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HISTORY

WILLARD RICHARDS.

WILLARD RICHARDS was the sixth son of Joseph and Rhoda, born in Hopkinton, Middlesex county, Massachusetts, June 24, 1804.

His father, Joseph, was born in Middlesex county, March 17, 1762.

His mother, Rhoda, the daughter of Phinehas and Susannah Howe, was born July 8, 1762.

They were married December 20, 1781; and had eleven children, viz.:

Name.	Born.	Died.
Joseph	Sept. 29, 1782	
Rhoda	Aug. 8, 1784	
Susan	Aug. 13, 1786	April 11, 1830
Phinehas	Nov. 15, 1788	
Levi	Dec. 7, 1790	June 17, 1795
Nancy	Nov. 22, 1792	
Hepsy	July 28, 1795	Sept. 30, 1838
Betsy	May 17, 1797	Dec. 12, 1803
Levi	April 14, 1799	
William	May 2, 1801	
WILLARD	June 24, 1804	

His father served in the army of the Republic in the war of Independence. While in the army he had mercurial ointment administered to him by the surgeon to cure an eruption of the skin, and taking cold, his health was impaired during life.

He possessed 160 acres of land, and would be considered in medium circumstances as a New England farmer. He and his wife were professors of religion, and belonged to the Congregational church in Hopkinton; had their children sprinkled, catechized and educated according to the prescribed forms of the Presbyterian directory.

Rhoda, Willard's mother, died Feb. 14, 1838.

Joseph, his father, died March 29, 1840.

Willard fell from the scaffold of a barn on his head, when he was four years old, and received a severe hurt. Soon after he fell into a stream of water, and would have been drowned, had not his brother Levi providentially rescued him.

When he was about nine years old, he removed with his father and family to Richmond, Berkshire county.

Until he was fifteen years of age, he attended good common schools; subsequently he attended the high school of Richmond.

The following extract from a letter to a Christian minister serves to show the state of feeling incidental to a conviction and conversion under the administration of the Presbyterian and other sectarian orders of priestcraft, — ministers ignorant, blind, distracted, without authority or knowledge from God, distract others by stirring up the imagination, exciting unnecessary fears and torture of mind and lead them blindly to the ditch:

"As it hath pleased God in his providence to separate us at present, at some distance from each other, so that I cannot have the privilege of verbal conversation with you, I deem it not improper to hold some correspondence by means of pen and paper.

"I address you, sir, as one whom I consider a friend, who I think will be willing to give advice and instruction to one who sincerely wishes it. Wishing to reveal the secrets of my heart to some friend from whom I may receive advice, I will attempt to do the same to you, being confident that you will keep whatsoever I may commit to you until you see or hear from me.

"In taking a view of my past life, I will go no further back than the spring of eighteen hundred and nineteen, although I might mention feelings which I had a year before that, were they not too hard to name. Near the commencement of the revival of nineteen my mind became impressed with the importance of the things then called in question, and well had it been for me had I then listened to the calls of the gospel, forsaken all, and followed Christ. I was impressed with a sense of my sins; I attended meeting after meeting, but all, I fear, to no purpose, until my feelings rose to such a height, that I lost all hopes of mercy, or of ever obtaining the one thing needful. Despair seized my whole soul; I concluded that I had sinned until it was too late for me to be pardoned. I forsook all meetings, thinking that my destruction was sure, and that all the calls of mercy would sink me deeper in everlasting misery. Night after night would I

lay my head on my pillow, and close my eyes in sleep, wishing that I might never more open them in that world in which I should treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

"Thus I was for a number of weeks with my feelings wrought up to the summit of terror and despair indescribable; I cared not what I did. Other books were as agreeable to me as the Bible, believing that all I read in that, and all the meetings I attended and all other privileges would sink me deeper in the labyrinth of woe. My feelings were wrought up to the highest pitch of despair, and I was ready to curse the day in which I was born, if I did not in my heart really do it. But they were of short duration for this time, for in a few moments I relapsed into a state of stupidity and insensibility and concluded my case was hopeless. I wanted to pray, but I thought it would be mockery as my sins were unpardonable."

How easy it would have been for Peter, or any other man with authority from God, to have said, "Willard, repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, which shall lead you into all truth;" but instead of such a comforting declaration saluting his ears from a servant of God, he was left to believe he had committed the unpardonable sin.

He commenced teaching school in Chatham, Columbia county, New York, in November, 1820, and taught thirty scholars five months; he received a certificate from the inspectors of schools, Columbia county.

