



*Wilford Woodruff, about 1894. (Photograph by Fox and Symons, courtesy of Church History Library.)*

*Alexander L. Baugh*

11



## WILFORD WOODRUFF CHRONOLOGY

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
March 1, 1807	Wilford Woodruff is born in Farmington Township (now Avon), Connecticut, the third son of Aphek and Beulah Thompson Woodruff.
June 7, 1807	Christened in the Congregational Church.
June 11, 1808	His mother, Beulah Thompson Woodruff, dies of spotted fever.
November 9, 1809	Aphek Woodruff marries Azubah Hart, who raises Wilford and his two older brothers Azmon and Thompson. Aphek and Azubah have six additional children, but only two, Asahel and Eunice, live to adulthood.

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## BANNER OF THE GOSPEL

- 1821–26 Attends common school in Farmington until age fourteen (1821), then leaves home. For the next four years he works for George Cowles and Andrew Mills during the summers and attends Farmington Academy during the winters. Following an accident in 1825, he returns to his family home to recuperate and attend school.
- 1827–32 Labors for three employers as a miller in a flourmill. During these years Wilford begins to seek for the Christian faith and on May 5, 1831, is baptized by Reverend George Phippen, a Baptist minister, but does not join the Baptist Church.
- 1832 Moves with his brother Azmon and his wife to Richland, Oswego County, New York, where they purchase a 140-acre farm, sawmill, orchard, and house.
- December 29, 1833 Wilford and his brother Azmon are introduced to Mormonism by two elders, Zera Pulsipher and Elijah Cheney.
- December 31, 1833 Wilford and Azmon are baptized into the Church of Christ by Zera Pulsipher.
- January 2, 1834 Ordained a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood by Zera Pulsipher.
- April 11–25, 1834 Travels to Kirtland, Ohio, to participate in Zion's Camp. Upon his arrival in Kirtland he meets the Prophet Joseph Smith for the first time.
- May–June 1834 Marches in Zion's Camp to western Missouri.
- July 1834–January 1835 Following the disbanding of Zion's Camp, Wilford remains in Clay County, Missouri, where he is employed by Michael Arthur, a non-Mormon, to make brick for his home. On November 5, 1834, Wilford is ordained a priest by Simeon Carter.
- January 13, 1835–November 25, 1836 Serves a mission (twenty-two and one-half months) in Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky. On June 28, 1835, while laboring in Tennessee, he is ordained an elder by Warren Parrish. On May 31, 1836, while laboring in Kentucky, he is ordained to the Second Quorum of the Seventy by David W. Patten and

## *Wilford Woodruff Chronology*

- Warren Parrish. On November 25, 1836, he returns to Kirtland.
- April 13, 1837 Following a two-and-one-half-month courtship, Wilford marries Phebe (sometimes Phoebe) Whitmore Carter. The marriage is performed by Frederick G. Williams of the First Presidency in Joseph Smith's home.
- April 15, 1837 Receives his patriarchal blessing from Joseph Smith Sr. in the Kirtland Temple.
- May 31, 1837–  
December 1839 Serves a mission to the New England States, with most of his time spent in Maine and the Fox Islands (Maine's coastal islands). Phebe joins him on this mission. He labors in Maine from August 1837 to May 1838, then spends the summer of 1838 in Connecticut, where he baptizes his father, stepmother, and half-sister Eunice on July 1, 1838. He then returns to Scarborough, Maine, where he arrives in time to witness the birth of his and Phebe's first child, Sarah, on July 14. Wilford then returns to the Fox Islands, and on August 9, 1838, while on North Haven, he learns by a letter from Thomas B. Marsh of his calling to the Twelve (Doctrine and Covenants 118). Upon being notified of his call to the Twelve, between August and October, Wilford makes plans to organize the Saints from Maine to gather to Missouri. Eventually, eight families consisting of fifty-three people make up the party. The journey took two and one half months and covered 1,500 miles. On December 19, 1838, near Rochester, Illinois (located just a few miles southeast of Springfield), Wilford learns about the plight of the Missouri Saints and the extermination order forcing them to leave the state. Because of the situation, he and his group choose to spend the winter of 1838–39 near Rochester. The Woodruff family remains here until April 8, 1839, when they move to Quincy to join the main body of Saints.

