

LDS Biography of John Druce

Druce, John, counselor in the Bishopric of the Twelfth Ward, Salt Lake City, Utah, for twenty years, was born June 18, 1818, in the parish of Mitcham, Merton, in Surrey, England. His father John Druce, was an engraver with an establishment of his own, where his sons were taught in that art. His mother, Sophia Bragg Druce, was for thirty-one years the matron of the church school at Merton, where John received his early education under her tutelage. Later, he attended the Arthur Academy for boys in Mitcham. Thoughtful and obedient, he always studied the wishes and interest of his parents. At twelve years of age he taught a small class in the Mitcham Church Sunday school. For a time he worked in a large confectionery establishment, owned by a cousin in London, but did not like the employment, and was glad to return home. He was strongly inclined to study financial questions, and took naturally to mathematics and mechanism. In the year 1840 he made his abode in the city of Manchester, where he was employed in the McEntire engraving department of the Ducie print works. He was very much respected by his employers and fellow workmen and was connected with that establishment as long as he remained in his native land. The year of his removal to Manchester was the year that "Mormonism" made that city its headquarters in the British Isles. Mr. Druce having become acquainted with the Latter-day Saints and their doctrines, was baptized Aug. 4, 1841, by Parley P. Pratt, who was then presiding in Great Britain. Soon Bro. Druce was called into the ministry and labored faithfully in the cause presiding at

different times over the branches of Stockport, Crossmore, Salford and Middleton. He remained in England until twenty-eight years of age when he emigrated to America, sailing from Liverpool Feb. 17, 1846, and arriving in New York March 26, 1846. His wife, Jinks Druce, whom he had married June 19, 1842, in Manchester, England, sailed for America in August 1846. Bro. Druce went to Haverstraw, Rockland county, in the same State, and was chosen presiding Elder of the Haverstraw branch April 25, 1849. Mr. Druce was employed at Garnerville Print Works, where he remained for fifteen years. He served the firm faithfully, gained the confidence of his employers and became head of the engraving department. When he was about to leave, they offered him inducements to remain, but financial considerations had no weight with him, as compared with his religious convictions. Deeming it his duty to gather with the Saints, he started for Utah, accompanied by his wife and seven children. He also had with him a cook and two teamsters, one of the latter his nephew. He left Haverstraw June 11, 1861, and by railroad and steamboat, via Chicago and St. Joseph, reached Florence Nebraska, on the 21st of that month. Says he: "It was a very critical time to travel through the States. The Civil War had just begun and the feeling against the saints was quite bitter. At Dunkirk, New York, the company was detained part of a day and all one night, none being allowed to leave the depot. At Quincy, Ill., men gathered about the train, swearing and uttering threats, but none were harmed. At Hannibal, Missouri, the train of cars was taken away by soldiers in order to clear the road, the guerrillas

having set fire to the bridge over which the train must pass. None were allowed to leave the depot, all slept on the station floor." Brother Druce had a good outfit of two Chicago wagons, well loaded with supplies, five yoke of oxen and three cows. He and his party joined Ira Reed's independent company and started across the plains (leaving Florence, on the 4th of July and reached Salt Lake City Sept. 16, 1861). He bought a house and lot in the Twelfth Ward, where he resided continuously until the day of his death. He also owned at one time property in Pleasant Grove, Utah county. His Twelfth Ward purchase was an old adobe house, cold and leaky, insomuch that the family had to open umbrellas and fasten them over the beds to keep off the rain, which finding its way through the mud roof, at times made matters very unpleasant. As there was no engraving to be done, he determined to learn some other trade, and as building seemed to be a most necessary occupation, he concluded to be a carpenter. Aided by Wilford Woodruff and Daniel H. Wells, he was employed at the carpenter shop on the Temple Block, and there learned the trade in question. Subsequently he helped to erect the Salt Lake Theatre and other notable structures. As building and contractor he afterwards formed a partnership with William Robinson, and later was associated with his sons, John A. and Edgar W. Druce. Under great difficulties he built up a business that enabled him to support his family in comparative comfort and made a good home lot himself in his declining years. He always had the respect and confidence of those who employed him and was ever honest and conscientious in his dealings. He became

the father of nine children. In the Church John Druce held the office of Priest as early as October, 1841, and in April, 1843, he was ordained an Elder by Ezra Clark. February, 1862, witnessed his ordination as a Seventy and in October, 1866, he was a president of the 21st quorum. In 1876-77 he filled a mission to the Eastern States, presiding by appointment of Pres. Brigham Young over the States of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Returning home he was chosen, June 21, 1877, first counselor to the Bishop of the Twelfth Ward, which position he held for over twenty years, under the successive administrations of Bishop Alexander C. Pyper and Bishop Hiram B. Clawson. His name was a synonym for fidelity and devotion to duty. He was particularly attentive to the needs of the poor and helped them in many ways. During his two decades of faithful service as Bishop's counselor he had the unlimited confidence and esteem of the authorities and people of his Ward and all others with whom he was connected. His death was due to paralysis, the first stroke of which came on May 18, 1888. He recovered sufficiently after a few months to enable him to attend to his Ward duties again, but on March 12, 1895, he suffered another stroke, which deprived him of the use of his right arm. For about two years he was unable to walk, without assistance, though his general health remained good, and he was able to attend to business affairs at home. He served faithfully as a counselor in the Bishopric until he was honorably released in June, 1897. Sept 29, 1897, he was taken in a carriage to the President's office, where he was ordained a Patriarch under the hands of

Presidents Geo. Q. Cannon, Joseph F. Smith and Franklin D. Richards, the second-named being mouth. This was the last time that he left home alive. A week later to the day (Oct. 7, 1897) his spirit suddenly departed from its earthy tabernacle.

Early Druce Family in England

The Druce family lived in Winkfield Berkshire for many years, having come there in mid 1600's. They owned a blacksmith shop known as the "Forge". Henry Druce owned the forge, and there he made a clock which he presented to the Church of Winkfield. On the dial of the clock was inscribed "Henry Druce Maker 1698".

In a newspaper "The Mercury" of Winkfield Berkshire printed Aug. 1952 was an interesting article in which is mentioned the Forge and its cottage as "A Winkfield treasure indeed", it also mentioned "Henry Druce that Master craftsman" and lastly states "The 1st Druce (Henry) produced magnificent iron work, an example of which (unequaled it is believed, by only one other at cambridge) is the shell fireplace in the cottage" (The Newspaper mentioned was received by the writer from Mrs. Bertha Smart, whose husband was the only son of Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Druce Smart.