

JEREMIAH WOODBURY

Jeremiah Woodbury, was the sixth child and second son of John Woodbury and Mary Ward, was born in Leverett, Franklin County, Massachusetts, March 9, 1791.

As he grew to manhood, he received what was considered at the time as a liberal education. During the first few years of his mature life, he followed the profession of teaching; and, so far as is known, contemplated making that his life work.

On June 20, 1815 he was married to Elizabeth (Betsey) Bartlett, at Montague, Franklin County, Massachusetts. She was the third child of Daniel Bartlett and Hannah Woodbury Bartlett, of Montague, Massachusetts, they were first cousins.

After their marriage, they established residence in New Salem, Massachusetts, and became the parents of seven children: 1) William Hamilton, 2) Joseph Jeremiah, 3) Thomas Hobart, 4) John Stillman, 5) Orin Nelson 6) Susan Elizabeth and 7) Hannah Maria.

As stated above, Jeremiah followed during his early adult life the profession of teaching. Later on, however, he turned his attention to agriculture, and soon became known as a successful and prosperous farmer.

Early in the year 1841, Elder Myers, a humble Latter-day Saint Missionary, came to their door and presented to them a message that changed materially the course of life of every member of the family. The message, as presented by Elder Myers, told of the new light that has recently dawned among the inhabitants of the earth.

The Gospel, as instituted by the Savior among his disciples during His sojourn here in mortality; but which had later been taken from the earth, had now been restored in its purity and simplicity and in its fullness, through the instrumentality of the boy Prophet, Joseph Smith.

The family, one and all, listened attentively to the elder's presentation of his message. After a careful and prayerful study of the Book of Mormon, and of the principles and doctrine embodied therein, they were all convinced of the truthfulness of the Divine message and immediately applied for baptism.

After their conversion and baptism, the Spirit of Gathering rested upon them, and they became imbued with a desire to assemble, with their fellow religionists, in their beautiful city on the banks of the Mississippi. In order to dispose of their possessions in New Salem, it was necessary for them to sell at a considerable sacrifice. However, they willingly made the sacrifice, and straightway turned their faces toward the "Zion of their dreams." Although each of the three older brothers had recently entered the field of matrimony in a triple wedding ceremony, each one of them, with his companion, joined with the rest of the family in making the trek to Nauvoo, where they arrived in the late summer of 1842.

At one time, when the Prophet was greatly in need of financial assistance, Jeremiah helped him out with a generous contribution. The Prophet laid his hands upon the head of the willing contributor and gave him a blessing, promising him among other things, that he should never lack for money. That promise was literally fulfilled.

Jeremiah testified many times during his later years that, though he had experienced many trials and hardships during the journey across the plains and the pioneer conditions in Utah, when money and every other necessity were hard to obtain, he had never seen one day when he was without money.

Soon after their arrival in Nauvoo, they were living in a house in the outer edge of the city. One evening, after they had retired for the night, a knock came at the door. The father asked what was wanted, and a voice answered. "We would like to come in out of the storm."

Jeremiah said he would get up and strike a light.

"No," said the voice, "don't bother to make a light. Just let us in, until the storm is over."

When he opened the door, one man seized him by the collar, and thrust a pistol into his face. The other man crowded past him into the room. The two younger brothers, John and Orin, were sleeping in a bed, made across the top of two chests. They scrambled out of bed and hid themselves.

The men threw the bedding off the chests and began going hurriedly through their contents, scattering things about on the floor. They found and appropriated a bag containing silver coins. In their haste, however, they overlooked a bag of gold, worth many times more than the silver.

They never did recover the money, nor did they learn the identity of the thieves, although they had their suspicions. They

felt certain they were persons who had been in their home, and knew just where to look for what they wanted.

The family endured with unwavering faith and patient forbearance the trials and hardships that beset them during their stay in and around Nauvoo. They never did question the divinity of the work with which they were identified, nor did they ever waver in their loyalty and devotion to those placed over them in authority.

The death of the Prophet and his brother, Hyrum, was to them, of course, a sorrowful experience, as it was to every other faithful Latter-Day Saint. However, they knew that the work in which they were engaged was the Lord's work, and that His hand would guide and direct its every activity toward the ultimate accomplishment of His divine purpose.

However, when Brigham Young arose and began to make his reply to Elder Rigdon, the people were amazed at the apparent transformation that had taken place in his manner, his whole personality appeared to be that of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The mantle of the Prophet had indeed fallen upon the shoulders of Brigham Young.

Many people in the audience cried out, "It is the voice of our beloved Prophet."

Jeremiah Woodbury and family accepted without reservation the statement of Brigham Young that the Prophet had placed upon the shoulders of the Twelve the responsibility of guiding and directing the affairs of the Church; and he, as President of the Twelve,

stood at the head, as chief executive, to make known to the Church membership the mind and will of the Lord.

