

Before reading this history, there are some errors that should be pointed out. Thanks to the great research of Connell O'Donovan, we now have better information about the life of Edward Robinson and his family. I have added the corrections at the end of the biography, please read them as they add significantly to the story. –Nick Stoddard

BIOGRAPHY OF EDWARD ROBINSON

Pioneer who came to Utah in 1849

Written by his granddaughter, Myrtle Robinson Seastrand of Camp Adams of Daughters of Utah Pioneers of Utah County, American Fork, Utah

Edward Robinson was born 16 OCT 1807, died 18 APR 1896

Edward Robinson's life on earth covered a period of nearly ninety years. Most of this sketch was given direct to me, Myrtle Robinson Seastrand, by his son, William Smith Robinson, seventh child of Edward.

Edward Robinson was the son of Joseph Robinson of Little, Sutton, England and was born in Cheshire, England 16 OCT 1807. We know at this time in English History that the children of the middle class had very little chance of attending school, as there were not free public schools and only the wealthy could employ private tutors or send their children to pay schools. Then too, children had to help earn a few pence per day to help out the father's scanty income of a few schillings a week.

While very young, Edward chose to train a footman to the gentry of one of the Royal families. He took great delight in driving and caring for the stately pedigreed horses of the Lords and Ladies and in taking charge of the blood hounds and race horses for the hunts. He had to dress exceedingly trim to be in the presence of these distinguished people as he rode about with them as a footman, in their fine carriages behind two span of immaculate white horses. He kept his fine English boots shined to perfection. He developed a fine appreciation of nature, as he spent much time among the rustic flower gardens on the different manors. He later became a fine landscape gardener himself, having a great appreciation of art.

Several of his grandchildren have done splendid work in the most technical of art portrait painting. Edward and William, grandsons, won recognition while attending the Brigham Young University of painting their mother and father's portraits which are still cherished by the family.

This early training as footman schooled Edward in obedience, promptness, efficiency, courtesy, and neatness, all of which helped equip him for his future life. He grew up into noble manhood, somewhat heavy-set, round features, very pleasant appearance and optimistic spirit. His eyes were deep blue and he had a mop of brown, curly hair and a fine set of teeth.

At the age of 21, in 1828, Edward married a lively, spiritually-minded English girl named Mary Smith, who was, born 2 DEC 1810, in Manchester, England. Their courtship began while they were working on the same manor. Mary Smith was a tutor to the Lord's children. She was

very intellectual and a good teacher. Her picture reveals a rather delicate little face surrounded by a mop of thick curls. During the 16 years of their short life together, nine children were born to them. Richard, 1831; John, 1832; Mary and Martha (died in infancy in England), Elizabeth, 1837; Edward Jr., 1839; William S. 1840; Mary Jane, 1842; Joseph, 1844 (buried in Nauvoo) .

Edward Robinson, came into manhood at the beginning of the most inventive and important century of the world's history. In 1828, the English Parliament offered a prize for the best model steam engine to run on rails from Manchester to Liverpool. Several men in different parts of the world were experimenting with steam power, but the prize was awarded to George and Robert Stevenson of England, for their prize steam engine the "Rocket." A charter was granted and this engine made its initial run from Manchester to Liverpool in 15 SEP 1830, the same year as the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This date marked the beginning of great things. A new Era of science and religion.

Edward Robinson had the distinction of being the first conductor, or guard, on this train. The English nobleman for whom Edward acted as footman owned a big block of stock in this new enterprise and he gave Edward this position because of the deep trust he had in him.

Edward used to like to tell of that first run and how they sprinkled sand on the rails to keep the cars from slipping when they got going so fast as 26 miles per hour. In the American Fork Cemetery on Edward Robinson's tombstone is carved a picture of the engine "The Rocket", under which is engraved "Edward Robinson, First railroad conductor on the World."

With a good salary and a thrifty wife, Edward and his little family were very happy, welcoming each child as it came into their lives to bless their home and name, but the grim reaper came and robbed them of two of the children Mary and Martha.

In 1840, the same year that Mormonism was first preached in England, Little William, who was one year old, became seriously ill, and Mary, a very religious woman with a great interest in this new religion, sent for the Mormon Missionaries. Brigham Young was then in Manchester and came to their home, anointed and laid his hands upon the sick child's head, and promised the parents that he should be made well and live to a ripe old age. William has been a living testimony of this healing, and always spoke of it with appreciative reverence. Soon after this, Edward also joined the church and he often let the missionaries ride free on the cars. He would say, "Sit still and say nothing." More than once he took them to his tailor and ordered a suit of clothes for them.

