

Donna Mecham

My father, Moses Worthen Mecham, was born February 19, 1804 at Canaan, Grafton County, New Hampshire. He was born of Joshua and Permelia Chapman Mecham.

My mother, Elvira Derby, was born November 6, 1811, in Grafton County, New Hampshire. Her parents were John and Sarah Currier Derby. Both families moved to Mercer County, Pennsylvania. At one time my father was engaged in the mercantile business with considerable success, and he afterwards conducted a hop farm.

Father and mother were members of the Methodist church but in 1839 they heard and accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. After joining the church much of father's time was spent in the interest of the same. He served for three years as church police without any recompense. Property destroyed by mobs, and having a very large family, was necessarily reduced to destitute circumstances and suffered many privations.

I was born near Kaneshville, now Council Bluffs, Iowa on April 15, 1852. In 1853 we came to Utah. We left the Missouri River on July 18th and arrived in Salt Lake City on October 15th. During this trip many hardships were endured. Only twenty traveling miles were averaged per day and Sundays the Saints always rested and held religious services when possible. Sometimes it was necessary to travel on Sunday to get food for their teams.

Occasionally they would stop for a day for the women to wash and bake for the men to repair wagons and shoe their oxen. They had no serious trouble with the Indians as some of the companies. About three days before reaching Salt Lake City we were met by a cousin of mine, Daniel Mecham. He had a horse team and members of the family who walked the entire distance had the much appreciated privilege of riding. He brought all kinds of vegetables for which they were very thankful not having had any during their long tiresome journey. One day before we reached Salt Lake, a friend of the family, Allen Stout, met us bringing cooked food and took us to his home where we remained for a few days.

" Crossing the Plains"

With four yoke oxen and of cows Their trip they started across the plains, And bringing seeds, rake,
hoes and plows And tent to shelter from the rains. And fourteen with one wagon came So able ones
had to walk, They often foot-sore were and lame But always cheered with pleasant talk. At night when
campfires bright did burn, The evening meal all cleared away At dancing they would take a turn Forget

fatigues then of the day. Or they would sing the sacred song And speak of their dear valley house, To help them in their journey long And to a place of rest to come. When the red man's war whoop did start And howl of hungry wolf would bring A terror to the stoutest heart They were undaunted at anything. But trials there were, many too, They God did trust in all their toil, And He brought them in safety through And planted them on chosen soil.

But they didn't dance every night, not by any means. Sometimes they were almost too tired to eat their suppers and would go to bed as quickly as possible. Mother did nearly all the dish washing and the cooking because the girls had to walk all day. The cows that worked in the teams supplied us with milk. The morning milk was strained into the churn and at night there would be a nice ball of butter as the churn was fastened to the side of the wagon and the jolting would do the churning.

My eldest brother had married and come to Utah before we arrived. Uncles Edward, Ephraim and Lewis and families and also my grandmother Mecham were here. We located in Lehi where father had a job husking corn on shares and he did also get a job digging potatoes, the children assisting in this work, which helped to provide the winters food.

Father hauled salt from the Great Salt Lake during the winter which he sold to the people. In the spring he got a job tending a toll bridge in the Jordan River. In the fall of 1855 we moved to Provo and bought a small home in the First Ward. Father taught school for a number of years. At this time we suffered greatly on account of destruction of crops by grasshoppers. One circumstance I remember: My brother John and I were out in the lot playing. We were very hungry although I know that we didn't suffer for food like the older ones, but we said to each other that we knew that we didn't have to starve to death and that we might as well die right then so we decided to lie down and die. We lay under a tree and I was soon dead to the world but John, not being able to sleep became restless and went to the house. Presently he came out shouting to me to get up quickly and come to the house, that Mother was making potato soup.

We had a few potatoes and fortunately we had a cow so mother had milk with which to season the soup and it was a great treat. We also had a few chickens which was a great help. Clothing was very scarce at this time. People raised a little flax which was made into a coarse cloth but it was little better than the sacks we used for sacking vegetables. This cloth was used for our everyday garments and was called tow. A better quality of cloth was made from the finer flax.

