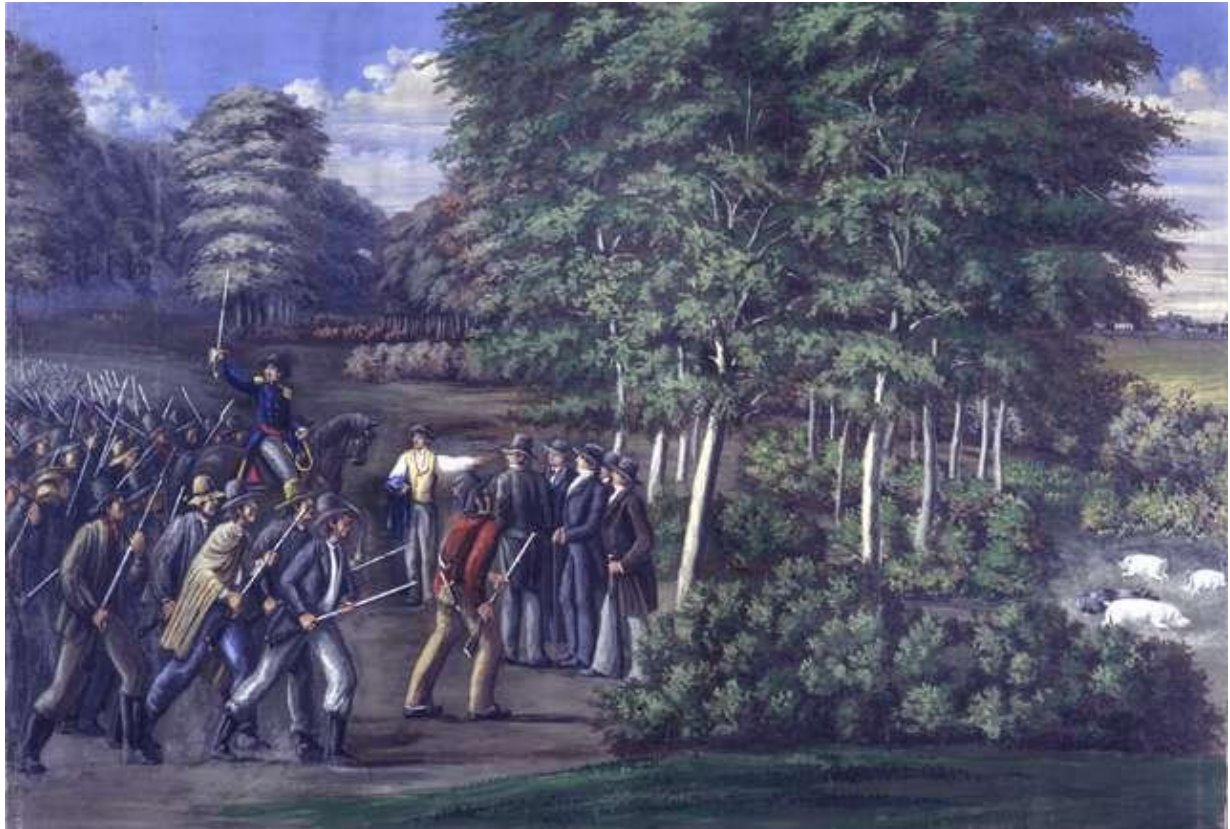


Joseph Knight Family Connections to the 2025 Come Follow Me Lessons

Doctrine and Covenants 115- 120



C.C.A. Christensen (1831-1912), 'The Arrest of Mormon Leaders,' c.1878, tempera on muslin, 78 x 114 1/8 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of the grandchildren of C.C.A. Christensen, 1970.

Lydia's memories of Far West, Missouri and the mobs, from her history, Chapters 6 and 7

When newlyweds Lydia and Newel Knight left Kirtland, Newel, they returned to his home in Clay County, Missouri. Newel set to the business of repairing his house, planting a garden and buying a cow. He also worked on a mill he had started. Newel's widowed Aunt Esther came to live them, and his son Samuel who had been cared for by extended family while his gone made them a household of four.

Residents of Clay County had been very welcoming when church members were driven from Jackson County, but by the summer of 1836 things had changed, and they were being pushed to move, preferably to an unsettled region of the state. Caldwell County became the negotiated solution. Far West was one of the 19 Latter-day Saint communities in Caldwell County.

The Joseph Smith papers give an excellent overview of Caldwell County.

