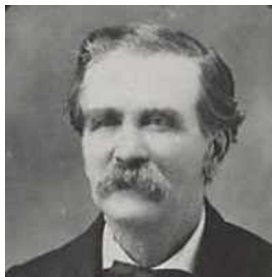


## ROBERT MATTINSON, JR.

Born: July 16, 1835 Lancashire, England

Age: 20

Martin Handcart Company

Robert Mattinson  
About 1895

Robert came to Zion with his parents, Robert (52) and Ann Pshaw (44), and his siblings, John (17), George (12), and Elizabeth Ann (3). The following excerpts are from his own account:

“At the age of twenty, I, with my parents, who had joined the Church in 1847, emigrated to America. We landed at Boston and from there traveled to Chicago by railroad. It was then a mere village. The first night we spent there was the third of July. The noise was terrific, as they were starting to celebrate the Fourth of July.

“From there we traveled to Iowa City, where I, with my parents, two brothers and one sister joined the Martin’s Handcart Company, and commenced our journey of thirteen hundred miles to Utah.

“We ... traveled three hundred miles [and] crossed the Missouri River ... to Florence to refit and lighten our loads. The company set forth from Florence the last of July [August]. On each handcart was placed flour and our clothing, as the wagons would not hold the entire load. At first we traveled fifteen miles a day, although delays were caused by the breaking of wheels and axles, the heat and dryness making many of them rickety and unable to sustain their loads without frequent repairs.

“We traveled along, standing guard at night. We had ox teams, which hauled the tents and what provisions we had, and when we came to a sandy, bad road, we helped the teams what we could by pulling. We took turns in herding the loose cattle, and all that were able helped stand guard at night. There was plenty of game and hundreds of buffalo but were too far away to shoot. We now came to the open prairie country where nothing could be seen but grass and passed the remains of the outfit of A.W. Babbitt, Thomas Margetts and one woman, who were killed by the Indians and everything burned. There were other companies ahead, and we could read on the bleached buffalo heads how far ahead they were.

“Provisions were scarce, and we were cut down to one pound of flour a day. After that, my father began to weaken but never failed to do his share of the work and help pull the handcart. He worked all day with little to eat, and when night came, he gathered wood to build a fire, set up the tent, then went to lie down. When he was called to supper, he could not be awakened. He died that night, but we could tell nothing about his death, only by the breathing and rattling of his throat, as we had no light. He was buried the next morning near Deer creek. [Although familysearch gives a death date of October 15, if Robert Sr. died and was buried near Deer Creek, it would have been October 17.] Robert’s father was spared the terrible ordeal of crossing the freezing North Platte River and the early winter storms that came with it just four days later.]

“Nights were getting colder and guarding began to be very oppressive. Deaths were frequent. Gradually the old and infirm began to droop, even able-bodied men, a few of them continuing to pull their carts until the day of their death. Rations were again cut and we had not enough to keep up our strength. When we reached Laramie I tried to buy a little food of some kind, but could get nothing but a quart of corn, which we ate without cooking. Traveling began to be very tedious. Every day brought its hardships, fighting against hunger and cold weather and bed covering was not sufficient to keep us warm. It would be midnight many nights before all the company would be assembled. Men were detailed to help the weak ones into camp and many were frost bitten, losing fingers, toes and ears and dying from exposure.

“After leaving Laramie rations were cut to a quarter of a pound of flour a day, and at one camping ground thirteen corpses were buried. After crossing the North Platte, we had our first snow storm. We could not make distances. Cattle were too poor, so we had to give up night herding. After the snow, we stopped for two or three days to get rested and grease the carts. Some shod the axles with old leather, others with old tin from their mess outfit, while for grease they used their allowance of bacon and even what little soap they had. We made very short drives. Days were getting shorter and the people weary. The snow fell and many of the cattle were devoured by wolves, while others perished from cold. Here we saw the first Salt Lake man, Joseph A. Young, the first of the relief party that came to find us. After seeing this brother, it seemed to give the people new strength and we were allowed a little more flour out of the two remaining sacks.

“In the evening as we neared Devil’s Gate, there were many who did not expect to see the light of another day. It had stormed all day and was one of the worst days. We traveled on through the storm and it was hard to keep the people alive. The night was terrible. Part of the stockade was cut down to burn, and the other part was left to shelter us from the piercing cold.

“The next evening we crossed Sweetwater to Martin’s Ravine, where there was plenty of cedar wood. The water was waist deep and just freezing enough to let us through the ice. It was a bitter cold night. Some of the relief party that were with us carried the women and children over. People too weary and cold, ate their scanty bit of flour dry. We put up our tent, cleaned out the snow, and that night the wind did not blow.

