

Doctrine and Covenants 37



*The road in front of the Knight Home in Colesville where the Colesville Branch met for meetings – Windsor Road facing north - Photo June 2023, D. Mangum.
The wagons headed for Kirtland in 1831 may well have lined up here.*

Colesville Branch Members: Those who left for Kirtland, those who didn't, and where they all ended up

On the 19th of April, 1831, a string of about ten wagons filled with clothing, tools and housewares, pulled out and the Colesville Branch began the journey to Kirtland. Gathering to Ohio was an enormous sacrifice for all involved.

The Colesville Branch was a group who mostly lived in Broome or Chenango Counties, New York, and they worshipped together at the Joseph Knight home in Colesville township. It was a collection of about 80¹ men, women, and children who were family, friends and strangers; not much different from a ward or branch group today. There were families with young children, older couples, and single young adults. Some couples came with their whole family; there were three generations in the families of Joseph and Polly Peck and several others. But some families were divided both on doctrine and on wanting to uproot their lives and move to Kirtland.

¹ Dr. Larry C. Porter, professor emeritus of Church History and Doctrine, BYU, List of Colesville Branch members and potential Branch members, compiled 2007. Link to the list found on the April landing page of this site.

What became of their lives is something of a microcosm of what happened in the Church as a whole at that time. Some were faithful and rejoiced in the gospel to the end of their days, and made every sacrifice asked of them. Some burned with enthusiasm in the early years, but when they became disgruntled over leadership decisions, or were swayed by friends with dissenting opinions, they left the church. Some didn't leave the church, the Church left them. More exactly, when they were asked to gather yet again to a new place, they just stayed put, for one reason or another. When they lost the nourishment that comes from ordinances and participating in a community of faith, they just drifted away and their descendants grew up outside the Church.

When the Colesville Branch left their homes, there was no way they could have foreseen the coming decades. They were in Kirtland/Thompson less than 3 months before they were asked to move again. The Colesville group spent 8 years in Missouri and were driven out of their homes three times. Nauvoo was a brief period of respite, but at last they were pushed out again. A willingness to follow leadership and gather together with other Saints proved to be the crucial factor in those who remained true to the faith they held in 1831.

Bolded names indicate Colesville Branch members

In late January 1831, Joseph Knight, Sr. learned that the same mob of men looking for Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon had added him to the list of those they wanted to harm. Joseph and Polly quickly decided they would leave for Kirtland, Ohio, that night. **Joseph Knight, Sr.** and his wife **Polly Peck Knight** left for Kirtland by sleigh with their 14-year-old daughter **Elizabeth Knight**. The rest of the Knight family met up with their parents about May 1st when the group that departed in April reached Kirtland. By mid-summer they were all on their way to Missouri, which had newly been announced as the location of Zion. Polly Peck Knight died a few days after their arrival in Jackson County, Missouri, in August 1831.

A few years later Father Knight married a second wife in Missouri, Polly's widowed sister-in-law, Phebe Crosby Peck. They endured the travail of Missouri and Nauvoo and became the parents of two children, Charles Knight who died as a small child, and Ether Knight who lived a long life. Joseph Knight, Sr. died in Mt. Pisgah, Iowa in 1846.

In 1842 Polly and Joseph's daughter Elizabeth Knight married Joseph W. Johnson in Nauvoo. Elizabeth participated in the Relief Society in Nauvoo and did baptisms for the dead in the Mississippi River. When Elizabeth and her husband started the trek to Utah in 1848, they had two small children. On the pioneer trail in Wyoming, Elizabeth gave birth to twin girls, Sarah and Mary, who died the day they were born. In Salt Lake City, Elizabeth was part of the 14th Ward Relief Society and she had two more children who lived to adulthood. She died in Salt Lake City in 1887.

Joseph and Polly's children who left in April, 1831 for Kirtland:

Nahum Knight and his wife **Thankful** and their children:
William, Joseph, John, Bethany, Sally, Eliza, and Newel

Nahum and Thankful moved their family to Kirtland, Ohio, and then to Jackson County with the rest of the Colesville Branch. When they were driven from their home in Jackson County, they moved across the Missouri River to Clay County.



The Joseph and Polly Knight home on Windsor Road still stands and has been refurbished.

A list of the members of the Colesville Branch is on a plaque next to the door of the Knight home where the branch had their meetings.

