The Pioneer’s story is an amazing story about human endurance. It is filled with faith, sacrifice, dreams, courage and bravery.

In the mid-1800’s men, women and children left the comfort of their homes to cross many states to go west, where they could worship and practice—in freedom—their religion. Among Americans of many generations which had lived in the Eastern states all their lives, there were many who had just arrived from Europe. These last ones were the poorest, with little belongings and no money to buy a wagon and oxen. Many of those had to push their hand carts, and had to walk all the way to the western states. They had not the comfort of living in houses for several months, not sleeping in beds, or take a shower or a bath with warm water. They used the cold creek water to bathe and to shower, to brush their teeth with a toothbrush but without a toothpaste. They had to make their own soap, and probably they also used it to wash their hair, since no shampoo was available. Many men didn’t use a razor and let their beards grow, and most of the women had their long hair hidden under their bonnets to protect it from the dust. Of course they didn’t had kitchens to prepare food in, or table to put the food on. they used campfire to cook meals, usually early in the mornings and in the evenings. At lunch time they would just have a dry biscuit with beef jerky or, where possible, an apple or wild fruits.
Many pioneers’ households had tin plates and cups, the fine china and glasses -that came with them across the ocean as heirloom from their grandmothers- were donated to the building of one of their temples, and had been crushed and mixed in the mortar to give the building a shining exterior.

Forks, spoons and knives were kept in a towel and taken out to eat with, washed and put in the towel again after being used, so that they will not rattle much driving on bumpy roads. This might be a typical pioneer’s day:

At sunrise they got up from their make-shift beds located in the wagon, or under the wagon, or in the tent. after building the fire, and fixing breakfast, they hastily ate and cleaned and prepared for the day’s journey. Then they walked, and walked and walked.

Some of the children played while walking besides the wagon, older people or sick people rode in the wagon, but often the able-bodied just walked next to it, so that the oxen or mules didn’t get too tired. During the trip many of the women thought their children how to read. There were many educated people among the pioneers, many doctors, teachers, lawyers. Education had a very important place among them. Even farmer knew how to read and write, and of course shopkeepers and all the others knew math, how to add, subtract, divide and multiply.

They kept going until close to sundown, and before it got dark they stopped for the night. They tried to choose, where possible, a spot close to water for the animals to drink, and for them to bathe. a place where there was firewood available to build fires with, and grassy pastures
for the animals to feed. Many pioneers traveled in winter, and in those months, they would choose a spot where the wind didn’t blow too much, so that they could keep themselves a little warmer.

During the winter many died of fatigue, exposure and plain exhaustion. But life for pioneers was not always tragic.

When the camp was settled for the day, after dinner, many met around the fire to sing and dance. The children ran around to play, older women talked to each other of dreams and hopes they had for their new homes. Their needs were few, their dreams were many, their hope was sustaining, their faith was unshakable.

By the light of the fire they read the Bible and the Book of Mormon stories to their young children to teach them the Gospel and entertain them before going to sleep. Many recorded those days in their journals, wrote about how they felt, how they watched their family’s and friends’ sufferings and happiness, how life was hard and good at the same time. Many were able to find positive things to write about even in the mist of tragedy. Some of the pioneers wrote many new songs, one of the classic is ‘Come, come ye Saints” that is still, even now, sung by many.

Can you see yourself living a pioneer’s life?