## BANNER OF THE GOSPEL

- April 26, 1839 Is ordained an Apostle on the southeast cornerstone of the Far West Temple excavation by Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, John Taylor, John E. Page. George A. Smith is also ordained to the apostleship.
- Mid-May 1839 Moves his family to Montrose, Iowa.
- August 8, 1839–  
January 11, 1840 On August 8, 1839, Elder Woodruff leaves Montrose/Commerce in company with Elder John Taylor for a mission with other members of the Twelve to Great Britain. Following over four months of traveling and proselyting in the East, on December 19, the two Apostles embark by ship from New York City and arrive in Liverpool on January 11, 1840.
- January 11, 1840–  
October 6, 1841 Preaches and proselytes in Great Britain with eight other members of the Twelve. He labors primarily in Staffordshire, Herefordshire, and London. On April 20, 1841, after over fourteen months of missionary activity, in company with seven members of the Twelve, he leaves Great Britain and returns to the States. After spending time with family and friends in the East, he returns to Nauvoo on October 6, 1841.
- October 1841–  
July 7, 1843 Resides in Nauvoo, where he serves as a city councilman, assistant chaplain in the Nauvoo Legion, a member of the Masonic lodge, comanager of the *Nauvoo Neighbor* and *Times and Seasons*. He helps establish the Nauvoo Agricultural and Manufacturing Society and assists in the construction of the Nauvoo House and Joseph Smith's red brick store.
- July–November 1843 Serves a short-term mission along with other members of Twelve to the East, visiting St. Louis, Louisville, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York City, and Boston before returning to Nauvoo in early November 1843.
- November 11, 1843 He and Phebe are sealed by Hyrum Smith.
- December 2, 1843 Receives his endowment.
- March 26, 1844 Present when Joseph Smith confers the keys of the priesthood upon the Twelve.

## *Wilford Woodruff Chronology*

- April 7, 1844 Present in the East Grove when Joseph Smith delivers the King Follett sermon. He takes notes of the sermon using the back of his hat as a rest.
- May 4, 1844 Moves his family into their Nauvoo brick home.
- May 9–August 6, 1844 Serves a short-term mission in the East with other members of the Twelve and several hundred political missionaries in support of Joseph Smith’s campaign for the U.S. presidency. He visits Indiana, Michigan, New York, Massachusetts, and Maine. On July 9, while attending a conference of the Church at his in-laws’ home in Scarborough, Maine, he learns of the Martyrdom and immediately sets out to return to Nauvoo, where he arrives on August 6.
- August 8, 1844 Brigham Young and the Twelve are sustained as the new leadership of the Church.
- August 12, 1844–  
April 13, 1846 Is assigned to preside over the European Mission headquartered in Liverpool. The Woodruff family leaves Nauvoo on August 28. After visiting family and friends in the East, the Woodruffs set sail for England on December 8, landing in Liverpool on January 8, 1845. The family remains in Great Britain for just over a year, returning to Nauvoo on April 13, 1846.
- April 15, 1846 Enters into plural marriage by marrying Mary Ann Jackson.
- April 30, 1846 Elder Woodruff and Elder Orson Hyde preside over a private dedicatory service of the Nauvoo Temple.
- May 1, 1846 Elder Woodruff and Elder Orson Hyde preside and speak at the public dedication of the Nauvoo Temple.
- May 16, 1846–  
July 26, 1846 On May 16, 1846, he and his family cross the Mississippi River and begin the trek across Iowa. Following a six-week journey, they cross the Missouri River and arrive at Culter’s Park (a few miles west of where Winter Quarters would be located) on July 26.
- August 2, 1846 Marries Mary Carolyn Barton and Sarah Elinore Brown, but the marriages last only a few weeks.

