

History of the Life Of William Wood Senior From February 3, 1823 to September 18, 1900



History of the life of William Wood, Sr, written by himself, but never finished.

In order that my children and others may have a short story of my life, I write this;

I was born 2 February 2nd. 1823, in the city of Hereford, England, although I have always claimed that February 3rd, being so lead to believe by those who should know. My fathers name was John Wood, son of James Wood and he the son of William Wood who was buried at Martin, Herefordshire, England. My mother, Ann Wood, was the daughter of William and Nancy Lawrence of the city of Hereford and it was in that town that I received most of my schooling, traveling three and a half miles in the morning and back the same distance at night.

This I did of my own choice as I could have stayed with my grandparents in town, but I preferred to go to Luguardine to stay with my grandmother, Mary Wood. She had a house and garden and a small orchard; also two houses with gardens attached to them. I was always taught to fear the Lord and to go to church on Sundays, in short to lead a moral life.

I was put to work quite young. The first thing I remember doing was keeping crows off of a field of beans, for which I received a half a crown a week and board (About 60cts in our money). This was for a neighbor who

had a small farm and kept a cow and two horses and a few sheep. His name was William Phillips. His wife's name was Mary. They had no children.

I worked for one year for a gentleman at Wilcroft. His name was James. I worked in the garden, ran errands and worked some in the house. From there I went to Live at Kingston where I worked for Doctor James. I stayed with him nine months then went home to Luguardine where I worked at various occupations, never being idle and always plenty of a chance to work, until the last of the year 1839, or the spring of 1840,, I am not certain as to the time.

Now previous to this I had been a regular attendant at the meetings of the United Brethren. About this time I met two Sisters going amongst the people in the neighborhood to inform them that a man from America was going to preach that night. I had no other idea but that he was one of the United Brethren, being a foreigner would probably speak some other language, so more out of curiosity than anything else I went and for the first time in my life I heard the Gospel taught as it was anciently taught by Jesus Christ and His Apostles.

The Elder who preached that night was President Brigham Young and seemed to me that I knew that it was the truth, as I had a strong testimony of it and intended to obey it. But that was the question with me. I knew well that if I did get baptized, I would be turned out of work and in that country if you do not work you do not eat, so I put off going into the water. Nevertheless, I was a regular attendant to the Latter Day Saint Meetings. Some times I would make up my mind not to go to the meeting but when the time came I could not rest until I went.

One time President Wilford Woodruff was going to preach at Shucknell Hill, Herfordshire and I had been laboring that day making mortar for the masons and at evening we stopped at a house where they sold cider to be drunk off the premises. We stood outside the gate by the side of a small stream and as I said I was going to hear President Woodruff preach one of the man said to me, "Damn you, if you want to be baptized I'll baptize you." He then picked me up in his arms and held me over the water and dropped me in, His name was Charles Wood. I got out and in my wet clothes went to the meeting, then walked home, a distance of two miles. I experienced more or less opposition to my joining the church until at last I concluded to be baptized. I was baptized by Elder Phillips Green in the River Lugg on the 23rd. day of September, 1840.

This was done in the night. At the same time John Dustin and Gorneilus Tayrun were also baptized. Although done at night it was all over the

neighborhood the following day. And very soon after the devil and his agents began to work.

I, with two or three others, were working in a stone quarry for Mr. John Freeman and some of our church works being given to him, he became mad and frothed at the mouth and ordered us off his premises, never to set our feet on his land again. Things began to get dark, still I had a testimony within me that I had embraced the truth and no one could persuade me otherwise. I was taken back to work by Mr. Freeman twice in the hopes of reclaiming me, but when I said that I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet I was given up and they explored other tactics.

One night I went to a meeting and the next day I was ordered to leave home and not go there any more, unless I would stay away from the Mormons.

There I was without money or food of any kind, no place to sleep, only in a barn. I sometimes walked the road most of the night and some of the brethren gave me a few frosted potatoes. I went three days without any food, I was so weak I walked with a stick and meeting Mr. Freeman one day he thus accosted me, "Will Wood, what do you think of Joseph Smith now?" I answered him "I think he is a prophet sir".

