

Knigh Women and Relief Society

The first meeting of the Relief Society, the LDS Church women's organization, was held March 17, 1842 with 20 women present and seven more were put on the membership roles. The purpose of the organization was to see to the wants of the poor, but also for spiritual edification of the members. The minutes of the fifth meeting recorded, "The spirit of the Lord like a purifying stream refreshed every heart." President Emma Smith exhorted the women to conduct themselves so as to have "The honor of commencing a good work and of carrying it out."

Women needed to request membership and be voted on as being of good character by current members before being admitted to the organization. Membership grew rapidly. At first meetings were generally held on Thursday afternoons at the Nauvoo Red Brick Store, but outgrew that and used the "Lodge Room", and by June, 1842, with hundreds of members, the meetings were held outdoors in the Grove in Nauvoo.

When the Knight women and extended family members joined Relief Society:

4th Meeting— Thursday, April 14, 1842, Lodge Room

Phoebe Crosby Peck Knight, 2nd wife of Joseph Knight, Sr., joined
Polly Knight Stringham, and her sister **Elizabeth Knight Johnson** joined
There were now about 75 members of record. Of those attending the meeting, six made cash donations for the poor, totaling \$4.75

6th Meeting — Thursday, April 28, 1842, Lodge Room

Lydia Goldthwaite Knight joined
Joseph Smith spoke at the meeting about spiritual gifts, including speaking in tongues.

7th Meeting — Thursday, May 12, 1842, Lodge Room

Electa Buck Peck, sister-in-law of Phoebe Knight joined
Sarah Peck and Henrietta Peck Rich, daughters of Phoebe Peck Knight joined
Jemima Peck joined, as did about 160 other new members.

9th Meeting — Thursday, May 26, 1842, Lodge Room

Mary Ann Peck, daughter of Martha and Hezekiah Peck joined

10th meeting — Friday, May 27, 1842, in the Grove

Mrs. President [Emma Smith] ". . . Impressed 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.'s] lot at \$.22,60, and solicited the Society in behalf of the payment which might be made in provision, clothing and furniture."
More than 200 women were made members of Relief Society at this meeting.

11th Meeting — Thursday, June 9, 1842, Grove

Anna Knight Demille, 4th child of Joseph Knight, Sr., and Polly Peck Knight, joined
As a new Relief Society member. Mary Ann Peck donated \$.25

Elizabeth Knight Johnson, was also one of the original members of the 14th Ward Female Relief Society in Salt Lake City in 1856 when Relief Society was reorganized in Utah.

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