

History of Robert Montgomery Sr. And Mary Wilson Montgomery

(Compiled by Margaret Ann Montgomery Lee, daughter of Robert Montgomery Jr. and Ann Chadwick Montgomery, and Zina Isabel Montgomery Blaylock, daughter of Alma Montgomery and Elizabeth Chadwick Montgomery).

Robert Montgomery Sr. was born 12 January 1800 at Glasgow, Lanarkshire County, Scotland. He was reared in the city of Glasgow where he obtained an excellent education. After completed his studies, he was apprenticed to the engineer's trade in Eddington Foundry where his father and three brothers were employed. After completing his apprenticeship he remained with this company.

When he was 25 years of age the French Government requested Scotland to send two of their best master mechanics to build the first steam engines ever built in France. Robert was one of the two who was chosen. He went to Paris and remained there for four years. He became very proficient in the French language, so much so that he was often taken for a Frenchman. Being a skilled draftsman, he drafted many of the patterns for the machinery he built.

About 1829 he returned to Scotland and fell in love with a "bonnie lassie", Mary Wilson, of Greenock, Scotland. Mary was born 17 April 1810. She had a pleasing personality, cheerful disposition, blue eyes, and light brown curly hair, which she wore parted in the middle, puffed around her face and wound in a bun behind each ear. She was of medium height. She loved to dance and was a very good dancer. She was clean and neat both in personal appearance and in her method of housekeeping. They were married in 1829.

Hearing of the wonderful opportunities found in American, they decided to investigate the truth of these reports. Accordingly, they sailed for the United States of America and landed in New York Harbor on the 31 March 1831. The following morning, April 1, 1831, their first child, James was born. They did not linger very long in the United States, but pushed on to Montreal, Canada. He worked here as his trade for a year. At this place his second child, John was born, 3 June 1832.

Tiring of the lack of freedom imposed upon him by too close application to his work, he decided to try a more independent mode of living. In a letter to his brother, Nathaniel, in Scotland, he said that he had bought 100 acres of land and was buying 100 more and had it partly paid for:

(This is a copy of a letter written in 1832 by Robert, then living in Canada, to his brother, Nathaniel, who lived in Glasgow, Scotland. It was carried to him by Ebenezer Anderson and brought back to America by his son, Alma Montgomery, who filled a mission in that land. Alma gave this letter to James Alma, a grandson.)

Dear Brother Nathaniel:

I will try to give as true an account as possible of this country. They have two months perhaps of hard work in the year and the rest of their time is just working as they pleased. Sometimes fishing, sometimes riding about where they want to go. If anything, the deer is more plentiful than I thought and the fishing is just as good as you would wish them. Pigeons you will get all the days in summer if you would wish to shoot them. I think I will like this place well. The money is not so ill got as people say. Where you are hard working there, people here will save more money than in Glasgow. All that I have seen yet are thriving well. Their sheep are always breeding and the cattle, horses and cows breed every year. When I was out the other day, I saw some young men that last fall hunted deer into the lake and felled them with their paddles.

I have little time to write as the young man that brings this is just going to start. But I think you, that is all of you, that has any thought of coming, may save all the money you can by the time I write you the next letter. If it be as I think it will be, some of you will not stop long in Glasgow, but do not think of coming till I write you again for I would not like to start you till I think I may do it with safety.

I have bought 100 acres and almost another 100 bought. It is far worse to get now than sometime back and is still getting higher in value. I have not heard anymore of our brother since I wrote you from New York.

By the Boy, send me word if you got that letter so I may know if letters come safe. Be so kind as to write a letter down to Greenoke and tell them to send a letter out along with this young man as many as waiting to know how they all are.

I have no more to send but give my most kind respect to Aunt Jean and Uncle McKey and Robert Goodwin. Tell them I have not much to write them yet, but I will mind in my next. Be sure to send a letter with this young man. Tell me how you all are. Be sure to give my kind compliments to all enquiring friends. You will get three savings with this letter; give them to Jeany Moore and tell her if she can think to part with Margaret, I would like to have her here.

Adeau,

I remain, Dear Brother

*Affectionately Yours
Robert Montgomery.*

Their first log house was one large room. Montreal was a great timber county. The work of clearing the land went slowly, however, they cleared land enough to produce timothy, potatoes, peas and corn. They also tapped the maple trees and made sugar. Wild fruits were plentiful and easy to gather. Wild grape vines grew abundantly, their children used them for swings.

Their farm and pasture were enclosed by a split rail fence; with wooden pegs and leather hinges fastened the gates. These were made by Robert. The pasture contained pigs, calves, horses, two oxen and three cows. The cows were named Cherry, Daisy, and Nanny.

