreboding land, Utah. He was so impressed by the teaching of this unheard of religion, that he was at once baptized and confirmed a member of the so-called Latter-day Saints of Jesus Christ. I didn't take much stock in this church, but heeded instead the warning of our pastor to beware of these Mormons. My husband was so filled with the spirit of the Lord and the message the gospel brought him, that he promised the Lord in due time and in His own way would make it known to me which was the true church; and I would have no doubt in my mind that he had seen the truth and righteousness of this new religion. It was understood between us there would be no dispute over our difference in religion, as I belonged to the Lutheran Church and was a faithful teacher in that religion. We both attended our meetings and there was peace and harmony.

Mother and father both died very suddenly within a short time of each other, leaving my two little sisters Sabina and Charlotte with no one to care for them. My sister Margaret and I took these little girls to raise. Mother appeared to me soon after her death, she conversed with me the same as she had done while she was on earth, wept, while telling me that the Latter-day Saint Church of Jesus Christ was the only true church on the earth. This cleared my mind of all ill feelings I had toward the church my husband's promise had come true. I accepted the gospel without further delay and was baptized a member of the Church. This angered my brothers very much and they took our two little sisters away from Margaret and me. We longed to see our sisters, on several occasions we went to their school grounds and waited until they were dismissed for recess. They would run to us and were so happy that they could spend a few precious moments with us. This separation from our little sisters seemed unbearable. While still overcome with grief at the loss of my sisters, another sorrow came into our lives. We lost our small baby girl, Anna.

We owned a comfortable little cottage in Pennsylvania, a beautiful cherry orchard and a lovely garden. We were very happy as far as financial conditions were concerned, but our religious conditions were impossible; so on the 7th day of May, 1860, we left our cozy home and started west, which meant religious freedom, where we could live our faith for which we had sacrificed so much. We traveled by train to Canada; as we crossed the Canadian line at Niagara Falls, our little daughter Agnes, age eight, was taken by death. It seemed we had had about all we could stand having had her with us longer only deepened our sorrow. As we were traveling under contract, they were unable to stop the train at this time, so our little darling was carried away by a negro porter and buried we know not where. We traveled by rail and water 2000 miles, landing in Florence, Nebraska. Here we camped two weeks, while arrangements were being made for the long trek across the plains. Here the grim reaper took his toll again - this time he claimed our little son Johnny, age three.

When the company was ready to start there were 235 people, men, women and children, 10 tents, 6 wagons and 36 oxen. We were lined up, 6 teams were put in the lead, the carts in the rear. Then came the people some pushing, some pulling the carts, and the rest who were too young or too weak dragged themselves behind the best way they could. The carts were painted beautifully, the tongue had a cross-piece 2 1/2 feet long fastened to the end, and it was against this cross-piece that the people leaned their weight. They called this pushing instead of pulling. The carts had bows over the top covered with heavy canvas and in these carts we carried our few possessions and food. It was a common thing to see young women between the ages of 16 and 20 with a harness over their shoulders which was then fastened to the tongue of the cart. Some 4 or 5 to a cart pushing and pulling all day long through the hot, dry sand with hardly enough food to keep life in their bodies. This company was one of the last handcart companies to cross the plains; the rest to follow came with ox teams and did not have quite the hardships these handcart companies had although all the pioneers had plenty of hardships.

I was assigned to come with one of the wagons, but I walked a great deal of the way. Before starting on our journey across the barren waste, I made noodles and dried them, these I shared with the sick. I also made yeast cake and light dough bread all the way across the plains. At times the water became very scarce and could only be found in boggy places. We would shovel to a depth of three or four feet before we found water and when we did it was yellow with alkali. At night when camp was made, the carts were placed in a circle leaving an opening of about ten feet. This circle was used as a corral for the animals. The oxen were unyoked inside the corral then driven perhaps a half-mile away where they were guarded until midnight by two of the men, when they were relieved by two others. When morning came the oxen were brought back to camp and each man yoked his own oxen. As soon as breakfast was over we were ordered to line up to resume our long march. Sometimes the little children, if they were too tired or their feet got so sore they could walk no farther, were put in the carts. It became a daily occurrence to see women without shoes on their feet leading barefooted children by the hand through the scorching sand. Whenever we camped we always had prayers and songs and everybody seemed happy and contented with having given up their wealth and comfort for the Gospel. Our journey was very peaceful, we were not molested by the Indians although several bands of them passed our little company.

At the Sweetwater river we found the water literally full of fish and everyone had all they could eat. As we had had no meat of any kind except salty bacon since we started on our tedious journey from Florence, Nebraska, these fish were indeed a most welcome treat. At Green River the carts, wagons and people were taken across the river in ferry boats, and the oxen had to swim. At one time when food was very low and provisions had failed to reach us my husband swam the Platte River and made arrangements for supplies to be sent to camp. Provisions were weighed every week to each family from the beginning of the trip across the plains, at one time our food got so low that each family was cut to one-half a pound of flour a day. It was at this time when the supplies were so low that two wagons with provisions came to our rescue.

At the mouth of Echo Canyon on the Weber river in a small town called Henefer, it was named after the only people living there at that time, we camped for two days and Mr. Henefer donated five bushels of potatoes if we would dig them. The Weber river was full of fish, so after the potatoes were dug and the fish caught and cooked every one had a feast.

We reached Salt Lake Valley August 27, 1860. It took almost eleven weeks to make that long, wearisome trek. Wagons, carts, oxen, tents and everything that was used on the journey was turned back to the church. My husband and I came north as far as Farmington where we made our home for three years. My husband helped to lay the rock for the old rock meetinghouse which is still standing. In the fall of 1863 we moved to North Morgan.

The first cabins were made of logs, the roofs were made of small poles and wild wheat grass for the covering, the chimneys were rock, there was one small window without glass, no door, just a quilt or carpet, the floor was dirt, my broom was made of fine willows tied together. Brooms were the only thing I could have plenty of. I could make a new one every day so would throw it in the fire

and make a new one each day. Our beds were built from poles with branches or small poles for the springs, and a tick was filled with wild wheat grass. The chairs were blocks of wood with holes bored in them, and round sticks or pegs driven in them for legs. Our lights were tallow candles. I spun all the yarn for clothes and stockings. I made enough cloth and dyed it to make my husband and son George a suit of clothes. In the fall I made a barrel of soap, so we took the soap to Salt Lake City where we traded it for dried fruit which we used during the winter. We passed through all the hardships of early pioneer life we lost four more children, Daniel, Birdie, Samuel and Arta, making seven of our twelve children taken by death. I was president of the Primary of the North Morgan Ward for sixteen years and counselor to the Stake Primary president for twenty-four years.

Rachel Smith Robison passed away after a brief illness at her home in North Morgan on the 4th day of September, 1905. Daniel Robison died after a lingering illness March 25, 1907.

Source: Our Pioneer Heritage

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