

## EMMA SMITH

**Born:** 1 Mar 1838, Adam-ondi-almon, Davis, Missouri, daughter of Samuel Smith and Martisha Smoot

**Died:** 4 Mar 1912, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah



Although named after the wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith, she was not a direct relative of that Family. Her father was of English descent and her mother of French descent and the sister of Abraham O. Smoot, a close friend and confidant of Wilford Woodruff. After the expulsion from Missouri, her family settled in Nauvoo. She was a playmate of Joseph Smith's children and was often on his grounds and about his place. She remembered how handsome Joseph Smith appeared. She recalled sitting on his knee. Once when he rode by, he made it a point to stop, dismount and ask how she was. She always treasured that memory.

In 1850, the Samuel Smith family, consisting of father, mother and 4 children (Emma being oldest), started for Utah. At Salt Creek, father Samuel was stricken with cholera and died. Little 12-year-old Emma became a woman. that day and a pioneer in her

own right. Three days after her father's death, her mother gave birth to a little girl, and Emma had to care for the family. There were kind friends about but Emma was the woman of the hour. She learned to hitch-up her oxen and drove them the remainder of the way. At camp time she mixed bread, milked her cow and helped her mother with the children. They arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in the fall of 1850.

On March 13, 1853 she and Sarah Brown were wed as plural wives to Wilford Woodruff in a marriage ceremony conducted by Brigham Young. Emma was 15 at the time. Wilford would have been 46. Emma did not have her 1<sup>st</sup> child with Wilford until she was 19. Hyrum Smith Woodruff (b. 1857) lived about a year and passed away. Emma had a total of 8 children, born between 1857 and 1879, 6 living to maturity. In addition to Hyrum were Emma Manella (b. 1860), Asahel Hart (b.1863), Ann Thompson (b/d 1867), Clara Martisha (b. 1868), Abraham Owen (b. 1872), Winnifred Blanche (b. 1876) and Mary Alice (b. 1879)

Wilford's wives initially lived together in the Valley House, on the southwest corner of South Temple and West Temple for the first few years of their marriage. In the early 60s, Wilford built his farmhouse in "the big field" (16<sup>th</sup> South 5<sup>th</sup> East). It was a log home at the time. Later lathe and plastered inside and stucco outside along with another floor and additional rooms. After about 1866, it was occupied by Emma and her family and was their home for many years. Emma and her husband shared the same birthday, March 1, and this was often the occasion of a joint celebration. Following Phoebe Woodruff's death in 1885, Emma became Wilford's "public" wife. The laws against Polygamy prevented Wilford from being seen in public with any of his other wives, although there were several "at home" parties or celebrations where all of the wives and children were present. Emma was a member of the first Salt Lake Stake Relief Society Board and President of the Granite Stake Relief Society. She was a charter member of the Retrenchment Society and later presided over the Farmers Ward Relief Society In 1891, Wilford built a two-story Victorian Gothic brick home which he called the "Woodruff Villa." This was his and Emma's home during his presidency. When the Salt Lake Temple was opened in 1893, Emma was chosen as an ordinance worker. She served as assistant to both Zina D. H Young and Bathsheba W. Smith, when they presided over the women's department. Emma and her family had several special occasions with her husband, including an extended family vacation (of about a month) into the Uinta Mountains. Emma and her daughter Mary Alice also accompanied her husband to St. George during the winter of 1886 and 87. That she was the wife of President Woodruff was an honor to her all her life, and that their children were willing always to take his counsel was her greatest blessing,

[Alan J. Hill, 7-30-20]

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