

Introduction

Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.¹

Reinterment and Restoration

Over two hundred Woodruff family members gathered on July 17, 1993, in the Salt Lake City Cemetery, to witness the reinterment of Abraham Owen Woodruff and his wife Helen May Winters. This family celebration ended the eighty-nine-year separation of Helen and Owen after their unexpected deaths from smallpox in June 1904 in Mexico City and El Paso, respectively. Grandsons of the Woodruffs, with funding from Brigham Young University and approval from Mexican authorities, arranged to exhume the bodies and bring them to Salt Lake City, along with their original headstones. The reburial served as the culmination of family efforts to restore them to one another, as reported by grandson Wilford Bruce Woodruff:

As plans for this significant event have proceeded, a wonderful spirit of unity has grown in the family. We felt that a husband and wife separated 89 years and by more than 1,000 miles should be brought together and buried side by side. It is the result of a series of wonderful experiences.²

One of the “wonderful experiences” mentioned by Bruce included the fortuitous timing of the reinterment. Because no one paid Helen’s grave fees for nearly nine decades, the Mexican authorities had declared her grave abandoned and scheduled the reburial of her remains in a common grave and the reselling of her plot. Arriving just in time to pay the fees and exhume the body, the Woodruffs made a posthumous reunion for Helen and Owen possible. In addition to bringing together husband and wife, the burial also reunited their family. Helen and Owen were reinterred alongside their three deceased children — Wilford Owen,