

Freeborn DeMill



by Melvin Hall

some of the following account is taken from Loren Squires Family Genealogy published in 1960.
Transcribed and revised by Susanne Quayle Price

Freeborn DeMill joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and eventually came to Utah with his family. Freeborn was born 3 March 1795, in Platskill, Ulster Co., New York (twin brother to Garrison DeMill). He married Anna Knight 11 March 1819, in Colesville, Broome county, New York. Anna Knight was born 5 March 1804 in Marlborough, Windham Co, Vermont. Freeborn and Anna were among the first of the Saints to go west and they were persecuted and driven from one place to another until they finally settled in Manti, Utah.

Joseph Knight Senior, Anna's father, employed Joseph Smith in 1826, as a farm hand. Joseph Knight was very impressed with the young man, and when Joseph Smith shared with him the story of his first vision, Joseph Knight believed. When Joseph Smith went to get the plates, he took Joseph Knight's wagon and when he was in the process of translating, Joseph Knight gave him material assistance so that he could finish the work without interruption. Joseph Knight Sr. also gave Joseph Smith assistance several times thereafter whenever Joseph Smith was in trouble. There is a wonderful history of the Knight family called "Stand by my Servant Joseph: The Story of the Joseph Knight Family and the Restoration" written by William G. Hartley that anyone interested in the Knight history should read. That is exactly what that family did in every circumstance. They stood faithfully by the prophet and followed him.

Joseph Knight was there with a group of close friends of the Prophet the day the church was organized. He kept a record of what took place that day. It is likely that Freeborn would have

been there as well. There is no doubt that Freeborn DeMill and Anna Knight DeMill were familiar with all that took place in the beginning of the church. According to church records, Freeborn DeMill was baptized the 6th of September by Hyrum Smith and confirmed the same day by Joseph Smith. Anna was baptized June 28, 1830. Freeborn and Anna were numbered with a total of 70 members in the Colesville, New York branch in December 1830. The Colesville branch was the first organized branch of the church and it included all of the Joseph Knight Sr. family.

In December 1830, Section 37 of the Doctrine and Covenants was given, in which the Lord told Joseph Smith to visit and strengthen the church at Colesville and commanded the church members in New York to assemble in Ohio. The latter part of January 1831, the Prophet Joseph Smith, and his wife, with Sidney Ridgon and Edward Partridge, left New York for Kirtland, Ohio, with instruction from the Prophet that the members of the church in New York should follow in the spring.

In Freeborn DeMill's own written record, he states that on 21 April, 1831 he, with his wife and family, the oldest being eleven years old and the youngest thirteen months, left Colesville for Ohio. They arrived in Thompson, Ohio, near Kirtland, on 16 May 1831.

Arrangements had been made for them to settle on a tract of land owned by Lemman Copley, a member of the church, who had provided land for this purpose. Work was begun on the land in good faith, however, Copley broke the agreement. Joseph Smith received Section 54 of the Doctrine and Covenants early in June 1831, in response to the situation. As a result of this revelation the church at Thompson, composed of the members of the Colesville branch, made all possible haste to leave Ohio for Missouri. Newel Knight, a son of Joseph Knight, Sr. was appointed leader of the group and under his leadership they made the entire journey from Thompson, Ohio to Missouri.

In the record of Freeborn DeMille, he states that they left Thompson, Ohio June 28, 1831 and arrived at Independence, Jackson County, Missouri on 25 July, 1831, in 27 days. The Colesville Saints were the first to start a school in Western Missouri, under the Prophet's direction and were so honored 100 years later by the Missouri Historical Society which placed a marker in Kansas City, Missouri in 1932.

In a book published in 1983 by Conway Sonne entitled, "Saints on the Seas: A Maritime History of Mormon Migration, 1830 to 1890", it states, "At the [wharf] the [Captain] discharged about 60 Mormon passengers, the first organized company of Latter-Day Saints to gather in the west. These emigrants were the Colesville branch of the Mormon Church from Broom County New York." The Captain said they were very well behaved. "They had come a long way, about 1200 miles, part of the journey had been on water, a lakes loop from Buffalo, New York, to Fairport, Ohio and then the river trip aboard the steamboat."

From the church section [of the Deseret News], 1 March 1980, in an article by Arrington & Bitton, [Mormon historians] was a statement about the Colesville branch, "We were told by

teamsters that we were the most peaceable and quiet emigrants that they had ever carried west: no profanity; no bad language; no gambling; and no drinking."

The Colesville branch settled in Kaw Township, a few miles west of Independence, in the valley of the blue river. Just eight days after their arrival, on 2 August, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "I assisted the Colesville branch of the Church to lay the first log for a house, as a foundation of Zion in Kaw Township, 12 miles west of Independence." This was in between Independence and Kansas City, and is now covered by suburbs of Kansas City. The log was carried and placed by 12 men, in honor of the 12 tribes of Israel. At that time the land was consecrated and dedicated by Elder Sidney Rigdon for the gathering of the Saints. Freeborn was one of the 12 men to help carry the log. Freeborn recorded the names of those 12 men.