In conclusion, President Young said to the assembled multitude, "If the brethren and sisters gathered here feel that Elder Ridgon is the rightful leader of the people, and desire to follow his leadership, we have no desire to restrain you in any way whatsoever. But I declare unto you that here with the Twelve, and with them only is the Divine Authority to officiate in the various ordinances of the Gospel."

Not one person in the vast assembly manifested any desire to follow the leadership of Elder Rigdon.

The oldest son of the family of Jeremiah, William Hamilton Woodbury, after completing high school in New Salem, attended Amherst College, from which institution he graduated, probably majoring in some branch of engineering, or in higher math. After their arrival in Nauvoo, he was employed as a teacher of higher math in the University of Nauvoo. Joseph J., the second son, had completed high school, and was ready to enter college when the family left New Salem and started on their journey to Nauvoo.

However, the two younger brothers John S. and Orin N., because of their youthfulness at the time of leaving New Salem, together with their limited opportunities for attending school while in Nauvoo, and after reaching the Valley, received only a very limited amount of formal education. We have understood that their attendance at school after reaching the Valley was limited to a few weeks. The major part of their education came from the school

of experience and "hard knocks."

After the death of the Prophet, persecution of the Saints in and around Nauvoo not only did not cease, but became even more relentless and vindictive than before. Homes were burned, crops destroyed, horses, cattle and other farm animals were shot down wantonly and indiscriminately, and on many cases, human lives were taken without provocation.

As the autumn of 1845 drew near persecution became so utterly unbearable that many of the Saints began making plans to vacate their homes and take their journey into the western wilderness. Jeremiah and his family were among the number making such preparations.

However, as the time drew near for their departure, they were surprised and deeply grieved by a wholly unexpected development. The two older brothers, William and Joseph and their wives, refused to accompany the parents and other members of the family on their journey to the West. This situation was brought about mainly by the principle and practice of plural marriage, which was being advocated and put into practice by leading men of the Church.

It was a severe trial for both parents and brothers and sisters to leave for the West without the two older brothers and their families, from whom they had scarcely before been separated. It was even more painful to contemplate the fact that they were probably severing themselves from the Church, which had up to that time meant so much to every member of the family.

However, the brothers were obstinate, and their wives even

more so. The rest of the family, therefore, began their westward journey as planned, hoping and praying that those left behind would later recognize their mistake, and decide to follow.

In making preparation for the westward journey, the family had provided themselves not only with suitable outfits and equipment for traveling, but also with a full eighteen months supply of provisions. They traveled in the Abraham O. Smoot Company and arrived in the Valley September 26, 1847, two months and two days after the arrival of the original Pioneers.

Immediately following their arrival, they began the erection of an adobe house within the walls of the Old Pioneer Fort. The roof was composed of poles, willows, grass and dirt. The building was fairly comfortable, except after a heavy rain storm when mud and water came through the roof in rich profusion. However, they accepted the situation philosophically as a necessary accompaniment of early pioneer life and looked forward hopefully to improved living conditions in the not too far distant future.

During the winter the boys herded the cows on Mill Creek Bench south of town; and in the spring the family moved there into a house made of poles, willows, grass and dirt. After the crops had been planted, and were up and showing signs of a prospective satisfactory harvest in the fall, the crickets came in hordes and began devouring everything before them.

Every person that has any knowledge of early Utah Pioneer history is undoubtedly familiar with the story of the crickets and the gulls; how the crickets came just as the crops were up and

growing satisfactorily, and the eating of the crickets by the gulls; thereby bringing increased hope and encouragement to the hearts of the weary settlers; how every able bodied person, man, woman, or child, worked frantically in a desperate but apparently fruitless effort to stem the tide that was sweeping and devouring everything before it; how, when it had become apparent that their most exhaustive efforts were to be unavailing in removing the threat of a winter of starvation--then came the seagulls (Heaven's white winged messengers of mercy) and began devouring the crickets. They feasted until surfeited; then flew to a nearby stream of water, drank and disgorged; then flew back to the field for another helping.

This continued without intermission until the fields were cleared of the devouring pest. A sizable portion of the crops was saved, and the threat of impending disaster had been removed.

The family of Jeremiah joined with other faithful Saints in rendering to Divine Providence their deepest gratitude for His timely and miraculous deliverance from the threat of starvation.

It seems however, that Providence had decreed that Mother Woodbury was not to be permitted to enjoy the luxury of a comfortable home, with pleasant surroundings, for more than a brief period. The persecutions endured during their stay in Nauvoo; the hardships encountered during the journey across the plains, together with the trials and privations incident to early Pioneers life in Utah, had so weakened her constitution that, when she became the victim of a serious disease, her system was unable to

withstand its ravages, and she passed to her final reward on May 18, 1851.

She left a devoted husband, six children, several grandchildren, and a host of friends to mourn her untimely passing.

To be thus so suddenly and unexpectedly bereft of a self-sacrificing wife and mother was to the entire family a severe and stunning shock.