## BANNER OF THE GOSPEL

August 1846– April 14, 1847	The Woodruff family settle at Winter Quarters, where they spend the winter of 1846–47.
April 14, 1847	Leaves Winter Quarters as a captain in the main vanguard company of pioneers.
July 24, 1847	Arrives in the Salt Lake Valley.
August 26, 1847	After spending a month in the Salt Lake Valley, he begins the return trip to Winter Quarters.
October 31, 1847	Arrives back at Winter Quarters.
December 27, 1847	Present at the Kanesville Tabernacle when the First Presidency is reorganized with Brigham Young as President and Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards as counselors.
June 21, 1848– October 14, 1850	On June 21, 1848, accompanied by his family, he leaves Iowa to preside over the Eastern States Mission with headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He presides over the mission until April 9, 1850, and then returns to Utah, arriving back in the Salt Lake Valley on October 14. During the next twenty-seven years, he lives in Salt Lake City.
1850	Earns his livelihood as a Salt Lake City merchant. About this same time he is appointed a member of the legislature of the State of Deseret, a member of the Board of Regents of the University of Deseret, and a chaplain in the Nauvoo Legion, Utah's territorial militia.
March 28, 1852	Marries Mary Giles Meeks Webster.
December 22, 1852	Appointed historian and clerk of the Quorum of the Twelve.
March 13, 1853	Marries Emma Smith (not to be confused with the wife of Joseph Smith), and Sarah Brown (not to be confused with Sarah Elinore Brown, a previous plural wife). That same day he and Phebe are sealed a second time by President Brigham Young.
February 3, 1855	Officially organizes and is elected president of the Universal Scientific Society (USS), a philosophical group. The organization lasts less than a year.

### *Wilford Woodruff Chronology*

- September 13, 1855 Organizes the Deseret Horticultural Society. He maintains an interest in horticulture throughout the remainder of his life.
- 1856 Earns his livelihood primarily as a farmer and rancher.
- January 17, 1856 Serves on the Board of Directors of the Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society. He is elected president in 1862 and serves until 1877.
- April 7, 1856 Appointed assistant Church historian.
- July 31, 1857 Marries Sarah Delight Stocking.
- January 10, 1870 Offers the dedicatory prayer at the completion of the Utah Central Railroad, linking Salt Lake City with the main transcontinental railroad.
- September 23, 1873 Suffers a mild heart attack.
- January 1, 1877 Called to serve as president of the St. George Temple and offers the dedicatory prayer at the temple's dedicatory services.
- January 11, 1877 Begins performing proxy ordinances in behalf of the dead in the St. George Temple.
- March 10, 1877 Marries Eudora Lovina Young.
- August 22–24, 1877 Performs the vicarious ordinances for the dead in behalf of all of the signers of the Declaration of Independence (except John Hancock and William Floyd), all of the deceased presidents of the United States (except Martin Van Buren and James Buchanan), and a number of other prominent men. Lucy Bigelow Young assists in performing ordinances for a number of prominent women.
- August 29, 1877 Brigham Young dies in Salt Lake City, and John Taylor becomes the senior Apostle with Elder Woodruff next in line.
- September 2, 1877 Following the funeral services for President Young, Elder Woodruff dedicates his grave.



## BANNER OF THE GOSPEL

- January 26, 1880      Receives a “wilderness revelation” while in the Little Colorado region of northern Arizona. The revelation discusses Christ’s Second Coming, the impending judgments of God, the divinity of plural marriage, the Lord’s protecting hand, and his approval of the Twelve. The revelation was presented to the Twelve and approved by them on April 4.
- October 10, 1880      The First Presidency is reorganized with John Taylor as president and George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith as counselors. Wilford Woodruff becomes President of the Quorum of the Twelve.
- 1882–87              Passage of the Edmunds Act (1882) and the Edmunds-Tucker Act (1887) forces the Church’s leadership to go underground to avoid arrest. Among other places, Wilford Woodruff frequently finds asylum in Atkinville, Utah, about ten miles southwest of St. George.
- October 5, 1883      Sustained as Church Historian and Recorder
- June 17, 1884        Is released as president of the St. George Temple.
- November 10, 1885    His first wife, Phebe, dies in Salt Lake City. Although he is present at the time of her death, because of the raid being conducted against Church leaders, he is unable to attend her funeral.
- July 25, 1887        President John Taylor dies in Kaysville, Utah. Wilford Woodruff becomes the senior Apostle and President of the Church. Because of the antipolygamy raids, he cannot attend President Taylor’s funeral.
- December 16, 1887    Elected president of Deseret Telegraph Company.
- May 17, 1888        Presides over the dedication of the Manti Temple.
- October 5, 1888      Elected president of ZCMI.
- October–  
December, 1888      Under President Woodruff’s leadership, seventeen stake academies are organized in Utah, Idaho, and Arizona. By 1895, twelve additional academies are established, including two academies in Colonia Juárez, Mexico, and one in Alberta, Canada.

