

ASAHEL HART WOODRUFF



Born: 3 Feb 1863, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake Utah, son of Wilford Woodruff and Emma Smoot Smith

Died: 2 July 1939, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah

When Asahel was 5-years old, his hand was caught in a crusher, at his father's molasses mill. He lost his thumb and two fingers and damaged the remaining fingers on his right hand. However, he never let his handicap hold him back. He had other illness and injury in his young life and learned lessons from the experiences. He was baptized Feb. 3, 1871 and ordained a Priest when he was only 11-years old. His father performed both of these ordinances. He had a limited formal education, but he was a great reader and thinker. He became one of the best-educated, wisest and most respected men in early Salt Lake. Of all of Wilford Woodruff's children, he undoubtedly became the most financially successful. He worked on his father's farm until he was sixteen years old. He became an errand boy with Z.C.M.I. in 1878. He worked his way up through the company until he became manager and buyer of the wholesale dry goods

department. He also took on his share of church and family responsibility. He was ordained an Elder in 1884 and served a mission to Great Britain until 1886. He labored as a traveling Elder in the Manchester and London conferences. On March 1, 1886, his father recorded, "I spent this my birthday at the farm at work...the first day's work I had done for a long time. I helped Asahel make fence posts a part of the day." Asahel also accompanied his father on an extended vacation into the Uinta Mountains that summer. He loved to work and to fish, just like his father.

He married Naomi Abbott Butterworth on Dec. 14, 1887. He was 24, she (an English girl) was 23. They were the parents of 6 children (Roxie Norma, Beulah, Asahel Jr., Douglas Owen, Emma Rose and Kenneth Claude). His home was at 5th East and 17th South on the northwest corner. In 1905 he built and moved into a new home next door (which still stands) at 1636 South 5th East. He loved flowers, roses in particular. He had a beautiful garden, and was generous in sharing his produce with his neighbors. During his father's later years, he had several opportunities to accompany him on retreats or trips. He was one of the executors of his father estate. In 1899, the Granite Stake was organized and he was made 2nd counselor in the Stake Sunday School. He was called to preside over the Northern States Mission, with headquarters in Chicago from Jan. 18 1902 to Sept. 15, 1904. While serving as Mission President, he was authorized by the Church to purchase the Carthage Jail. He returned home because of serious eye trouble; resulting in the loss of one eye and wearing a removable glass eye for his remaining 35 years. When the Waterloo Ward was organized Jan. 29, 1905, he became the ward first Bishop, a position he held until Dec. 17, 1916, when he was chosen as an alternate High Counselor in the Granite Stake. He also served as a counselor in the Stake Presidency to Joseph J. Daynes. He later became President of the High Priests Quorum in the Wells Stake. As his health failed, he found usefulness in temple work. In 1938 he was made a Patriarch in the Wells Stake, a position he held until his death. He was always industrious and busy. He was involved in several business ventures. Although he retired from ZCMI in 1930, he was still active in business and financial circles until the time of his death in 1939. He was one of the promoters and directors of Pioneers Electric Power Company, which was later absorbed into the Utah Light and Railway Company. In 1905 became Director of Zion's Saving Bank. He also served as Director of Deseret Building Society. He loved his grandchildren and they loved him. He was a great example. President Heber J. Grant paid him this compliment— "I know no man who was truer to his faith...Integrity, generosity and faith were the watchwords of Asahel."

[Alan J. Hill, 7-13-20]

SOURCES

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