

Stories of Heroism

From the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

]Joseph and Polly Knight

Joseph Smith first became acquainted with “Father Knight,” as he affectionately called him, while boarding with him near the Susquehanna River in 1826. He was one of the first people to hear the prophet’s story, and he believed him. When Joseph obtained the plates, he used Father Knight’s carriage

Joseph and Polly Knight

During the translation of the Book of Mormon, ever-present economic concerns required that Joseph and Oliver stop and seek employment. Just as they were about to cease the work, Joseph Knight, Sr., came with provisions, including potatoes, mackerel, and several bushels of grain. He also brought lined paper and money to purchase more.

Joseph and Polly Knight

When the Lord commanded the Saints to go to “The Ohio” (D&C 37:1-4) in the middle of the Winter so that they might receive his law and be “endowed with power from on high” (D&C 38), Joseph and Emma make the arduous journey in the January snows (eighth move in 4 years—and Emma is six months pregnant) in Joseph Knight Sr.’s sleigh.

Joseph and Polly Knight

From the moment he was baptized in 1830, he suffered religious persecution and economic difficulty and was forced to relocate five times. First he moved to Colesville, then Kirtland, then Independence Missouri, and then Nauvoo. He left with the saints West and died in Mt. Pisgah, Iowa at the age of 74.

Joseph and Polly Knight

He remained true and faithful to the Church and its leaders from the moment he met the Prophet Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith said of him: “For fifteen years he has been faithful and true,... never deviating to the right hand or the left. Behold, he is a righteous man... and it shall be said of him, by the sons of Zion, while

Joseph and Polly Knight

there is one of them remaining, that this man was a faithful man in Israel; therefore his name shall never be forgotten.” (HC 5:124-25). Once Joseph saw him hobbling without a cane in Nauvoo, and he gave him his personal cane. He asked it to remain in his family and passed on to his descendants named Joseph. It has to date.

Joseph and Polly Knight

Polly Knight, the wife of Joseph Knight Sr., was one of the greatest heroines in Church History

Her health had been failing for some time. She was very ill during her journey from Kirtland to Missouri.

Joseph and Polly Knight

'Yet,' says her son, 'she would not consent to stop traveling; her only, or her greatest desire was to set her feet upon the land of Zion, and to have her body interred in that land. The Lord gave her the desire of her heart, and she lived to stand upon that land.' (In History of the Church, 1:199n.)

Joseph and Polly Knight

D&C 59 was received the same day as her funeral.

It is believed that verses 1-2 might have been in reference to her, of whom Joseph Smith said: "I attended the funeral of Sister Polly Knight, the wife of Joseph Knight, Sen. This was the first death in the Church in this land, and I can say, a worthy member sleeps in Jesus till the resurrection."

The "Pueblo Saints"

John Brown had been appointed by Brigham Young to gather the "Southern Saints" West to meet with the main body of Saints that intended to leave Nauvoo in the Spring of 1846 and settle in the Great Basin, probably in Bear River Valley, in the Fall of that Year. He, along with William Crosby, led forty-three people 640 miles to Independence, Missouri, where they were joined by fourteen others.

The "Pueblo Saints"

They then continued west along the Oregon Trail expecting to find the main body of the Saints led by Brigham Young. In July, however, when they reached Chimney Rock in western Nebraska, they main body of the Saints was no where to be found. Rather than get upset or overly concerned, they waited there until they received new direction.

The "Pueblo Saints"

Trappers returning from California told them there were no Mormons ahead of them. Unaware that Brigham Young had decided to establish Winter Quarters on the Missouri, they decided to wait at Fort Laramie. There they met John Richard, a trapper who invited them to winter near his trading post at Pueblo, Colorado. Their move there proves providential, because the three sick detachments of the Mormon

The "Pueblo Saints"

Battalion are sent to Pueblo, only to find a latter-day saint settlement already established. Word finally reached them in Pueblo that Brigham Young had stopped at Winter Quarters.

When BY sent for them, they returned to Ft. Laramie and arrived in the SL Valley just five days after the advance company.

Heber and Vilate Kimball

Before Joseph Smith could fully trust Heber C. Kimball with the mysteries of the gospel, he designed for him a test.

It was no less than a requirement for him to surrender his wife, his beloved Vilate, and give her to Joseph in marriage!

The astounding revelation well-nigh paralyzed Heber. He could hardly believe he had heard right. Yet Joseph was solemnly in earnest.

Heber and Vilate Kimball

His heart-strings might be torn, his feelings crucified and sawn asunder, but so long as his faith in God and the priesthood remained, heaven helping him, he would try and do as he was told. Such, now, was his superhuman resolve. Three days he fasted and wept and prayed. Then, with a broken and bleeding heart, but with soul self-mastered for the sacrifice, he led his darling wife to the Prophet's house and presented her to Joseph.

Heber and Vilate Kimball

It was enough--the heavens accepted the sacrifice. The will for the deed was taken, and "accounted unto him for righteousness." Joseph wept at this proof of devotion, and embracing Heber, told him that was all that the Lord required. The Prophet joined the hands of the heroic and devoted pair, and then and there by virtue of the sealing power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, Heber and Vilate Kimball were made husband and wife for all eternity.

Heber and Vilate Kimball

It was one thing to give your wife to another—an even more excruciating test awaited them and many others. He was later told by Joseph, three times, to go and make a certain widow, Sister Noon, his wife; but not till he commanded him in the name of the Lord did he obey. However, Joseph told him not to divulge this secret, not even to his Vilate, for fear that she would not receive it; for Joseph's life was in constant jeopardy because of enemies.

