

John Menzies MacFarlane

John Menzies Macfarlane was born 11 October 1833 in Stirling, Stirlingshire, Scotland.¹ He was the oldest of four children of John Macfarlane and Annabella Sinclair. His father died when John was thirteen years old. Three years later, his mother, brother and sister and he moved to Glasgow, where she was a midwife. He and his mother joined the Mormon Church in 1842. Together, they sang hymns and preached on street corners. They were almost destitute but desired to immigrate to Utah. The Perpetual Emigrating Fund was their answer, and they were in the first group to travel from Europe.²

John immigrated from Glasgow to New York City on the ship *Robena*, arriving 10 December 1852.³ He moved to Cedar City in 1853⁴, taught school and led a choir, using a tuning fork or pitch pipe since there was no organ. The choir traveled throughout the settlements of southern Utah, becoming well known.⁵ John married Ann Morton Chatterley in 1854 in Cedar City, Iron, Utah Territory.⁶ They had ten children, five of whom died young. In 1859, they family moved to Toquerville, where John was the first postmaster⁷ and also worked as a surveyor. He was requested to return to Cedar City to take over the choir.⁸ He was living there with Ann and two children in 1860.⁹

In 1866, John married Agnes Eliza Heyborne in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah Territory. They had ten children. From 1866-1868, he was the superintendent of schools for Iron County.¹⁰ He also served as leader of the choir in Cedar City, district judge, and surveyor and builder. He enlisted in the cavalry during the Black Hawk War and served under Colonel C C McArthur for 14 months. He took charge of the home guard, mustered troops and secured supplies.¹¹

In 1868, Erastus Snow asked John to go to St George and be the choir director (which he led for twenty years¹²) and to organize a band. He set up a school with about 90 students. He also organized the St George Harmonic Society and taught music lessons. He began writing music for the poetry of his friend Charles L Walker. That winter he wrote the Christmas song, "Far, Far Away on Judea's Plains".¹³

John was admitted to practice law in Washington County in 1869.¹⁴ In 1870, John was a farmer, living with Ann and their four children, and next door to Agnes and their two children, in St George, Washington, Utah Territory.¹⁵ That year he was elected Washington County surveyor.¹⁶ He

¹ Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah.

² Yours Sincerely, by L W Macfarlane, 1980 (*Familysearch.org*).

³ New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957.

⁴ Iron County Militia Project (*1857ironcountymilitia.com*)

⁵ Yours Sincerely, by L W Macfarlane, 1980 (*Familysearch.org*).

⁶ Western States Marriage Record Index, Vol 4, p. 12.

⁷ US Appointments of US Postmasters, 1832-1971.

⁸ Iron County Militia Project (*1857ironcountymilitia.com*)

⁹ United States Census, 1860.

¹⁰ A History of Iron County: Community above Self, by Janet Burton Seegmiller, 1998, pp. 191-2.

¹¹ Commissioner of Indian War Records (*images.archives.utah.gov/cdm/ref/collection/2217/id/15133*).

¹² Iron County Militia Project (*1857ironcountymilitia.com*).

¹³ Yours Sincerely, by L W Macfarlane, 1980 (*Familysearch.org*); Iron County Militia Project (*1857ironcountymilitia.com*).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ United States Census, 1870.

¹⁶ Yours Sincerely, by L W Macfarlane, 1980 (*Familysearch.org*).

conducted the choir at the groundbreaking ceremony for the St George Temple and again when the last stone was laid. He was elected to the St George City Council in 1876 and elected probate judge in 1878.¹⁷ He was a US deputy mineral surveyor and attorney at law with an office in the courthouse in St George.¹⁸

In 1876, he surveyed the area of Bonanza Flats and the rock pile site above it for the Leeds Mining Company. Later this upper site became Silver Reef.¹⁹ During this time he stayed at Mrs. Grave's boarding house and met Father Scanlan, who also boarded there. They had many discussions of religion, music, and their ancestries. When Father Scanlan shared his wish to hold a High Mass for the Silver Reef Catholics, John shared his concerns for a building, choir, and other problems. John suggested that he could take care of the choir, but where would they get the music and where could they hold the mass? Then John suggested that they could hold it at the new St George Tabernacle. At first, Father Scanlan refused but later reluctantly agreed.²⁰

