



The location of the grave site of Mary (Molly) Knight Slade, sister of Joseph Knight, Sr., has been researched for some time. Knight relatives Carl and Paul Davis found the neglected site in a pauper's field in the Salt Lake City cemetery. On 4 August 2007, a group of family members and Church historians, who are interested in the Knight family story, gathered at the grave site for a dedication of a new head stone. Carl presided and retold the story of the family and Molly's part in their history.

## Finding Molly

After being lost to the current family for over 154 years, Mary “Molly” Knight Slade was found at her journey’s end buried in the paupers’ field of the Salt Lake City Cemetery in plot # 374. A commemoration and headstone setting were held on Aug. 4, 2007.

Those attending were many Knight-Slade descendants as well authors of early church history Larry C. Porter and William G. Hartley. Molly was a faithful woman who found herself among a unique and small group of individuals. She was one of the few privileged members of the recently organized church that knew Joseph Smith Jr. and his brother, Hyrum, before the Church was organized and the Book of Mormon had been translated. To further her uniqueness, she managed to live through many of the travails suffered by the early saints. As a culmination to her miraculous life, she was one of very few of the Colesville-Fayette NY. era that reached the Salt Lake Valley in 1852. Molly was 78 years old when she climbed off one of those wagons for the last time. She died on April 6, 1853 and was buried that day in an unmarked grave.

Molly was born June 23, 1774 in Oakham, MA to Benjamin Knight and Sarah Crouch. Her elder brother was Joseph Knight Sr., who is known in church history to be a good friend and great help to the Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. in bringing forth the Book of Mormon. The Prophet felt so strongly about their friendship that he had his feelings for him and his sons, Newell and Joseph Jr., recorded for posterity. The three Knights left personal histories that give priceless insight into the beginnings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Molly left no personal history, but she was very close to her family in many ways including geographically. She lived only two miles north of the Knights in South Bainbridge, NY. She was a frequent visitor and this is how she became friends with the Prophet and his brother.

When Molly joined the new and then controversial religion in Nov. of 1830, her husband left her. She and four of her nine children left the Colesville NY. area as a group known as the Colesville Branch. This small group of saints stayed together for many years through many trials in many famous places in church history. Their journey was to “The Ohio.”

When they arrived in Ohio, Joseph Smith Jr. asked the Colesville saints not to come to Kirtland but settle in Thompson, OH on the Lehman Copley farm working the farm under the New Order. Lehman Copley then asked them to leave after they had made many improvements. Upon hearing this news, the Prophet directed the Colesville saints to go west to Missouri and establish Zion. They loaded up the wagons and headed south to the Ohio River.

They went by boat down to the Mississippi River where they then transferred to a paddle wheeler that took them north to St. Louis. The small group of faithful saints then trekked across Missouri to what is now Kansas City, MO. As we know, they were expelled from that settlement and forced to leave under terrible weather conditions and set up temporary camps on the muddy banks of the north shore of the Missouri River. They lived for a time in Clay County, MO on Rock Creek. They lived in a secluded canyon valley called Afton. They were finally able to move to Far West, MO with the Prophet. He had negotiated for the Church to be located in Caldwell County, MO.

Happy times had returned again as the saints began to prosper. Corner stones for a temple were laid, farms were productive, and shops opened. All however was not well. Some began to doubt and murmur and left the Church including a friend of the Colesville saints, Oliver Cowdrey. Tensions were also growing against the

“Mormons” and it culminated in the Hans Mill Massacre and the false arrest of the Prophet his brother and others. Molly was a witness to these events as many others were. Once again the saints had to pack up and get out leaving most of their possessions and all of their land behind.

Molly and her family traveled east and across the Mississippi River to the small town of Pittsfield, IL. It lies about 60 miles SE of Nauvoo. They remained there until their prophet established a place for them to gather later to be called Nauvoo, IL. Once again the saints pitched in and they began to prosper. This was the official end of the Colesville Branch because the Prophet established wards and there were no more branches in Nauvoo.

Even though they weren't in the same ward, Molly stayed close to her family by living with them. Again farms were cultivated, shops were established, homes built and a temple lot was cleared and construction began. This must have been a most exciting time for all that lived there because new members were constantly arriving and the temple seemed to miraculously rise to the east of the city. As the city grew so did the “Anti-Mormom” sentiment of the locals. There were hostilities that ended with the martyrdom of the Prophet and his brother. Soon after, Molly and her family along with all the inhabitants of Nauvoo were told to leave all that they owned and take only what they could carry in their wagons. This time Molly and her family headed west but she knew it would be different than all of the other expulsions. She knew that her dear friends and Prophet, Joseph Smith Jr. and Hyrum would not be waiting for them at the trail's end. What to do now? There was no question; follow the brethren.

They packed the wagons again and went north into Iowa. They ended up in a place that became known as Winter Quarters. It was also known, and still is, as Florence, Nebraska by the locals. After establishing a small settlement, in what is now Florence, NE., the saints were asked to pack up again and go back across the Missouri River because they were on Indian land. Molly and her small family group were obedient to Brigham Young's directives and settled in Kaneshville, IA. While in Kaneshville, Brigham Young was sustained as the next prophet to the church. It must have been an unusual feeling for her to sustain someone other than Joseph Smith Jr. as the Prophet, but she did. She followed Brigham Young all the way to Salt Lake City. It did take a few years to finally arrive.

In 1852, the very elderly Mary “Molly” Knight Slade climbed into the now familiar wagon for the ninth and final trek on behalf of her decision to join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 32 years earlier. She lost many of her

loved ones along the way. Her beloved brother Joseph Knight Sr. died at Mt. Pisgah in Iowa. Her nephew, Newell Knight, died in Nebraska and her son Clarke died in Pittsfield, IL. At her advanced age Molly climbed down off her wagon for the last time. She had reached the promised land. When she died her family had become so poor that they couldn't afford a lasting marker for her grave. But as poor as she was she left her family and the entire Church something money can't buy; her testimony. One could say that Molly witnessed the restoration of the gospel grow from a seed to a mighty oak.

For more information about Mary "Molly" Knight Slade and her descendants, contact Carl Davis: [carld1945@gmail.com](mailto:carld1945@gmail.com) Or visit the Joseph Knight Sr. family organization website at: [www.josephknightfamily.org](http://www.josephknightfamily.org)