Heber and Vilate Kimball

When Vilate noticed a change in his countenance, she asked him what was the matter to which he refused to answer. He became so ill at the thoughts of her finding out from another source, and at her constant questioning, he became sick, and his mental wretchedness was so great he could not sleep, and he would walk the floor till nearly morning, and sometimes the agony of his mind was so terrible that he would wring his hands and weep like a child.

Heber and Vilate Kimball

Finally, unable to convince him to tell her what was the matter, Vilate retired to her bedroom to ask of God. Her mind was immediately opened to a vision of the order of Celestial marriage. She covenanted to stand by him and honor the principle, which covenant she faithfully kept, and though her trials were often heavy and grievous to bear, she knew that Heber was also being tried, and her integrity was unflinching to the end. (taken from Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, pp. 321-328)

Aurelia Spencer Rogers

Aurelia Spencer Rogers, a devout, thoughtful Latter-day Saint, took seriously her bishop's charge to come up with a way to teach the children the gospel. After much prayer, she heard a voice say "that there was an auxiliary organization for all ages except

the children, where members learned to do things and use their time wisely." Bishop Hess, when approached by Sister Rogers, was excited by the idea of an organization for the children. He explained that he would carry Sister Roger's thoughts and inspiration

Aurelia Spencer Rogers

to the First Presidency to see what should be done. The First Presidency directed Eliza R. Snow to discuss the matter with Sister Rogers when she attended auxiliary conferences in Farmington. After returning to Salt Lake City, Eliza R. Snow met with President John Taylor and secured his blessing for a children's organization to be held one day a week other than Sunday. Sister Snow then wrote to Bishop Hess and indicated President Taylor's approval for Sister Rogers to organize and preside over a Primary in Farmington, Utah.

The Miracle of the "parting"

Between the end of January and the middle of May 1831, most of the New York Saints sold their possessions and migrated the 300 miles to Kirtland Ohio and the adjacent areas. The Colesville saints, who left earlier than some of the other groups, traveled along the Erie Canal, but were stopped by ice near Buffalo, New York

The miracle of the "parting"

Despite their desperate situation (cold, hunger, sickness), Lucy persuaded the still murmuring group to ask the Lord to break the twenty-foot clogs of ice that jammed the harbor. She explained, "A noise was heard, like bursting thunder. The captain cried, 'Every man to his post.' The ice parted, leaving barely a passage for the boat. ... We had barely passed through the avenue when the ice closed together again."

Mission to the Lamanites

The Church was barely six months old when Oliver Cowdery was called by revelation to go to the Lamanites and preach the gospel (see D&C 28:8). Subsequently Peter Whitmer, Jr., Ziba Peterson, and Parley P. Pratt were called to assist him (see D&C 30:5; 32:1-3). On 18 October they began their fifteen-hundred-mile westward trek.

Mission to the Lamanites

Most of the trip was made during the "winter of deep snow" of 1830-31.

The weather was characterized as "bitter cold, a blinding, swirling blur of snow... some places three feet deep."

All they had to eat was frozen corn bread and raw pork. Parley said the bread was "so frozen that we could not bite or penetrate any part of it but the outside crust."

The entire trip was made on foot, except one small portion on a steamboat—and even that was ended by ice in the river.

Mission to the Lamanites

First stop: "Western Reserve (Ohio)

Visit Seneca Indians and leave 2 copies of the Book of Mormon

While in the vicinity, they call upon Sidney Rigdon and his following called the "seekers"

Mission to the Lamanites

Amazingly open-minded, they agree to hear the gospel

Convinced they do not have the authority for baptism, Sidney Rigdon, along with 127 others request baptism and join the Church

Mission to the Lamanites

Prominent among the number were Isaac Morley, Levi Hancock, Lyman Wight, Philo Dibble, and John Murdock, well-known residents of the area who were destined to play an important role in future Church affairs.

Mission to the Lamanites

The brief stopover the missionaries made in the Western Reserve that November bore immediate and lasting fruits. These Ohio conversions more than doubled Church membership in only three weeks.

Mission to the Lamanites

Destination: Missouri

At Amherst, Ohio, Parley P. Pratt has “stu-boy” experience

Enroute, they stop and teach the Wyandot Indians at Sandusky, Ohio.

On 13 January 1831 the missionaries arrived in Independence, Missouri, the western frontier of the United States.

Mission to the Lamanites

About 1 February, Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, and Frederick G. Williams entered Indian lands to preach and introduce the Book of Mormon.

William Anderson, the aged chief of the Delawares, is a willing listener.

However, they are forced off Indian lands because they failed to obtain proper permits from Indian Agents

Mission to the Lamanites

Like so many other endeavors in life, often the best results come as unforeseen blessings from the Lord when we are anxiously engaged in other good causes.

The mission to the Lamanites was highly productive in terms of convert baptisms, the overall growth of the Church, and the establishment of branches outside of the New York area. Many influential converts that would direct the future history of the Church were brought into the fold because of this mission.

Mission to the Lamanites

Although no Lamanite converts directly resulted from these efforts, the following did result from this important mission:

Sydney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams (who both later serve in the First Presidency), Edward Partridge (first Bishop), and many other future leaders are brought into the Church.

These five stalwart members of the Church gained invaluable experience in both the Independence Mo. And Kirtland Ohio areas of the Church, both of which would become spots for future gatherings.