

Knight Family Connections to Come Follow Me 2025

Doctrine and Covenants Section 129-132



Sunstone from the Nauvoo Temple

Knight Family Members Received Temple Ordinances

Less than five years after the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in April 1836, the Saints began work on a new temple in Nauvoo. Construction began on a House of the Lord on the bluff overlooking the Mississippi River on Feb. 18, 1841.

Anxious to begin receiving the blessings of the temple, the Nauvoo Temple was dedicated a portion at a time so the dedicated parts could be used. The baptismal font in the basement to be used for baptisms of dead ancestors was dedicated November 8, 1841 by Brigham Young. Construction work continued on the upper stories with most of the men in the city including the Knight family continuing to the work. Rooms in the attic were dedicated on November 30, 1845, and a sealing room was dedicated January 7, 1846, even as most of the city was preparing to leave for the west.

There was real urgency for members of the church to receive their ordinances before they were forced to leave the city. William G. Hartley wrote,

The Twelve wanted church members to receive their temple ordinances and blessings before they headed off to the western wilds. Prior to Joseph Smith's death, he had

introduced about 60 people to the temple endowment in temporary rooms. The apostles endowed another 15 soon after his death. Then starting on December 10, 1845, and continuing into February 1846, during day and night shifts, ordinance workers administered the washing, anointing, endowment, and sealing ordinances. By early February 1846, more than 5,000 Saints received their endowments in the Temple.¹

Newel Knight was among those working in the temple to provide those ordinances to others.²

Many Knight family members³ received their Initiatory and Endowment ordinances in the hectic months of December and January:

December 13, 1845

Joseph Knight, Sr. and wife Phebe Crosby Peck Knight
Newel Knight and his wife Lydia Goldthwaite Knight

December 24, 1845

Elizabeth Knight Johnson and her husband Joseph Watkins Johnson, Jr.

December 25, 1845

Anna Knight DeMill and her husband Freeborn DeMille

January 17, 1846

Joseph Knight, Jr. and his wife Betsey Covert

Most of the Knight families returned to the temple for spouses to be sealed as husband and wife in the next month after the altar and room had been completed in the Nauvoo Temple.

January 15, 1846

Elizabeth, the youngest child of Joseph and Polly Knight, was sealed to her husband Joseph Johnson.⁴

January 18, 1846

Newel and Lydia were sealed as spouses, and Newel was also sealed at that same time to his deceased first wife Sally.

January 22, 1846

William Stringham was sealed to his first wife, Elizabeth Knight who had passed away more than a decade earlier, and to her sister, his second wife who had passed away a few years earlier, and to his current living third wife, Eliza Lake.

January 27, 1846

Anna Knight and Freeborn DeMille were sealed as an eternal family.

¹ William G. Hartley, *Stand By My Servant, Joseph*, Deseret Book, 2003, pp. 368-9.

² Newel Knight Journal, Allen Typescript, p. 144.

³ Initiatory and endowment work was done posthumously in 1931 for Esther Knight Stringham who passed away in Missouri in 1833 and in 1912 for Polly Knight Stringham who died in Nauvoo before the temple was finished. Work was done for Nahum Knight in 1877 in St. George, Utah.

⁴ In later years in Salt Lake City, Joseph Johnson was sealed to 11 other women, including three who became his spouse on the same day, June 19, 1884 in Logan, Utah.

February 2, 1846

Joseph Knight, Sr. was sealed to each of his wives, Phebe his current wife, and also to Polly Peck his deceased first wife, with Anna Knight DeMille serving as proxy for her mother.

Joseph Knight, Jr. was sealed in later years in Utah to each of his four wives.

Other extended Knight family members who received temple blessings in those months included the children of Phebe Knight from her first husband, and many of the Pecks and Slades.

The doctrine of proxy baptism on behalf of deceased ancestors was introduced in Nauvoo on August 15, 1840, and those baptisms began immediately in the Mississippi River until the font in the temple was finished in November of 1841. Apparently the sealing of deceased spouses to their partner was work that was common. Joseph Knight, Sr. and Newel were both sealed to living and deceased spouses, and Joseph Sr.'s son-in-law William Stringham was sealed to both of his deceased wives.

But the temple ordinances of initiatory and endowment done by proxy on behalf of deceased ancestors was not introduced until 1877 in Utah.

The sealing of Joseph Knight, Sr. and Phebe Crosby Peck

Joseph Knight, Sr.'s wife Polly died within days of the Colesville Branch arrival in Missouri in August of 1831. Among the other members of that group was the widow of Polly's brother Benjamin, Phebe Crosby Peck and her four children.

Two years later Joseph Knight married Phebe Peck in Jackson County, Missouri in 1833. Phebe was 33, the same age as Joseph's son Newel, and Joseph was 61 at the time of their marriage. This was a hard time for the members of the Colesville group. They were facing their third winter as well as expulsion from Jackson County by mobs. Joseph still had two unmarried daughters who were older teens and Phebe had four young children.

Joseph and Phebe had two sons, Ether and Charles, during the trying Missouri years when they were driven from county to county and finally to Nauvoo. Losing their home three times, and their livelihood was trying, and Joseph's strength was ebbing with age.

When at last they were in Nauvoo, a temple was built, a family meeting was held on February 1, 1846 at Joseph Knight, Sr.'s home. Most of the adult Knight children were in attendance as well as Joseph's in-laws, Electa and Ezekial Peck, and the children of Phebe from her first marriage, and the husband of Henrietta Peck Rich, Thomas Rich.

Newel wrote in his journal about the unsettling discussion that night as they discussed Joseph Sr.'s appointment at the temple to be sealed to his wife. At the meeting Phebe Knight,

announced that she did not want to be sealed to Joseph Knight, her husband for the last 8 years, and father of her two youngest children.

Joseph Knight, Sr. said he loved and respected Phebe, but she was not satisfied to live with him anymore and he had agreed to let her go. When Newel asked the cause of dissatisfaction, she said she respected the old gentleman, that he had been kind to her and was good man, but she did not love and honor him as her head and bosom companion, and so she was not satisfied to live with him any longer. Perhaps Phebe was thinking she would be prefer to be sealed to her first husband, Benjamin Peck.

Newel wrote that for some reason he felt to ask her about her feelings toward him, referring to her as his “mother” even though they were the same age. Phebe replied that she believed Newel’s motives and intentions had always been good towards her and her children, and she found no fault with him. Her children expressed kindly thoughts towards him as well.

As the meeting was concluded, Phebe went home with Aunt and Uncle Peck instead of staying in the home she and Joseph Sr., shared. Newel took a buggy to get his sister Anna who lived four miles away, so she could be the proxy in the sealing for her mother’s sealing to her father the next morning.

When Newel arrived at the temple in the morning to fulfill his regular assignment he was called into a council with President Brigham Young where it was announced that it was time to prepare to “move into the wilderness, and we must soon bring our labors in the temple to a close.”⁵

At the close of the council meeting, one of the apostles came to Newel and told him that Phebe had talked to him and she had concluded that she would be sealed to Joseph Knight, “provided my oppression of her would cease. She told them she was willing to be ruled by her husband, but not his children.”

Newel was stunned. Over the last several years Newel had frequently provided food and financial support to his father’s new family. He wrote:

“I replied that I never had oppressed her, nor did I wish to rule or oppress her, and if they were agreed, I should do nothing to hinder their union. You can be a better judge than I can describe my feelings on hearing the above statement, after what transpired yesterday. But suffice it to say, they were sealed and received their annointings.”⁶

⁵ Ibid. p.146.

⁶ Ibid.