

## Reflections on the Lydia Goldthwaite Knight Headstone Reconstruction and Dedication

On a beautiful summer's morning, June 9, 2012, almost a hundred people gathered for a birthday celebration of our beloved ancestor—Lydia Goldthwaite Knight was turning 200! And although she was not there to grace us with her presence, it was evident by the testimonies shared and happiness felt that she resides in the minds and hearts of many of her grateful descendants. Even at 9am, the St. George summer sun was hot and we were all very grateful for those family members who set up a shade canopy, chairs, and a sound system to accommodate and facilitate the occasion. Many thanks go to Branton Campbell, a Lydia Knight descendant and the late Mavon Herring's grandson, who was the organizer of the event.

Branton conducted the meeting which included talks given by Don Oscarson, Harold Redd, and Scott Bonham regarding their feelings about Lydia and her life and their involvement in the headstone restoration project. James Knight related chronologically the events which led up to the completion of the project. Songs were sung including a very heartfelt rendition of 'Happy Birthday Dear Lydia'. At the conclusion of the meeting Branton gave a very special dedicatory prayer which was part rededication of the grave site to honor Lydia and part petition for blessings needed by her family and rededication of our own lives to honor our covenants and follow the Savior in her memory.

Mavon Herring, who was the inspiration and driving force behind the restoration of Lydia's headstone and the reason why we were all gathered together that Saturday morning, was able to visit her completed project in 2011, but her strength began to decline last winter and after the tender mercies of a brief respite to enjoy her family, she passed away peacefully on May 20, 2012, at age 84, having spent her life in the service of her family, her ancestors, the community, and the Lord.



Turning the hearts of the children to their 'mothers' was Mavon's pursuit as well. The story of Lydia's life was well retold in Mavon's book "The Three Lydias." Here Mavon's story is summarized:

In the summer of 2009 Mavon Nelson Herring of Manti, Utah, started a project to raise funds to honor her beloved great-great-grandmother Lydia Goldthwaite Knight by restoring her gravestone in the St. George City cemetery. The monument, which is a 24" diameter polished granite sphere resting on the point of a 24" tall tapered octagonal block of granite was a revered spot in the cemetery and according to Mavon, was always a happy gathering place for Lydia's many grandchildren.

The dark grey granite sphere and inscription has remained in very good condition, the granite base, which we speculate was granite from the Wasatch canyons, is softer and has been subject to much weathering and flaking on its top and sides. Larry & Kathy Sorenson, Mavon's second of three daughters, were in St. George earlier that year and paid a visit to Lydia Knight's gravesite. They told Mavon they were surprised to find that large flakes of granite had broken off from the monument and were scattered around the base. Worried that the base may soon be unable to bear the sphere, Mavon began to call on extended family to make them aware of the situation and ask for financial help. Having organized the Knight reunion in 1996, she was acquainted with many Knight family members. She began making phone calls and sending letters out one person at a time.

Because the donations trickled in slowly, she wasn't sure that enough funds could be raised to complete the work. Knight relative Don Oscarson then made a generous donation, which gave momentum to her fund raising effort.

Knowing that the 2010 Knight reunion was around the corner also gave her hope that many more could be told and share in her project.

Mavon's project became even more memorable when she, with the help of other family members including Robert Newel Reynolds, completed a wonderful book about three great ladies named Lydia: Her grandmother, Lydia Young; her great-grandmother, Lydia Knight; and her great-great-grandmother, Lydia Goldthwaite Knight. The book, which is a compilation of journal entries, stories, photos and documents, is wonderfully written in the first person, as if one of the Lydia's was speaking to the reader. It is very insightful of the life and example these great women left for us to learn from.

Mavon decided that the book could be made available to family members and reunion attendees and the proceeds donated to the refurbishing of the monument. The books were printed and sold by Harold and Pat Redd, and the CD's were prepared by Robert Reynolds. The proceeds at the 2010 reunion provided roughly \$1000. Following the many reunion contributors, Scott Bonham, nephew of Robert Reynolds, worked to understand the scope of work in order to get a complete cost estimate from a capable monument company and generously donated the necessary amount to complete a high quality project.

Once the required amount of money was collected, another project began to determine just how the monument was to be restored. Following a couple trips to the cemetery taking measurements and making drawings, it was determined that the base may have actually been taller when new and had sunk into the ground 6 or 7 inches. Hoping to achieve an accurate re-creation, close examination of the sides revealed a rough cut panel detail on each side framed by smooth stone with sloped top edges and a recessed resting place for the sphere held in place with a metal dowel.



Before



After

Circumstances lead us to believe that it was most likely Lydia's son, Jesse Knight, who commissioned this large monument to be made for his mother with granite taken from the walls of Little Cottonwood Canyon not far from his mines, and because the sphere does not include the last names of Lydia's husbands after Newel. (Although the birth date for Lydia was a few days different than current records show.) Many of the other headstones of the same era were probably made from local sandstone or limestone. Jesse would have had the funds required for such a project and was known to love and respect his mother and enjoyed being able to use his financial blessings to commemorate the lives of his ancestors and benefit the church.

Soon after our visits to the cemetery and before the restoration, Lydia's headstone and many others around were vandalized by a couple of youth who were 'under the influence'. Lydia's sphere was knocked off the base and rolled over to the street curb but miraculously remained unharmed. Other limestone and sandstone grave markers were

not so lucky. American Monument of Ogden who had been hired to help reconstruct the headstone, retrieved the dismantled headstone sphere and base and stored them in their shop until a new base was built. The sphere was cleaned of its deposits and polished and the base was broken up into smaller pieces which were made available at the 2012 Knight reunion.

The desire to retain the base's original design concept yet create something that conforms to new cemetery standards; will endure to the millennium; and signify the effort to refurbish the monument, led to the use of a harder granite base, a concrete foundation, and a new bronze marker. A marker was added to the base 13 years before 2012 which corrected Lydia's name, adding the name McClellan, however her other married name, Dalton, was not included. Because of this we felt that creating a new name plate marker was appropriate. In Mavon's book and during the reunion we also learned that one of Lydia's enduring mottos, uttered when Newel passed away and many other times in happiness or times of trial, was "God Rules....in the heavens and all is well." Lydia lived by this motto her whole life as she entrusted her life into God's all-knowing and caring hands.

You may want to download and read the [talk given by Pres. & Sister Hafen](#) at the 2012 Knight reunion to learn more about Lydia Knight and Jesse Knight and the importance of keeping covenants. The following web site links also provide more in-depth information about Lydia Knight, Mavon Herring, Robert Reynolds, and this headstone project.

## RESOURCES

- [Lydia Knight - God Rules Was Her Motto - Ensign Aug. 1977](#)
- [Lydia Goldthwaite - \(Robert N Reynolds Family History\)](#)
- [The Lydia Goldthwaite Graveside Memorial Project \(Robert N Reynolds\)](#)
- [The Three Lydia's](#)
- [Susan Evans McCloud: Another Joseph — the contributions of Joseph Knight Sr. \(Deseret News\)](#)