- Located in northwest Missouri. Settled by whites, by 1831.
- Described as being “one-third timber and two-thirds prairie” in 1836.
- Created specifically for Latter-day Saints by Missouri state legislature, 29 Dec. 1836, in attempt to solve “Mormon problem.” Major Latter-day Saint immigration followed.
- Population by summer 1838 between 5,000 and 7,000. Population by 1840 about 1,500.
- Included at least nineteen Latter-day Saint settlements.
- Expansion of Latter-day Saint settlement beyond county borders resulted in conflict and violence between Saints and other Missourians.
- Governor Lilburn W. Boggs ordered that Saints be exterminated or driven from state, 27 Oct. 1838.
- State militia arrested and imprisoned JS and other Latter-day Saint leaders and expelled remaining Saints from state.
- Almost all Caldwell Co. Saints evacuated by spring 1839.¹

Lydia described in her history the circumstances of her family’s move to Far West in Caldwell County, and the trouble that ensued there.

CHAPTER VI

of Lydia’s Knight’s History

Starting on the 5th paragraph of the chapter:

“On the 1st of December, '36, a little girl was born to Lydia; and once more she took up the cares and exquisite joys of motherhood. The little one was called Sally after her grandmother. After the birth of her child Lydia's health improved much; but when the child was two months old, the mother had a severe inflammatory fever fastened on her, and for nine days she was insensible. Friends were ready and willing to assist; a physician was called in, but notwithstanding this she rapidly sank until nearly all had lost hope in her recovery. Her devoted husband felt that he could not lose her, and once more be left a desolate, miserable man; he gave himself up to fasting and prayer, that the disease might be rebuked, until God heard his cries and granted his fervent desires.

¹ <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/place/caldwell-county-missouri>

She awoke as it were from a long troubled sleep, and asked the watchers for her baby. It was brought, and from that moment she was rapidly healed.

Newel designed moving his family to Far West in the Spring, but shortly after Lydia's illness, he himself was prostrated with a lung fever.

This illness was expensive, and when he began to get around he found himself sadly in arrears. In consequence they were unable to move in the Spring.

The following year served to set them straight with their creditors, and in February, 1837, they purchased forty acres of land from the government, in Caldwell Co., close to Far West.

On the 29th of April, 1838, a boy was born, who was named James Philander by Father Morley when eight days old.

On the 4th of July, 1838, a large assembly of the Saints came together in Far West to celebrate the day and to lay the corner stone of a temple. The glorious stars and stripes were swung to the breeze and joy was everywhere among the Saints. But has there ever been an attempt to erect a temple without the bitterest feelings of our enemies being aroused?

The outside element began to be very jealous. Mobs assembled and threatenings were heard. Several days after the celebration, a storm, fierce and mighty as the storm which was soon to break over its inhabitants, swept over Far West. The heavens were blackened with rolling, hurrying masses of clouds. Down through the darkened air flashed the lightning's arrow! Peals of thunder shook the very earth! In the midst of this horrid uproar, a sudden, swift flash and down fell the liberty pole.

"Oh liberty," exclaimed the Prophet, "is it thus thy proud head shall be brought low? The wicked will seek to trample thee in the dust, and uproot thee from the earth!"

This prophecy was sadly fulfilled. But we will see in what manner.

Far West was a lovely little town, with rich fields, the houses and barns full and comfortable. Boasts were made by the rapacious, murdering robbers that as soon as the crops were well matured, the ghastly scenes of Jackson county should be repeated, and they would take possession of the smiling homes of the Saints.

To carry this out was not so easy as had been the Jackson county tragedy; for the authorities of Caldwell county were our own people. Some new pretext must be made to wrest the power from those who held the reins of government.

The same political hatred of the solid unity of the "Mormons" was felt by our enemies then that is felt for us now. Polygamy had not been revealed then, and so did not exist in their imaginations to cast a flimsy pretext over their fiendish purposes. It was Satan against Christ!

The mob spread out into adjoining counties to poison the Missourians against the people. At the August election in Daviess county, loud threats were made that the "Mormons" should not vote. Some of the Saints however were determined to maintain their rights and went to the polls to do so. They were roughly assaulted and a skirmish ensued. The "Mormons," however, succeeded in casting their votes, which so enraged the mob that they immediately began to organize into parties of hundreds, in some instances even thousands, to plunder our fields and drive off the stock; they attacked men on the high-road, and if they caught a "Mormon," or one they fancied to be a Saint they would murder him. One man by the name of Carey was thus assaulted and was not even allowed to see his family until just before he expired. An old gentleman by the name of Tannor was attacked and his skull beaten in.

About the middle of October word was brought to Far West that the mob was assembled by hundreds about ten miles from Far West, at a little settlement on Crooked river, and assistance was wanted. About sixty men, who were a legal organized militia, started out under David Patten, and, reaching Crooked river, they were obliged to defend themselves and people from the mob. The little party was defeated and overpowered, six of our brethren falling martyrs, among whom was David Patten, one of the first quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Not many days elapsed ere a hurried messenger brought the startling news that just outside the city a mighty multitude was camped with full intent to raze the town to the ground.