In 1821, he received the following:—

"This certifies that the bearer, Mr. Willard Richards, is a young man of fair moral character, and as such he is recommended in the capacity of a teacher, wherever he may find employment.

E. W. DWIGHT,
Pastor of the Church."

"Richmond, Oct. 30, 1821."

November, 1821.—He commenced teaching school in Lanesborough, Berkshire county, Massachusetts, and taught four months; average number of scholars, thirty. He received a good certificate from the board of examination at Lanesborough.

In December, 1822, he was recommended by the minister of Hinsdale, and taught a school of six classes.

April 6, 1823.—The inspectors of common schools in Nassau, Rensselaer county, New York, gave him a certificate. He commenced a school there in April and continued until August, having an average attendance of about forty scholars.

He had constantly devoted his leisure time to the acquisition of knowledge.

In February, 1827, he commenced lecturing on electricity and other scientific subjects, which he continued to do at intervals, for several years, throughout the New England States. There are numerous testimonials preserved in favor of his lectures from men of high standing in the literary world.

For several years he devoted much of his time to the study of the healing art, and delivered many instructive lectures on that subject.

In 1834 he entered the Thompsonian Infirmary in Boston, and practised under the direction and instruction of Dr. Samuel Thompson.

In 1835, at the request of Mr. Albert P. Rockwood, he went to Holliston, Massachusetts, and delivered lectures on the Botanic or Thompsonian practice of Medicine, which created much excitement there and in the surrounding towns.

He removed to Holliston and practised with success for one year, during which time he resided with Mr. Rockwood.

The following is from his journal:—

"I was baptized at Kirtland by Elder Brigham Young, December 31, 1836.

Jan. 8, 1837.—I partook of the sacrament, and was confirmed by Reynolds Cahoon; I received such a measure of the spirit, as to be sensible of the subject of a song of Zion, which was sung by Elder Lyman Sherman, in the gift of tongues, on the coming of Christ.

March 6.—I was ordained an elder by Preat. Alvah Beeman.

—8.—Visited some friends in Newburgh. I

bore them a faithful testimony, and returned on the 11th.

—13.—Received the prayers of President Joseph Smith, jun., and Sidney Rigdon, with the laying on of hands for the recovery of my health, and was set apart to accompany Elder Brigham Young on a special business mission to the East.

—14.—Left Kirtland with Elder Young, and travelled by stage to Buffalo, and from thence to Utica, stopped one day at Canandaigua; continued travelling day and night, till we arrived at my father's in Berkshire Co., Mass.; from thence proceeded by New Haven to New York.

April 2.—Attended meeting with bro. Fordham, at St. Paul's Church.

—6.—Proceeded by way of Providence to Boston; arrived at Holliston on the 10th, and preached to Mr. A. P. Rockwood and family.

—11.—Went to Hopkinton, Southboro' and Westboro'.

—12.—Went to Framingham, staid at uncle Nehemiah Howe's.

—13.—Bro. Brigham Young baptized uncle Nehemiah Howe and his wife, and Miss Milton, and confirmed them; we then proceeded to Lyne.

—14.—I baptized Miss Towne, Boston, from whence I went round by Providence, New York, Rochester and Albany, back to Richmond.

—27.—Bro. Brigham left me, and started for Kirtland, and I remained during the month of May visiting my relatives and friends, bearing testimony of the gospel to them.

June 5.—I received a letter from Elijah Fordham, New York, on business, and on reading it, felt a strong desire to start to Kirtland immediately; but, wishing to know the mind of the Spirit, I submitted the case to the Lord; praying that my head might be relieved from pain immediately, if it was the Lord's will I should start for Kirtland at daybreak; which prayer was answered. I started for Kirtland, and arrived on the 11th; had a pleasant and happy interview with bro. Brigham and his dear family, from whom I have received many favors (the Lord reward them), and my bros. Phinehas and Levi, and sister Hepsy and others.

Evening, went with bro. Brigham to Prest. Joseph Smith's; Prests. Sidney Rigdon and Hyrum Smith, and others were present; Elders Kimball and Hyde and bro. Joseph Fielding had been set apart to go on a mission to England; and Prest Smith was giving them counsel on the subject: I felt my heart burn within me, strongly desiring that I might be one of the number.

—12.—Met Elder Kimball in the street, when he said, "Elder Richards, I am now ready to fulfil my engagement with you. I start for England to-morrow, and you may go with me; so get ready;" but I saw no way to extricate myself, or to procure means.

