

A 488

51

PROPERTY OF
UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

4720201
MATTES #267

UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
603 EAST SOUTH TEMPLE
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

JAMES HENRY ROLLINS
1816--1899

The following sketch of the life of James Henry Rollins, dictated by himself in 1898, was copied in November, 1941, by the Utah Writers' Project, WPA, through the courtesy of Mr. L.C. Lee, 3448 South West Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Grand daughter

Mrs. Wm. H. Prince

1429 So. W. Temple

64449

A short sketch of the Life of James Henry Rollins, which was dictated by James H. Rollins and written by his daughter Mary Osborn, and re-written by his youngest daughter, Ida M. Rollins Hamblin, and assisted by his daughter, Melissa R. Lee Hayborne, Sept. 7, 1924, in Cedar City, Utah.

James Henry Rollins was born May 27th, 1816, in Lima, Livingston County, New York, the son of John Porter Rollins, born in Rutland, New Hampshire, about 1794, and Kasiah Katura Van Benthuysen born May 15th, 1796, in Albany, New York.

The Rollins lived in Vermont and New Hampshire. There were three brothers emigrated to America and settled in the Eastern States a while, then two of the brothers went south. Their names were James, John Porter and Henry Rollins. My father, John Porter, was interested in cattle and sheep, and he was going on a trip to Canada with a large boat load of cattle, when a storm came up and wrecked the boat, and he went with the load to the bottom of Lake Erie, about the year 1820 or 1821.

My mother was left a widow with three small children, myself and two sisters younger than me, Mary Elizabeth and Caroline. My mother's sister, Elizabeth Van Benthuysen then the wife of Sidney A. Gilbert, took me to raise as their own. They moved from New York to Mentor, Ohio, in 1825, and a year after that moved to Kirtland, Ohio, at which place my Uncle Sidney went into the mercantile business with Orson Whitney, and I did chores for them, and as soon as I was old enough was employed in their store as clerk.

I continued working thus until Oliver Cowdery and Parley P. Pratt, and some other brethren came to Kirtland and brought the Book of Mormon in the fall of 1830. These brethren were on their road to find the Center Place of Zion. They preached the Gospel to my uncle and aunt and the Whitneys and several others, and they were converted and joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I did not join then, as I did not thoroughly understand it, but read the Book of Mormon through, and I had to read at night by fire-light, as candles were very scarce at that time, and I lay on the floor on my back with my head to the fire, and read at nights, the only time I had to read.

Brothers Cowdery and Pratt put some Elders in charge and they were afraid to denounce the actions of individuals who were at that time operated upon by different kinds of spirits such as receiving revelations on parchment, and professing to receive them from Heaven; others lying like they were dead, in meetings, on coming to rushing to the river, and going through the form of baptism in the flowing ice until they had to be taken out, as was the case with Durr Riggs. After seeing all these I pleaded with the Lord to show me if this spirit which was operating on certain individuals was His Spirit. After much praying I was shown in a dream or vision Joseph and Hyrum. I saw them standing side by side through a wall which seemingly was transparent and was the color of amber. The light which enveloped them and me was not as the light of the sun, but such as penetrated me from head to foot. They beckoned

some few miles and out and rafted Cottonwood logs down to Winter Quarters, I came very near getting my leg taken off by the raft in landing it. I sprang from the raft with the rope to fasten and stop it. As I jumped for the shore the bank gave way from under my feet, just as the raft struck the bank, but saved myself and succeeded in stopping it, by a turn around a tree which was from the other bank. It was a very large raft of timber which made several houses, with one for myself. I also cut logs and built a house for the wife and family of my brother-in-law, Horace Alexander, who had gone as one of the 500 that was called to Mexico in the Battalion, and they were left in my charge during the winter of 1846 and 1847. This wife gave birth to a child, after which she had what the Dr. called the black leg. She died, and was buried on the Hill. In a week or so her infant died and we carried it and opened the mother's grave and placed its little coffin on its mother's. There were three little girls left by my sister-in-law, which were cared for by her sisters.

We, soon after this, according to orders, began cutting timbers to build a stockade for our fort before the Pioneers should start in the spring for the West. This was to protect the camp from the Omaha Indians, and other tribes that were west of us. The Omahas and Sioux were at war with each other at this time. A great many Indians that were wounded would pass by us in a battle with Sioux up the river.

In the spring after the Pioneers left we plowed and planted corn, squash, melons, & etc. This was the year of 1847*. In the fall late, teams and wagons were sent back for the purpose of furnishing those that had none, that they might pursue their journey West. It was decided that these teams should be taken up the river and herded in the rush bottoms, some 25 miles up the river. John S. Olmson and myself took them, and our families, and herded the cattle in the rush beds. If we could do this we would have teams to draw our wagons in the spring westward, which we did. There were other cattle, those that were sent back from the West were driven up there also. When the company started from Winter Quarters to cross the plains, Brigham Young being the leader of the companies, he started ahead with his company and then Amasa Lyon's Company, with a hundred wagons, I being in Amasa's Company; then Dr. Richards' Company, which was mostly made up of English emigrants with Joseph Howe as captain of a hundred. The second day out, we camped on the little Horn River, where we stayed two or three days. Then we pursued our journey to Leap Fork on the Platte River. When we crossed down the other side, which was very difficult to cross, Dr. Richards and Company arrived on the other side as we had left when it was determined to help with our load men to cross them over on the same side we were, which we accomplished that day. No accident happened. We remained there the next day or two, then starting the next morning early for the main Platte River 20 miles distant, and when we arrived there, both Amasa Lyon and Dr. Richards were taken very sick. We remained there 2 days, and went out and killed 4 antelope on the Sunday while we layed over. Our next move was up the Platte River towards Fort Laramie. We supplied ourselves with meat, killing buffalo myself that day, and another

* Our farms raised a large crop of cash.

that Bro. Flake had down. And we were obliged to shoot two bulls in order to get the cow that he had killed. As we were skinning that cow, another cow had made its appearance coming down a ravine near us. I took aim and shot it; it turned and went up the bluff. About this time Brother Horne came to us and said their Company had not killed anything. He told him to take the loins and hump, and as much more as he wanted out of the two bulls, and go upon the bluff and he would find a cow that he might have for his company, which he did and found it to be very fat.

