

ANOTHER JOSEPH JUNIOR

By Darrell Knight

In the early history of the Church, there were four close friends and associates named **Joseph**. Two were Joseph Seniors, and two were Joseph Juniors.

Joseph Knight, Jr. was one of them. He was the third son of **Joseph Knight, Sr.** and Polly Peck Knight. They were the parents also of four daughters. This New England family came from English stock and migrated from Massachusetts and Vermont to New York, finally settling along the shores of the beautiful Susquehanna River in Colesville, New York. They were farmers and millers and considered by neighbors to be hardworking, honest, Christian frontier settlers.

Joseph Junior followed two older sons, Nahum and Newel. Nahum was born in 1796, Newel in 1800, and Joseph Junior in 1808. As the third son, Joseph Junior may have been named after the old English custom of naming the third son after the father of the family. This custom may have influenced Joseph Smith, Senior who named his third son Joseph, Junior, also. The Smith and Knight Juniors both were born in Vermont not far from each other and only three years apart.

The names of Joseph and Newel are given names for many sons born into the Knight family line to this day.

Because the Knight men were grain brokers and millers, they were likely known by many farmers throughout a wide area of Western New York.

Newel wrote in his journal that he knew Joseph Smith, Jr. and brother Hyrum, "even from their boyhood." (KB Pg. 387) In 1826 Joseph Smith, Jr. came to work for Father Knight. The two Juniors slept, ate, and worked together on the farms owned by father Knight. Nahum and Newel were married and living apart from the family.

Joseph Junior was the only son still in the family home. In the evening, the young prophet shared the marvelous story of the “First Vision” and the visitation of angels.

Father Knight and Joseph Junior readily accepted what they heard from this trusted friend. Other members of the family had not yet accepted his message. In fact, Joseph Junior recorded, “My father and I believed what he told us, I think we were the first (ones) after his father’s family.”

Joseph Junior was raised to work the farm as well as a gristmill and two carding machines. His father bought three other farms and hired “many” hands. The bond that developed during the months of joint labor was reflected on many future occasions when Father Knight and Joseph Junior furnished supplies to Joseph Smith, Jr. — later when he was married, and after receiving the plates of the Book of Mormon. The Prophet and his new wife, Emma Hale Smith, settled in nearby Harmony, Pennsylvania and proceeded, with the help of scribes, to translate the plates by the power of God.

The temporal support started with a request of the Prophet for \$50 to sustain them. Father Knight could not provide it, but Joseph Knight, Junior, who had just bought a lot for his own home, sold it and answered the needs of his friend and included a horse and wagon. This act of generosity was a hallmark of Joseph Junior during the rest of his life. Father Knight gives us some idea of the variety of his supplies when he wrote, “... when I came home I bought some nine or ten bushels of grain and five or six bushels potatoes and a pound of tea, and I went down to see him (Joseph Smith, Jr.), as he was the only male helper at home.”

Assistance on other occasions included some shoes, and paper on which to record the words of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith Jr. was grateful for the goods as he wrote: “And I would just mention here that he (Joseph Knight) several

times afterwards brought us supplies (a distance of at least thirty miles) which enabled us to continue the work, when otherwise we must have relinquished it for a season.”

Joseph Junior was baptized into the new Church on 28 June 1830 by Oliver Cowdery, along with seven other members of his family. Almost all of the Knights were baptized in 1830, the same year as the organization of the Church. Some twenty-four Knight relatives were at the organizing meeting in April 1830, including Joseph Junior. In January of 1831 the New York saints were instructed to move to Ohio and to live a new economic order. The persecution was so great in Colesville that Joseph Smith, Jr. and Father Knight left for Ohio early in Joseph Knight, Junior’s “\$50 sleigh.” The rest of the family waited ‘till spring in order to sell their property. There is no record whether they ever sold the property, or if they received anything in exchange.

Some sixty-seven members of the Colesville branch moved as one body, under the direction of Newel, branch president. Joseph Junior helped him by coordinating with some travelers, already on the road. Thus, Joseph Junior walked part of the way, to Dunkirk, New York, where he boarded a steamer with others and arrived in Fairport, Ohio just eleven miles from Kirtland. After arriving, they were directed to Thompson, east of Kirtland, to settle on land recently consecrated by a new convert (Leland Copely). They were the first to live the “United Order” in this dispensation but only for about two months. Copely changed his mind, and ordered the saints off his land, and to pay him \$60 for “damages to the land,” Joseph Junior said were “for fitting up houses and planting his ground.” In this dire circumstance The Colesville Saints moved again to Missouri and were “among the first to settle their Zion” on the western edge of the frontier.

In Jackson County, Missouri, Junior recorded he (and Newel) built the first mill in Missouri for the Saints. He also made furniture for the new homes. He built the first printing office, and fitted out a new store. Mobs destroyed these two buildings.

Before leaving Ohio, Joseph Junior at twenty-three, married Betsey Covert, almost nineteen, with Oliver Cowdery officiating, in March of 1832. Their first child, Martha Ann was born a year later in Kaw Township where they settled with the Colesville Branch. Persecution raged in Jackson County. Sixteen houses were destroyed in one night. Men had to be posted around Joseph Junior's mill in order to save it for a while. Many of the Saints listed damages by the mobs. Joseph Junior recorded "a mill burnt down, a house burnt down, and the loss of three acres of land, fifty peach trees, (and a quantity of) hay and corn."