Nahum appears on an 1836 County tax list in Clay County, Missouri, and on an 1840 Illinois Census record. His extended family had moved to Far West and Caldwell County, and then to Nauvoo by 1840. In 1850 they were in Buchanan County, Missouri, where Nahum was a wheelwright, and in 1860, they show up on a census in El Dorado, California. It has been a Knight family mystery where Nahum died and where his children made their homes. Some of Nahum and Thankful's posterity moved to Texas.²

Esther Knight and her husband **William Stringham** and their children:

Julia Ann, Harriet, and Harlow

Esther and her husband William lived in Colesville and were baptized with others of the branch on June 28, 1830. Her daughter Julia was the first teenager to be baptized in the Church. The move to Missouri was hard on Esther and she died in Missouri in 1833, as did her son Harlow. Two years later the widowed William married Esther's younger sister Polly Knight. As young adults, Esther's daughters, Julia and Harriett, moved from Nauvoo to Springfield, Illinois where they found work. They ended up marrying and living near Springfield the rest of their lives with husbands and families.

Anna Knight DeMille and her husband **Freeborn DeMille**, and their children:

Maria, Lora Ann, Orpha, and Oliver

Anna and Freeborn married when Anna was 16 years old. When the Colesville Branch left for Kirtland, they were the parents of daughters ages 10, 8, 2 and a new one-month old baby boy, Oliver. Anna and Freeborn endured the move from Kirtland to Missouri. In Missouri, like the other Colesville Branch members, they were driven from homes three times in eight years,

² Census and tax records for Nahum Knight were found on the FamilySearch memories page for Nahum Knight, Personal ID number LK6F-BDS.

before they were pushed out and left for Nauvoo. Anna, Freeborn and all of their children made it to Utah, and they made their final home in Sanpete County, Utah.

Newel Knight and his wife Sally Coburn Knight

Newel was appointed by Hyrum Smith to take over as the leader of the Colesville Branch when Hyrum left for Ohio in March of 1831. Newel and Sally had no living children in Colesville; they had longed for a child, and Sally had delivered two stillborn baby boys in Colesville. But Sally had been promised in a blessing that she would give birth to a live child. That blessing was realized in Jackson County, Missouri in 1832 when they had a son, Samuel. Sally died in 1834 shortly after childbirth with a second son, as did the new baby Eli. After a few months Newel returned to Kirtland to work on the temple and while there he met and married Lydia Goldthwaite. The couple moved back to Missouri and went eventually to Nauvoo. Newel and Lydia became the parents of seven children; the last born 6 months after Newel's death in Niobrara, Nebraska in January of 1847. Lydia brought the children to Utah on her own.

Joseph Knight, Jr., unmarried in 1831.

Joseph Knight gave his new sleigh to Joseph Smith and Emma, who took it to Kirtland in late January 1831 at the same time Joseph Jr.'s parents left. Joseph Knight, Jr. and his sister Polly stayed at the family home until April when the group left. It fell to them to pack things up and make efforts to sell the home and farm. Joseph married his first wife, Betsy Covert, in Missouri, and two other wives in later years in Salt Lake City. Joseph and Betsy and their three children were among the last to leave Nauvoo. In Winter Quarters, Joseph Knight, Jr. was an acting bishop, a calling he also had later in Council Bluffs. Joseph Knight, Jr. and his wives and children all later made their home in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Polly Knight, unmarried in 1831.

Polly married William Stringham two years after her sister Esther passed away in Missouri. Polly had one son, Walter in 1837, and she helped raise her sister's children. Unfortunately, Polly died at the age of 33 in Nauvoo. Her son Walter Stringham came to Utah in 1851. Her husband William Stringham came with his third wife Eliza in 1856. Walter became the father of 15 children and left a large posterity in the Manti, Utah area.

Mary (Molly) Knight Slade and husband Aaron Slade. Molly was the sister of Joseph Knight, Sr., and joined the church in 1830, as did her husband and four of their nine children. When the Slades left for Kirtland, five of their adult children stayed in the Colesville area.

During the journey to Kirtland when the Colesville Branch reached Buffalo, New York to go by boat the rest of the way, it was May 1st, and yet the harbor was solid ice. The group had to wait two weeks for it to thaw so they



Headstone on Molly Slade's grave

could travel. In that time Aaron Slade had a significant change of heart, left the group and returned to his home in South Bainbridge, New York, and later divorced his wife, Molly.

Molly was 56 when she was baptized and endured the many trials of Missouri and Nauvoo as a single woman. At the age of 78 she crossed the plains and made it to Salt Lake City, Utah. She died the next spring in 1853 and was buried in an unmarked grave in the Salt Lake City Cemetery. In recent years, descendants located her grave location and placed a marker there to remember her courage and faith.

