

## SUSAN CORNELIA WOODRUFF



**Born:** 25 July 1843, Nauvoo, Hancock, Illinois, daughter of Wilford Woodruff and Phebe Whittmore Carter

**Died:** 6 Oct. 1897, Sioux City, Woodbury, Iowa.

Susan had a very interesting yet challenging life. There were times of illness and near-death experiences but also happy times. When she was only one year old, her father was called to preside over the church mission in England. He took his wife, Phebe, and little Susan with him. Before departing, she was blessed by Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball that she would “live and cross the sea” with her parents and would again return to this land. This was a significant blessing in that an older sister, Sarah Emma had only lived 2 years and then died: and of her subsequent siblings, four died young and only one survived to maturity. The trip returning from England was also a particularly turbulent one. While crossing Iowa in 1846, Susan Cornelia became “dangerously sick.” Her father administered to her, assisted by two brethren. This blessing and careful nursing brought her back to health. Life expectancy in Winter Quarters was not good

for young children. Two younger brothers die, but Susan survived. Her family lived in Boston, Mass. for two years (1848–49). Her father presided over the Eastern States Mission. Susan was only 7 as her family pioneered across the plains to Utah. She was in Wilford’s carriage at the head of the wagon train when a terrifying stampede started. After a terrifying ride across the prairie she ended up lying on her back with her feet hanging out between the wheels of a demolished carriage. She escaped injury because she held on until her father was able to come to her rescue.

Susan married Robert Scholes on Jan. 30 1859 at young age of 15. She was the first of Wilford and Phebe’s children to marry. Robert was a hired-hand who assisted with farming, milling and caring for livestock. Robert had participated as one of the mountain guard during the Utah War. Subsequently, he had remained in Salt Lake to guard the Woodruff property when the city was evacuated. After his marriage, Robert was tasked to build Wilford Woodruff’s farm home in ‘the big field’. Their young family became its first residents. In about the mid-1860s, Robert and Susan moved to Brigham City. In 1868, her father, Wilford Woodruff, noted that he had visited with Susan and her husband on at least two occasions and that “They do not live happily together.” He later noted that his son-in-law had become “dissatisfied with Mormonism” and had “sold out his place in Box Elder.” Robert made the move to the vicinity of Omaha, Nebraska, where his family lived. Susan spent a month with her parents before leaving to joining her husband. “It was quite a trial to her and her parents to have her leave, but they are in the hands of God, and he will deal right with them,” her father wrote in his journal.

The families stayed in contact. Robert and Susan had 7 children, 4 girls and 3 boys. The first 4 children were born in Salt Lake between 1860 and 1868, the remaining three in Onawa, Iowa between 1869 and 1879. In a letter to a friend, on Oct 23, 1890, Wilford Woodruff wrote. “Robert Scholes has been here on a visit, and has just returned. Susan was here also and returned yesterday. She has one daughter sick with diphtheria, which hastened her return (to the East).” Robert, who was 12 years senior to Susan, passed away in Iowa in 1891. Susan, as a widow, had older children to assist her. Susan remained in the East until her death at the age 54, which preceded that of her father by about a year. Her remains came back to Salt Lake “in charge of her son-in-law.” The funeral was held in the 21<sup>st</sup> ward chapel. She was buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery. Several of her children took up residence in Salt Lake City. Phoebe Carter Saville, Susan’s 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest child was very active in the Daughter of the Utah Pioneers.

[Alan J. Hill, 6-16-20]

## Sources

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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

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Gibbons, Francis M., Wilford Woodruff, Wondrous Worker Prophet of God. Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1988.

Woodruff, Wilford, letter to Williams Atkins of Oct 23, 1890. Available through the Utah Historical Society Library.

Daughter of Utah Pioneer file on Wilford Woodruff contained family group sheet for Robert Scholes and Susan Cornelia Woodruff, also Photo Family group sheet of Wilford Woodruff and Phoebe Carter.

Wilford Woodruff's Journals