

# The Jesse Knight Legacy

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By [Janice Helmick](#) June 7, 2018



*Nick Castleton, Mayor of Eureka showing the foundations of the school at Knightville to a tour group. The tailings of the Humbug Mine are in the background. Photo: Ed Helmick*

Jesse Knight was a mining magnate who lived in Provo, Utah. He was born on September 6, 1845, in Nauvoo, Illinois, and because his sister, Lydia Rosana Knight, married John Ray Young, is a relative of the author.

When Jesse was a one-year-old, his family had to flee Nauvoo. His father, Newel Knight, died in Nebraska, and he was raised by his widow, Lydia. Lydia and her eight children did not reach Salt Lake until 1850. Jesse was poor throughout his childhood and youth.

As a young man, Jesse worked as a prospector and discovered the Humbug mine in the Tintic Mining District near Eureka, Utah in 1896. As the Humbug mine proved profitable, he acquired other mines in the area including the Uncle Sam, Beck Tunnel, Iron Blossom, and Colorado mines.

He owned more patented mining claims in the Intermountain West than his fellow miners, but he did not manipulate the stock like many other mining entrepreneurs. When dealing with his working men, he was more paternalistic and benevolent than typical businessmen of the era. Knight treated his employees fairly in the town of Knightsville, which he equipped with a meetinghouse, amusement hall, and a school. He did not allow saloons in his town.

His generous gifts to Brigham Young University earned him the reputation of the “patron saint” of BYU. He also gave freely to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and to many church projects. He built a relatively simple home, which serves as Berg Mortuary in Provo today. He did not seek political office.

During his lifetime, he earned the nickname “Uncle Jesse.” He believed that his money was for the purpose of doing good and building up the church, as a trusted stewardship. He helped save the LDS Church from legal battles with the federal government over such issues as polygamy.

He never practiced polygamy. He purchased over 250,000 acres of land in Canada’s Northwest Territories, and many Mormons who did practice polygamy immigrated to this land and established the community of Raymond. This community grew around the irrigation farming of sugar beets, which were processed in a local sugar factory also built by Jesse Knight.

Jesse Knight died at the age of 75 on March 21, 1921, and is buried in the Provo City Cemetery, Provo, Utah.

The Joseph Knight and Polly Peck Knight family reunion will be held June 29 and 30 in Spanish Fork at the YSA Spanish Fork Stake Center, 1138 West 100 South, Spanish Fork. Hope to see you there. If you are a relative of Jessie Knight contact the Reunion Chaiman, Ed Ulloa at [famulloa5@gmail.com](mailto:famulloa5@gmail.com).



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Janice McGee Helmick had never considered herself a writer until she started helping her husband Ed on some of his assignments. She enjoys researching the subjects she writes about, and then putting the right words on paper. She really likes being affiliated with Serve Daily.