

Willard Richards

By Kelton Gledhill

Before reading about Willard Richards I knew he was my 6th great-grandfather. I knew he was an honest man; trustworthy, loyal, kind and helpful. I knew he was with Joseph Smith when Joseph Smith was killed. But I learned many more things about his life and what he did. I learned that when he was four he fell from a scaffold and suffered head injuries. Because of this, he wasn't able to work on the farm, leaving him time to learn to read and finding he loved learning. He continued with school, earning his teaching certificate at age 16. He taught school in New York and Massachusetts and continued to study mechanics and science, and lectured on these subjects. At this time he also learned to play the clarinet and was in the Massachusetts Militia Band.

After his sister Susan died of an unknown illness, Willard chose to study medicine along with herbal remedies, later becoming Dr. Willard Richards.

Willard was always interested in religion. In 1836 he was introduced to the Book of Mormon by his cousins, Joseph and Brigham Young. He read the Book of Mormon two times in ten days, and soon after that Willard sold his medical practice, moved to Kirtland, Ohio, and was baptized in freezing water on December 31, 1836, by Brigham Young.

Because he was single, he went on a mission right away to England. While on his mission, he got married and was called to be an Apostle in the Quorum of the Twelve and ordained by Brigham Young in 1840.

After Willard's mission, his family settled in Nauvoo, Illinois, where, in 1842, he was called as the LDS Church Historian and Recorder, which he did until he died.

Joseph Smith asked him to be his private secretary, and was at Carthage Jail when Joseph and Hyrum Smith were murdered.

He traveled with Brigham Young and the first Latter-Day Saints to the Salt Lake Valley, where he died at the age of forty-nine on 11 March 1854.

My thoughts about him have changed a lot and my relationship has grown stronger and I feel much closer to him now that I know more about his life. He truly was a great man.