
John Snider

1800–1875

D&C 124:22–24, 62, 70

John Snider, a Canadian farmer, mason, and stonecutter, was part of “a Society [that] ... met together twice a week for the purpose of discussing topics of religion.” In one discussion, class leader John Taylor asked, “Where is our modern Philip? ... Where moreover, is the ancient church with Apostles and Prophets inspired by Heaven?”¹ Attending that evening meeting was Parley P. Pratt, a missionary who had recently arrived in Upper Canada from the United States. Pratt answered the query by speaking of apostasy in the primitive Church and the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

John believed the words of Elder Pratt and was baptized in June 1836 in Toronto. By 1837 he had been ordained a priest in Kirtland, Ohio, and was serving a mission in England. After completing an honorable mission, John returned to the United States and settled in Far West, Missouri, where he was ordained a seventy on January 19, 1839. Within a month of his ordination, persecution in northern Missouri reached such heights that John was forced to sell his farm and flee from the state to avoid the government-sanctioned extermination order issued against all Latter-day Saints.

John and his family settled in Springfield, Illinois. When the Prophet Joseph Smith and other Church leaders were traveling to Washington, DC, seeking redress for wrongs committed against Latter-day Saints in Missouri, they stayed in the Snider home in Springfield. Joseph wrote to his wife Emma on November 9, 1839, “This morning we are

¹ Edwin G. Snider, “John Snider,” 1. Church History Library.

under the nesesity of leaveing [Sidney Rigdon] at Brother Snyders and pesueing our Journy [to Washington, DC] without him.”²

By 1840 John had moved his family from Springfield to Nauvoo. On January 19, 1841, the Prophet Joseph received a revelation calling John to “build a house unto my name” (D&C 124:22). John served on the Nauvoo House Association and as a guard, or an assistant aide-de-camp, in the Nauvoo Legion.

In December 1841 he was called to journey to the British Isles to gather funds for the construction of the Nauvoo House and the Nauvoo Temple. He was instructed to “speedily return [to Nauvoo] with means to strengthen the hands of the laborers, and adorn and beautify the Tabernacle of Jehovah.”³ John delayed fulfilling this assignment, claiming poverty and a belief that the Twelve should pay his passage to the British Isles. When the Prophet Joseph Smith explained to him that he was expected to cover his own passage, John departed from Nauvoo on March 26, 1842.

In the British Isles, the Saints “donated various small sums between May and December, 1842, as contributions for building the Temple, and paid over nine hundred and seventy-five dollars and four cents. The names of the donors and amounts are recorded in the ‘Law of the Lord.’”⁴ When John departed from England on a steamer bound for New Orleans, he brought 157 English converts with him.

After the death of Joseph Smith in June 1844, John returned to Toronto, “the object being to give the sons ... a chance to learn the Mason’s trade.” He eventually made his way to the Salt Lake Valley after a stint in northern California, searching for gold. He died from “over exertion after eating a hearty meal” in December 1875 in Salt Lake City at age seventy-five.⁵

² Letter to Emma Smith, 9 November 1839, 1. Joseph Smith Papers.

³ History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842], Addendum. Joseph Smith Papers.

⁴ Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:438.

⁵ Snider, “John Snider,” 2.