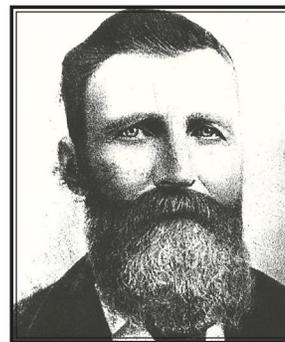


## GIBSON CONDIE

Born: 10 March 1835 Clackmannan, Scotland  
 Age: 21  
 Rescuer



Gibson Condie's parents were Thomas and Helen Sharp Condie. He was named for his grandfather, Gibson Condie (1774-1856). The family joined the Church in 1847 and made plans to immigrate to America. They sailed from Liverpool on the ship *Zetland* in January of 1849. Gibson's occupation is listed on the ship's record as "Mormon Laborer." He was 15 years old by the time the family arrived in Kanesville, or Council Bluffs, Iowa, where they stayed and worked for two years. They arrived in Salt Lake City in September 1852 with the Thomas C.D. Howell wagon company. Here they were reunited with many of their relatives and friends from Clackmannan, including John Sharp, the first branch president of the Clackmannan Branch in Scotland.

As part of General Conference in April 1997, the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints broadcast a presentation from sites along the Mormon Pioneer Trail. The presentation was titled, "Faith in Every Footstep: The Epic Pioneer Journey." Included in that broadcast is this statement from President Thomas S. Monson: "Big Mountain holds a special place in my heart. A pioneer ancestor, Gibson Condie, came over this summit on his way to help rescue the stranded handcart pioneers. At the call of the prophet, he journeyed to this very spot in the bitter winter of 1856. The snow was 16 feet deep on the road. How grateful I am for this pioneer ancestor, who, leaving the comfort of home and family, risked his own safety to help those in such desperate need."

Brigham Young called for the first party of rescuers to go out from the Salt Lake Valley in early October, as soon as he learned that the last companies of 1856 had been delayed and were still out on the plains. As reports were returned, needs assessed, and inspiration received, President Young continued to call for others to go out and help for the next eight weeks. In his own account which follows in this sketch, Gibson Condie records being among those who helped clear the canyons of snow in November so the Martin, Hodgett, and Hunt companies could get through.

Condie also records information about the George and Margaret Robinson family in the Martin Company. Condie married Elizabeth Robinson of that family. (There were a total of three women by the name of Elizabeth Robinson in the Martin Company.)

The following excerpts are from Gibson Condie's handwritten autobiography, transcribed with light editing for readability, by Jolene Allphin, October 12, 2005:

Sept 26th [1856] first Hand Cart companies arrived under the charge of Captain Edmund Ellsworth and D. D. McArthur. They were met by the first Presidency of the church, a Brass Band and a company of dancers and a large concourse of influential Citizens. In October Conference, called upon the Brethren with their teams to take provisions, wearing apparel, stocking, &c. to meet the companies of Saints, as they were [in] destitute condition. Pres Brigham Young went, but he was took down sick. He went as far up the Canyon, [but] he was obliged to come home. They were a good many Brethren with their teams. They took provisions, &c. Teams were loaded. It was getting late in the season. They were anxious to help the poor saints. They went (back) as far as four hundred miles with their teams. They find the companies in a deplorable condition. The cattle died. They were obliged to leave their wagons. The hand carts in Martins company, they had to leave them also. A great many died of starvation. Not much to eat. Short rations, and many frozen to death. Snow very deep hindred their progress from traveling. It was very dark before them. Death stare before them. Four hundred miles from the valley, but Providence smiled on them. Our Brethren with their teams from the valley gave them fresh courage, giving them flour, meat, onions, &c. The Brethren wept when they heard of their sufferings they suffered. In one day they would bury eleven in that day. My Bishop called on me if I would not drive an oxtteam, three yoke. [I] hauled a load of hay to meet the companies for their horses and mules, as the feed were covered with snow. I then went, got everything ready to start.

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I traveled as far as the foot of the Big Mountain. [I] could not go no further on account of the snow being so deep. We left the team at camp [with?] a young man named Bill. Jide traveled with me from the City, assisted me and also company [be]for me. I went with a few more Brethren <also Thomas Shipham> with our shovels to clear the roads. They were drifts of snow piled up when we reached to the top of the Big Mountain. The snow was so deep as sixteen feet of snow on the road. We all went to work and clear the snow for the teams to pass as they were a large company on the other side of the Big Mountain. We were just in time to assist them and clearing the road for them. We all descended down from Big Mountain to camp. It was dreadful cold and stormy. We had to have a large fire burning all night [to keep] from freezing to death. My feet was frozen. I could hardly walk. We traveled and then crossed little Mountain and on to the city. I was glad that I arrived at home. I suffered considerable with my feet [they] pained me so. I could not go home for days. In November 30th the last companies arrived in Salt Lake City on Sunday. The streets was all along crowded to see the emigrants. Even Pres Jedediah M. Grant who had been sick, with the attendants to carry him to the window as he could see the emigrants <passing house>. Bishops with their counsellors, was on hand to see that the emigrants have places to go and [were] well cared for. It was a sad time for the poor Saints to suffer as they did. Edward Martin hand Cart company suffered the most, it being [the] last company. They were some have their legs froze. If the hand cart company left the states about two months sooner they would not have suffered as they did. First hand carts company thru all right.

