

Knight Family Connections to Come Follow Me Doctrine and Covenants Section 124



The Red Brick Store in Nauvoo where early Relief Society Meetings were held in the large upstairs room. Photo by Tim Stewart.

Joseph Sr. and Phebe get help for a home in Nauvoo

In May of 1842 the recently formed Relief Society in Nauvoo had a business item in their minutes about Joseph Knight, Sr. and his need for help with a home.¹

Friday, May 27, 1842

*Minutes of the proceedings of the
Tenth meeting of the Society*

*Meeting in the Grove² – open’d with singing. Prayer was given by Prest. E. Smith
Prest. E. Smith arose and address’d the congregation, said all must have grace for
themselves &c. – that the first order of business is to finish the business commenc’d
yesterday—requested if any were present who came to make ridicule of the Society, that
they would withdraw.*

The following persons were receiv’d to wit.

¹ Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, Matthew J. Grow, *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society, Key Documents in Latter-day Saints Women’s History*, Church Historian’s Press, 2016, pp. 72-75.

² According to the book *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*, the ninth meeting was held the day before in the lodge, and the minutes report “The house was full to overflowing.” Fifty women were listed as women added as members of Relief Society. But more wanted to join, so they met the next day to complete their business in the grove where there was more room.

And then 187 women's names were read and voted to be admitted as members in the organization. Following the review of membership items, the minutes report:

She [Mrs. President, Emma Smith] impresse'd the necessity of being united in doing good to the poor—said she had hired a poor man to plough and fence father Knights [Joseph Knight, Sr.] lot at \$22.60 and solicited in behalf of the payment which might be made in provisions, clothing and furniture.

Prest. J. Smith and Bishop Whitney then came upon the stand. Bishop Whiteney arose and after some preliminary remarks, proceeded to address the congregation by saying that he rejoic'd and did rejoice at the formation of the Society.

Bishop Whitney continued to speak for the remainder of the meeting.³

Relief Society President Emma Smith would have reason to feel kindly towards Joseph Knight, Sr., the benevolent man who brought her small family provisions and help back in Harmony more than a decade earlier.

The years since that time grew harsh for Joseph Knight, Sr.

After leaving Colesville, Joseph Knight and his family gathered with the Saints in Thompson, Ohio, near Kirtland and were asked to live the law of consecration, they stayed only a couple of months before the community was disbanded. The Prophet then sent the Colesville Branch to Jackson County, Missouri.

Joseph's wife Polly died within a few weeks. Within a few years the Knight family with others were driven from Jackson County, and then Clay County and finally Caldwell County, Missouri. They lost property and homes each time and found it difficult to establish a business over and over. Father Knight remarried in Missouri to a widow, Phebe Crosby Peck, who had four children. She was 25 years younger than him, and they had two more children together.

When the winter exodus from Far West, Missouri began, Newel went to his father and "put means in his hands to carry him and his family into the State of Illinois." The church Committee on Removal also came to help Joseph and Phebe leave Missouri. Allen Stout, the brother of Phebe's son-in-law Hosea Stout, took his own father to Quincy, Illinois, and came back to help others.

The young Brother Stout walked to Clay County "to see if I could help old Father Knight out." Allen found Father Knight tending the "East Mill" that Newel had built. Allen searched for two weeks until he found someone willing to give him \$30 for the 40 acres of Knight land, and then

³ Derr, et al., *Frist Fifty Years of Relief Society*, pp. 72-75

helped Father Knight and Phebe with their two children Ether and Charles, and stepchildren Hezekiah, Henrietta and Sara Jane leave.⁴

By the time Joseph Knight, sr. and Phebe made it to Nauvoo, they had no means to buy a house.

They had left behind homes and property too many times in the last decade, and Joseph did not have the strength for hard work that he once had. The City Council of Nauvoo voted to give a lot to Joseph Knight and build him a house. He was a revered member of the community remembered for his support of Joseph Smith and the early church. He and Phebe lived on the northeast corner of Bain and Hotchkiss streets.⁵

In May of 1842, Emma Smith said she had paid to have his lot fenced and garden ploughed, and solicited donations from other members to supply any furniture, clothing or provisions they could. Phebe Knight was in her early 40s in Nauvoo, and married to a man who was about to turn 70, who was not in great health. That her peers in Relief Society discussed her family's need for help probably was uncomfortable. Phebe had joined the women's organization in April, a month before Emma's announcement that they needed help.

