

Doctrine and Covenants Sections 24 and 26



These photos show the location of the Colesville baptisms in June, 1830. This small creek flows down from the mill pond on the hill to the Susquehanna River. The creek flows under the road, at the spot that is where there is a line of trees left side of the road in the photo below. In 1830 the dam built to create a pool for baptizing was somewhere near the spot on the left. Due to a local drought, the creek was very low in 2023 when this photo was taken.



**The backstory to Section 24:3 – Go speedily to Colesville,
and Section 26:1 – “confirm the Church at Colesville”**

June 28, 1830 Baptism Service in Colesville

Joseph Knight, Sr., was there to witness the glorious outpouring of the spirit when Joseph Smith, Sr. was baptized in the evening after the Church was founded. Father Knight later wrote about it saying he considered baptism that day, but felt he should read the Book of Mormon first. He said, “I should have felt better if I had gone forward [to be baptized], but I went home and was Baptized in June with my wife and family,” who were all in Colesville.¹

The Colesville baptism service was a much-anticipated event, with Emma Smith coming to join with the Knight family and Colesville friends to receive the ordinance and formally join the church. Polly and Joseph Knight probably hosted the five guests who came from out-of-town for

¹ Joseph Knight, *Reminiscences of events in Early Church History*, handwritten copy from Church History Library Archives, p.7.

the event - Joseph and Emma Smith, Oliver Cowdery and John and David Whitmer. The baptism site chosen was a small creek just 50 yards from the Knight home, near the road.

Newel Knight wrote in his journal about the baptism service in Colesville:

“Soon after conference², Joseph Smith, the Prophet, accompanied by his wife, Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer and David Whitmer came to Colesville to make us a visit. There were many in our neighborhood who believed, and were anxiously waiting an opportunity to be baptized. Meeting was appointed for the Sabbath, and on Saturday afternoon we erected a dam across a stream which was close by for the intentions of baptizing those who applied on Sunday, but during the night a mob collected and tore away the dam. This prevented us from attending to the ordinance of baptism that day. It was afterwards ascertained that the mob had been instigated to this act of molestation by certain sectarian priests of the neighborhood who began to think their craft as in danger, and took this plan to stop the progress of truth. The sequel will show how determinedly they prosecuted their opposition as well as to what little purpose in the end.

The Lord overrules all things for good.

The sabbath arrived, we held our meeting: Oliver Cowdery preached, others bore testimony to the book of Mormon, the doctrine of repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, etc. In the audience were those who had torn down the dam. They seemed desirous of giving us trouble, but did not until after the meeting was dismissed, when they immediately commenced talking to those whom they considered our friends, to try to turn them against us and our doctrine.

Among the many present I will mention the case of one young lady, Miss Emily Coburn, my wife’s sister. The Rev. Mr. Shearer, a divine of the Presbyterian faith, who had considered himself her pastor, understanding that she was likely to believe our doctrine, came to labor with her for a short time previous to our meeting. He spent some time without being able to persuade her against us, and then endeavored to have her leave her sister’s house, and go with him to her father’s who lived ten miles distant, for his purpose he had recourse to stratagem, he told her that her brothers were waiting for her at a certain place, and wished her to go home with them. He succeeded thus in getting her a little way from the house, when seeing her brothers were not waiting for her, she refused to go farther with him. He thereupon took her by the arm and tried to force her along; my wife, her sister, was soon with them, the two women being one to many for him, he was obliged to sneak off without accomplishing his errand, after all his labor and ingenuity. Nothing daunted, however, he went to her father, and represented something to him which induced the old gentleman to give him the power of attorney.

² Newel attended the first conference of the church held June 1, 1830 in Fayette.

Thus armed, and as soon as our meeting was out on the Sunday evening, he served the process on her, and immediately carried her off to her father's residence. All his labor was in vain, however, for the said Emily Coburn in a short time afterwards was baptized and confirmed a member of the church.

Early on Monday morning we were on the alert, and before our enemies were aware of it, Oliver Cowdery proceeded to baptize Emma Smith, Hezekiah Peck and wife, Joseph Knight and wife, William Stringham, Joseph Knight, Jr., Aaron Culver and wife, Levi Hall, Polly Knight and Julia Stringham³. But before the baptism was entirely finished the mob began to collect again; we retired to my father's house, and the mob, which numbered about fifty surrounded the house, raging with anger and apparently wishing to commit violence against us. So violent and troublesome were they that the brethren were obliged to leave my father's house, and they succeeded in reaching mine. The mob soon found out where they had gone and followed them, and it was only by great prudence on our part and reliance on our Heavenly Father that they were kept from laying violent hands on us.