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“After leaving this camping ground, we traveled about seven miles a day and it was the first time I did not pull a handcart. The relief party that were with us carried the women and children in their wagons. Even those short distances, it was a hardship to walk. Every day brought a few more of the relief party, and from that time on we began to get a little more to eat.

“We next stopped at Green River and the day we crossed, it was given out by the captain that everyone who was able must cross on the ice, the river being frozen over. The weather was bitter cold, but we had good fires as the relief party found the most convenient places where there was wood. In the meantime there were from seven to ten deaths a night. The next morning they were buried, nothing to put them in but the grave. I was called to help bury the dead. It was a terrible job, as they are buried just as they were dressed.

“At last we arrived at the foot of the Big Mountain. The cattle and wagons had broken a track, so it was possible for us to walk over, and there was not a woman that crossed who had on a pair of stockings, and everyone who was able was ordered to walk. It took just one whole day to get over it, and we camped in between the mountains. It was a cold night and nothing but green willows to burn. But we had plenty to eat for the first time, together with some clothing and buffalo robes for the worst off.

“The next day, being the last day of November, brought us into Salt Lake, Sunday, November 30, 1856. Meeting was dismissed for the people to get those they knew. Some old friends of Mother’s took us to their home for a few days. Later I came to Payson and after resting for a few weeks, went to work with others in the canyon to make a dugway. In this way we had our wood to burn, as Mother had also settled in Payson.

“In the spring of 1857 I again went to Salt Lake to work for Bishop Sharp of the Twentieth Ward for ten dollars a month and board. While working for this man, a letter came from England which cost a quarter. I did not have it, nor could not get it, but my employer got it out of the office for me.

“The people went up big Cottonwood Canyon to celebrate the 24th of July. I was working for John Sharp at the time, so went with his family. The Saints were gathered about one thousand in number, when word came that the United States Army was coming. They had stopped the mail and were coming to stop the ‘Mormon Rebellion.’ It was here that Brigham Young made his speech. He said they had been settled in Utah ten years, and that he asked no odds of them, and if they came he would treat them as an armed mob, as he was Governor and had not been notified of their coming. The Saints danced all night as there were two large dancing floors. They sang patriotic songs and made speeches. They were not discouraged by the news of the soldiers coming.

“Next day, all returned to their homes. As the army approached Salt Lake, President Young called out the minutemen to watch the soldiers which they did all through the summer and fall. When the troops were in express distance there was a correspondence between President Young and Colonel Alexandra, and the messages were read to the people on Sundays.

“Our men hindered them all they could. They captured some cattle and mules, among them was a white mule, a favorite of Colonel Alexandra’s, and he sent word to President Young he would like it sent back and was told he could get it in the Spring in good condition.

“Later that Fall the troops reached Bridger, where General [Johnston] joined them and was determined to come into Salt Lake. There was quite a number of men called out. Echo Canyon was fortified. I was on guard in Salt Lake at the time. The army had made a move to Hams Fork where they were snowed in. The Saints would pray that the troops would be prevented from entering Salt Lake.

“In the Spring of 1858, the people were determined if the soldiers did enter they would leave and leave it as they found it—a desert. They were going to burn their homes and cut all the trees down. All the missions were abandoned and the missionaries called home. The people were determined to leave the city, and I was called with others to go to the White Mountains and find a place for the Saints to retreat to. [This was generally known as the ‘Move South.’ All Saints from Brigham City south to Point of the Mountain, abandoned their homes and moved further south to Utah county.]

“We left in March, and as we traveled south, we gathered our company. We took seeds and plows to put in crops, but the country was too dry; nothing could be raised on account of having no water. Meantime, the Peace Commissioners and the new governor, Governor Cummings, arrived, and the troops were sent to Cedar Valley, known as Camp Floyd, so the city was quiet once more.”

Robert obtained various forms of employment, including working on the road and stations for the Pony Express Company. At the request of Brigham Young, he went back to the States to help bring other emigrant companies into the Valley. Robert married Betsy C. Burnhope in 1869 and they made their home in Payson, Utah. They became parents to at least five children.

Source: “Robert Mattison,” autobiography and younger photo obtained from Frances Hutchins, Salt Lake City, Utah; also “Robert Mattinson,” autobiography dictated to his daughter Effie Mattinson Simons, Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files, St. George, Utah; *Pioneers and Prominent Men*, by Frank Esshom, 1913. Mattinson older photo from Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website.