December 1st Jedediah M. Grant Died. It cast a gloom over the territory. He was a great and noble man for the truth. ... I attended his funeral, very large. ... Pres. Heber C. Kimball related, "*I went to see him one day last week and he reached out his hand and shook hands with me. He could not speak. ... I felt for him and wanted to raise him up, and to have him stay and help us whip the devil and bring to pass righteousness. Why, because he was valiant and I loved him. ...* [President Kimball blessed President Grant, asking God to strengthen his lungs so he could breathe easier after which Grant raised himself up and] *talked for about an hour as busily as he could. [Grant spoke to Kimball of the spirit world where he said he had been for] two nights in succession. [In great detail] he would mention one item after another and say: 'Why, it is just as Brother Brigham says it is: it is just as he has told us many a time.' ... He saw his wife: she was the first person that came to him. He saw many that he knew, but did not have conversation with any but his wife, Caroline. She came to him and he said that she looked beautifully and had their little child that died on the plains in her arms, and said, 'Mr. Grant, here is little Margaret. You know the wolves ate her up but it did not hurt her. Here she is all right.'* This imperfect account of the wonderful vision of those two nights was listened to with rapt attention by the large Audience and was repeated for years after by many who heard it. ... He was forty years of age when he died, but had spent those years to such advantage in laboring for the welfare of his fellow men that he was mourned by thousands and left in their memories a name that will be forever throughout the Territory. ... The winter was excessively severe, snow falling to a depth of Eight feet in places in the valleys. ...

[I] proposed marriage to [a] young woman who came in Captain E. Martins Hand Carts Company. <with mother and sister Dorthy> ... Her Brother William Robinson (Carpenter) was living in the 9th ward. He came out to this country a few years before. ... We lived in fathers house a good many months untill we have means to commence housekeeping. Both of us were very poor. Times was very hard; no money, clothing, furniture, bedding, cooking utensils. We had none. They loan us things. I do not think any person on the earth was so poor as were to be married as we were, but the Lord knew our hearts and the Lord Blessed us. ... Her Father George Robinson, her mother Margaret Angus Robinson, her sister Dorthy, and her little Brother George. ... They all set sail for America bound for Salt Lake City. When they came to Iowa pulling their hand carts, little George ran away from camp. His father went in search for him. He did succeed. In where he was it appears a man induce him not to go to Salt Lake; made great promises if he would live with him, give him horse, money, &c and soon be rich. Father tried hard for George to go with him to camp, but George would not go. The man then induced the Father to stay and not go. It was late in the season to cross the plains. They would be work for him to make furniture. He would do well and have money enough to buy an outfit for next spring to go to the vallies and not pull a hand cart across the plains. Father then persuaded his wife and his daughters Elizabeth & Dorothy to stay in Iowa, wait untill next spring. Mother were willing to stay but Elizabeth would not stay. She had great inducements. They would give big wages to live with respectable families, but she would not stay. She was determined to go to the vallies. There then the family were separated. Father would not leave little George. He stayed. The mother then, with her two daughters, went on. Elizabeth and Dorthy had a cart to pull. It was very distressing; scarcity of food, winter set in, passed thru severe trials and hardships, hundreds died, starvation and cold. It was a hard relating scene to explain. I do think the ones who passed thru this trial will have a great reward. God will bless them. ... My wife's folks were comfortable in England. Her father made furniture and sold them. He was a good mecanic and made a comfortable living. ... Shortly after we were married her sister Dorthy got married to Solomon Rossiter in the twenty ward. Dorthy was the oldest of the family. She had a good home.

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George Robinson, Sr., died in Panora, Guthrie, Iowa, in 1857. George Robinson, Jr. also died in Panora, Iowa, in 1909, having married and had a family there. Panora is about halfway between Iowa City and Florence, so if Panora is also where they left the company, they would have traveled about 150 miles before the family separated.

Gibson and Elizabeth Condie had a large family whose good influence was also felt in President Thomas S. Monson's young life. Their children said that "Elizabeth was always home darning, patching, cooking, sewing, knitting, and cleaning for her family. At night she would gather her children around her while she was knitting and tell them of her childhood days, crossing the Atlantic Ocean and the Plains, or teaching them Gospel Principles."

Sources: "Autobiography of Gibson Condie," FHL US/CAN Film 182342 (This is Gibson Condie's original handwritten account. The rescue portion here was transcribed by Jolene Allphin.); Larsen, Karen M. & Paul, *Remembering Winter Quarters/Council Bluffs*, Omaha, Nebraska, 1998, 165-172; letter to Jolene Allphin from Chris Christiansen, Jan. 2, 2006; interview by Jolene Allphin with Francis M. Gibbons, November 3, 2005. (Gibbons authored *Heber J. Grant: Man of Steel, Prophet of God*, 1979.)



Elizabeth Robinson (Condie)