

# Anna Knight DeMille

By Jennifer Roberts

Anna Knight was born to her parents Joseph Knight, Sr. and Polly Peck Knight on March 5, 1804, in Halifax, Vermont. Her family moved northeast in 1808 to Colesville, New York near the Susquehanna River when she was just four years old. Her family owned a large farm and ranch and a grist mill. Anna certainly learned to work with all that was required to do for the family and property.

Anna married Freeborn DeMille on March 11, 1819 at age 15 in Colesville, Broome County, New York. Together they had 7 children named Moriah, Orpha, Lora Ann, Oliver, Adelia, Elias and Lovina Esther. Their fourth child, Oliver was their first son born on March 30, 1830, and they named him Oliver after Oliver Cowdrey. Interestingly, his birth was just days away from the restoration of the latter-day Church of Jesus Christ on April 6, 1830.

In late June of 1830, Anna, her parents and other Knight relatives were baptized members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Elder Oliver Cowdery, on the same day as Emma Smith, the Prophet Joseph Smith's wife. Church records note that Anna was the 62nd baptized member of the restored church. Those who were baptized with Anna expected to be confirmed at an evening meeting, but hostile neighbors interfered. Joseph Knight Jr. recalled that "when we were going from the water, we were met by many of our neighbors, pointing at us and asking if we had been washing sheep; before Joseph [Smith] could confirm us, he was taken by the officers to Chenango Co. for trial", where he was arrested for disorderly conduct and "of setting the country in an uproar by preaching the Book of Mormon and other such charges." Anna was later confirmed in August, and her husband Freeborn was baptized in September. This decision changed their lives entirely. Anna was a pioneer woman of faith and fortitude. As some of the first members of the first branch of the church, she and Freeborn along with the other Knight family relatives were known for their faithful devotion, diligence and perseverance from the inception of their membership throughout their lives despite many persecutions and hardships.

On April 21, 1831, Anna and Freeborn left New York for Ohio with their children to be with the Saints of the church. At that time their oldest child was eleven and Oliver, the youngest, was fifteen months old. They settled as instructed in Thompson, Ohio, just as the Prophet Joseph received Section 54 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The revelation was to Anna's brother, Newel Knight. The revelation told these new Church members, including Anna, Freeborn and family to go westward to the land of Missouri. Newell's history notes that they arrived at Independence, Jackson County, Missouri on July 25, 1831. The members of the church rejoiced in the revelation of Section 57 of the Doctrine and Covenants, declaring Independence, Jackson County, Missouri as the gathering place of Zion. On August 6, 1831, Anna's Mother, Polly became ill and passed away, satisfied that she had reached "Zion". Anna was just 27 years old and would give birth to her fifth child, Adelia, the following year on September 29th, 1832.

As winter was setting in the December of 1833, the Jackson County mobs drove them from their homes. They migrated to Clay County, Missouri which became their new home, until shortly the mobs again drove them out in 1837, this time settling in Far West, Missouri which was northeast of Clay County. Just two years had passed before they were driven completely out of Missouri with the rest of the church members. Anna had her sixth child, Elias on January 12, 1838.

Anna and Freeborn settled in Quincy, Illinois on the banks of the Mississippi River. In 1842, they left and moved to Nauvoo. In 1843, their seventh child, Lovina Esther, was born. The following year in 1844, the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, were martyred at the hands of an evil mob. All of the Church members were heart broken and traumatized by the severe persecution and loss of the prophet and his brother. However, they continued to press forward with faith as the church and its members faced challenges. In October of that year, Freeborn's Mother passed away.

On Christmas day, December 25, 1845, Freeborn and Anna, along with 107 others received their endowment in the Nauvoo Temple. Shortly after in that same temple, on January 27, 1846, Anna and Freeborn were married and sealed together for time and all eternity.

The next Spring on April 22, 1846, they again were driven from their homes by a mob. They traveled west and arrived in Mt. Pisgah, Nebraska on May 26, 1846. On October 29, 1846, tragedy struck and their daughter, Orpha passed away in Winter Quarters, Nebraska. Sadly, some months later in January 1847, Anna lost her brother Newel who died from all the wilderness hardships before they reached Mt. Pisgah. Anna's Father, Joseph Sr., died one month later in February 1847, and was buried at Mt. Pisgah. Their third daughter, Lora Ann married Samuel Gifford there and later became the parents of ten children.

Years previously in Missouri, Freeborn had injured his leg with a saw and was unable to work well for 5 years. He was again taken ill at Mt. Pisgah from that accident and also suffered from fever blisters which required him to rest a great deal. He made contributions to the family in other ways and was known for being a kind-hearted man. Anna, Oliver and the other children certainly had to help more due to Freeborn's weakened health. His health delayed their journey west with other church members for some time. They began their trek as a family to the Great Salt Lake and arrived the same day as the Warren Foote Company reaching Utah on September 17, 1850. After a short rest in Salt Lake, they left for Manti, Utah on November 5, 1850.

Manti became their final home, never to be driven by mobs again. Anna was 46 and Freeborn was 55 years old when they arrived. They lived for more than two decades in Manti before their deaths. Anna Knight DeMille died on July 28, 1878, at the age of 74 and Freeborn died January 23, 1881, at the age of 85. At the time of their death, they had 66 grandchildren. They both are buried in the Manti cemetery close to the temple they loved. Each of their children married and Anna and Freeborn were blessed with more than sixty grandchildren as part of their posterity and legacy. Through privation, struggle, persecution, Indian wars and more, Anna Knight DeMille and her husband, Freeborn, were stalwart in living their faith and raising their large family.