

LIFE AND JOURNEYS OF JOHN SOMERS HIGBEE

Was Mobbed and Driven from Missouri With Other Mormons—Army Takes Guns and Leave Them Unarmed in Savage Country.

Following are notes from the journal of John Somers Higbee, read at a recent meeting of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers by Charlotte Haight, a granddaughter.

He was an early pioneer to this country and the notes depicts his life previous to the time he left for the mountains, and after his arrival here, until the time of his death in Toquerville, Utah, Oct. 27, 1877:

John Somers Higbee was the son of Isaac and Sophia Higbee, born in Tait Township, Clearmont Count, Ohio, on March 7, 1804. On Feb. 26, 1826, he was married to Sarah Ann Vorhees, and he with his wife and parents joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in 1832. They sold their property and moved to Jackson County, Missouri, Feb. 1833, where they bought land and planted corn.

Mr. Somers Higbee's journal reads that "there was some trouble between the old and new settlers. The Mormons were mobbed and driven out, and in November I moved with a sick wife to Clay County with only what we could carry on our backs. In this condition five families made huts out of the bark of trees for the winter, and depended entirely on the success of

my hunting wild game with a flint-lock shotgun, as the mob had taken all of our guns. I was very successful with the old shot gun, and we had many deer to eat that winter. For bread we crossed the Missouri river in the night to steal some of our own corn (we had not sold it) from my brother's farm, a distance of six miles from where we were camped.

"The mob kept threatening us, so my parents, brothers and the other families moved to Caldwell County, Missouri near Far West, where my mother died through exposure August 24, 1840.

"Now the State rose up against us. The Governor sent an army who told us 'you are rebellious and must comply with our frontier opinions called law.' The army took our guns from us and we were left living on the edge of an Indian country filled with savages. When I gave up my arms I was forced to sign a deed giving all my land in Jackson and Caldwell counties Missouri, for the use of the executives of the State to defray the expenses in this war. Then they selected 57 of us to make examples of, and took us to Richmond and put us in the courthouse under a strong guard. After 29-

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Life Of John Somers Higbee

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ing world (from Ancient Europe in particular) and to pull in one boat days we were tried and nothing found against us. We were ordered to leave the state, which we did January, 1838, going to Illinois in an old rickety one horse wagon. There were three families of us on this trip, and all that could, walked, most of them bare footed, over frozen ground, women as well as children. Nevertheless in all this trial and trouble we seemed to be happy.

"We traveled about 15 miles per day, our wagon breaking down on us every few days. After arriving at Quincy, Illinois, my father died from the fatigue of the journey. He was 75 years of age. May, 1838, we moved to Nauvoo, Illinois, but it was only a few years when rumbles of the Mormons being in rebellion again were heard, some of them were mobbed and had their homes burned, after which the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum Smith were martyred in Carthage jail in 1844.

"February, 1846 I enlisted under Col. Markham as a pioneer to go through the wilderness to California and was elected as captain of ten men. On the 9th of February commenced to ferry across the Mississippi river to Monarose, Iowa, all those that wished to join the company. The people locked up their homes, leaving all they could not take with them or sell, which was very little. Very few ever realized anything on what they had left.

"Very slowly we took up the line of march for the West. I hunted wild game for the camps, stood guard and worked splitting rails for farmers in northern Iowa, to get horse feed and other necessities. At Sheridan river I was appointed general hunter for Heber C. Kimball company. In April game was scarce, and thunder showers and wet hunters were very common. Once I got lost in a storm, sat up all night without a fire with wild animals about. Next morning I went back to meet my family and traveled with them to Mt. Pisgah where we stopped and planted crops. Here my wife, Sarah Ann Voorhees, took sick thru exposure and want of some of the necessities of life. She died June 15, 1846, and was buried in an unknown grave. She was 41 years and 30 days old at time of her death. She departed this life leaving four children, John M., Silas, Sarah and Harriet.

