

A Short Sketch of History
October 10, 1933
Life of Evalyn Mattson Perry
By Evalyn Perry at the age of 76

My parents: George Britton Matson and Mary Jane Guymon Matson

They were early pioneers to Utah. My father came to Salt Lake City in Abraham O. Smoot Co. in Oct. the year 1847. My mother came in 1850 where her father helped to build the town of American Fork, putting up the first home there. Later my mother went to Salt Lake City where she met my father and in 185# (4?) they were married in the Endowment House. Then they moved from Salt Lake City to Springville where I was born. We lived in Springville until I was about seven years old and then my father, thinking he could better his financial condition, moved to Fountain Green, Sanpete Co. in southern Utah, but as it was the time of the Blackhawk Indian War, my father didn't do as well. I can remember as a child the many nights while my father was out on guard, my mother and we children would crouch down in the corner away from the Indians never knowing when they would break in and kill us.

This went on for several months and then the people broke up our settlements moved to another town. At this time my father was very ill with the sickness they termed as Mountain fever and my second brother was ill with inflammatory rheumatism and my mother had a new babe of two weeks old.

So kind friends took us in a carriage to an old school house of one large room where we dwelled with them [and] two other families for six weeks. When we moved the soldiers told us it was very dangerous and we shouldn't attempt it. But we moved to Springville. Even after all these years I can picture very plainly as if I were a child again as Mother and Father sat perched upon the high spring seat at the front of the covered wagon. My mother with her babe in her arms and we six children sitting back under the cover in fear, telling one another what we would do if the Indians attacked us. As we went through the narrow canyon with high trees on each side, it looked like ugly Indians ready to spring out upon us. How frightened we were when we passed two big rocks and to our stricken eyes saw the marks of a family killed a few weeks before by the Indians. But to our relief we passed through the canyon safely and a few days later arrived in Springville.

There I lived until I was nineteen years old. I can remember the first Sunday school that was organized in Springville, also the first Mutual Improvement Association. Instead of mutual then it was called Retrenchment Society. We had many enjoyable times at these gatherings, but oh how times have changed now the young people's pastime is car riding,

dancing, and card parties. Then it was wool picking, carpet rug bus, peach cuttings and candy pulls.

My girlhood days passed quickly. By and by in January 27th 1876 I was married to John Sylvester Perry. We were married in Salt Lake City in the Endowment House by Daniel H. Wells. In Feb. of the same year my husband and I with a Co. of sixteen other people left for Arizona, being called by the president Brigham Young to go on a mission and we were to settle on the little Colorado River in that state. It seemed a big undertaking in those days without many conveniences and an automobile being unheard of, but we started out with our relatives and friends gathered around to wish us goodbye. Some of the young people went one days journey with us and returned in the evening. And we resuming our journey through the mud and snow as they didn't have roads then like we have now.

There were several families in the Co. who had children, therefore traveling in a covered wagon with all you possessed was a more serious affair. Yet we young people had a happy time traveling all day then gathering around a big bonfire after supper, singing and telling stories.

Nothing particular happened until we reached Orderville, a small town in souther Utah near the border line between Utah and Arizona. We found the people living in the United Order. Their property was all put together and they lived as one big family, yet each family having his own home, the home usually consisting of one room, yet all eating in a big hall. It seemed very queer to us, yet they seemed happy. We stayed there one day and night, resting and preparing for our journey over the divide.

The following weeks were ones of hardships and difficulties. Bad roads, cold weather, snow and ice were the obstacles that stood in our way. We were several days going thirty-five miles going over the divide. There was no water and we had to melt snow for our cattle to drink. We would put several span of horses to one wagon and go a little ways then go back for the others.

At night our clothing would be wet and frozen so we would make a big bonfire to dry them. The next day after traveling through all the snow we came into sand and sunshine. We soon arrived at the place they called House Rock Springs. A small pool of water lay at the foot of high red cliffs of red stone where a stream of water burst forth from the smooth cliff of rock about six or eight feet up above. The water, pure and cold, did indeed look good to us and our cattle. We camped there two days, resting and preparing for the journey.

One thing I must tell about before we left camp. The scenery had changed. The mountains were of a red color and many of them looked like huge walls of castles. The boys climbed to the top of the cliff and raised a flag and carved their names in the rocks. We girls started to climb after them. The road didn't look so difficult going upward, although sometimes we would stand out on a large rock and it would shake under our feet as though it was

going to fall and I fear it would have if the boys had not met us. Nothing of importance happened from there to the big Colorado River.