It took a year or so for Mary Smith to persuade her husband to quit his fine position and leave their native land to join the Mormon Saints, who were then in Illinois, but the prayers of this little woman prevailed and in 1842, Edward and Mary with six children, left their native land for America. Upon leaving, the railroad company presented Edward with a silver watch in which was engraved, "To Edward Robinson in token of regard from the Directors of the Manchester-Liverpool Railroad, 1842." This watch is now in the keeping of the Daughters of the Pioneers of American Fork.

They crossed the ocean in an old sailing vessel, the "Henry" in October 1842. It took nine weeks to cross the water. They were delayed by storms and Mary and two of the children lay at death's door during most of the voyage.

They were indeed happy to set foot on ground, but as soon as they landed, they changed ships for the steam-propelled flat river boat which sailed up the enchanting Mississippi for Nauvoo. The Saints had built this beautiful city in Illinois on the banks of the Mississippi on swamp lands, thought worthless by others. Edward, believing this to be their permanent home, took their savings and immediately built them a lovely, little red brick two-story home. This was the happiest year of their lives. They were living and learning the gospel of Jesus Christ as taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith and others.

In the newly built Nauvoo Temple, the children were sealed to Edward and Mary and were endowed for all eternity. They envisioned only happiness ahead, but as the poet Burns said, "The best laid schemes of mice and men can aft gang a-gley and leave us naught but grief and pain, for promised joy." Within the next year, 1844, the Prophet and his brother, Hyrum, were martyred. This tragedy brought horror and unrest among the people. Grief came with even more force into the home of Edward Robinson for three months later, in September 1844, his wife, then 33, was taken in death at the birth of her ninth child. The baby, who was named Joseph after the Prophet, was taken care of by the Kirkwood family. Later he died and was buried beside the mother in Nauvoo.

Life was discouraging for Edward. He employed Ann Wootton, a widow with four children, two of her own, Attie and John and two adopted one's, Lizzie and Nammie, to care for his household. Ann Wootton was born in Tunstall, Staffordshire, England, 7 NOV 1810, She made such a good housekeeper that Edward proposed marriage to her and these two plucky parents decided to rear their families together. She made a good stepmother to Edward's children, although a mixed family of ten children was a big job for one woman.

Unrest and mobbing in Nauvoo again became rampant and Edward, taking the advice of authorities to seek homes in nearby towns and hoping to get employment, traded his little dream home for a team of horses and moved his family to Burlington, Iowa. Here for four years they struggled, trying to save enough to make their journey with the Saints to Utah. Here two boys were born, Heber and Alfred. At this time Edward and the biggest children would go to the mills and get roughins (bran) for ten cents a bushel. From this Ann would make sack after sack of bread which was dried, in order to take it with them on their journey across the plains.

They traveled in the Ezra T. Benson Company, leaving in the spring of 1849. By that time over 5000 Saint's had gone ahead of them, so by then the paths first made by the light tread of the moccasined Indian were trampled into a dust road, by the clumsy hoofs of the oxen and rawhide boots of the men. At one time, Edward, still retaining his jolly humor, said, as he held up his coarse boot, "This old clod cruncher doesn't look much like the fine-polished English boots I wore in the Gentry, but such is the price of pioneering."

Edward drove two good yoke of oxen to pull the two wagons and had two good cows; Paddy and Lilly. Lilly was a hard looker, as she had had her tail bitten off by a coyote when she

was a calf, but they gave plenty of milk to soak the dried bread they had to eat. With an occasional flapjack or egg from the hens they took with them, they seemed to have a mighty healthy diet. They also had buffalo and deer now and then. There were plenty of these dangerous looking buffalo on the plains. At a distance they looked like a patch of cedar trees. The Indians claimed the buffalo and deer and they didn't like to see so many white men coming onto their hunting grounds. The whites took away the deer from him and robbed him of his food, clothing, needles and thread and other essentials.

When Edward and his family finally started down grade into the valley they were indeed thankful. 'Tis true, the land with it's purple sage appeared dry and deserted, compared with the green plains they had left behind, but the streams and the beauty of the lake made up for the land's dryness. The majestic mountains stood like sentinels guarding the people as they proceeded to build their homes once more, happy with the thought they would never be driven again.