The next morning Joseph sent out a flag of truce to learn the intentions of this vast mob.

They were met by another flag of truce, and the two messengers conferred together.

"What is your purpose? What is the intention of those you represent? Why have you thus come to alarm and terrify the peaceful dwellers in Far West?" inquired the "Mormon."

"We want three men from your city," insolently and boldly answered the other. "We want Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith and Sidney Rigdon, then we will burn your town to ashes and as the flames leap up we'll massacre and murder all we find within the city limits. That's what we want and intend."

The "Mormon" messenger, Col. Hinkle by name, grew pale at these words.

"Can we not devise some other way? Would you murder all? Let the innocent suffer as well as those whom you call guilty? Have mercy on us."

The other seeing the evident fear and treachery of the base colonel, proposed that if he could devise means to get the leaders of the Church into the mobbers' camp, to get all the "Mormons'" property that it might be divided among their enemies, and to give up all the arms and ammunition in the town, in return the rest of the Saints should be permitted to leave the state and be protected by the militia.

To this infamous proposal the traitor consented and returned to the town to comply with the conditions.

The night before this was spent by Lydia, in common with the rest of the women, in trying to place her household effects where they would not be destroyed in case the mob should fire the city.

"My dear," said the husband, "be careful of our little ones to-night, I must go out and join my brethren who are on guard. You will not be afraid will you?"

"Newel, God rules!" replied the dauntless woman.

As night came on, two brethren who were among those that had gone up to Crooked river came to the door, and asked Lydia if she could not find a hiding-place for them, saying that the mob were doubly enraged at those who were up at that fearful engagement and determined to murder every such man they could find.

One of them, James Emmet by name, was an old friend of Lydia's. She quietly told them that she would do all in her power to secrete them. Accordingly, the night was partly spent in making a little store-room adjoining the living-room as comfortable as possible for the two men. When daylight came the mother dressed her little ones and commenced her usual daily duties. She knew she was liable to be killed herself if these men were found in her house, but as she told her husband, so she comforted her heart now by saying, "God rules!"

CHAPTER VII.

In the early morning of Wednesday, 31st of Oct., the flag of truce spoken of in the previous chapter was sent out, and the traitor soon returned to consummate his horrible plan.

The day was spent by the anxious mother in work and prayer. Often she bent her knees in humble petition for the safety of her children and the brethren concealed in her house that they might not be found.

Newel was away with the men who were trying to devise means to protect their homes and families.

In the afternoon a neighbor came in to say, "Joseph has gone out to the enemies' camp."

"God protect him!" replied Lydia.

"They, that is the Prophet, Brothers Rigdon and Pratt, Col. Wight and Brother Robinson, have gone along with Col. Hinkle to see if something can't be done to prevent the carrying out of the exterminating order sent by Governor Boggs."

"What exterminating order?"

"Why didn't you hear that Governor Boggs, you remember the rascal, the one who headed the mob in Jackson Co., had sent an order to this host of robbers outside the town, telling them that they are to wipe out every one of us? Giving them authority as an organized militia. Well you must have staid close at home last night not to have heard that!"

"Yes," said Lydia, "I was very busy all night."

"So were we all! I am told that Major-general Wallack and General Doniphan were ordered to raise a thousand men and join this General Clark who has command of the whole, and this precious trio are now trying to make arrangements to murder us all in cold blood! This is indeed a land of freedom! Why, Sister Knight, I feel just as though my blood was boiling oil when I think of this inhuman outrage."

"Be calm, sister, let your heart rather be filled with humblest prayer, that God will turn aside their wicked purposes."

The indignant neighbor departed, with many wishes that "God would exterminate them root and branch if they did not speedily repent."

Not long after the woman had gone, the air was filled by shouts and hideous sounds from the mobbers' camp. Looking anxiously from the window, Lydia saw her husband hurrying to the house. On entering he cried,

"Lydia, Lydia, pray as you never prayed before. Our beloved Prophet is taken prisoner! The wretch who decoyed him out has betray his Prophet, his religion and his God! Listen to those awful sounds! May the God of Israel hold their lives as in His hand. My wife, these are bitter days."

"Newel, I am full of weakness."

"Do not go outside the house, for prowlers are around and will injure you if they find you in their power. I must go now, my girl. You know my very soul is bowed with prayer to God to preserve my wife and babes. Be brave as you always are, and I will come when I can and bring you word of what transpires."

"Be careful, my husband, and I feel that we shall be protected."