Molly's four children who did join the church and left for Kirtland with the Colesville group are:

Benjamin Slade and wife **Roxanna** and their children **Ozro** and **Edwin**.

Benjamin and Roxanna made the journey to Kirtland and then moved with the Colesville Branch to Jackson County. Church records show he was endowed in the temple in 1846, but by 1850 Benjamin and Roxanna were back living in the Bainbridge area in New York apparently disaffected from the Church. However, after Roxanna died in 1866 Benjamin moved to Utah where his daughter Angeline lived and he was buried in Davis County, Utah.

Clark Slade, age 18 in 1831

In 1833 in Missouri, Clark married **Emily Coburn**, the younger sister of Newel's wife Sally. Clark and Emily had five children. When driven out of Missouri they moved to Pittsfield Pike, Illinois, about 60 miles from Nauvoo where Clark died in 1842. Emily moved to Nauvoo to be near extended family, but after her husband's death, Emily struggled. She left her children with family members while she bounced around several locations, including living with her mother in Wisconsin. She came back for her children and left again. In the course of her travels, she became a Methodist in Pennsylvania. She married James Finch in 1851 in Wisconsin. Her third husband was James Ward and later she married again to Philander Austin.³ It was under the name Emily Austin that in 1882 she wrote her book, "Life Among the Mormons," that was critical of the Church and her experiences. Emily died in Quincy, Illinois in 1901.⁴

George Washington Slade, age 15 in 1831.

George married Jane Atwood in Nauvoo in 1844. They had one baby in Nauvoo, one in Winter Quarters, one in Council Bluffs, and another in Missouri that died at birth. Their other six children were born in Salt Lake City where George was a shoemaker. He died at the age of 94 and lived in his home at 240 South 500 East for 59 years.⁵ His wife Jane died 20 years before him in 1891.

Ann Slade Rogers, was a widow with a small child, **Hortensia**, when she left her Colesville home for Kirtland. Anna remarried in Liberty, Missouri, to Henry Cleveland and had three more children. She and all four children made it to Utah. Ann died in Davis County, Utah.

³ Joseph Smith Papers Biography, Austin, Emily M. Coburn, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/emily-m-coburn-austin>

⁴ FamilySearch memories and details and memories for Emily M. Coburn FamilySearch PID LHR4-DX3

⁵ Obituary of G. W. Slade posted at <https://www.familysearch.org/en/tree/person/memories/K2HX-GCN>

Hezekiah Peck (brother of Polly Peck Knight) and his wife **Martha Long Peck**, and their children:

Reed, Elizabeth (Betsy), Melvina, Mary, Washington, Matthew, Mark

Parents Hezekiah and Martha (Patty) left Colesville with seven children. Another daughter, Diana, appears to have been married and not living at home when her family joined the Church and left for Kirtland, but a few years later she and her husband and children were living in Nauvoo at the time of her young death in 1841.

Hezekiah was a Bishop of the Tenth Ward in Nauvoo and a leader in Winter Quarters. But when it was time for the final journey to Utah, they felt the Church would be returning soon to Jackson County Missouri to build Zion, and they wanted to stay in the mid-west. Hezekiah died in Andrew, Jackson County, Missouri in 1850. Three Peck children Mathew, Mark and Mary all moved to the Des Moines, Iowa area, and widowed Martha moved to Iowa to be near them.

Son Reed Peck was very involved in Church leadership in Missouri but he became disaffected. Reed moved back to Afton, New York, and Washington moved back to Auburn, New York to live the remainder of their lives not far from the home where they grew up.⁶ No details are known on where Betsy and Melvina spent their adult years.

Phebe Crosby Peck, widow of Benjamin Peck, younger brother of Polly Peck Knight, and her children: **Hezekiah, Samantha, Henrietta, Sarah**

Phebe left Colesville as a widow with four young children. In Missouri she married Joseph Knight, Sr. in 1833, two years after Polly died. Joseph and Phebe had two more sons. One died as an infant in Montrose, Iowa; the other Ether, came to Salt Lake City with his older sister. Phebe died about 1848, probably in Winter Quarters. Phebe's son, from her first husband, Hezekiah Peck, died in Salt Lake City at the age of 39. Samantha Peck died in Sugar Creek, Iowa, age 18. Henrietta Peck died in Porterville, Morgan County, Utah at age 73. Sarah Peck died in Paris, Idaho, at age 68. Phebe's youngest son Ether Knight came to Utah and married Sara Jane Terry, they had six children in Utah, and four more children after they moved to California. Ether died in San Francisco at the age of 66.