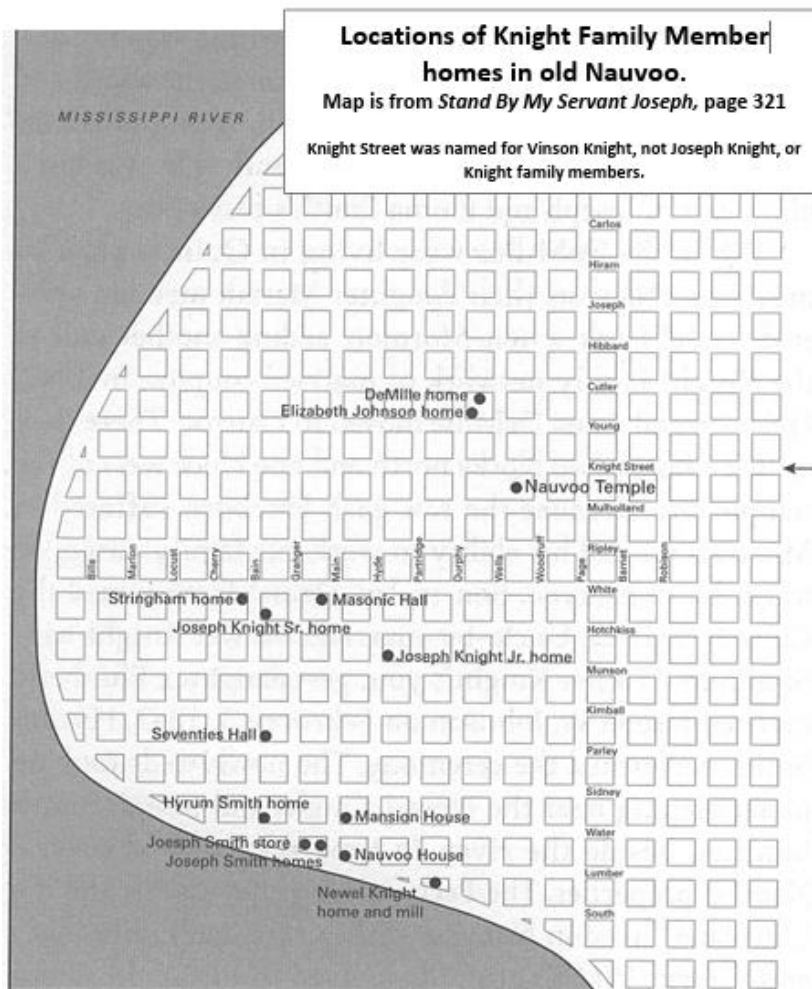
In Nauvoo Joseph and Phebe had an abundance of family nearby. Polly Knight Stringham and her husband William lived across the street. Joseph's other children Joseph, Newel, Elizabeth, Anna, and well as many Pecks and Slades all lived in Nauvoo at some point. Hosea Stout, who had married Phebe's daughter Samantha Peck, even came by regularly to visit with Father Knight and Phebe. In Nauvoo there were marriages and grandchildren born with the children from first marriages of Phebe and Joseph.

Surrounded by family no doubt provided Joseph Sr., and Phebe some happier times for a few years. They were driven from their home once again in September of 1846.

Diane L. Mangum – October 2025

⁴ William G. Hartley, *Stand By My Servant Joseph*, Deseret Book, 2003, p. 302.

⁵ Ibid. p. 320.



As the various Knight family members left Missouri, they came one by one, and did not travel as a group. Newel came straight to Nauvoo and at the request of Joseph Smith, immediately began work on a grist mill. Joseph, Jr. and Joseph, Sr., first stopped in nearby Quincy instead of coming directly to Nauvoo.

Near the site of the Newel Knight Grist Mill a marker has been erected to recognize the spot and contribution of the mill to the community.