

ENSIGN WOODRUFF



Born: 23 Dec. 1865, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah son of Wilford Woodruff and Sarah Delight Stocking

Died: 1 May 1955, Murray, Salt Lake, Utah

Ensign was born in the Valley House in downtown Salt Lake City during the cold and snowy winter of 1865. One of more significant and faith promoting events of his life occurred when he was but eighteen-months-old. He was very ill and apparently passed away. He was pronounced dead by Zina Young, but a Miss Simper saw a muscle move and mentioned it to his step-mother, Phoebe. She asked Miss Simper to lay baby Ensign in her lap. Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith and Lorenzo Snow were out in the yard at the time. They were called in. It is said that when they entered the room there was a light over Wilford Woodruff head. The men anointed Ensign with oil and then laid hands on his head selling the anointing and praying for his recovery. As soon as their hand were removed from his head Ensign arose and asked for bread and butter, being permanently healed. He

was baptized on February 28, 1874, along with his sister Emeline, by his father. The baptism took place in Parley's Canyon Creek, by the bridge 5th East Bridge where the ice was broken open to perform the service. The confirmation took place in the farmhouse, where the family was living at the time. He was ordained a deacon in the Old Farmer's Ward. Ensign recalled attending his father's birthday party in 1880 at Valley House Cottage, a 2-story brick home south of the Valley House. At that celebration Wilford Woodruff gave each of his sons a father's blessing and then his sons laid their hands on their father's head and gave him a blessing. Ensign also recalled in his youth of helping drive ox carts used to carry the stones that were being prepared for the Salt Lake Temple.

Ensign married Isabel Jennette Shields on Oct 15, 1889. She was the daughter of George and Jane Shields, early Scottish Pioneers, who had settled in the West Jordan area of the Salt Lake Valley, where Isabel was born and grew up. Ensign and Isabel were the parents of 8 children, all born in Cottonwood. Their oldest child, Jane, died as an infant; they rest growing to maturity. Ensign apparently held several jobs, including working with his brother driving the mule driven street cars in early downtown Salt Lake City, and even participation in a strike, which vexed his father, a bit. However, during his life he was best known as a farmer and carpenter or contractor. He was a pioneer in the Cottonwood area and was prominent in its development. The small city Briton, part of the Cottonwood area, was known as the family home. He wrote his life story in 1931, relating several incidents of importance regarding his own father's life.

Ensign's wife Isabel, died on Jan 17, 1932, Ensign married Anna Sophia Hogan Sept 28, 1933. They had no children. During his life, Ensign was a Sunday School officer and worker, President of the 14th Quorum of Seventies, and a counselor in the bishopric of the Brinton Ward. He also served two terms as a School trustee in the 37th (Granite) District. On April 28, 1955, after an illness of three weeks related to his heart, Ensign called his children to his bedside and pronounced a small blessing on them. He asked the blessing of the Lord to be upon them. He blessed them with health and strength that they might serve the Lord and keep His Commandments. He asked them to be humble and set an example to the world and to live worthy so that they could all be together in Eternity. He told his children that he loved them and that their Heavenly Father loved them. His voice very weak at the end and his children very touched by the beautiful blessings. He passed away a few days later.

[Alan J. Hill, 12-19-99]

SOURCES

Alexander, Thomas G., Things in Heaven and Earth, The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet. Signature Books, Salt Lake City UT. 1991.

Cowley, Matthias F. Wilford Woodruff, History of His Life and Labors as recorded in his daily journals. Bookcraft, Salt Lake City UT. c. 1964. 7th Printing 1978.

Deseret Evening News, Salt Lake City, Monday, May 2, 1955 [Obituary for Ensign Woodruff]

Family Group Sheets: Wilford Woodruff and Sarah Delight Stocking: Ensign Woodruff and Isabel Jeanette Janet Shields.

Life History of Ensign Woodruff, written by Ensign Woodruff, May 23, 1931. It and other notes attached to family group sheet of Ensign Woodruff and Isabel Shields (recorded of Wilford E. Woodruff, Sandy, Utah)

Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah – 1847.