He then asked me when I had eaten anything. I told him three days ago, then he said, "Come up to the house and have something to eat." I went up and a good meal was sat before me and in front of my plate was set a book for me to read while eating. Also his wife and daughter sat near me telling me about the wickedness of the Mormons. I paid but little attention as to what was said, but after eating I departed after thanking them for their kindness to me.

I being without work and could not get any there, I was persuaded by a brother and his son to join them and go to West Bronwitch to look for work which I accordingly did. His name was John Tyler and his son's name was James Tyler. We started out, the father having control and management of our affairs, of what little we had and I soon found out that I had got into the wrong pew. As public houses were very plentiful in that part of the country, John Tyler would not go by without calling to drink to their health. I supposed this continued on until he had pawned all his own clothes that he and his son could spare and also a coat of mine. Thus I was left in shirt sleeves. At length we arrived at West Bronwitch, some 58 miles from home, among strangers. The Tylers had relatives there and they got them work, but none could I get so I resolved to go back to Lugwardine. I traveled to Birmingham, a distance of six miles and stayed at a brother's house of the name of Riley. I sat up in a rocking chair all night and in the morning, having received a piece

of bread with lard spread on it before starting, I traveled to Worchester some 26 miles by a little after dinner time, I had then some 24 miles to go before I could get back to Lugwardine which I did although it was sometime after dark when I reached there. The next day my feet were one solid blister on the bottoms. After going without food and shelter for myself to lay down on, for a month or two (that is, I had little to live on) the Lord opened up the way for me and turned the hearts of the people towards me so that I had some calls to go to work, more than I could fill. When harvest time came I joined some men and worked all through harvest earning more money, more than it took to support me and as a family by the name of Green was about to emigrate to New Orleans, they loaned me three pounds and a girl with whom I had no acquaintance came and gave me a sovereign, so that I had enough money to come to America. We started in the year 1842, and came to Liverpool and took passage to the ship MEDFORD, for New Orleans. She set sail from Liverpool on the 23rd. day of September, 1842. (Just two years to the day since I had joined the church.) Elder Orson Hyde, one of the twelve apostles, was President of the company which consisted of 268 souls.

When I landed at New Orleans, which was on the 14th. of November 1842, I was in a strange country without means to go on up the river as the rest of the company were going to St. Louis Mo. and it looked to me at that time rather discouraging, however, I said nothing but remained on the steamer with the rest until all were ready to take a ship for St. Louis. When Sister Ann Dustin came to me and asked me what I was going to do. If I wanted to go on up the river they would pay my passage to St. Louis. There were about 400 Dutch steerage passengers on board, so the Latter Day Saints had to sleep on the Hurricane deck, but this was no hardship as the weather was warm. At length we arrived in St. Louis and it was there that everybody had to look out for him or herself. As the 400 Dutch were all looking for work it was almost impossible to get anything to do.

At last I met a gentleman, asked him for works and he said that he never had work, but knew a friend of his from whom I might get work. He took me down to No. 3 Water St. to a store kept by Ames and son and there I was employed until the ice broke up on the river which was about three or four months, when I with to other Latter Day Saints took passage on the steamboat "LEANDER" for Nauvoo Ill. where we landed on the 6th. day of May 1843. As soon as we arrived, Phillips Green, William Green and myself went to see Joseph Smith the Prophet. (This is the end of his own writing)

From there on he shared the persecutions and mobbing of the Saints. He

was at Nauvoo when the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother were assassinated. He was also present at the meeting when the mantle of Joseph Smith fell upon Brigham Young when he looked and spoke with the voice of Joseph Smith, the prophet.

One day while crossing the Mississippi River on foot (the river at that time being frozen over with thick ice), one third of the way across he heard a voice say "Go back and get a pole." He stopped for a second, but could not see anyone, so went on again. It was repeated the second time and again the third time, "Go back and get a pole." By this time he was almost two-thirds of the way across. He wondered at the meaning of the voice which he had heard, for there were no poles for miles and miles from there. But obeying the voice of warning, he turned back and when he reached shore from which he had started, a pole about 18 feet long lay in the exact spot from where he had started; picking up the pole and holding it in front to him, he reached the exact spot from where he had turned back and gone just a few feet farther when the ice broke and he slipped into the icy waters of the river. The ends of the pole he was carrying hit solid ice and by its aid, he was able to draw himself to safety.