Ezekial Peck, brother of Polly Peck Knight, and his wife, **Electa Buck Peck**

And their children, **Hannah, Chauncy, Joseph, Anna, Mariah, Evaline**

Ezekial died in 1865 and Electa in 1855, both in Adams, Illinois, about 60 miles south of Nauvoo. Apparently, their daughters Hannah and Evaline also made homes there. Like his brother Hezekiah, Ezekial and Electa decided to not to move to Utah with the main body of the Saints. They did not actively leave the Church; they just didn't move on.

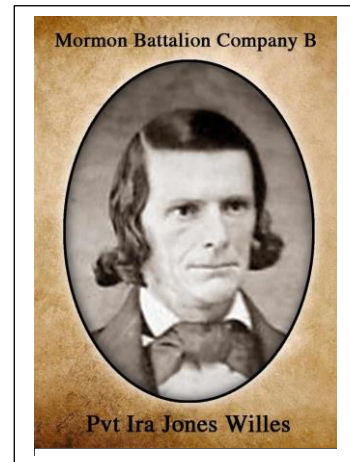
Esther Peck, older sister of Polly Peck Knight, and her husband **Aaron Culver**.

Aaron died in Independence, Missouri in 1831, age 61. Esther died in Clay County, Missouri, in 1836, age 70.

⁶ William Hartley, *Stand By My Servant Joseph*, Deseret Book, 2003, p. 480.

Levi Hall is among those listed by Newel Knight who were baptized in the creek on the Knight farm on June 28, 1830 by Oliver Cowdery. He was born in Canada about 1802, and moved to Windsor, New York about 1827. Levi married Ruth in 1826 and they had one or two little boys in 1831 when the group moved to Kirtland. There is no mention of Ruth Hall participating in the Colesville Branch and apparently they did not move to Kirtland.⁷

Ira Jones Willis, was 19 when he left with the Colesville Branch for Kirtland. He was baptized by Newel Knight probably just days before leaving. Most of his family became acquainted with the Church in January 1831 and Ira's parents and two brothers joined the church and went to Kirtland shortly after Ira did. When the Saints were driven from Jackson County, Ira was whipped so severely that he carried the scars the rest of his life. Ira was a corporal in the Mormon Battalion and one of the men who discovered gold in California. He and his wife settled in Lehi. He died at the age of 42 when he and his son were trapped under awagon load of wood when the wagon Ira was driving rolled into a stream.⁸



Jared Carter, his wife, Lydia Ames Carter, and their children, Evaline, Ellen, and Orlando Carter. The Carters were baptized in February of 1831 in Colesville by Hyrum Smith after being introduced to the Book of Mormon by John Peck,⁹ who didn't care for the book but shared it anyway. The Carters lived in Chenango and were part of the Colesville Branch.

Jared was called on several missions from 1831-1834; hence the family did not move to Missouri in July 1831 with the others. Jared Carter was an exceptional missionary who converted 79 people and his mission calls are mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants Sections 52, 79, 94, and 102. Carter became disaffected from the Church in 1838 and became part of the group later known as the Danites. In 1843 he was accused of conspiring against the Prophet and he was disfellowshipped the next year. He confessed and repented, but when the Saints left Nauvoo, he moved to nearby DeKalb County, Illinois. Jared Carter died in DeKalb County in 1856. His wife Lydia died ten years later there and it appears none of his immediate family moved to Utah.¹⁰

George A. Smith in 1861 recalled hearing Jared Carter say in Kirtland, "I have sacrificed all my property once, but I will never do it again." To which Smith observed, "Where is that man? He is numbered in the long catalogue of apostates."¹¹

⁷ Newel Knight journal, Allen Typescript p. 4, and FamilySearch details page for Levi Hall, PID LT34-JK2.

⁸ FamilySearch memories and details for Ira Jones Willis/Willes, PID KWJJ-1TL

⁹ This could well be John Peck, the son of Hezekiah and Martha Peck who did not join the Church.

¹⁰ Susan Easton Black, *Who's Who in the Doctrine and Covenants*, Bookcraft, 2001, Jared Carter Biography, pp 51-54.

¹¹ Susan Easton Black, *Who's Who in the Doctrine and Covenants*, Bookcraft, 2001, p.54.