"About this time they were recruiting for the Mormon Battalion. I volunteered, taking my son John in with me, a neighbor caring for the other children. It was arranged for us to drive teams up to Council Bluffs, but on arriving the battalion was made up and had started 24 hours previous. John M. cried because we could not follow. The leaders of the camp then appointed me to take charge of the ferry across the Missouri river, a rapid whirling, boisterous stream, navigable most of the year for small steam boats.

"Here at Winter Quarters I married Judith Dall, a widow from South Carolina. I again volunteered to go with Pioneers to the Rocky Mountains and was chosen one of the hunters. The necessary articles for a Pioneer to cross the plains, I put in John Wheeler's wagon, April 5, 1847 were as follows: 350 lbs. corn for horse feed, 150 lbs. flour, 150lbs. corn meal, 75lbs. beans, 50lbs. potatoes, 17 lbs. bacon, 25 lbs. seed corn, 12 lbs. salt, a few garden seeds, Hatchet, knife, broad ax, chopping ax, bridgmaker tools, fish net, trunk and clothing, wash kettle, bucket, bakeskillet, shovel, hoe, yauger gun, brace of pistols, saddle, bridle, halter straps, martingales, 4 lbs. powder, 8 lbs. lead, fish hooks and line, iron wedge and pick, the whole totaling a value of \$217.77.

"April 9th of that year at noon we started from Winter Quarters. I was captain of ten, myself, John Wheeler, Percy Fitzgerald, Thomas Roker, Benjamin Rolf, Hanson Walker, John Tibbets. I traveled with the pioneers to Upper Crossing of Platt river, killed all the buffalo we wanted for meat. When we arrived at Upper Crossing we made a boat to ferry our wagons across. After crossing the Great Colonizer, Brigham Young detailed myself and others to remain and ferry the immigrants across on their way to California and Oregon, during the high water until our families came along, they arriving August 20th.

"Leaving Upper Crossing upon the arrival of our families we arrived in Salt Lake Valley September 26, 1847. On the 22nd of December I was appointed to solicit assistance for some of the Battalion boys who had just returned, obtaining 35 lbs. of bread stuff and 27 lbs. of meat which was received with thankful hearts. My family were on a 1/4 lb. corn meal allowance per day just enough to make

a man hungry) until crops could be raised.

"January 1848, I went with Parley P. Pratt, J. Tibbets and others on an exploring, hunting and fishing expedition, south of Utah Lake, crossing over the point of the mountain between the two valleys, taking our wagon with a skiff on it. We crossed without cutting a brush or making a road. My son John was teamster.

"In the spring of 1849 in charge of a company, I was sent to make a settlement in Utah Valley at Timpanogas, which place we called Provo. We surveyed and drew numbers for city lots. Each man's name was written on a number as drawn on the city plot. We did the same with farming land. We built a stockade fort for our protection against the Indians. The Indians stole from us and annoyed us very much. The first white man killed by them was my brother Isaac's only son, John Higbee, a well liked and very promising young man. The hardships endured thru the depredations of the Indians were very greivous and discouraging. The want of food and clothing was also severe. Some whole families lived for months on fish, buttermilk and what few roots they could dig. Armed men had to herd and guard the stock, go with teams after wood or plow, besides guarding at night.

"In the fall of 1849 my brother Isaac was called to take charge at Provo and I was sent on a mission to England, leaving Salt Lake City October, 1849. I was chosen to preside over our company going across the ocean. Then I was appointed president of the New-

castle conference and served until January 5, 1852 when I was released to return home. I traveled in England 3924 miles, mostly on foot. On January 8, 1852 I was appointed to preside over the 333 Saints on board of the good ship Kenebec, which sailed January 10, 1852. Among the passengers was Mrs. Jane Homer Grainger with several children. She died on board ship and was buried in the ocean. Her daughter Ann married John Somers Higbee March, 1852.

"In company with Pres. Brigham Young I went on an exploring trip to Salmon river. October 10, 1857 was appointed captain of the 1st 10 and 2nd 50 of Militia. I moved on to Weber river April 4, 1858, and in February, 1865 moved to Toquerville, Utah, with my wife Ann, and children Sarah Ann, Charlotte, Jane, Sophia, Sabra, Richard Talt and Isaac William.