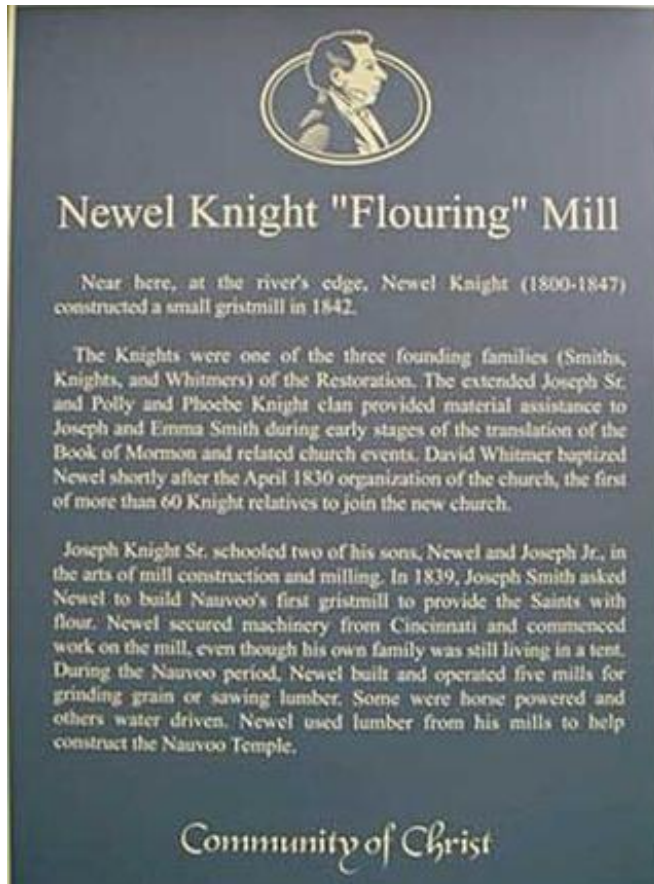


Knight Family Connections to Come Follow Me 2025

Doctrine and Covenants Section 124



As refugees from Missouri, when Newel and Lydia arrived in Nauvoo they put building themselves on hold while Newel traveled to buy equipment needed to build a grist mill.

This sign was erected in Nauvoo in 2009 at the site where the mill stood near the Mississippi River. It no longer is there.

A tent made out of bedcovers – first home in Nauvoo for Newel and Lydia

Newel and Lydia lost their home and land in the winter of 1838-9 to the mobs of Missouri. It was their third home lost in Missouri since their arrival in 1831.

Like hundreds of other refugees, Newel filed a complaint with the state of Missouri asking for redress to the lost land valued at \$1500, as well as moving costs of \$275. Money never came.

Newel and Lydia had no horse nor wagon and they had to sell their cook stove and cow to have cash to hire a man to take them to Illinois. Once again they put their children in a wagon and took what little they had left and set out to find a new home. It was a hard journey that

involved camping in the snow and being stranded for a week when the wagon driver they hired said he couldn't go further.

It was many more weeks before they arrived in Nauvoo with their tiny collection of earthly possessions which were unloaded not far from the Smith home. Newel began cutting logs to start on a cabin. Within a few days the Knights joyfully greeted Joseph Smith when he came to their tent and brought Benjamin Brown with him. Joseph explained that there was a scarcity of mills in the area and the Saints had to pay eight dollars a barrel for flour, and 75 cents for a bushel of ground cornmeal, a very high price. Could Newel build a mill?

Newel acknowledged the need, but explained he had no cash to buy the equipment needed. Brother Brown spoke up and offered the capital to buy the stones and iron needed and would be a willing partner in building a mill. Immediately the two men were picking out a mill site and they moved the Knight family tent to the spot.¹

Newel left the next day on a steamship for Cincinnati to buy mill equipment and work on a Knight cabin stopped. Within three weeks Newel was back and at work. It took five more weeks to build the horse-powered mill and they started grinding flour for the hungry citizens of Nauvoo.²

That was eight weeks that Lydia spent in May and June with 3 small children in a tent made of bedcovers before her husband could resume work on a house. Lydia cooked outdoors on an open fire, rain or shine. Beds were on the ground. If Lydia longed for a door that would open and shut, or a solid roof, or a shelf to put a dish on, she kept it to herself. Newel wrote that his wife never complained about the hardship.

Newel wrote that the mill was soon working perfectly and grinding four bushels an hour, and it was a great help to the brethren. But Brother Brown's family got sick, and he decided to leave the river bottom and get a farm. Brown needed back the money he put into the mill. Newel had no cash and could not take on future obligations. A Mr. Annis stepped in to buy out Mr. Brown, who was never paid in full, and nothing came to Newel for his labor. Annis took the mill apart and moved it out of town. Newel was left with nothing. He wrote, "I had left the building of my house for the sake of putting the mill in operation, and my family were now sick and living in a tent."³ He had lost the value of a whole summer's work.

A Handkerchief with a Blessing

That summer was particularly trying because of the bugs. The swampy land bred mosquitoes and mosquitoes carried disease. Lydia described the area as having beautiful green grass and "the water was plentiful and clear, but warm, and over all brooded the wings of the fatal

¹ Newel Knight Journal, Allen typescript, p.80.

