

WRI- Family Activity

Helping your children come to know and love the pioneers is fun and easy. Tonight we did a short family activity as part of our Family Home Evening to help our children connect with the community, learn about our pioneer heritage, and do a little genealogy.

We started by singing a pioneer song. There are many of these in the Children's Songbook. We chose "You Don't Have to Push a Handcart".

You don't have to push a handcart,
or leave your family dear,
Or walk a thousand miles or more
to be a pioneer!
You do need to have great courage,
faith to conquer fear,
And work with might for a cause that's right
to be a pioneer!

We then had a family prayer and loaded up in the van. On the way to the local cemetery we talked to the kids about the words to the song and helped the children consider modern day pioneers and living a noble life.

At the cemetery I gave each of the older children (Robbie, age 9 and Enoch, age 7) three printed lists. First, I gave each a list of the original 309 pioneers that were called to settle St. George in 1861 (<http://www.weaverresearch.org/scrapbook-tw.html>). Second, I gave them a list of our family's relatives that are buried in the cemetery: William Atkin and one of his wives (you can create these lists easily using a search in PAF). And third, I gave them a list from the cemetery index of every Atkin that died before 1900 (if you live in Washington County you can go to the website <http://www.lofthouse.com/USA/Utah/washington/cemetery/master.html>; then copy the list of persons with your surname to the clipboard and paste it in a spreadsheet; finally, sort the list by date and print the one you want).



Figure 1 Headstone of William Atkin, Jr. (brother of Sophia Atkin, great, great, great, grandma of Rebecca)



Figure 2 Headstone of Solon Foster (one of the original 309 settlers of St. George)

I told the kids that for every tombstone of one of the original pioneers they found they would get one point (I would verify and photograph each, then record who found it on my master list). The person with the most points at the end would win (they never asked what they would win, nor did it matter, just knowing it was a competition made it fun for the kids).

For every relative they found, I told them they would get one lick of my ice cream cone. For safety, and so everyone could have fun, even those who could not read, I had the older kids pair up with their younger siblings. They did really well, I only had to remind them a couple times in the beginning to stay close by their little brother/sister. After that, the older kids really got into it and would explain to their buddy what they were doing so the little ones could really feel like they were part even though they can't read very well or at all (Joshua is now 5 and can read a little, Marianne is 4 and cannot read yet).

Within about half an hour the kids had found 7 of the original pioneers and 5 of our ancestors. I was able to photograph them all to add to our WRI research database and the kids had great fun. On the way home we stopped by Arctic Circle and got ice cream cones for everybody and declare the winners. Both groups tied in points and Robbie got 4 licks from my ice cream cone.