

JAMES JACKSON WOODRUFF



BORN: 25 May 1847, Florence, Douglas, Nebraska, son of Wilford Woodruff and Mary Ann Jackson.

Died 8 Dec. 1927, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah.

James Jackson Woodruff was born in Winter Quarters, Nebraska after his father, Wilford Woodruff left for the mountains with the Vanguard Company of Mormon Pioneers. It was said, "he was so small that he could have been put in a quart cup." His mother was also anxious to come west. Accompanied by her father-in-law, Aphek Woodruff, Mary Ann and her infant son joined the A.O. Smoot Company (part of the much larger Jedidiah Grant wagon train). They left Winter Quarters on June 13, 1847. They met Wilford Woodruff on his return trip east, near the Continental divide, on Sept 8, 1847. It was on the banks of the Sweetwater River, that his father gave James his name and a blessing. James was too young to realize the danger associated with the journey, but it is said that the wagon in which he was riding one time overturned while fording a stream, and only the quick action of his grandfather saved James from drowning. Also with his

grandfather's support, they made their home in the valley until Wilford was able to return 3 years later. James' mother divorced his father, but James looked up to both and grew to young manhood under his mother's direction. Wilford stated, at the time of divorce, that he was 'ready at any time to take [James] & furnish him a home & do as well as I can by him.' On May 29, 1863, Wilford Woodruff recorded, my son James Jackson who had been absent for several years, returned to live with me.' This was not the return of the prodigal son but of an obedient 16-year-old boy who had been separated from his father only because of circumstances. He was received into the family with joy and accorded the same right as the other children. At the age of 20 he joined the "down-and-back boys", going back across the plains to bring emigrants to Utah. On the trip, about 200 Sioux warriors raided the camp and stole about fifty horses. The boys were subsequently invited to the Indian encampment where they found their horses and were allowed to reclaim them. The next year (1868) James also participated in the same adventure, where he met and courted Fanny Lloyd, a pretty 18-year-old English girl. On December 21st of that same year they were married in the Endowment House. The marriage was performed by his father, who stayed in touch with his son and daughter in-law. They had 10 children, although only 3 grew to maturity. After burying their third son, Wilford in September 1874, the carriage in which they were riding had a runaway. James was thrown from the carriage breaking both wrists and both knees. His wife's hand was crushed when the carriage overturned. Ten days later, another child, Fanny, age 2, also succumbed to illness. Wilford Woodruff, himself, drove the carriage this time. He helped to carry coffins to the grave on both occasions. James and his family made their residence in Provo for a time and then made an attempt at ranching at Koosharem in southern Utah. The winters were terrible, and the cattle died. On one occasion he found some of the cattle frozen solid still standing up. Returning to Salt Lake, James went to work for Z.C.M.I. When he was 50, James was building a crate when a nail flew up and cut his eyeball. All the fluid escaped. In an administration by his father and George Q. Cannon he was promised restoration of sight. He would not let the doctors remove his eye and miraculously his sight was restored. Following his retirement from Z.C.M.I. in 1912, he devoted time to working in the Temple. He and his wife also had his oldest daughter, Mary Catherine, and her family move in with them, following the untimely death of her husband, George Ensign. They served as both parents and grandparents to her children. James preceded his wife in death. He passed away in 1927, she in 1931. James was always proud of his pioneer heritage. In 1926 he wrote a brief life sketch, ending them with the following. "I am the son of a Pioneer, the grandson of a Pioneer and a Pioneer myself."

[Alan J. Hill, 11-26-01]

SOURCES

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Family Group Sheet: James Jackson Woodruff and Fanny Lloyd.

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THE DEATH OF THE SMALL ONES AND A VISION (Written by Hazel Woodruff Johnson and Marilyn Erickson)

At one time [Sept. 1874] two of the children were just recovering from measles when a child was brought to the house who was coming down with scarlet fever. These two little tots were weakened from measles and were easy prey to the other dreaded disease. One child died, and the other was at the point of death. After having buried Wilford, one month old, they were on their way home from the cemetery when an accident occurred. The horses, which were pulling the carriage in which Fanny and James were riding became frightened and began racing wildly. Knowing that their driver was only a young boy, James attempted to crawl out of the carriage to assist the boy in controlling the horses. Just as he was on top of the carriage, the carriage struck a pole and tipped over. This threw James into the air and he fell lighting on his hands and knees, breaking both wrists and both knees. The young driver was killed, also one of the horses. Fanny in her fright grabbed hold of the edge of the carriage and as it tipped over, her hand was crushed. A poor job of setting the hand resulted in its having to be broken again and reset. The hand was misshapen for the rest of her life.

Just ten days later [October 1], another baby, little Fanny, 2 ½ years old, died of the same affliction as her little brother. This time Wilford Woodruff personally drove the carriage to insure their safety. Picture the condition and suffering of this little family. Both mother and father still hurting from their injuries having to bid an earthly farewell to the second of their three children.

James was a very tenderhearted and home-loving man, and after the death of these two children, and the terrible result of the accident, he seemed to lose heart and mourned and grieved a great deal. This began to undermine his health, and weaken him in body and soul. He came home one day feeling more downhearted and exhausted than usual, and he sank down on the sofa. He related later that he felt he was wide-awake when the door opened and his two little children entered hand in hand. They both looked very beautiful and happy, and the oldest one said, "Don't cry any more papa, we are both so happy and well now." After this James felt he should not mourn for his babies any longer, and he soon regained his health and spirits.