A few sheep were kept so some woolen goods were made. The first school that I attended was in a little log cabin one block from the Woolen Mill in the spot where the Woolen Mills were afterward built. Mrs. Boron was the teacher. I attended school only a few months. My father sold his home and bought one in

the Fourth Ward. He obtained a job attending a toll gate in Provo Canyon and he moved the family there. He cleared off the small farm and planted an orchard which was just coming into bearing when we left the place. Father raised sheep and cattle and had plenty of everything for the family in the way of food stuff except fruit and sugar which were very hard to get. This was a very lonely place to live. Much of the time Grandmother lived with us occupying one of the three rooms of our log cabin. My sister, Emily Haws, died during the years we lived here and her three little children came to live with us. Their father was also with us much of the time.

High water took the river bridge away and the road was changed so in 1865 we moved back to Provo. Soon afterwards we moved to Wallsburg, then called "Round Valley" where father had taken up land. There were only a few log cabins there but it was better than living in the canyon. Here we did have some associates and we held Sunday school and meetings in our homes. The only amusements we had were coasting and dancing. About once a week one of the neighbors would have a dance in their little home. All of the furniture would be moved out except chairs and boards would be arranged around the walls for seats. Two or three candles furnished the light. We would dance until two or three in the morning and some times later and after that the things would be put back in place so that the occupants could retire. We usually had just one old fiddle for music but occasionally a man would come over from Heber and bring an accordion. Some of the settlers here had two rooms to their homes and in this case, the furniture was all moved into one room while the other was used for dancing.

My sister, Lucinda Boren, kept a little school in her home for six months which I attended. We had no school books except spellers and so each student took just any book he happened to have and each was a class by himself. One girl brought a Bible and I had a Journal of Discourses and I had a hard time to spell out and learn the words. We read and spelled twice a day and learned the multiplication table. These were the only things we studied so I used to take my knitting and work at that after getting my lessons. After being driven from Round Valley two or three times on account of Indian troubles we abandoned it and moved back to Provo. My childhood and early girlhood was spent almost out of civilization where there were no advantages either educationally or socially. In 1864 my sister, Polly Packer and her husband who were living at Franklin, Idaho made me a visit. On their return I went with them and remained two months. In 1869 I again visited them, staying six months. I made five trips to Franklin and surrounding settlements, three times by team and twice by rail. On one of those trips I spent a week working in the Logan temple.

On November 21, 1870, I was married to Joshua Mecham in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City and lived with my sister Elvira Bigalow for two months. When my sister went to Wallsburg to look after some cattle she had there, my husband and I lived in her home while she was away. In the spring when she returned we moved to Wallsburg and returned to Provo in the fall where our baby girl was born September 23, 1871. We remained in Provo for two years then again went to Wallsburg.

On July 22, 1878 my father died and that winter mother came to live with us. The following spring we moved to Provo to live with my mother. Soon after moving to Provo I joined the Relief Society and the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association. I was also a teacher in the Sunday School organization. I acted for several years as counselor to the President of the Relief Society and was President of the Y.W.M.I.A. of the Fourth ward.

My mother died on April 28, 1886 and shortly afterward we left the old home and moved into one of our own on East Center Street where we remained until 1920. In 1890 we adopted Maud Morgan. She is married now and lives in Monterrey, California. She has no children. My daughter Leila, an only child, married James E. Snyder and is living in Provo. She has six daughters living and one dead, also two baby boys who are dead. I have twenty one grandchildren.

On February 28, 1891 I was chosen President of the Y.W.M.I.A. of Utah Stake which position I held until June 1902, resigning on account of ill health. I have been unable to walk without the aid of crutches for thirty years April, 1932.

When I was no longer able to do active work I commenced gathering genealogy and preparing names for temple work and to record work done by other members of the family. In 1905 I went to the Salt Lake Temple and worked for six weeks staying with Susa Young Gates who helped me in every way that she could. I have been to the temple several times since then and worked for a short time. In 1907 I went to Vernal and other towns and visited relatives. Several years later I went again both times by team.

I desire to close this sketch with a testimony of the truthfulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for I most assuredly know it is true. I have never had any remarkable manifestations but the greatest desire of my heart is that all of my family, (and that includes all of my in-laws) may be true to their religion performing their church duties faithfully and well, that we may all secure for ourselves in exaltation in the Celestial kingdom of our God.