A meeting had been appointed for the evening to confirm those who had been baptized in the morning. The time appointed had arrived, and our friends had nearly all collected when, to our great surprise and sorrow, the constable came and arrested Bro. Joseph Smith, Jr. on a warrant charging him with being a disorderly person, and of setting the country in an uproar by preaching the Book of Mormon. The constable soon after he arrested Joseph told him that the plan of those who had got out the warrant for his arrest was to get him into the hands of the mob who were now lying in ambush for him, and the constable was determined to save Joseph from them, as he found him to be a different person to what had been represented. This proved true for they had not proceeded far from the house, when the wagon in which Joseph and the constable were riding was surrounded by the mob who seemed only to await some signal from the constable, but to the great discomfiture, he gave the horses a whip and was soon out of their reach. As the constable was driving briskly along, one of the wagon wheels came off, which accident left them almost in the hands of the mob, who had pursued closely after them. But the constable was an expert man and managed to get the wheel on again before the mob overtook him, and soon left them in the rear once more. He drove on to the town of South Bainbridge, Chenango County, where he lodged Joseph in an upper room of a tavern, and in order that all might be safe for himself and Joseph, he slept during the night with his feet against the door and kept a loaded gun by him. (Joseph occupied a bed in the same room,) and declared if they were unlawfully molested he would fight for Joseph and defend him to the utmost of his ability.

³ Newel Knight had already been baptized in May, 1830 when he traveled to Fayette for that purpose. Family records show Newel's wife Sally, and his sisters Anna Knight DeMille and Esther Stringham were also baptized June 28, 1830.

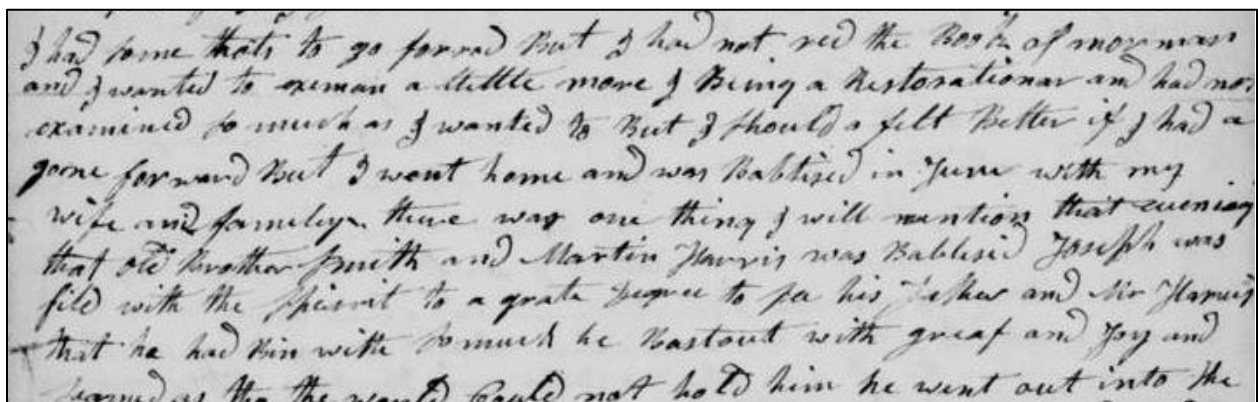
On the following day a Court was convened for the purpose of investigating the charges which had been preferred against Joseph Smith, Jr. On account of the many scandalous reports which had been put in circulation a great excitement prevailed.

My father, Joseph Knight, Sr., did not let pass the opportunity of doing all in his power to assist this persecuted boy. He went to two of his neighbors, James Davidson and John Reed, Esqs, respectable famers, who were well versed in the laws of the country, and retained them in behalf of Joseph during his trial."

Knowing of the violence that erupted the day a group of Colesville Saints were baptized at the end of June, gives more significance to Section 24 and the verse three admonition to go speedily to Colesville and the other groups of new converts in Manchester and Fayette.

Weeks had gone by and the Colesville group who had been baptized at the end of June still had not been confirmed members of the Church. There was no one in Colesville who held the priesthood yet, and Newel was the only one who had been baptized and confirmed. They needed Church leaders to return to do this for them. In Section 26:1, the Lord gives specific instructions to Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer to do this for them. Given that Joseph was arrested and put on trial the last time he had been in Colesville, he would want to be very cautious about returning to that community. In fact, those confirmations did not take place until the end of August.

Read about the trial of Joseph Smith in 1830, in the article, "The Knights and the Trial of Joseph Smith," printed in the New Era in 1986. A link to the article is found on the March landing page on this website.

A photograph of a handwritten page of cursive text. The text is written in dark ink on aged paper. It describes a personal experience of baptism in June with family, mentioning the presence of Joseph Smith and Martin Harris, and the emotional intensity of the event. The handwriting is fluid and characteristic of the early 19th century.

The passage from page 7 of Joseph Knight, Sr.'s Reminiscences about being baptized with his family.