A creek ran through the farm. Wolves were numerous in this part of Canada. There were also

Indians here. Electric storms were terrific. Mary was so afraid of them that whenever she saw one brewing, she had the children stay away from the trees. She also carried iron and steel tools out of the house and hid the kitchen utensils in between feather beds.

Because of the dense timber no neighbor's house was visible, yet they knew neighbors were there. They could hear roosters crow and cow bells ring. One neighbor, Mrs. Moffit, came to visit them. They lived here for three years. Their first daughter, Isabel, was born here on 16 July 1835.

The following year the family moved to Detroit, Michigan. Robert entered the employment of Mr. Davis who manufactured steam engines. His third son, Robert, was born here 8 May 1837. After a short time, his employer's business failed. Robert had to look elsewhere for employment. He became an engineer on the steamboat, Fort Sarina Greshett, plying between Fort Sarina and Detroit. One day due to the carelessness of one of the workers, Robert met with a serious accident, crushing his head and losing the sight of one eye. Never again did he fully regain his health, or was able to continue his trade.

He and his family, consisting of his wife and four children, returned to his Canadian farm. Four more children were born here; Margaret, 31 July 1839, Nathaniel, 3 May 1842, Mary Elizabeth, 23 May 1843, William, 17 September 1845.

In the spring of 1845 some Mormon Missionaries visited the locality where the Montgomery family lived. They accepted the gospel and were baptized in the winter of 1845. The ice had to be cut for their baptism. Their greatest desire now was to join the Saints in Nauvoo. Nearly one year was spent in preparation for the long journey. The older sons helped their father chop and sell cord wood to get provisions and wagons for the trip. Robert built his own wagons, except for the parts that had to be finished by the blacksmith. Leaving the farm in 1846, they began their journey with two wagons and six oxen. The city of Hamilton now stands where their farm was. At one hotel, where they stopped, they paid for making their beds on the floor, using their own bedding.

After a long and tedious journey of 700 miles, they arrived at Nauvoo, only to find the Saints being driven from their homes by an infuriated mob, and forced to flee for their lives. They stopped near the Mississippi River and rested there for a month, then crossed into Iowa. At Farmington, Van Buren County, Iowa, a farm of sixty acres was purchased. It was known as half-breed land. A log house was built and burned to the ground by a mob before the Montgomery's had a chance to move in. A kind neighbor by the name of Joshua Fountain, promised them protection and safety if they would build their house near him. Kind neighbors assisted in building this house. This was in the summer of 1847.

This was a hilly county abounding in creeks and nice spring water. Wild hickory and hazel nuts were plentiful, also wild plums. The children enjoyed gathering them. This was their home until they left to join the Saints in Salt Lake City. Two children were born here; Joseph Smith, 24 May 1848, and Hyrum Smith, 29 January 1850. A neighbor woman said to Mary, "I suppose

you named them after Old Joe Smith?" "Yes", was the answer, "and he was named after one of the greatest prophets on earth".

While here Mary made yeast cakes enough to last one year after reaching the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. They lived near a "still". From this "still" she got what was called "Barm" and she put hops with it and made it into cakes which were thoroughly dried.

In 1850, they sold their place and once more started to join the Saints. The trip this time led them across the great American plains. They traveled in Captain Warren Foot's Company, which started from the Missouri River 17 June 1850. There were about twenty deaths in the company in the fore part of the journey, nearly all from cholera.

The Montgomery family owned two wagons, five yoke of oxen, and a number of loose cattle. Some of the provisions they carried were a gunny sack of rice, a sack of sugar, a sack of coffee, a sack of sea biscuits, the latter being carried in case of rain when it was impossible to build a fire.

It was considered that they were well equipped for the journey; nevertheless, the children came barefoot across the plains. There were no shoes to be had. They traveled slowly. At one camp one of the oxen died. Margaret's cow (one she called her very own) had to be hitched with the oxen. The children always remembered the large herds of buffalos they saw while crossing the plains. They kept one large buffalo robe in the family for years.

One day as they neared their journey's end, some Indians met the company. Robert was holding his son Hyrum, a baby of about five months. The old chief reached for the baby; Mary did not want Robert to let the old chief have him, but Robert, not wishing to anger the chief, let him take the baby. This seemed to greatly please the old chief. He passed Hyrum from one Indian to another until all had a chance to hold him. They seemed to think it an honor to hold a white "papoose". The family was greatly relieved when the old chief passed him back to Robert.