The first thing Edward did when he arrived in the valley of Salt Lake in October 1849, was to secure land. He rented the John Taylor farm and immediately commenced fall plowing, using the faithful oxen that had brought them across the plains. The boys helped slip logs to make walls to keep the wolves out of the milk. They cleared the land and broke the sage and skunkbrush up for fuel, drove the oxen into the canyons to bring back cottonwood, wild game and berries. Deer and game were plentiful and helped out when bread stuff was so scarce. Most of the grain had to be saved for spring planting as it was the year before, 1848, that the crickets got away with a big part of the crop when the Lord in his mercy sent the Seagulls to help them out. Much grain was needed in 1849, as well as flour, for that is when the gold rushers came through. They were glad to trade tired animals for food stuff. That is how the Pioneers obtained horses, sheep and cattle.

Let us vision Edward Robinson's pioneer home that first winter. A family of eleven children, three sets of half-brothers and sisters, ranging in ages from one to nineteen years, living in one big room with it's quaint fireplace, and black smoky kettles and primitive oven, which must have been kept full to supply food for so many growing, hungry youngsters; a spinning wheel, straw ticks made from the canvasses from the covered wagons, and a crude box or chest made of native lumber, which contained their Sunday clothes, two or three homemade chairs with buckskin bottoms.

This was a home quite different to what might have been theirs had they remained in old England. Almost as humble as that of the Christ Child. A home that called for all the perseverance, thrift and patience that individuals could cultivate, where every member of the family, of an evening, bowed his head in reverence and knelt upon his knees in thankfulness, for the preservation of his life, for the daily sunshine and the soil and strength to bring about the things they visioned ahead; where there were scanty meals shared willingly; kind services rendered unbegrudgingly; where a high standard of English culture was maintained in spite of the rough western setting; where they were happy because each day meant improvement and progression.

Content and happy as they were, this was as yet not ,their permanent home. A call came from the authorities asking the Saints to go to other valleys and make homes, since so many were coming with each company into the Salt Lake Valley. Once more, Edward Robinson answered the call and loaded his scanty, belongings into his one remaining wagon. One of his oxen had died, but he yoked a cow in its place and again they all, started out for what proved to be their final destined home.

Their worldly possessions at this time were the scantiest they had ever owned, but this didn't daunt their determination to work and plan toward future growth. And from this time on, each year brought them added blessings and wealth. They journeyed south toward the beautiful Utah County, then called the Provo Valley. Arza Adams and Stephen Chipman and their sons, Nathan and Henry Chipman, had already passed through here the fall before on their way to the fort of Provo. They were so impressed with its prospects that they returned, and in the spring of 1850 built the first two log homes. They brought back the report of their find; vast green pastures around the fresh water Utah Lake, abundant fishing, fertile bench lands covered with bunch grass. Lovely streams carrying water through virgin soil and much wild game, including antelope and deer, with snow capped mountains protecting the lovely valley. Picture this fine English family of 13 members. Father and sons walking as they drove the oxen with the women and children riding along with their few remaining possessions. Picture their admiration as they pulled over the rugged grade around the point of the mountain separating Salt Lake County from Utah County and first beheld the beautiful Utah Lake and it's surroundings. This valley proved to be their permanent home.

It was now the fall of 1850. They purchased a one-room log house from Sol Thomas, who wanted to join the gold rushers. This lot is the present American Fork City Park, where three generations of Robinsons raised their families; no other persons ever owning the corner. Here William S. Robinson lived 86 years. Part of the lot and Edward's adobe home were sold to the city upon the death of my father, William Edward. The other part was sold to the city upon the death of William S. They wished to buy it all at the same time, but grandfather said, "This spot, my home, is too dear to me to be sold for money. I want to live here as long as live . After my death you can have it."

The old fort wall just enclosed this property and I remember playing on it where it was worn down to a long mound of earth. Grandfather says we didn't need that fort, as the Indians were better peace makers than the whites if you knew how to treat them; of course, they became hostile when they saw us taking up all their streams and hunting grounds.

After spending the first winter in the one room log house, which sufficed a few years of pioneer environment, they added another log room. In grandfather's words, "We were so many grown ups that Ned, Richard and myself had to sleep out in the straw with a bit of shed over it; but it wasn't bad, it made us tough. Our stepmother fashioned us some warm bedding from home worsted and buckskin tops and that was warm, I'll tell you. She also made me a fine buckskin shirt with a beaver collar on it. I caught the beaver on the Provo River. This suit lasted my brother and me for years. It was just the kind of a garb to wear when you had to break the ice on the basin outside the door to wash your face or to go to the city creek for water. You've got it

pretty slick now-a-days; just turn a tap and out comes hot or cold water, but you've got your troubles paying for these luxuries.