To the daughter, Hannah Maria, the blow was especially severe: Since the untimely death of her sister, Susan Elizabeth, she and her mother had been even closer companions than before. And now, to be so suddenly and unexpectedly deprived of her companionship left the daughter with a feeling of loneliness that would be hard to describe. However, she had been endowed with a cheerful, sunny disposition, and with a sincere, unwavering faith in the Restored Gospel. She resolved therefore to carry on and be at once a wife, a mother, and a sister to the rest of the family.

Jeremiah, although deeply depressed by the loss of his beloved companion, resolved to carry on, as possible as before--to discharge faithfully and loyally every duty devolving upon him as a member of the Restored Church, and to instill into the hearts of his children an uncompromising love for the principles of truth.

Shortly after the death of his beloved companion, he helped organize the first Sunday School in the Seventh Ward.

Brother Woodbury was sustained as first Superintendent of the school and chose, to serve as his assistants, John Vance and Thomas Dunville. Even after being released from the superintendency, he

served faithfully as an ardent Sunday School worker during the remainder of his life, or until he was incapacitated.

Some years after the death of his wife, Elizabeth he formed a close acquaintance with a very estimable lady, whose name was Charlotte Frost Train, the daughter of Appollis and Abigail Frost Train. She was born March 21, 1798, at Berkshire, Massachusetts.

As their acquaintance grew, their friendship ripened into love; and they were finally sealed for time and all eternity. Their union proved to be a fortunate one for both of them. Although not blessed with any offspring, they enjoyed a harmonious companionship from the time of their marriage until the day of their death.

From information available it seems that during the early 1880's a grandson built a modern home on a corner of the lot on which the old home stood. He invited them to move into a part of the new modern home, where they could enjoy the use of every modern convenience. They accepted the invitation, and soon thereafter, until finally death overtook both of them at nearly the same time.

On October 6, 1883, Mother Charlotte Woodbury passed peacefully away as a result of paralysis; and two days later, on October 8, her husband followed her. An impressive funeral service was held for the couple in the Seventh Ward Chapel, and they were laid to rest side by side in a single grave.

In life they were united and in death they were not separated.

From information available, it appears evident that Mother Charlotte Woodbury was never blessed with any offspring of her own.

But in connection with her husband and his other companion, Elizabeth, her name is honored and revered by a numerous posterity that runs well into the thousands, and who "rise up and call her blessed."

Jeremiah Woodbury was not essentially a public man. He was not a man that sought for place or prominence among his fellow mortals, whether in civil or ecclesiastical circles. He was content to do his full duty in a quiet way, both to his Church and to his community, striving always to be an uplift to his fellow men, and to make the world a little better for his having lived in it.

Brother Woodbury was ordained a Patriarch, May 10, 1873. He was blessed to a remarkable degree with the gift of healing. Peter S. Condie, who served as Senior President of the twenty-third Quorum of Seventy, stated in a Priesthood meeting that his mother was left totally blind after a severe spell of sickness, and continued so for eight months. One day she asked the person attending her to take her to the home of Jeremiah Woodbury. On entering the home, she told him she felt impressed that if he would administer to her, she would regain her sight.

He replied, "Well, sister Condie, if that is your faith, it shall be so."

He therefore administered to her and the following morning she was able to discern objects placed before her. Her sight continued to improve until she could see practically as well as she ever had been able to, although her eyes did remain somewhat weak.

The writer visited recently an old gentleman, Brother Thorne, who had lived during his entire life in the Seventh Ward. He said he had, as a boy, been well acquainted with Jeremiah Woodbury, had herded his cow, and had been closely associated with him in various other capacities.

He bore this testimony, "Jeremiah Woodbury was one of the best men I ever knew."

In addition to his two wives, Elizabeth (Betsey) Bartlett and Charlotte Frost Train, each of whom served as his companions in this life for many years, he also had two other estimable ladies sealed to him for eternity. These good sisters will serve as two additional companions in the eternal world.

The fact is well established that he was married to his first wife, Betsey Bartlett, June 20, 1815, at Montague, Franklin County, Massachusetts. But information is sadly lacking as to just when each of the four was sealed to him for eternity.

The writer recently made a visit to the archives of the Salt Lake Temple. In company with Brother Winkler, custodian of the Endowment House Archives, he search the records for information as to when each of the four wives had been sealed to their husband, Jeremiah.

The information acquired appears to be rather inaccurate, and is somewhat confusing. However the following facts seem well established; One of the four was sealed to him by Brigham Young, in the President's Office, August 15, 1858, with B. Young and H.H. Clawson as witnesses.

The other three were sealed to him July 12, 1869, in the Endowment House by President Daniel H. Wells. Elder A. Pratt and W.W. Woodruff served as witnesses.

The two ladies that were sealed to Jeremiah Woodbury for eternity only are: 1. Phoebe Pendleton Kingsbury, born July 8, 1800; and 2. Ursulia Billings Hastings, born May 12, 1799. As nearly as we are able to determine, the total number of descendants of Jeremiah Woodbury at the time of this writing, living and dead, is 2,296. April 20, 1957.