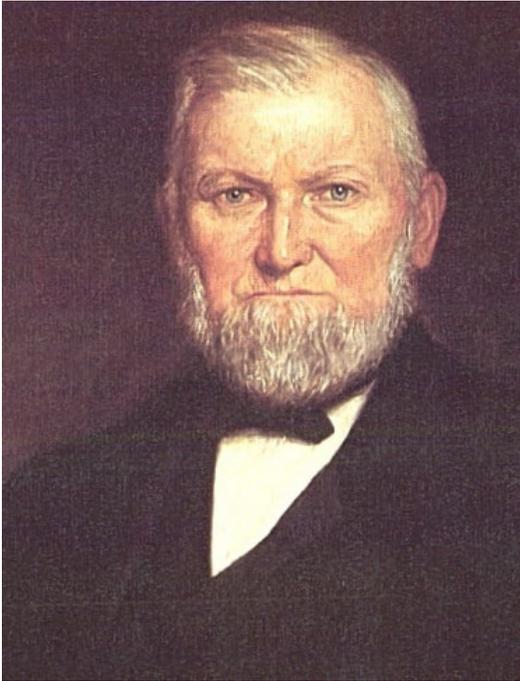


## WILFORD WOODRUFF



**Born:** 1 March 1807, Farmington, Hartford, Conn.,  
Son of Aphek Woodruff and Beulah Thompson.

**Died:** 2 Sept 1898, San Francisco, San Francisco, Calif.

His heritage was hard work, education, and religion. He emulated these values and pursued formal education beyond common school for about 4 years making him one of the best educated of early church leaders. A miller's son, he ran his own flour mill at age 20 for about 3 years. He and his brother then moved to Richland, New York buying a 140-acre farm, with a sawmill, house and orchard. He converted to the "Mormon" faith in Dec. 1833. In April 1834, Parley P. Pratt carried Joseph Smith's call for volunteers for a Missouri relief expedition to Richland. Wilford put his affairs in order, came to Kirtland, Ohio hence onto Missouri with "Zions Camp". Although the small army failed in some regards, it served as the "school yard" for future church leadership.

"A miller by trade and a missionary by profession" was Wilford's comment of his early days in the church; a

mission to the Southern States (1834-36), to Fox Island, Maine (1837-38), to Great Britain (1839-41), to the Eastern States (1843-44), to Great Britain (1844-46), to the Eastern States again in 1848. He personally baptized about 2000 souls, including the conversion of the United Brethren congregation in Herefordshire, England.

Joseph Smith called him "Wilford the Faithful." Returning from a mission, he helped gather the fleeing Missouri saints to Illinois. Called as a new apostle, he returned to Far West for the secret midnight laying of the cornerstone of the temple. July 22, 1839, became known as, "a day of God's power," when Joseph Smith healed hundreds of illnesses in Nauvoo. Unable to continue, he gave his red handkerchief to Wilford, instructing him to wipe the ill's faces and then administer to them. It was done and they were healed. "As long as you will keep that handkerchief, it shall remain a league between you and me." Wilford kept it the rest of his life. He built an imposing brick federalist style home in Nauvoo (which still stands). He was a dedicated journalist, and to him we owe much of the record of early church events, including many of Joseph Smith's discourses and teachings.

. He was in the first company of saints crossing the plains in 1847. He had learned to fly fish while English mission president, a pastime he enjoyed, using these skills on the trek. Entering the Valley, Wilford was driving the carriage from which Brigham Young made the statement, "This is the Place." He drove a stake in the ground to identify the Salt Lake Temple site. He was the foundation foreman, and saw the Temple through to completion 40 years later. He raised a variety of crops on his farms and encouraged horticulture. He believed in and practiced the principle of plural marriage, having 5 wives—33 children. He was honored and revered by all his children. He was the first President of the St. George Temple, when he had the revelation to baptize early leaders of our country. In the late 1870s/early 80s, he went into hiding to prevent arrest for Polygamy living with the desert Southwest. He became President of the Church in 1889. The Edmunds-Tucker Act in 1887 provided a means for the confiscation of church property, and the church was on the brink of financial collapse. Woodruff's Manifesto in 1889-90 ended the practice of polygamy and along with the adoption of Republican/Democrat politics (also encouraged by Wilford), led to Utah Statehood in 1896. The church could again operate and a new tone was set for the twentieth century. A beloved prophet, 10,000 saints tried to attend his funeral.

(Alan J. Hill 7-4-97)

## SOURCES

Alexander, Thomas G., Things in Heaven and Earth, The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet. Signature Books, Salt Lake City, Ut. 1991.

Cowley, Matthias F., Wilford Woodruff, History of His Life and Labors as recorded in his daily journals., Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Ut. c. 1964. 7<sup>th</sup> Printing 1978.

Lund, Gerald N., The Work and The Glory, copyright 1994, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City.