Edward Robinson and Ann Wooton were worthy parents, equal to the task of training and raising this large, mixed family. Edward was the steady, plodding type, with an unusual kind and humorous manner. Yet he was a very good disciplinarian, quite forceful and strict, believing in the use of Solomon's rule when necessary. Ann was more aggressive, the bustling kind and an exceptional seamstress. You could often find her sitting up into the late hours of the night sewing suits for her grown sons and dresses for the girls; knitting all day while the children did the housework. With such a thrifty wife, the family soon improved things around them. They took up a large section of land along state highway 91, half way to Pleasant Grove. Homes included here were Edward's, Nate Robinson's, Maggie Robinson's, and Wallace Heislet's. This large tract of land meant endless clearing and cultivating.

The larger boys and girls worked in the fields with their father. Grandfather recalls, "We were certainly children of the soil and we could go to William Greenwoods's school for only a short time in the winter months when the ground was too frozen to be worked. We traded vegetables from the farm for our schooling, being a native looking bunch of pupils. We did more fooling than learning as we sat on our log benches. We had bits of slate and a speller but our main textbook was our Bible. We felt more at home out in the fields than in a schoolroom, for we loved to work in the clear air and sunshine which gave us good appetites. We were a thankful bunch that we were finally settled in such a peaceful land.

As Edward Robinson tilled the soil with his boys around him, he must have thanked his Heavenly Father that he was now a land owner himself, instead of a footman to royalty in Old England, and best of all in a free country of religious liberty where his family would be driven no more.

It wasn't long until Edward and Ann built themselves a comfortable six-room home. It was made of adobe-colonial style, quite like the red brick house Edward and Mary had built in Nauvoo, with four rooms downstairs and two big rooms upstairs. Grandfather has said, "We boys went to the canyon and hewed down our own native timber." We dried our own adobes, and I can see my stepmother now, throwing the adobes up to the masons as they put up the walls. We were surely proud of our lovely home. It stood back some distance from Main Street on the corner lot, leaving a large front yard where father Edward could be found continually at work."

Edward landscaped and planted trees, lawns, shrubs from the neighbors, Salt Lake, and from the east (these had to be brought by ox team.) some later emigrants brought him his lilac bushes from England which were planted each side of the east gate to bid you welcome. From the front entrance were rows of various kinds of roses which outlined the long gravel walk that curved to the door of the house. Next to the path beneath the rose trees were beds of violets, rows of white narcissus, with hyacinths back of these, and a great profusion of purple and yellow iris, which followed the corner curves and the lawns, and bordered the walk to the back gardens. Here there were roses of every shade, from wild pink and yellow single which were in the background against trellises of fragrant honeysuckle, to his choicest deep red Prince Henry. These roses he had to show to everyone who came into the lot and remind them it was named after one of

England's Kings, and a symbol of his great love for his mother country. In fact, his roses were the admiration of everyone. The town people called his place, Robinson's Rose Corner. Some of the trees now growing on the city park were planted by this great lover of nature.

Richard was the first to leave this lovely home; his romance budded in their own family when he wooed Lizzie Brently, the adopted daughter of Ann. This couple was called by the authorities to help settle southern Utah. John married Mary Ann Levens (Ann Clements) of Grantsville, Utah. Elizabeth married Morgan Phillips of California. While Edward Jr. married Sarah Harrington and built a home on part of the Robinson land. Heber married Maggie Della Smith. Later he married Margaret Crystal and also built down on the farm. William married Orpha Adams and built a red brick house west of his father's home, which he later sold, also to the City Park. Mary Jane married Oscar Woods of Castle Gate.

Most of the children were married when another great sadness came to Edward. Ann Wootton's life had been too strenuous and she was taken from this existence at the age of only 54, in 1864, and was buried in the American Fork Cemetery. Edward found much solace cultivating his lovely flower beds and mowing his lawns, trying to keep house himself, until two or three years later when another lovely little English woman came to bless his old age. He married Margaret Grosvener, an old maid, who had accepted the gospel in England and had come to American Fork with the Kelley family. She was born 11 OCT 1811 in Hertfordshire. England.