We could see in the distance the huge mountains like banks of the Colorado River and wishing to get a closer view of the river. The boys took ropes with them and following the gulch leading to the river, they let themselves down the cliffs to the river. We girls too were very curious to view the river we had read so much about in school, so we got one of the boys to go with us and started across the country but we forgot to take any water with us. After several hours we reached the mountain where the mighty Colorado River cut through and as we stood and gazed down on what seemed to us a silver thread of water glistening below, we could scarcely believe it was the mighty river we had heard so much about.

The boys who had gone down to the water's edge looked like mere specks. It was indeed a grand sight. We had a very hard time getting back to camp. We began to get thirsty looking at the clear water below. But it could not be helped, so we started back with our mouths getting dryer. By the time we had reached the little gulch with its wet sand, our tongues were so sore we could scarcely speak. We dug a hole in the sand and when the water slowly began to arrive we lay down on our stomachs and we drank and drank then went on our way. Soon we met one of the men with a canteen who had started to meet us.

The next day we reached what was called Lu's Ferry (?) just below Grand Canyon. We ferried across the river here. It took some time to ferry us all across as there were dangerous riffles just below and they had to start their boat a half mile above to avoid the riffles. At last we got across safely. And to show you that young people were just as fool hardy in those days, if not more so than they are now, I will write what we did. While our husbands were preparing to go over the mountains, a couple of us girls with two young men in the Co. took the only little row boat there was and went a few miles up the river. The river was swift and quite narrow and the banks were mts. high, the boys began to rock the boat and it was just luck that kept us from turning over.

At last we got back to camp where our husbands waited anxiously for us. So we continued our journey over territory what we called Lu's backbone, a very difficult and dangerous road if one could call it a road. It was very narrow and rocky. The river lay at one side of us and the mountains near on the other side. At last we came to a petrified forest. At one time these forests had been huge trees. Now the trees lay stretched on the ground. Even walnuts lay upon the ground. When they were broken open the nut looked perfect, but it was petrified as the trees. It certainly was a wonderful sight.

As we traveled now we saw nature change every few days. Sometimes we would come upon country lands of low hills. They looked purple, yellow and gold in the distance and when we got near them, they were only a grey

bed of grey ashes. Other days the rock formation was as black as jet. And so the days passed by as over the sandy roads we slowly wended our way.

We had a chart given to us by a Mr. Brown, who had explored the country. The map told us of the bad places and where we would find water for our cattle and our own use. Sometimes the places would be dried up. At other times the water would be blackish and full of alkali and we dared not let our cattle drink of it. Then we would have to wait until we got to the next place. Sometimes the rain fell in holes where huge rocks were and sometimes it was not dried up.

At last in the distance we spied something that looked like trees. So we finally came to the little Colorado River. As the days went by we passed Black Rock Falls, also Grande Falls. Then we crossed the river. There was quicksand so the men swam ahead to find the safe way. We at last crossed the sand with all our people, even if we had lost several of our cattle. In a few days we reached our destination, but oh what a desolate place. No mountains, no trees, no living water. Just red, sluggish water of Little Colorado which was a rushing torrent in rainy season. In the dry season, the bed of the river was dry and dusty and always the water was red and you could not settle it. We were hundreds of miles from white people. Fort Winsgit (?) was our nearest trading post. There were several camps located up and down the river. Each camp had about fifty occupants in their outfit.

So we planted a few cottonwood trees along the river to make a shed frame. We lived in our tents.

Our food consisted mostly of bread and water gravy. As the hot days came along this food seemed very monotonous. The men toiled on and on. Some trying to make a dam in the river. This proved to be very difficult as the ground was very sandy. Others tried to plow and prep the ground so we could plant the few seeds that we had brought. But after a few months they began to see they wouldn't get any returns that year, so they called a meeting and decided to send several men back to Utah after supplies. My husband was chosen as one of the men to go. So he had to take my bedroll so I just put on my bonnet and went with them. There were four men with this train and wagon boxes and I was the only woman. We started the journey of many hundreds of miles with only 25 pounds of flour, one dozen and a half eggs, some little strips of jerked meat. The Indians had shown us how to prep the meat. They cut it in narrow strips, dip it into boiling hot brine, then you build a scaffold, covered with the green willows. Then the meat was layed on the willows and smoked and dried. After eating bread and water gravy the jerked meat tasted good to us. But we were headed for home and most anything tasted good.

So we traveled along. When crossing the Black Skin Mountains, we found some rabbits and shot them. They surely tasted good. But as we had no grease to fry them and no salt to salt them they soon got tiresome. For many years afterwards I could hardly near the smell of rabbit cooking. At

length we reached the big Colorado River and were ferried across. Then our feed began to get low for our cattle and ourselves.