² Newel Knight Journal, Allen typescript, p. 80-81.

³ Ibid.

miasma.”⁴ In July and August of 1839 it seemed like the whole town was sick. The Prophet himself was sick for two weeks. Afterward he spent time blessing and healing the sick. Lydia spent many days tending to sick family members.

In September, Lydia was struck with malaria. A small cabin was vacated nearby and Newel moved his family in. It wasn’t the home they dreamed of, but it would do. Lydia became desperately ill and for several days she lay in a raging fever; she thought her flesh would be consumed by it. She asked Newel to go to the prophet Joseph and ask him to bless her handkerchief with a blessing of health for her. She did not need to even see the prophet if he would bless her handkerchief.

Newel didn’t want to trouble Joseph who had been worn down himself by the many sick people and he put off Lydia’s request. The next morning after a long miserable night, Lydia made the request again and her husband left with the handkerchief and came back home and tied it on her head. He did not actually take it to Joseph.

Lydia rapidly grew worse. Newel brought the doctor to her, but it did no good. A week passed and he feared that Lydia was close to death. Now fervently repentant about the deception, he actually took Lydia’s handkerchief to Joseph Smith who blessed it and told Newel to tell Lydia, “This is from Joseph and he says your Heavenly Father will heal you.”

Newel confessed his misdeed as he came back to his wife and tied the handkerchief again to her head. She immediately felt the spirit of healing and resumed her household work the next morning. The doctor was stunned by her recovery. He began to praise himself and the medicine he had left for her, but Newel corrected the doctor and said she had been healed by faith through the Prophet Joseph Smith.⁵

Mill Building

Over the next year Newel worked as an employee or as an owner or partner in several more mills. Each time it was a struggle and didn’t leave his family financially secure.

In February of 1840, Newel had a mill almost ready to go, but while working he was kicked in the leg by an ox and injured so badly he could scarcely work for months. He wrote:

“I labored under almost every inconvenience and hardship imaginable. There were days of trial to me in temporal matters, for, for the want of means to hire one month’s labor, I was obliged to let my mill lie idle for months, and from the time I was kicked in February, to the 18th of July we had not one dollar’s worth of provisions or clothing, except that my wife earned with her hands and needle.”⁶

⁴ Lydia Knight, Lydia Knight History, p. 51

⁵ Ibid, pp. 53-55.

⁶ Newel journal p. 96

Newel's family was hungry. He traded his \$20 horse for a \$10 cow so the children would have milk but the cow ran off, never to be found. Newel wrote in his journal, "I am sure I ought not to complain, for, if I am faithful, I doubt not that all will work out for my good."⁷ He was ever the optimist who believed firmly in the goodness of God.

On July 18th a man came to the door of the Knight cabin and wanted to look over the Knight mill. That very day the man bought a half share in the mill. Newel wrote:

"He paid me part of the stipulated price, sufficient to enable to set the mill running, and supply some of the necessities of my family. . . Thus did relief come in an unexpected hour, and from an unexpected source, and I did not fail to confess the hand of God, and return my thanks to Him for the same."⁸

In Nauvoo there was never a time of continued prosperity and enduring good health for Newel, his father or his siblings. There were short seasons when they had more stability than others, but it never lasted long. After more than four years in Nauvoo there was some hope.

In a journal entry dated July 30, 1844 Newel wrote,

"Blessings are bestowed upon us as a people. There is less sickness than at any previous time since the Saints began to settle here. . . As for myself, I have labored hard and through the blessings of my Heavenly Father, I hope soon to see my family comfortably. My mill is doing well and we are well supplied with food and raiment and if Bro. Clapp builds my house according to contract, I shall have the satisfaction of seeing my family comfortably situated the first of September."

And on September 1, 1844 he wrote,

"The time has come when Bro Clapp according to agreement should have enclosed my house, ready for the inside finishing, instead of which he has not even laid up the walls and there seems to be but little preparation on his part toward doing the work. Our children are sick, the family large, and I feel that we need a better place for them to be in."

On September 7, 1844,

"We had an excellent meeting today; the discourse was instructive and calculated to bless those who listened to it.
My children continue sick with the whooping cough and chills and fever.
Last night another son was presented to me whom we shall name Jesse. Wife and child are doing well. [Whooping cough is very contagious and very dangerous to newborns. New baby Jesse apparently came through unscathed.]

On September 10, 1844,

⁷ Ibid., p. 97

⁸ Ibid. p.141

“The mob spirit has been agitating and fomenting mischief for some time, and to-day it broke in the same evil aspect as in years gone by. The mob collected near Lima or Morley’s settlement, and burned twenty houses driving the inhabitants into the woods, men, women and children, having to camp out in a heavy shower of rain. Threats have been uttered against the whole people.”⁹

For Newel there seemed to be such hope that Nauvoo would be a haven - a city where the Saints could flourish and find peace. But the trials never ended. They all endured the refiner’s fire.

Diane Mangum – October 2025

⁹ Newel Knight Journal p. 141.