Margaret was a fine helpmate for him as she was a very good housekeeper and took pride in serving her meals on a nice, fresh tablecloth and always on scheduled time. Every afternoon exactly at 4:00 o'clock, one could hear Margaret calling to Edward, "Come to tea." This was always served in her cherished china which she had brought from England. In her advanced age she became totally blind, but with Edward's kind help, she managed to keep house and still serve her afternoon tea. And as if providence was giving her a chance to repay kind deeds, Edward became deaf, so Margaret became ears for him and with patience communicated to him all that was said. While on the other hand, Edward became eyes for her, explaining all that was to be seen. Thus what might have been a very drab life was made bright for each other, until 1889 when his third mate was taken in death. She was buried by the side of Ann Wootton Robinson in the American Fork Cemetery. Life for Edward now seemed so lonesome and difficult and his house of six rooms so large that he decided to sell the old homestead to his grandson, William Edward. He said, "This will be a nice home for you and your new bride and I'd like the old homestead to stay in the family name."

To please the old gentleman, my father bought the old adobe house and brought his wife, Jane Chipman Robinson, there to live. Edward maintained one room as a bedroom and ate most of his meals with his son, William S., who had built the red brick home on the other side of the lot. He dressed himself when he pleased and spent much of his time caring for his flowers. He enjoyed taking bouquets to his friends and neighbors.

When Jane's first baby, Myrtle, was born and commotion commenced in that family, Edward decided to move down on the farm and take turns living with Edward and Sarah, then Heber and Maggie. This was about the year 1892. Their children were now a good size and could wait on the old gentleman in whatever he wished and many were the times when he sat with

them on his knee and entertained them. He loved to let them listen to the tick of his English watch. He took great pride in wearing it because it meant so much to him and brought back fond memories of his life in Old England, his first wife, and young children. Oft times he would come up with the children and spend the afternoon sitting among his flowers beneath the lovely shade trees which he had planted, now the City Park. He would walk about supported by a cane yet not too feeble to bend down and stir up the soil around the roots here and there. He enjoyed good health until the last few weeks of his life, when Sarah and the girls cared for him in her home.

He died at the age of 89 in the year 1896 and was buried in the American Fork Cemetery, by the side of his two wives, Ann Wootton and Margaret Grosvenor, beneath the tombstone which bears the picture of the first steam engine in the world "The Rocket" and engraved, "Edward Robinson, the First Railroad Conductor in the World."

Corrections **Courtesy of Connell O'Donovan**

First, Edward and Mary could not have been endowed together in the Nauvoo temple. The only people to be endowed before December 10, 1845, were members of what was called "The Anointed Quorum", a group of about 75 LDS leaders and wives who had been specially selected by Joseph Smith. When the temple was finished, the Anointed Quorum were all re-endowed in the temple on December 9, 1845. Then on the 10th, the temple was open to the public and some 5,000 people went through before it was closed down in 1847. Nauvoo temple records show that Edward was not endowed until February 2, 1846, long after Mary's death. In fact, it was his second wife, Ann Turner Wootton - not Mary, who was endowed with him on February 2. [For details on the Anointed Quorum, see Devery S. Anderson, "The Anointed Quorum in Nauvoo, 1842-45", 29(2) *Journal of Mormon History*, pp. 137-157 (Fall 2003).]

Second, Mary Smith Robinson died on September 1, 1845, not 1844.

Third, Mary Smith Robinson committed suicide and did not die from childbirth. The *Nauvoo Neighbor* confirms the date and manner of death:

Suicide. – On Monday morning last [Sept. 1], Mary Robinson, wife of Edward Robinson, of the east part of this city, was found with a razor in her hand, and her throat cut, dead. An inquest returned a verdict, "that the deceased came to her death by her own hand, in a state of mental aberration." -*Nauvoo Neighbor*, September 3, 1845 (Wednesday), p. 2

Also, the biography states that "the English nobleman for whom Edward acted as footman owned a big block of stock in this new enterprise" of railroading. The English nobleman who owned this "big block of stock" in the Liverpool & Manchester Railway (or L&MR) was George Granville Leveson-Gower, the Marquess of Stafford (and the richest man in Europe at the time). The Marquess in fact owned 1000 shares in L&MR, the largest single stock holder. He had married Elizabeth Gordon, the 19th Countess of Sutherland, in 1785. However the biography is incorrect in stating that Edward and Mary's "courtship began while they were working on the same manor. Mary Smith was a tutor to the Lord's children." In fact, the

Marquess and the Countess were in their 70s at that time. Their youngest child was older than Mary by 10 years; therefore Mary could not have been "a tutor to the Lord's children". In 1828-1830, the children living in the family manor would have been the Marquess's grandchildren (children of his eldest son and heir George Sutherland-Leveson-Gower). The grandchildren were:

- 1) Constance Gertrude (b. 1823)
- 2) Elizabeth Georgiana (b. 1824)
- 3) Evelyn (b. 1825)
- 4) Caroline (1827)
- 5) George (1828)