There was a lot of early church history that took place in Kaw township. For our history the most important is the death of Polly Peck Knight on 6 August, 1831. She was Anna Knight DeMill's mother and was the first member of the church to die in Missouri. Then in a little over a year, on 29 September, 1832 Freeborn and Anna Knight DeMill's fifth child was born.

Newel Knight continued to be branch president and leader of the Colesville Saints. They continued to live as a group. The Prophet Joseph Smith was so impressed with their unity that during a visit to Jackson County in 1832, he called the Colesville Saints together and sealed them up to eternal life.

The mobbing and persecutions became so bad where they were that the Saints were forced to leave Jackson County. In Freeborn's own account he relates that on 1 December 1833, as winter was setting in, they were driven from their home by mobs and out of Jackson County. They crossed the Missouri River to the north into Clay County, where they took up their new homes. Here a little over two years later, in the spring of 1837, they were driven with the rest of the saints out of Clay County and went north-east to Far West in Caldwell County, Missouri. Here on 12 January 1838 their sixth child, a son was born and given the name of Elias DeMill.

Freeborn states that in the spring of 1839 they, with the rest of the saints, were driven out of the State of Missouri. They crossed the State for about one hundred miles to the east, came to the Mississippi River, crossed that and settled in Quincy, Illinois on the bank of the Mississippi river. While here in Quincy, their oldest daughter, Mariah, at the age of 21, on 22 April, 1841 was married to Daniel Buckley Funk. After coming to Utah this couple made their home in Sterling, Utah, six miles south of Manti and raised a family of nine children.

Freeborn's record states that they left Quincy in 1842 and moved to Nauvoo, Illinois. Here on the 8th of January 1843, their second daughter Orpha, at the age of 21, was married to Perry Davis. Here also in Nauvoo on 13 May 1843 the seventh child of Freeborn and Anna Knight DeMill was born, and given the name of Lovina Esther DeMill. On Thursday, 25 December 1845, Christmas day, Freeborn and his wife received their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple. There were 107 endowments given that day. On January 27, 1846, they were sealed in the Nauvoo

Temple. Freeborn states in his record that they left Nauvoo for the west on 22 April, 1846, being again driven out of their home by mobs. They arrived in Mt Pisgah on 26 May 1846.

Freeborn DeMille had injured his leg with a saw and was laid up for about five years while in Missouri. Most of the time they were in Mt. Pisgah he was laid up with fever sores. Here in Mt Pisgah, on 1 October 1848, their third daughter Lora Ann DeMill married Samuel K. Gifford. Lora Ann and Samuel came to Utah and settled in Shonesburg and were the parents of ten children.

In the spring of 1850, Freeborn and Anna left Mt. Pisgah for the valleys of the Great Salt Lake. They arrived 17 September 1850, with the Captain Warren Foot Company. After a short rest in Salt Lake, they left for Manti, Utah and arrived there 5 November 1850. Manti was their home for the rest of their lives, never again to be driven by mobs. Freeborn was just past 55 and his wife past 46. They had been driven from five different homes; they deserved a rest.

On 31 December 1852, their fifth child, Adelia married John Prichard Squire, Manti's first school teacher. Adelia and John made their home in Manti and had a family of eight children.

On 13 May 1855, the oldest son Oliver, at the age of 25, married Emily Almira Beal. Oliver and Emily had eleven children. Oliver married a second wife, Fidelia Winget, 3 June 1865, in the Endowment house in Salt Lake City and they had seven children. Oliver also married a third wife, Rebecca Jane Allred, 10 October 1865, and they had one child.

On 11 December 1859 the youngest child, Lovina Esther DeMill, married John Alma Beal. Lovina and John had eleven children. They lived in Manti and Glenwood and they moved to Shonesburg around 1875. Their youngest son Elias married Melvina Winget on 11 June 1863, at the age of 25. Elias and Melvina made their home in Manti and were the parents of nine children.

This makes a total of 66 grandchildren for Freeborn and Anna Knight DeMill. Freeborn was a member of the first High Council organized in Manti and was a member for many years after.

Anna Knight DeMill died in Manti, 22 July 1878, at the age of 74 and is buried in the Manti cemetery. Freeborn died in Manti, 23 January 1881, and is buried in the Manti cemetery by the side of his wife Anna.

The Knight family and the DeMill family suffered starvation and extremely cold weather as they were driven by mobs from place to place, along with the other saints. Freeborn worked for the Knight family in their mills and suffered an accident that left him crippled. This put an extra burden on Anna to help make a living for their seven children. When they were driven from Nauvoo, they went as far as Mt. Pisgah and remained there for four years. They came across the Plains with the Lorenzo Snow Wagon Company and arrived in Salt Lake Valley on 5 November, 1850. Two months later, Brigham Young sent the family to settle in Manti, Sanpete County, Utah so Anna helped in the settlement of this new community. Her children lived close

by and were always an asset to them. They all endured many hardships such as famine, pestilence, Indian Wars, and many disadvantages of pioneer life. They made their humble contributions toward the construction of the Manti Temple. Anna had a strong testimony of the gospel and instilled this in her children who stayed faithful to the church. Anna lived to be seventy-eight years old. She is buried among the pines in the Manti Cemetery close to the temple and next to her husband Freeborn, who lived to be eighty-five.