In Sept. the grass was burned and dry and where had been our watering places while going down now were dry holes. But at last we reached upper Kanab in the southern Utah. It was getting dark and all we had was a little bread. In the distance we saw a light and upon searching found it to be a dairy. We got some cheese and had bread and cheese for supper, saving part of it for our breakfast. The next morning just at daylight a flock of geese flew low over our camp and the men were not slow in getting out their guns. Soon we had four or five ready to cook. As we had not salt nor grease, one or two of the men found a nickel and a dime and away they went to the dairy for butter and salt.

Talk about a feast. Yum yum. Fried chicken, bread, and butter and cheese. One must live on bread etc. As we did for months before they appreciate food. So we went on and on like this barely getting enough to live on. And at last we reached our home and loved ones.

They were overjoyed to see us again. They begged and pled with us not to go again but we knew those we had left in Arizona were depending on us and would be anxiously waiting for us to come with the supplies, so we gathered everything we could, and started on our journey.

We found them anxiously waiting for us. We found the people had built a fort about a mile and a half farther up the river and had moved. They had built the fort as a protection against the Indians of which there were several different tribes. They were all friendly toward us at this time, but we did not know which they would do otherwise. The Indians of the Apache tribe were more or less on the warpath.

And here is where we enter into the United Order. What little property we owned was appraised into the order at a certain price and we all worked together as one family.

On May 31, 1877 our first baby was born. A little girl and we named her Clara Maud. There were no doctors, nurses, or hired help, but when one was ill we cared for each other. I was very ill for a long time after my baby's birth, but through the goodness of God I gradually grew stronger.

And so days came and went. Each day was somewhat like the other; the men trying to build dams and raise crops, and we women baking bread and making water gravy. In the year 1879 August 10th, our second daughter was born Ida Luella.

When she was six years old, we with two other families left Brigham City Arizona finding we were unable to live there. We started for Colorado where the Latter-day Saints were colonizing and had a little ward at Manasseh, Conagus Co. Colorado. After a long tedious journey we reached Manasseh and found kind friends who although were strangers to us, were very kind and took us in and provided shelter and food for us. My husband could get work, and although we arrived penniless, my husband soon got

work freighting for the Mickelsons (?). I was often left alone with my two babies in strange places. After we had been there about two years, my husband took a job on contract of railroad building out in Gunnison country in Colorado.

Not wanting me to be alone he took me with him. It was indeed an experience for me. On the Gunnison River in Black Canyon where some of the camps saw only a few hours of sunshine because of the narrowness of the canyon just barely room for the river and the railroad in some places. They cut into the side of the mountains to build the railroad. It was a wild, rough country and miles away from Mormon things. Only the railroad workers. They were blasting rock all the time. Several times a day we would have to run as far away as we could and crouch down as the small pieces of rock came down upon us. How well I remember one evening when we had just made camp when one of the workmen told us we would have to move immediately as they were putting a blast in about a half an hour. We had our stove up and our things out but we didn't have time to reload our things so we ran as far as we could up the hill. The blast went off and when we got back to camp it was somewhat of a wreck. One rock had struck the stovepipe, cutting into it and several other things were smashed. So we loaded up our things and moved. Another day Mr. Perry and the other men had to Gunnison City after supplies, leaving me alone with the two little girls when the oldest one came running in saying, "Mamma, there is a man down in the willows." I didn't know what to do as I only had a butter knife to defend myself and my babies. The only help was a camp across the river. They were negroes. But with a prayer in my heart I waited and in about a half an hour he went on. This incident may not seem much to one who does not know conditions, but we were in a wild country where all kinds of men were employed and thought nothing of taking a life.

At length, the contract was finished and my husband was obliged to return to Manasseh and not wanting to take me back there on account of my health, he sent the children and me back to Utah. This was in Sept. and the following December 8, 1881, our third little girl was born Edith Estella at my father's home. My husband arrived a few weeks later and our friends and parents begged us to stay. So we never returned. We left all our things in Colorado and started anew.

Then came the first great sorrow in our life. Our oldest little girl died. May 15 1882. The year following we bought us twenty acres of land in Mapleton, a little town upon the bench about two miles east of Springville, our old hometown. It was just sagebrush land. Mr. Perry cut and hauled wood from the canyon to pay for it. He was away much of the time but he found time to clear the land and plant fruit trees and beautiful shrubbery. We were beginning to think we would never have a nice home.

In Oct. 10, 1885 our first baby boy was born John Sylvester Jr. How proud we were of him, but we only kept him a short time, for in April 1888 he

died of the same disease that took his sister Maud – Membranis Croup. (?) The loss of both of them left me a nervous wreck for many years. Our second boy (George Steven) was born February 13, 1888 about weeks before we lost our oldest boy. My baby was a great consolation to me and always has been so. It seemed now that I was more of a burden to my children than a help.