The next day we pressed on our journey toward Laramie. We came to an Indian village where a great many tents were made of tanned buffalo hides. They impeded our progress and stopped our train by squatting in the road. They demanded pay for the water and grass of our Captain, and the chief answered: "We want you to give us flour, sugar, coffee, powder and lead." The captains of each ten were set to work to get from the wagons these articles, the chief spreading his large buffalo robe on the ground on which the contributions were emptied. We asked him if he was satisfied. He said, "Yes, if you will give me a little more powder." He was told we did not have any more to spare. The Indians then removed the contents of the buffalo skins and said we could pass on our journey. We were not troubled any more until we reached Fort Laramie, where we stopped our train. There were many Indians their with the French who kept the Fort. The Frenchmen told us not to sell the Indians any whisky, which, of course, we did not do, but to sell it to them, if we had any and they would pay us a big price; and those that had it to sell, sold it to the French for a \$1.00 a pint cup full. Banters were out by the Indians for a horse race, and Nathan Tanner ran his horse with the Indians and beat him; then they wanted to give him a larger horse, which Brother Tanner needed, and the trade was made. About this time, while our people were trading for buffalo skins, the Indian chief was discovered to be drunk, and seemed to be very mad as he walked through with tomahawk in hand. He cut many gashes through the buffalo skins which hung on the banisters. He was watched by his squaw, and two or three Frenchmen, and was taken and bound and was laid away. We then pursued our journey, after obtaining many buffalo skins, until we came to the three crossings of Sweetwater, where we camped for two or three days, for the women to wash. We killed quite a number of mountain sheep and one buffalo. We pressed on our journey up Sweetwater, and while traveling up the stream, I killed 20 antelope and eleven of their hides I took into Salt Lake and tanned them. When we came to Pacific Springs, we camped here for one day. The next day we started for Green River, which we crossed safely by raising our wagon beds with blocks to keep the water from running into them, then we pursued our way toward Bear River, and crossing this river we again raised our wagon boxes and crossed without accident. Then we wended our way over the mountains, and arrived in Salt Lake about the first of October, being five months on the road, from the time we left Winter Quarters until we arrived in Salt Lake. All this I have written from memory. The records of our travels on the way which I had kept, I delivered to our Captain was lost and could not be found, and at this writing I am 80 years old and six months of age. Many incidents of our travels I have not here

related, such as losing many of our cattle. One evening when we were cooking our supper over the camp fire, baking bread in the bake ovens, a number of Indians surrounded our camp fire and asked for bread, and as soon as it was baked, the Indians would grab it from the bake ovens and were quite fierce. And while they were all around an old Indian stole our oldest son by catching hold of him and putting him under his blanket, and then soon mounting his horse rode away with John Henry. We soon missed him and several of the men and myself mounted our horses and away we went; overtook the old Indian and my son about 7 years old at that time. We told the Indian we wanted the boy, and the little boy was almost smothered to death by being held so tight, so not to cry, the Indian said, I was just fooling. My wife was so frightened and also all the camp, but we felt to thank our Heavenly Father for his recovery, and his unharmed. And on this trip our oldest daughter, Mary, only five years old, fell and the wheel of the wagon ran over her leg and caused a dreadful scar which she carried to her grave; and the death of Sidney Turner's little boy, who fell from the wagon tongue, and was instantly killed by the wagon running over his neck. He was buried by the road the same day, then the company journeyed on toward Salt Lake.

After we arrived there, I moved my wagon into the old Fort; also that of Horace Alexander's children. Their mother died at Winter Quarters, after their father had been called into the Mormon Battalion. The mother died in child-birth, and the father not knowing of her death, and when hearing of the company coming, he went out to meet his wife and family, and did not know of her death until he reached the wagon where his children were being taken care of by their grandmother, Nancy Walker, and there he was told by Grandma the sad story of his wife's death. Mother and baby buried in the same grave. No one can tell of the heart-rending scene of the father and children.

I soon obtained a room, where we lived through the winter. In the spring I plowed and planted about five acres of wheat and corn and some vegetables seeds. This was located about one mile and a half south of the old fort, but water being very scarce that season did not raise much of a crop.

In October of 1849, President Young called several missionaries to the Sandwich Islands and George C. Cannon being one of them; Charles C. Rich and myself and other accompanied them as far as California. George C. Cannon was then about 20 years old. When we arrived at Provo from Cottonwood, where we stayed for a few days waiting for General Rich. During this time we organized. James Flake as captain, which was not altogether satisfactory to General Rich. At about this time a company of men with pack animals, and a great many other animals from New York, joined us here. Their captain was a Mr. Smith. They went with us and we followed the road by Captain Hunt, who had agreed in Salt Lake for \$1,000 to lead them through to California by the Spanish trail, which we had traveled over previous to this. We overtook them at a place called Minersville on the Beaver River, where they were camped. Captain Hunt spent all the day before we arrived searching watering places for a number of days. They returned and heading out every