Arriving in Salt Lake on 29 September 1850, they went at once to Ogden and made their home at Brown's Fort (now Five Points) until the following spring. They moved to North Ogden and took up squatter's claim on 170 acres on the main highway running North and South. Most of this land is still owned by the Montgomery's.

On this farm, Robert spent the remainder of his life engaged in farming, and stock raising. After clearing the land of its wild growth, Robert sowed the first acre of wheat in North Ogden. He was also the first one to build a two-room house in North Ogden. One woman laughingly said she thought the Montgomery's were aristocrats of the town because they had two rooms instead of one, and she later said she thought the reason he built two large rooms was because he had so many sons that they could not get into one room.

Due to the accident in Detroit, ill health compelled Robert to let his sons take over the management of his farm shortly after he brought it under cultivation. This was a great trial to him, but, nevertheless, proving a great blessing to North Ogden, as the new country stood in

need of one who could devote intelligently his time to its advancement and improvement. To this work Robert Montgomery turned with the same complete absorption that characterized him on other occasions. He assisted and engineered the building of the North Ogden Canal, the first and largest of its kind at that time.

At the first election held in his precinct, he was elected Secretary. When North Ogden Ward was organized 4 March 1853, he was sustained as clerk. He held the office of a High Priest. In those days the pleasures of the people were simple. He had a keen interest in the youth of North Ogden. He taught them dancing, boxing, and fencing. He was adept in these arts.

Their last child, Alma, was born 1 January 1852. He was the first white male child born in North Ogden. In addition to their own large family, they welcomed into their home other boys, David Francis, Andrew Calahan, and Chet Grover were among those boys. They thought Mary a wonderful mother. David Francis said she was without doubt the kindest woman he ever knew. Andrew Calahan said she was the cleanest woman. She never touched a dish that had been washed without taking a hold of it with a tea towel. He added, "No one ever had a better home or was treated more kindly than I by Dad and Mother Montgomery".

Mary Wilson loved her native land. She named the mountain north of North Ogden, "Ben Lomond", in honor of her beloved Scotland mountains. How she must have longed for them. Dear courageous grandmother.

A great sorrow came to Mary on 18 April 1863. Robert died at North Ogden, Weber County, Utah and is buried in the North Ogden Cemetery. He had a lively disposition, enjoying a good joke immensely, even if the jokes were on him. He was dark complexioned with curly hair and snappy black eyes. He was unexcelled in honesty.

Grandfather had a great sorrow in his life. When he came to America, he left a little daughter, Margaret, behind because her mother would not give her up. Just why Jeannie Moore and Robert could not build a successful life together we do not know, but this we do know, he sent money for Margaret's support and begged her mother to send Margaret to him. The mother refused to do this. Years later, Margaret's two sons, James and William Chambers, came to America. Later the father and mother came with the rest of the family, Elizabeth, Jeannie, and Margaret.

On 19 February 1874, some the second great sorrow in grandmother's life. Her son, Hyrum Smith Montgomery, was killed in a snowslide in the North Ogden Canyon. He and his brother Alma had gone to the canyon for wood. Alma had come down the mountain to hitch up the team. When the slide started, he motioned for Hyrum to go higher up the mountain, but he stayed with the slide. He swung his hat and shouted to Alma; just then the slide parted and swallowed him up. A few months before this happened, Hyrum said that two angels visited him at night. They carried a banner between them which said at the age of 24 he would die. Just a day or two after his birthday, just before the snowslide accident, he told the family that he was living on borrowed time. Two years after his death his mother died. She died of a peculiar disease; the ends of her fingers and the ends of her toes became numb. This numbness gradually

crept up until it reached her heart. The doctor said this was caused by the shock of her son's death. She died 8 May 1876. This was just about two weeks after she moved into her new brick home.

Elizabeth Chadwick, later married to Alma, worked at the Montgomery home for years. By Grandmother's request, they placed her bed in the front room by the west window, where she could look toward the barn. She would call "Lizzie, come find my hands for me". Lizzie would place Grandmother's hands upon her chest. Life lingered longest there. It was shown Grandmother in a dream that she would die in the springtime when the apple trees were in bloom and laden with snow. It happened just that way.

Mary's oldest son, James, was blind for many years before he died. One day as he lay on his bed he told his son, James Alma, that three men dressed in white had come for him; that he had persuaded them to wait three days longer. The morning of the third day Alma went in to ask him what he would like for breakfast. He replied, "Oh, just the usual thing will do, eggs, toast, and bacon or anything you have". As Alma turned to go, James said, "Oh, never mind the breakfast, it's too late now; they have come for me". With these words he died.