

Betsy Baker Topham was born at Pomfret, Chautauq County, New York.

January 24, 1835, the daughter of Simon and Mercy Young Baker. Mercy had a family of eight children when she died March 4, 1845, near Montrose, Iowa. Betsy being only ten years old. Three brothers were older than she, and four, two boys and two girls, were younger, leaving Betsy to do the best she could with the work for the family. Mr. Baker was fortunate in getting himself another companion who proved to be a mother to his children. When the Saints were preparing to leave the states to come to the Rocky Mountains. Mr. Baker came with them. His outfit consisted of four wagons and ox teams. The number of persons were fifteen, Mr. Baker taking his Wife's step-mother and three children with them. They had neither hats nor shoes and were destitute for other clothing.

Leaving Florence about May 1st, they went to Elk Horn River where the Saints set in camp to organize in companies to cross the plains. Their company was the third of the emigrating Saints. Their organization consisted of Amos Neff, Captain of ten; Joseph Noble, Captain of fifty; and Jedediah M. Grant, Captain of one hundred, who was over the other captains.

When the organization was complete the company started on the march through the wilderness to the Rocky Mountains. As they journeyed Betsy drove a team of three yoke of oxen across the plains. Her older brothers driving teams for other people. They soon found their teams were too heavily loaded, so they yoked up their steers and cows and any and everything that could work. The country was inhabited by many Indians who never saw a white man before. When they reached the North Platte country there were hundreds of thousands of buffalo. The teams could frequently become frightened and stampede at sight of these large herds of buffalo. Mr. Baker had a riding pony and an old shotgun sawed off at both ends which he called a pistoloon with which he killed many buffalo while crossing the plains thus supplying the company and his family with meat.

They were at Sweet Water September 9th, and on October 2nd arrived in what is now Salt Lake City where Mr. Baker pitched his tent and began making preparations

er the winter. The little band of saints had to use every caution and diplomacy for protection. There was a band of war like Indians and every precaution had to be used. They treated the Indians kindly and gained their good will. They built three forts, the old fort was built of adobes, the north and south forts of logs.

The rations while crossing the plains and during the first winter were but one-half pound of flour per day for each person, this with poor beef rawhide and thistle roots for vegetables was their food for the winter of 1846. About May first the thistle roots became tough they then used the tops for greens until the top of grain was ripe. This they flailed out and ground in a hand mill, making their bread of this chopped wheat. Mrs. Baker took some of Mr. Baker's seed corn and parched it to serve a handful to the children as one meal a day. The family was very destitute for clothes. Betsy had only one blue calico dress. She would wash it on Saturday night and iron it next morning to have a clean dress for Sunday.

When they were in Nauvoo, Betsy will remember seeing the Prophet Joseph Smith after he was martyred.

After remaining in Salt Lake two or three years a call was made for pioneers to go to settle Little Salt Lake Valley, and John Topham among others was called to go. No doubt he had had his eye on Betsy Baker for he proposed to her and they were married on December 3, 1850, and on the 10th of December he started with ox teams to the Parowan Valley. That was a delightful honeymoon traveling in snow with ox team. When they crossed the mountain from Beaver Valley to Iron County, the snow was hub deep.

On arriving at Center Creek (no Parowan) January 13, 1851, their wagon boxes were set on the ground so the wagons could be used for getting out wood and logs for building. Their cooking had to be done by campfires for a long time as there were not many stoves in the camp. They then built in fort form to protect themselves from the Indians.

After living in the fort for a few years some of the pioneers decided to go to Paragonah to make homes. Wm. H. Dams had a three roomed house built but it

was to be chopped down so the Indians could not hide in it. The other men's work

going the same way they had to return to Parowan. Later they again started to settle in Paragoohah under the leadership of Wm. H. Dame. Orsen B. Adams, Marius Ensign, Job Hall, Charles Hall, C.Y. Webb, Robert Miller, Benjamin Watts, John Topham and others. They built a fort where the people lived for many years. There was a large corral built of mud where they kept their cattle and another where they kept their sheep as everything had to be hearded during the day and guarded at night.

In the early settling of the county the people used to make feasts for the Indians and give them what clothing they could spare as Brigham Young told them to feed the red men instead of fighting them.

The women had all they could do taking the wool from the sheep's backs, washing it, carding, spinning and coloring the yarn ready for the weaver, making flannel and lincy for the women and girls and jeans for the men and boys. I have gathered many baskets full of rabbit bush blossoms and pounded many pounds of redder for my mother to color with. Mother never learned to weave. She made cheese and butter to pay the weaver. They also wove cotton cloth for bed ticks table cloths and some wearing apparel, also made a lot of their sewing thread. I remember hearing Mother say that 1863 she paid 75 cents a yard for common calico to make a baby dress. She also paid 75 cents each for oranges for another baby in 1865. Sugar was one dollar per pound and they couldn't get that only when a train of emigrants were going through to California and had some to spare. Mother made molasses out of carrots one time to pay Mr. Watts for braiding and sewing Father a straw hat.

When times were better Father and Mother kept a little grocery and drygoods store for a few years making trips to Salt Lake for their goods. After a few more years land was taken up in Bear Valley and a co-op herd started by people owning their spare cattle in. Samuel H. Rogers was the first President of his company. Later John Topham was President. They had hired men and women to milk cows and make cheese and butter to supply the people all winter.

Father Topham would bring fresh beef three times a week to supply the people and this was done for many years. At last the time of the cooperation expired and the partnership was dissolved. He then found work elsewhere. John and Betsy had a family of twelve children, three dying in infancy, the others growing to maturity.

John Topham died November 8, 1900 at the age of 75 in Paragonah.

Betsy Baker Topham survived him 12 years, dying January 30, 1912, in Paragonah.

Susann Topham Robinson