Once more the woman was left alone with her little ones and the brethren under her care. God and her own heart alone know the anxieties of the next few hours. But into her soul crept and brooded the sweet spirit that whispered to the troubled waves, "Be still." And she was calm. Oh, that awful night! Over every thing, into every house, down into the low places, high over the

tree-tops sounded the piercing, shrieking yells of that blood-thirsty mob. The flesh would creep at the fiendish sounds, the heart would quiver with the fearful thought that Joseph, the beloved one, was in their power. Ten thousand wolves could never make a sound so hideously inhuman, or so fiendishly triumphant as the yells and shouts that unceasingly arose from the throats of that murderous throng from evening shades till morning light. Were these men human? Oh yes. Were they civilized beings? Oh yes; there were seventeen ministers and nineteen commissioned officers, who led the mob.

The night was spent by Lydia in one long, anxious prayer. The next morning, the 1st of November, dawned cool and bright.

With the morning came Newel. He brought the sad news that the Patriarch and Brother Amasa Lyman were taken prisoners and removed to the enemy's camp.

"Newel, how will this end? My heart is torn with anxious fears, and yet the Spirit tells me all will yet be well."

"God grant it, Lydia," replied her husband. "What is the meaning of all this? Look from the window! Here is an army marching upon us. Good by and God protect you, I must go, for there is the signal for us to gather at the public square."

So saying, he hastily snatched his rifle from the wall and rushed to the square, where the signal drum was beating long and loud. On arriving there he was commanded by Gen. Lucas to give up his arms.

He replied, "Sir, my rifle is my own private property, no one has a right to demand it from me."

"Lay down your arms, you rascal, or I will have you shot."

Full of righteous indignation, the helpless man complied, seeing that many of his brethren were also disarmed.

Their leaders were gone but they were true Saints. And were they not also free-born American citizens?

As the men rushed into the public square they were all forced to obey the summary command "Give up your arms!"

When all were assembled, they were compelled at the point of the bayonet to sign a deed of trust of all their (the "Mormons") possessions to Gen. Lucas to defray the expenses of this unholy war.

This unrighteous deed being accomplished, and all the men of the town being placed under guard, the mob swarmed out into the town, pillaging, foraging, insulting women and abusing

little children. Stock were shot down and left on the streets to rot. Fields were destroyed, houses were searched, everything of any value was taken and any one who dared to remonstrate was brutally threatened with murder.

Every house was searched for the men who were at the tragedy of Crooked river. At last three ruffians came to Lydia's door, and one who seemed to be the leader asked: "Have you any men in the house?"

"You have our men under guard," answered the fearless woman.

"Have you any man in the house?"

"I tell you, my husband is on the public square a prisoner."

"Have you any arms in the house?"

"My husband took his rifle with him."

The little children seeing the ferocious men, were frightened and commenced to cry.

"Sir, go away from here, do you not see how frightened my little ones are?"

"Well, have you no men or arms in the house?"

"I tell you again my husband is a prisoner on the square, and he took his rifle with him."

"Upon my word, at least you've got plenty of Mormon blood and to spare."

So abruptly speaking he turned away and they all left the house, leaving the brave but trembling woman whispering to her children, "God rules!"

The next morning, the sun arose on a scene of desolation. Hundreds of houseless, homeless beings huddled together as best they could, weeping, sorrowing and sad, but peaceful and full of the testimony that all suffering was in Christ Jesus, and He would be their helper and comforter. Many were without food to eat, but those who had some, shared with those who had not.

The Prophets and leaders were gone, but ways must be devised to get out of the state. Only a few short months were given them in which to leave their desolate homes and corn-fields.

That day the leaders came into the town heavily guarded, and were marched to the square. There they were permitted, after much pleading, to see their distracted families. It was ascertained from the Prophet that a court-martial had been held, and the prisoners were tried without being allowed to be present or to have any one to defend them, and were sentenced to

be shot the next day. Gen. Doniphan, who was a lawyer, told the mob he would have nothing to do with such unlawful high-handed proceedings, and in disgust left them, ordering all of his men to take up their march homeward.

This circumstance made the robbers hesitate, and accordingly it was determined to remove the prisoners to Independence.

Not long were they permitted to be with their friends, but were taken back to camp. The next morning the Prophet and Patriarch, Sidney Rigdon, P. P. Pratt, Lyman Wight, Amasa Lyman and George W. Robinson were started off for Independence.”²

Diane Mangum – September 2025

² Lydia Knight’s History, The Juvenile Instructor, 1883, pp. 38-50. Found online at <https://readingroo.ms/4/6/6/0/46602/46602-h/46602-h.htm> on September 6, 2025.