The Saints tried to find safety in Clay County. Joseph Junior stayed three weeks (in Jackson County) after the rest of the family left in order to "... keep grinding for feeding the Saints 'till the first of December 1833. Then I left with meal and flour which the Saints used 'till all got houses where I was." This compassion to stay behind was repeated several times by Joseph Junior. Newel and Joseph Junior practiced their trade again, and built another mill in Clay County. The brothers completed a total of eight gristmills for Joseph Smith and the Saints of the Restoration.

The Knights lived through the period of the worst persecution in Missouri. They eventually were forced into Far West, Missouri. As brothers sometimes do, they had disagreements. But In general, they collaborated with their milling skills to serve many of members of the Knight clan and other saints. They bought lots in the same block east of the temple block in Far West. Joseph Junior recorded that he was

a short distance west of Haun's Mill and heard the gun shots and shouts of the massacre. These sounds alerted them in Far West that terrible things had happened at the mill site.

Joseph Junior and Betsey had six children, a boy who died early in Nauvoo, and five daughters, two of which died in infancy. Only three daughters lived to maturity. Betsey's biography picks up the story in Far West, with this entry; "Three weeks after the birth of their third child at Far West a mob drove them from their home, leaving the stock and everything that could not be hastily thrown into their wagon. For the next few years they were driven until they crossed the Mississippi. When they got to Nauvoo, they were without possessions and life was very hard. After four years of peace the mobs again attacked them. Betsey and children hid in the basement and finally had to flee. It was so sudden; they were forced to join the "poor camp" on the banks of the river until they were rescued. They experienced the "miracle of the quail." It saved their lives"

Earlier, as they approached Nauvoo, Joseph Smith, Jr. asked Joseph Junior to operate a mill in La Harp so the Saints could have flour and meal. He remained there until it became dangerous with the mob roaming at will, destroying property and committing atrocities. In Nauvoo in 1842 the Prophet entered the names of Joseph Knight, Sr., Newel, and Joseph Junior into the Lambs Book of Life as those who had been most faithful. He added Newel and Joseph Knight..."for they are my friends." This phrase was the title of the first edition of the family book. By 1843 Newel's wealth had tripled and Joseph Junior's had doubled. (Nauvoo Neighbor, 10 May)

Both Newel and Joseph Junior became involved again in mill building and operating. Joseph moved his family into Nauvoo for protection. This time Joseph Junior operated a steam mill. Before he left La Harpe he sent flour and meal into Nauvoo for the Saint under siege. "Afterwards, I sent 200 lbs. of pork to them", he

recorded. He reported in his history that at La Harpe, he was ordained a priest in 1846 and a high priest in the temple in Nauvoo, by Isaac Morley and C. C. Rich. Some members of the family speculate Joseph Junior was ordained a bishop before he left Nauvoo as he was appointed a captain of ten on the trail through Iowa and was referred to by Bishop Allen as Bishop Knight.

The record indicates that Brigham Young ordained Joseph Junior a bishop in Iowa and set him apart as the bishop of the Block House Ward. It is believed that Pres. Young set him apart at this time and gave him the assignment to take care of all the refugees coming into Winter Quarters from the east. He performed exceptionally well, and received a commendation by George A. Smith and Ezra Taft Benson, "Bishop Knight has been running about here taking care of the poor, as he could not get but little help from the people; they are so busy raising potatoes, etc. ; he has been very diligent and done the best in his power." He was named as president of the bishop's council.

He finally resigned due to poor health and he needed time to prepare to move west to Utah (1850) as was Lydia. It is not known if they traveled together or not, although they both arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in the fall of 1850.

He was delayed due to a broken wagon wheel. Betsey encouraged him to fix it quickly to keep up with the wagon train. A non-member family was camped nearby the husband was sick. He asked the wife if he could give her husband a blessing. After the husband recovered Joseph learned he was a wheelwright. The man was happy to return Joseph's kindness by repairing the Knight's wagon. The family was on the trail to Oregon, but following the Knights to Zion and later joined the Church.

Joseph Junior took other wives; Adeline Johnson who settled in the 19th Ward in Salt Lake City. In 1852 he also married Aba Weldon. Family tradition passed down from this period explained those marriages were assignments from higher authority to provide temporal support for these single women, and he did not live with or sire children with them. He complained to Brigham Young that his only son had died in Nauvoo and no one was able to continue his name.

Pres. Young told him to marry a new English convert, Mary Woolerton, and that she would give him sons. He obeyed and Mary gave birth with three children, two of which sons, Joseph III and Miland. Miland fathered ten sons and a large posterity.

Some records indicate that Joseph Junior served a mission to the Moqui Indians in Arizona. They were of the primitive Pueblo tribal nation. There is no known record that he ever served in the office of bishop again in Utah and died on 3 November 1866 at the age of fifty-eight years.

To those of us who descend from this “Pioneer of the Restoration and the Great Westward Trek”, we will always admire his courage, devotion to his friend Joseph Smith, Jr., and his dedication to serve the Saints of God at all costs to himself and family.