John took the request to the Mormon leaders in 1879 and was first refused but later gained approval. In two weeks, John's choir learned the music and Latin lyrics from a single copy of music. The congregation traveled from Silver Reef to St George to participate. Curious Mormons filled out the congregation to 3,000 as Father Scanlan explained the meaning of the mass and vestments.²¹

In 1879, he married Elizabeth Jane "Lizzie" Adams in St George, Washington, Utah Territory. They had seven children.²² On the 1880 census, he was listed as a surveyor, living with his three wives and nine children in St George, Washington, Utah Territory.²³ He mapped out parts of Cedar City and St. George. He became increasingly concerned as the passage of the Edmunds Tucker Act increased the anti-polygamy activity. For a while he hid out with his first wife in Nevada, but contracted malaria and returned to Cedar City. He finally took his third wife and their children to the Mormon colony in Mexico. There he organized a choir, took up surveying, and helped with legal matters.²⁴

John did return to St George now and then to see his family. In 1888, he was involved in founding an academy for advanced schooling in Washington County that was the predecessor to Dixie State College.²⁵ He attended General Conference in Salt Lake City in 1890. His second wife, Tillie, joined him in Mexico in 1892. That year he was bitten by a snake on a survey expedition. He returned to St George for medical care. He recovered enough to attend the laying of the capstone on the Salt Lake Temple. However, he died on 4 June 1892 in St George, of heart failure and complications of diabetes. He was buried in the St George Cemetery.²⁶

¹⁷ Yours Sincerely, by L W Macfarlane, 1980 (*Familysearch.org*).

¹⁸ Silver, Saints and Sinners, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, p. 102.

¹⁹ Silver, Saints and Sinners, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, pp. 43, 57.

²⁰ Silver, Saints and Sinners, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, pp. 89-90.

²¹ Ibid.

²² *Familysearch.org*

²³ United States Census, 1880.

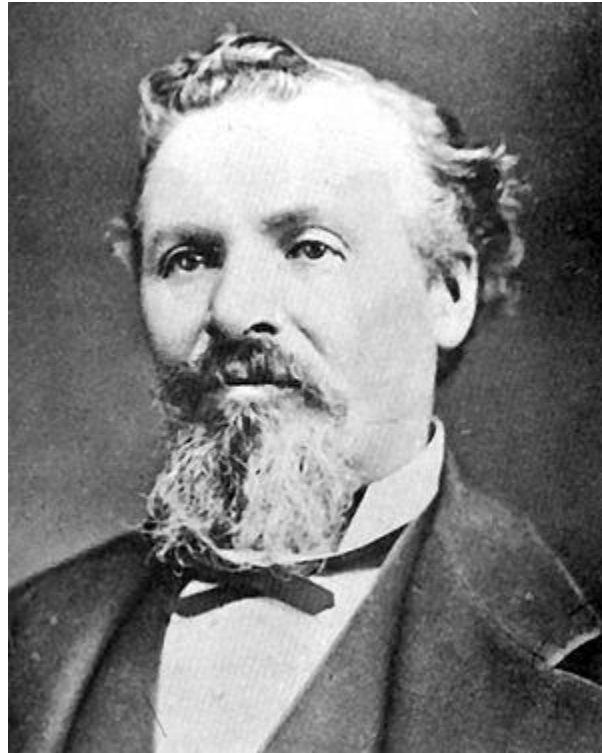
²⁴ Yours Sincerely, by L W Macfarlane, 1980 (*Familysearch.org*).

²⁵ Culture in Dixie, by Lorraine T. Washburn, in *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Vol 29, p. 247.

²⁶ Yours Sincerely, by L W Macfarlane, 1980 (*Familysearch.org*).

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(Image from *The Union* [St George, Utah], 1 July 1878, p. 4)



John Menzies Macfarlane
(Image from 1857ironcountymilitia.com)



John Menzies Macfarlane
(Image from Utah Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah, 1847-1868)



St George Stake Chorus in the 1880s; director John M Macfarlane center back row, wife Annie Macfarlane front row second from right (Image from 1857ironcountymilitia.com)