He was with the body of the Saints on their western movement when the call came for 500 of their gallant men to volunteer to fight in defense of the Government against Mexico. He enlisted in the Mormon Battalion July 16th 1846, marching with the company from Council Bluff, Iowa over a trackless plain where foot of man had never trod.

On that perilous journey he helped to make roads, dig wells, and suffered untold agonies from hunger and thirst while marching on the desert day after day in the blazing sun. He was discharged at San Diego, California on July 16 1847.

(Copied from the Millennial Star - 1848)

A Letter written to his father and mother in Luguardine, Herefordshire, England,

Letter written by William Wood to his family in England,

With my pleasure I take up my pen to write to you. Hoping it may find you all in the enjoyment of good health as much as I am at present. It is nearly five years since I left England, I wrote one letter to you, but never received an answer to it. The reason why you have neglected me I do not know. Although we are thousands miles apart, you may be assured, that I have not forgotten my parents, who gave me birth - Faith nor ever shall.

No doubt you are anxious to know where I am and what I am doing. In

the first place I would say I am in the town of Angeles, Upper California, about 25 miles from the shores of the great pacific sea. You may ask what brings you there; the answer is our church was settled near or in Nauvoo and the Mobocrats were continually rising in opposition to us, burning our houses, destroying our grain and committing other acts disgraceful to civilization. So the whole body concluded to leave and go to some place remote from these men where we could worship God according to the dictates of our own consciences.

With this view, we left and were journeying with our teams, when the United States Government sent an invitation for so many men to enlist in the service for one year to march against the Spaniards in New Mexico.

Accordingly, 500 men enlisted and left their families to be taken care of by the church; this was on the 6th day of July, 1846.

So now we have served our time, got our discharge and had but little fighting to do. First we marched to Santa Fe, the Capital of New Mexico. Passing several small towns from thence we marched to Sonora to the town of Tosone (Tucson?) We left there for the San Diego seaport on the coast of California. From there we marched to San Louis Bay (San Luis Rey) where we stayed about two months, when we left and came to Pueblo Los Angeles, the capital of upper California, where I am now. We were among the Spaniards nearly 8 months.

I expect to leave this place in a few days for the purpose of going to meet the church. They will settle about 500 miles from here, near the great Salt Lake.

I have traveled over a great desert of country. I have crossed the continent of America from the shores of the Atlantic to the shores of the Pacific, yet my mind is not changed at all in regards to the religion I profess to believe.

I know that is true and that all men will know so sooner or later either to their salvation or to their destruction. Various have been the changes that has taken place since I left England and all plainly indicates the fact that the great day of the lord is nigh.

It behooves ye then to prepare for these things, for I know and do testify that all men must repent and obey the Gospel that is now being preached to the nations of the earth or else they will be lost.

You think I am bold and have not considered it in its true light, but I would say I am no more bold than it is true. Therefore, let no man persuade you. Act according to your own will and obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ and then I will be glad and will bring you to this country, where you can be your own

farmer, eat your own bread and meat and enough of it.

I am content as ever I was. I think no more of traveling a hundred miles than I used to twenty. When I leave this place I shall take with me three or four horses, as horses are very cheap and cattle also. You see 5000 in one herd. A man can get a good ox for \$1.50 which is about 6 shillings in English money. Good horses sell for \$4 to \$5 each. Mares \$1.50 each.

and in fact every thing that can grow in any other climate. A person can stand on the hills and look down in the valleys and see vineyards loaded down with grapes, pear trees, apple trees, coconut trees, apricot trees, plum trees, and all loaded with fruit beautiful to. The country abounds with produce of all kinds such as wheat, beans, corn, potatoes look upon.

For want of paper I say no more on this subject. I wish you to write and send me word what changes have taken place since I left. And as I hope to be with the church, you send by some of the emigrating points.

I remain your ever affectionate son,
William Wood

He was married March 4, 1849 , to Lucy Babcock at Salt Lake City, Utah by Parley Pratt.

He lived in the First Ward a while, then moved to Provo, Utah.

His eldest child, Lucy Ann, was the first white child born at Provo.

From Provo, he moved to San Bernardino, California, where he stayed until the call came for all loyal saints to return to Utah.