I walked with bro. Fitch Brigham to Prest. Hyrum's, and after closing my business, enquired if it was my privilege to take a foreign mission; he replied it was, if I wished it. With the approbation of the First Presidency, I was set apart, Monday, p.m., 6 o'clock, to a mission to England under the hands of Prests. Sydney Rigdon and Hyrum Smith; brother Brigham agreed to take charge of our business.

—13.—I bade my Kirtland friends farewell, and started for a foreign shore at 9 a.m., in company with bros. Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde and Joseph Fielding; several friends accompanied us to the Lake shore, among them sister Rhoda Greene, who gave me 25 cents: the Lord reward her.

—19.—Elder Kimball accompanied me to Richmond, Mass.

—20.—We visited uncle Leadbetter, sisters Wealthy Richards and Nancy Pierson.

—21.—11 a.m., I bade my dear parents and friends farewell, and went to Albany.

—22.—Left in the steamer Rochester, and arrived at New York at 5 p.m.; found Elders Hyde, Goodson and Russel, and bro. Snyder and Fielding. They felt somewhat disap-

pointed at our late arrival, by which we lost the chance of a passage in the ship United States.

—23.—Engaged passage in the ship Garrick, in the second cabin.

—24.—This day I am thirty three years old. Removed to Mr. Fordham's store, and took lodgings on the floor.

—29.—Went on board the ship Garrick, and hauled out of the dock.

July 1.—7½ a.m., weighed anchor, and was out of sight of land at 2½ p.m.

—7.—On the banks of Newfoundland.

—12.—Strong wind, much rocking through the night.

—16 (Sabbath).—Elder Hyde preached on the aft quarter deck. I heard the sermon, though severely afflicted with pain. Elders Kimball and Hyde laid their hands on me and prayed; then Elder Kimball took me by the hand and told me, in the name of Jesus Christ to arise; which I immediately did, and found myself quite comfortable. Thanks be to the Lord for his healing power, which has been repeatedly manifested towards me.

—18.—At 4½ p.m., saw Cape Clear and entered St. George's Channel; just eighteen days since we lost sight of land below New York.

—19.—Looking east with cheerful hearts.

—20.—Awoke this morning in the utmost horror. It appeared to me that evil spirits or devils had fastened on every muscle of my body, pinching it so severely, as to completely stop the circulation of the fluids; and Satan himself held me so close by the throat, that I was gasping for breath. Doubtless, it would have gratified the prince of the power of the air, if he could have strangled me, but the Lord suffered him not.

We anchored in the Mersey, took the small boat, and Elders Kimball, Hyde and myself were the first who landed, after a prosperous voyage of 20 days from New York. We sought the first opportunity to unite our hearts in thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father for his protection.

—22.—We went to Preston.

—23 (Sabbath).—Bro. Heber opened the mission, in Mr. James Fielding's meeting house, followed by bro. Hyde; and in the evening bro. Goodson preached, and bro. Fielding bore testimony.

—26.—Elder Hyde preached in the evening, and I bore testimony.

—31.—Met in council; it was decided I should go to Bedford, with Elder Goodson.

Aug 1.—We went to Bedford.

—2.—We took lodgings at the Swan Inn, and called upon the Rev. Timothy Mathews. Bro. Goodson preached in the evening in Mr. Mathews' chapel; also on the eves of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th.

—6 (Sabbath).—I attended Mr. Mathews' meeting.

—7 & 8.—We preached at a private house, which we hired for one week.

—9.—We called upon Mr. Mathews, and received a letter from bro. Hyde.

—10.—Elder Goodson baptized five.

—12.—I baptized one.

—13.—Elder Goodson baptized one. In the afternoon administered the sacrament at sister Braddock's.

—18.—Elder Goodson baptized sister Page at 10 p.m.; quite a commotion prevailed on our way home, created by scoffers; but the most perfect composure reigned in the breasts of the disciples.

—20.—Preached at Kempson in the morning; afternoon, administered the sacrament at sister Braddock's; evening, met at Kempson, bro. Goodson baptized two; I began to address the company, but was interrupted; on our return I was pelted with turnips, &c., by the multitude; "the Lord forgive them."

—22.—Baptized Wm. W. Smith.

—23.—Elder Goodson started for London.

—24.—I preached under a shed, disturbed by noise.

—27.—Preached at Kempson at 10½ a.m.; sacrament at sister Braddock's at 2 p.m.; preached in the evening at bro. Gaunt's to a