## *Wilford Woodruff Chronology*

- April 7, 1889 The First Presidency is reorganized with Wilford Woodruff as President and George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith as counselors.
- April 13–26, 1889 Travels to northern California (Oakland and San Francisco) to enjoy a vacation and to meet with political and business leaders.
- October 7, 1889 Marriner W. Merrill, Anthon H. Lund, and Abraham H. Cannon are ordained to the Quorum of the Twelve.
- October 21–  
November 16, 1889 Travels to British Columbia and Alberta, Canada, where he meets with local Church leaders and Saints living in the Mormon settlements.
- August 11–24, 1890 Travels to Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona.
- September 3–21, 1890 Travels to San Francisco to enjoy a vacation and to meet with political and business leaders.
- September 25, 1890 With the support of his counselors and the members of the Quorum of the Twelve, President Woodruff issues the Manifesto, published in the *Deseret Weekly News*, announcing that the Church would stop performing plural marriages.
- October 6, 1890 The Manifesto is presented and accepted by the Church during the October semiannual general conference.
- 1891–1896 To achieve statehood, President Woodruff and the Church's leadership take an active role in disbanding the People's Party (a political party made up primarily of Latter-day Saints) and encouraging Church members to align themselves along national party lines (Republican and Democrat).
- May 9, 1891 U.S. President William Henry Harrison visits Salt Lake City.
- June 20–27, 1891 Travels to San Francisco to enjoy a vacation and to meet with political and business leaders.
- April 6, 1892 Presides over the capstone ceremony of the Salt Lake Temple.

## BANNER OF THE GOSPEL

- April 6, 1893 Presides over the dedicatory services of the Salt Lake Temple.
- August 29–  
September 19, 1893 Travels to Chicago to attend the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago.
- April 5, 1894 Receives a revelation (non-canonized) indicating that the Church is to cease the practice of sealing members to Church leaders and from that time forward are to conduct sealings along ancestral lines.
- November 13, 1894 Under President Woodruff's direction, the Utah Genealogical Society is organized to assist individuals in researching their ancestral lines.
- April 6, 1895 The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve issue the "Political Manifesto." The document states that Church leaders are not to seek political office unless they receive permission from the Church's leadership to do so.
- June 25–July 27, 1895 President Woodruff, his counselors George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, and some family members and aides travel to Alaska, where they enjoy sightseeing and deep-sea fishing.
- January 4, 1896 Utah becomes the forty-sixth state.
- August 13–  
September 13, 1896 Travels to vacation along the Pacific Coast (Portland, Oregon, and Monterey, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Catalina Island, California).
- November 5, 1896 Fast day is changed from the first Thursday of each month to the first Sunday.
- February 28–  
March 1, 1897 The Church celebrates President Woodruff's ninetieth birthday with a celebration held for him in the Tabernacle. From that event, Evan Stephens composes the hymn "We Ever Pray for Thee" (now hymn 23).
- March 12, 1987 Makes an audible voice recording of his testimony using an Edison dictaphone. (The recording does not survive.)
- March 19, 1897 Makes a second audible voice recording of his testimony using an Edison dictaphone. This recording has survived and is the only known recording of his voice.

### *Wilford Woodruff Chronology*

- July 20–24, 1897      Participates in a four-day celebration commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the pioneers into the Salt Lake Valley.
- September 9–25, 1897      Travels to vacation in Oregon and northern California.
- October 7, 1897      Matthias F. Cowley and Abraham O. Woodruff (President Woodruff's son) are sustained as members of the Quorum of the Twelve.
- August 13–  
September 2, 1898      Travels to vacation in San Francisco. His health begins to fail.
- August 31, 1898      Writes his last entry in his journal. His journal record covers over sixty years.
- September 2, 1898      Dies at the home of Isaac Trumbo in San Francisco, California.
- September 8, 1898      Funeral services held and body interred in the Salt Lake City Cemetery.