Time softens all sorrow and on the 39th of November 1891 we were blessed with a dear brown eyed baby girl (Mable?) who in measure took the place of the little girl we had lost by death. And so the years sped on, with me trying to care for our family of little ones. And my husband working hard to procure the necessary things of life and improve our home. I also tried to do my part in a social way, attending church when possible.

About this time I was chosen for a counselor in the Mutual and held the position for nearly three years. At this time we had been living in a house of two rooms but in 1894 we built a nice brick house. In Aug 3, 1894, twin boys were born. We named them Jesse and Jasper. We were surely proud of them. By this time we had a lovely home with choice assortment of fruit trees and flowers. And I supposed we would end our days there but in the year 1899 the Utah Capitalists built a sugar factory in Le Grand Oregon. The people there knew nothing of raising sugar beets, [so] the officials of the factory chose men from Utah to go to Oregon and instruct them along that line. Mr. Perry went taking our eldest boy along for company while I stayed at home to care for things, little dreaming that in the near future that Oregon would be my home, for I felt that I had pioneered enough. I soon found my husband was very much enthused with Oregon. And in a few weeks time he sent for our oldest daughter to come and cook for them.

On July I received word that the children had been exposed to measles. I could not think of them away out there and perhaps ill and no one to care for them, so I packed my trunks and taking my youngest girl and my two baby boys and started for Oregon.

It was a very good thing that I did too, for they soon had the fever and it seemed in spite of all we could do they would die. One can imagine my feelings – a stranger in a rude farm home a thousand acres farm, not knowing a soul, but after weeks of watching over them they all recovered and life went on.

We were very lonely as people were not of our religion. Weeks and weeks may go by before I would see a woman. My husband was involved with the place that we finally bought a place and settled there. His brother and he had been cooking at a large farm of six hundred and sixty acres. So my husband went back home to dispose of his property there. And on returning they bought the property I mentioned. It was a beautiful farm. Later they cut it into smaller farms and sold it to friends who came from Utah. We soon had a thriving little ward. We built us a nice little church

house to meet in. Before we had been meeting at one another's homes to have Sunday School and church.

We were very proud of our little Church and I think everyone helped to build it. I know we tried to get it finished so we could have our Thanksgiving dinner in 1901 in it. We all worked hard but on account of not getting the windows in time we could not finish it. But we were not daunted for while the men were busy hammering away, we women cooked and took quilts and tacked over the windows and hung our lace curtains over them. And on rude tables we spread our nicest linen table cloths and set our nicest dishes.

Although rather late, we had a wonderful feast of good things and it was all enjoyed. Thanksgiving in Mt. Glen. That was what we named the small town.

That was not the last picnic we had, for we had many good times. It was not long until wards were organized in La Grande a few years we had one of the finest stakes installed. It surely looked like the Lord was blessing us as a people. A large sugar factory was built in La Grande and the people were happy, prosperous, and contented.

We built us a lovely home and with our children with us we should have been the happiest people in the world but it seems one does not fully appreciate their blessings until they are deprived of them. Although a person shouldn't grieve when their children leave them to make homes of their own, there is always a heartache when they go one by one.

I was first counselor in the primary and first counselor for the Relief Society for several years there. The Church was on one corner of our land as we gave the land for that purpose. And the years slipped by one by one until our oldest boy was called to go on a mission to the Southern States. Our two oldest daughters were married and our oldest son returned from the mission and married.

In the year 1914 we moved to Idaho where our youngest daughter was married. Then came the world war and our twin boys both volunteered and went and we were left alone. God was good to us and after the boys went through those terrible battles they came home to us.

Jessie married and has five lovely children – four girls and a boy. Jasper married later. George's wife died in May 1930 and we took their two little girls – the oldest five and the youngest one three years old. The two girls and their father have made their home with us ever since. Helen is now nineteen and Verna seventeen. They are a great comfort to me now when I'm not able to do much as the years have slipped by. Some of them with joy and pleasures yet with struggles and sorrows.

Yet I have many things to be thankful for. We have six children in our life living. They have none caused us any real sorrow and they are true to the gospel. We gave two back to God in their childhood. We have twenty-nine grandchildren and eight great grandchildren and my greatest desire is that they will all prove faithful to the faith which the grandparents and

parents have endured so much to maintain. Then I will feel I have accomplished much in this life.

One by one the grey-haired sisters
Have answered the Master's call
And soon the work began so nobly
Will upon their children fall.

Then children polish up your armor
Holding fast the iron rod
Let your thought be forever
Your religion and your God.

Copied by her granddaughter Helen Perry

Grandma died at the home of a daughter Edith Estella Perry Snow. 6 April 1952 at the age of 95 years young.