William Riley Hine and his wife Clarissa Steward Hine, and their children: **Mehitable, Irena, and Lucy Almira Hine** all left for Kirtland in April, possibly with the Colesville Branch group, but probably on their own. William was born in Colesville in 1803 and his wife Clarissa was born in Windsor, Broome County nearby. They were baptized October 10, 1830 in Colesville by Hyrum Smith.

William Hine's parents lived in Harmony and were friends with the parents of Emma Hale Smith. Sometimes William became the link for Emma to send letters to her parents. In Kirtland as plans were underway to build a temple, local people refused to sell stone for building to the members of the Church. William Hine rented a farm with a quarry in the Kirtland area and that quarry became the source of stone for the temple. In 1836 William Hine left the Church and the rest of his family drifted away from the Church and never moved any further west. In his elderly years William Hine was interviewed for the purpose of discrediting the church and he told the interviewer he knew Joseph, saw Joseph's peep stone, and saw Joseph translating plates in a local Colesville tavern.¹²

Emer Harris and his wife **Parna Harris** were baptized Feb. 10, 1831 as a result of the missionary labors of Hyrum Smith and Newel Knight.¹³ Emer was the brother of Martin Harris who had served as a scribe to Joseph Smith and mortgaged his farm to print the Book of Mormon, so Emer had some familiarity with the origins of the church and its doctrines. In fact, months before Emer and Parna were baptized they named their first son, born in July 1830, **Joseph Mormon Harris**. Joseph Mormon Harris and his sister **Fannie Harris** are both listed as members of the Colesville Branch.

Emer and Parna and their children were part of the Colesville Branch, but probably traveled to Kirtland independent of the large group in April of 1831. In Kirtland, Emer and his brother Martin labored as missionaries and later Emer worked on the Kirtland Temple. Parna, Emer and their children left for Missouri in 1838 and only a year later were forced to move east again to Nauvoo where Emer worked on the Nauvoo Temple. Emer married a plural wife in Nauvoo, Martha Allen, who lived only 4 years after their marriage. Later in Utah Emer married another plural wife, Polly Chamberlain. Emer Harris' final home was in Logan, Utah where he was buried in 1869. Parna died in Ogden in 1857.

¹² Toni Richard Turk, short biography, "William Riley Hine," FamilySearch memory posted 20 Oct 2104 on page of William Riley Hine, K24X-MCX, and "William Riley Hine's "Corrected" Statement," created 2004 and posted on 15 July 2015.

¹³ In his journal Newel Knight wrote that Emer Harris was the first man he baptized.

Josiah Stowell is considered a member of the Colesville Branch. It is believed that Josiah was baptized some time in 1830, but no solid record of it been found nor mention of his participation in early conferences or meetings.

He was an early friend and employer of Joseph Smith, Jr. Josiah's wife Miriam did not like Joseph Smith and thought the young man had duped her husband. Miriam's nephew even took Joseph Smith to court with that complaint. However, at the trial Josiah testified in court of his willing support and belief in Joseph Smith. Josiah was there at the Smith home in Manchester when Joseph Smith brought home the gold plates. Josiah was a moderately prosperous farmer and saw mill owner who lived just a few miles north of Colesville. Josiah stayed in his home in South Bainbridge until 1833 when he and his wife moved to Smithboro, New York, where his wife died later that year.



The original Josiah Stowell home is still standing in South Bainbridge and has been restored, and is open for tours in summer months.

In 1843 Josiah was sick and he dictated a letter to his old friend Joseph Smith and asked that Joseph and the Saints pray for his health so he might be able to come join them in Nauvoo. Josiah regretted that he neglected the privilege to live with the Saints in Nauvoo, and he wanted to come and see Joseph and the city. Josiah had been subscribing to the *Times and Seasons* Nauvoo newspaper and had followed the events there.

Josiah did not live to ever see Nauvoo. He died in May of 1844 in Smithboro, New York. Just six weeks later Josiah's old friend Joseph Smith was killed in Carthage, Illinois.¹⁴

Anna Badger and **Ortentia Badger**, are two Colesville Branch members found on several lists, but nothing is known about them.

John Morse was a branch member who is thought to have passed away before the 1831 departure for Kirtland.¹⁵

Diane Mangum – January 2025

¹⁴ Joseph Smith Papers, Martha Campbell, *Letter, Elmira, Chemung Co., NY, to JS, Nauvoo, Hancock Co., IL, 19 Dec. 1843; handwriting probably of Martha Campbell; dockets in handwriting of Willard Richards and Thomas Bullock; three pages; JS Collection, CHL.*

¹⁵ Dr. Larry Porter, list of Colesville Branch members, compiled 1977. Full list on the April landing page of this website.