

PHEBE AMELIA WOODRUFF



Born: 4 Mar 1842, Nauvoo, Hancock, Illinois, daughter of Wilford Woodruff and Phebe Whittemore Carter.

Died: 15 Feb. 1919, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah

She was born in Nauvoo, but little Phebe (named for her mother) lived 2 ½ of her younger years with her aunt in Maine while her parents presided over the England Mission (1844-46). Her father, upon his return, picked her up (her mother had already returned home another way) and the two of them traveled down the Ohio River back to Nauvoo. Wilford was enchanted with his little girl. One exchange went as follows. “Who put the water there?” “God” “Who helped God and how did he get it there?” These types of questions caused her father to comment – “Many persons seemed quite interested on the journey in Phoebe’s conversation.” She was only 4-years old as her family pioneered from Nauvoo to Winter Quarters. She was a very young helper to her mother during those trying days. In 1848-49, she received formal schooling while her father served as Mission In 1850, as a pioneer girl of 8, she walked across the plains.

As she grew to maturity, her father married plural wives. She lived in this extended family in the Valley House in downtown Salt Lake. On April 4 1859, at the age of 17, she was sealed to Lorenzo Snow, as one of his plural wives, by Brigham Young. Lorenzo was an apostle in the Church and a close associate of her father; in fact, her husband succeeded her father as the President of the Church in later years. In the church vital statistics, she is listed as Lorenzo’s 8th wife (of 9). Of Lorenzo’s 42 children, she bore him 5, three sons and two daughters, as follows: Mary Amanda (b. 1860), Leslie Woodruff (b. 1862), Orion Woodruff (b. 1866), Milton Woodruff (b. 1869) and Phebe Augusta Florence (b. 1870).

Phebe and Lorenzo lived in Salt Lake for the first few years of marriage. Phebe’s 1st child, a girl, Mary, passed away shortly after birth. Following the birth of her 2nd and 3rd children, both sons, Leslie and Orion, the family moved north to Brigham City. The influence of Lorenzo Snow’s leadership there is legendary. Phebe was made 2nd Councilor in the Box Elder Stake Relief Society on May 22, 1872 and a Secretary to that organization a year later. She was a Sunday School worker for many years and served some time as a 1st Councilor in Brigham City 3rd Ward Primary. She was known for her calm, dignified demeanor, placid equitable temperament and her striking character. She was an outstanding mother. She taught her children to honor both their Grandfather and father. Her son, Leslie W., became a renowned Medical doctor in Salt Lake. Her sons, Orion W. and Milton both became dentists; and her daughter, Florence, become a member of the Primary general board and wife of John Q. Critchlow, a capitalist of Salt Lake City.

The 1870s and 80s were trying time for the family as Phebe’s husband, Lorenzo Snow, was hunted, captured, and imprisoned for the cause of Plural Marriage. After the Salt Lake temple was dedicated, Phebe moved to Salt Lake City and was chosen as a priestess to assist in ordinance work. This was not new for her, as she had assisted her father with temple ordinances in the Endowment House many years earlier. She was present, April 11, 1901 at organizational meeting of the Daughter of the Utah Pioneers. Her husband passed away about 6 months later. Phebe was of medium height, with a mild dignity of coy manner, which won her friends. She lived to the age of 76 before joining her husband.

[Alan J. Hill. 6-15-20]

SOURCES

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Wilford Woodruff's Journal

Commentary

As with her mother, her name can be found as both Phebe and Phoebe depending on the source.