

Doctrine and Covenants Revelation Sites



On 24 July 1847, a sick Brigham Young rode into the Salt Lake Valley in Wilford Woodruff's carriage. Wilford stands at Brigham's left atop this Emigration Canyon monument.

Salt Lake City, Utah

Wilford Woodruff's 1890 Home and Office

Official Declaration 1

September 1890

Scripture

"Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the court of last resort, I hereby declare my intentions to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise."

"There is nothing in my teachings to the Church or in those of my associates, during the time specified, which can be reasonably construed to inculcate or encourage polygamy; and when any Elder of the Church has used language which appeared to convey any such teaching, he has been promptly reproved. And I now publicly declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land."

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Key Events

- The practice of polygamy was introduced by revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, perhaps as early as 1835. Several years later, he taught the principle to some Church leaders and other worthy members who began practicing it on a limited basis.
- Joseph Smith taught that the authority for administering plural marriage was only vested in one man on the earth at a time - the President of the Church. Only those authorized by Church leaders were permitted to practice plural marriage.
- When the saints moved to Utah, the practice became more widespread. Eventually, about 20% of Church members practiced plural marriage. Brigham Young and John Taylor, the second and third Presidents of the Church respectively, had plural wives.
- The United States government passed laws prohibiting the practice. Church members argued those laws were unconstitutional. In 1879, the United States Supreme Court declared the prohibition of polygamy constitutional, and subsequent laws were passed to aid in enforcement.
- Wilford Woodruff, who became the fourth President of the Church in April 1889, received a revelation known as the Manifesto. He presented it to the First Presidency and Twelve Apostles in September 1890, and to the general Church membership at a conference in October 1890. It formally ended the practice of plural marriage.

Words of Joseph Smith

“Gave instructions to try those persons who were preaching, teaching, or practicing the doctrine of plurality of wives: for, according to the law, I hold the keys of this power in the last days; for there is never but one on earth at a time on whom the power and its keys are conferred; and I have constantly said no man shall have but one wife at a time, unless the Lord directs otherwise.” (History of the Church 6:46)



President Woodruff lived in this farmhouse when the Manifesto was received in 1890. The home is one of the few urban farmhouses in Utah still on its original foundation.

Words of Brigham Young

“I would say to Congress that if they will pass a law, making it death for any man to hold illicit intercourse with any woman but his lawful wife, we would meet them half way on that ground. It is not uncommon for men who have not been lawfully married to any woman . . . to have children by several women . . . Men may do as they please with women, have numerous children by them, and take as many liberties with them as if they were their wives, and yet not call them wives, and modern society smiles upon them. But whenever a man applies the sacred name of wife to the mother of his children, if he happen to have more than one, then the world professes to be wonderfully shocked at the idea. What inconsistency! Such men will go to hell for ruining innocent women and increasing illegitimate children in the land. The community or nation that indulge in such practices will be damned. If I have wives, I take care of them, and I want my neighbors to let them and my daughters alone. Do you understand it? If you do not, and should undertake to infringe upon any of them, I will point my finger at you. Our young men, and we have many, live virtuous lives with regard to illicit communication with the sexes; they observe the law which has been given to this people.” (Journal of Discourses 11:261 - 1866)



President Woodruff's office was behind the door on the right. He may have received the revelation here. The church office building can be seen in the background.

Words of John Taylor

"We are not generally understood by the people of the world, by the outsiders; and I can look with very great leniency upon the action of members of the House of Representatives and the Senate, the governors, and others who have expressed strong indignation against this principle [plural marriage]. From your standpoint, you think we are a corrupt people; you think it is a part or portion of the thing you call the social evil, that permeates all classes of society, and is sapping the foundation of the life of so many throughout the land. You think that we are trying to introduce something that is encouraging licentiousness and other kindred evils among the people, and to legalize these things by legislative enactment and otherwise, and trying to popularize and make legal those infamies. I continued, that is a false view to take of the subject. Mr. President, I have always abhorred such practices from the time I was quite young; when I have seen men act the part of Lotharios, deceiving the fair sex and despoiling them of their virtue, and then seeing those men received into society and their victims disgraced, ostracized and esteemed as pariahs and outcasts, I could not help sympathizing with a woman that was seduced. I looked upon the man who seduced her as a villain; I do so today. Said I, when Joseph Smith first made known the revelation concerning plural marriage and of having more wives than one, it made my flesh crawl; but, Mr. President, I received such evidence and testimony pertaining to this matter, scriptural and otherwise, which it was impossible for me as an honest man to resist, and believing it to be right I obeyed it and practiced it . . . this principle is connected with the Saints alone, and pertains to eternity as well as time, and is known to us by the appellation of 'celestial marriage.' It does not . . . pertain to all of our own people. None but the more pure, virtuous, honorable and upright are permitted to enter into these associations. Now I speak to the Latter-day Saints, who are acquainted with what I say. If I state untruths, tell me, and I will consider you my friends, and the friends of this community. Should we preach the doctrine of plurality of wives to the people of the United States? No; you know very well that it is only for honorable men and women, virtuous men and women, honest men and women who can be vouched for by those who preside over them, and whom they recognize as their Presidents; it is only such people as these that can be admitted to participate in this ordinance. You know it. I know it, you Presidents of Stakes know it and the people know it. There are any number of people in this Territory who are good people in many respects, but who cannot come up to that standard. That is the position we occupy in relation to this principle." (Journal of Discourses 23:64-65)

Words of Wilford Woodruff

"The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty. . . It matters not who lives or who dies, or who is called to lead this Church, they have got to lead it by the inspiration of Almighty God. If they do not do it that way, they cannot do it at all . . . I saw exactly what would come to pass if there was not something done. I have had this spirit upon me for a long time. But I want to say this: I should have let all the temples go out of our hands; I should have gone to prison myself, and let every other man go there, had not the God of heaven commanded me to do what I did do; and when the hour came that I was commanded to do that, it was all clear to me. I went before the Lord, and I wrote what the Lord told me to write." (Official Declaration 1)



Wilford Woodruff used this room as his office while he served as President of the Church. It is located between the Lion and Beehive Houses.