Emmeline Wells turned to civic affairs for fulfillment and found her cause in the fight for suffrage and women’s rights. “I desire,” she proclaimed, “to do all in my power to help elevate the condition of my own people especially women” (Journals, January 4, 1878). Her writing talent blossomed as she submitted articles to the Woman’s Exponent, a feminist Mormon publication established in 1872. In 1877 she became its editor, a position she held for thirty-seven years.

In 1879 Emmeline was appointed one of two representatives from Utah to the suffrage convention in Washington, D.C., the first of many such meetings she would attend and address. She soon became friends with national suffrage leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who were impressed with her abilities. Election to several offices in the National Woman Suffrage Association, the National Council of Women, the International Council of Women, and as president of the Utah Woman Suffrage Association followed. In 1899 she was invited by the International Council of Women to speak at its London meeting as a representative from the United States.

Emmeline Wells was nearly eighty-three years old when she was called as general president of the Relief Society in 1910, an organization she had previously served for twenty years as general secretary and as head of its grain storage program in the 1870s. Her tenure proved, like her life, to be bittersweet. In 1912 she was awarded an honorary doctorate of literature from Brigham Young University, yet two years later she suspended publication of Woman’s Exponent, upon which she had labored for almost half her life, when the Relief Society declined her proposal to make it the official organ of the Relief Society. In 1919 she was honored by a visit to her home by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson and his wife; the occasion commemorated the sale of over 205,000 bushels of Relief Society wheat to the U.S. government during World War I, and, ironically, the loss of the Relief Society’s autonomy over its grain-storage program.

Finally, in 1921 at age ninety-three and suffering from serious illness, Emmeline was released as President of the Relief Society, the first since Emma Smith not to die in office. Upon hearing of her release, she suffered a stroke and then died three weeks later on April 25, 1921. In death, she continued to receive honors: a funeral in the Tabernacle (the second woman to be so commemorated) and the installation of a marble bust in the Utah State Capitol from the women of Utah engraved, “A Fine Soul Who Served Us.”

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CAROL CORNWALL MADSEN
MARY STOVALL RICHARDS

WELLS, JUNIUS F.

Junius Free Wells (1854–1930) was the organizer of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA, in 1977 Young Men). Born June 1, 1854, in Salt Lake City, a son of Daniel H. and Hannah C. Free Wells, Junius attended school at the Union Academy and graduated from the UNIVERSITY OF DESERET at the age of seventeen. He was known as an exceptionally intelligent young man. As a youth, he managed his father’s lumberyard and was a sales clerk for Zion’s Cooperative Mercantile Institution (ZCMI).

He was called to serve a mission to Great Britain (1872–1874), and in 1874 he accompanied Elders George A. Smith, Lorenzo Snow, Relief Society President Eliza R. Snow, and others to Palestine, where, on the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem, they dedicated the land for the restoration of the gospel. Immediately upon his return, Wells was asked by President Brigham Young to organize the first YMMIA in the Thirteenth Ward in Salt Lake City, which he did on June 10, 1875. Wells married Helena Middleton Foxes on June 17, 1879. They were the parents of two children.

The YMMIA, counterpart to the previously organized association for young women, was charged to help boys develop intellectually and spiritually and to enjoy recreation under proper supervision. A central committee was formed on December 6, 1876, with Wells as president, to coordinate all associations organized throughout the Church. He served as president of the board for four years. In October 1879 he founded the Contributor, a monthly magazine that served both
Junius F. Wells was the first general superintendent of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association, serving in that role for four years.

the young men and young women groups. Its motto was The Glory of God Is Intelligence (D&C 93:36). The publication featured articles written by young LDS men and women on a variety of literary and gospel themes. Wells served for thirteen years as its editor and publisher. In October 1899 the magazine was replaced by the Improvement Era.

Wells served a mission in the United States, laboring in the Midwest and New England. In 1919–1921, he served as associate editor of the Millennial Star, a Church magazine published in Liverpool, England, and accompanied the European Mission President on visits to the Scandinavian, Swiss, and German missions.

Acting as agent for the Church, Junius purchased the Solomon Mack farm, the birthplace of the Prophet Joseph Smith. A Church-history enthusiast, Wells designed a hundred-ton granite monument, with a shaft 38.5 feet tall, commemorating the thirty-eight and a half years of the Prophet Joseph Smith’s life. Erected near Sharon and South Royalton, Vermont, near the site of Joseph Smith’s birthplace, the monument was dedicated by President Joseph F. Smith on December 23, 1905, the centennial of the Prophet’s birth. In 1918 Wells made a smaller replica, which was erected in the Salt Lake Cemetery in honor of Hyrum Smith, the Prophet’s brother.

Sustained as an assistant Church historian in 1921, Wells collected and preserved paintings and photographs of persons and scenes connected with the early history of the Church. In 1928 he was instrumental in purchasing thirty thousand dry-plate negatives of Church history scenes taken by LDS photographer George Edward Anderson.

He died of a cerebral hemorrhage in Salt Lake City on April 15, 1930. At his funeral on Easter Sunday, he was memorialized as a kind and thoughtful man of dignity who made friends easily, “a polished gentleman, a fearless servant of God” (Smith, p. 15).

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PAUL THOMAS SMITH

WENTWORTH LETTER

John Wentworth, editor of the Chicago Democrat, wrote Joseph Smith in 1842 to request information about the Church for a friend who was writing a history of New Hampshire. The “Wentworth Letter” was written by the Prophet Joseph Smith in response to this inquiry.

The letter contains a brief history of the Church to 1842, including the key events in the restoration of the gospel. It states that the purpose of the Church is to take the gospel to every nation and prepare a people for the millennium. The letter also describes concisely the origin, contents, and translation of the Book of Mormon. It concludes with thirteen doctrinal statements that have since become known as the Articles of Faith and are published in the Pearl of Great Price (HC 4:535–41).

The contents of this letter were published March 1, 1842, in the Nauvoo Times and Seasons. There is no evidence that Wentworth or his friend,