He sold his property there for a span of mules. The property now lies in the heart of the business district of San Bernardino.

At the invasion of Johnson's Army, he settled in Washington, Washington County, Utah.

While at Washington, one of his girls, Eliza, was accidently shot and killed by a man killing crows.

He sold his home there for a barrel of molasses and came to Minersville, Utah, in the year 1860. To this union were born nine children, six girls and three boys.

His wife died December 6, 1863, leaving a nine day old baby boy.

His eldest daughter, Lucy Ann, age 14 years and a younger sister, Mary, age 11 years, took over the duties of keeping house and caring for the younger children.

One morning on waking up, the baby was missing. It was found at the foot of the bed, dead, where it had smothered to death during the night.

On March 7, 1865 he married Ann Eyre Banks in Minersville, Utah. He was married by James H. Rollins, serving as first councilor to Bishop James McKnight. Fourteen children were born.

He had a serviceable record for public service.

He received a badge for honor for thirty years of faithful work in the Sunday School. He served as Church Organist for a great many years and was the proprietor of the old Minersville Co-o- Store, finally buying the stock and going into business for himself.

During the time he served as Assistant Postmaster to J. H. Rollins, at the resignation of J. H. Dupaix, he was appointed Postmaster, which office he held and attended for 25 years, up until the morning he died.

He served as Justice of the Peace for more than 25 years and joined more than two hundred couples in the bonds of Holy Matrimony during that time.

He served as trustee for 10 years and at the time of his death was a Notary Public.

He was the father of 23 children, 65 grandchildren. He had great grandchildren, great-great grandchildren and great-great-great-grandchildren. Three of his sons, William, Joseph, and George never had any children. He was truly a pioneer of sterling quality, a builder and organizer and wise counselor in the circles of men and women who made this great state what it is today.

He died September 18, 1900, at the age of 77 years, 7 months and 15 days. It is a pleasure to honor his memory.

The following is written by a granddaughter of William Wood, Frances Myrtle Eyre, youngest child of his eldest child, Lucy Ann.

“I was born November 1, 1891, and was almost nine years of age when my grandfather, William Wood, died.

I am going to tell of the things I remember of him myself.

He used to come to his meals with a paper or book in his hand, sit at the table, remove his hat, lay down the paper or book, ask the blessing on the food, put his hat back on and eat his food while he read his paper or book.

One of my nieces had her shoe unbuttoned. He said, “Idonna, why don’t you keep your shoe buttoned?” I said, “I had asked her that and she said , “it was none of your business.” He misunderstood and felt very badly because he thought I had told him to mind his own business. I could not make him understand, so asked him to forgive me. He took me on hid lap and kissed me, said he forgave me, but for me to be careful in the future of what I said.

I didn’t think anyone could play the organ for the choir to sing as he did.

I have heard him tell and testify to the truthfulness of the Gospel and also tell of the things that are written in his history and testify to their truthfulness.

At the time of his death, September 18, 1900, there was an epidemic of smallpox in Minersville.

That morning he had milked and fed his cows, fed his horses and drawn water out of the well to water them all, as the water was out of the kitchen, so they could be all cleaned out ready for fall watering in the fields.

He had taken care of the mail, and at ten minutes to twelve o’clock he came to the house for his dinner, and asked Ann, his wife, if it was ready. She said in about half an hour, he said “I am tired, I will lie down and you can call me when dinner is ready.”

In about ten minutes his daughter, Bertha, went in the bedroom for clothes for her baby, Wanda, She cried, “Ma come quick, Pa looks funny.” He was dead, he had died as he lay down to rest.

Mother was combing my hair, had one side done and tied with ribbon, was just going to do the other side, when one of the neighbor boys, Horace Carter, came running out of breath to tell the news. He said, "George Wood's father was just found dead." He didn't know that he was also telling my Mother her father was dead. She turned deathly pale, grabbed the chair to keep from falling. To her he was saying, Your father is dead, your father is dead.

I got the other side of my hair combed the next day.

His son, George, still has his father's organ, which is a way over 100 years old. He lives at the old home in Minersville. Altho the home has been repaired and made modern, it is still to be my grandfather's home. The building that was used for the Post Office for 25 years has been torn down. The old well filled."