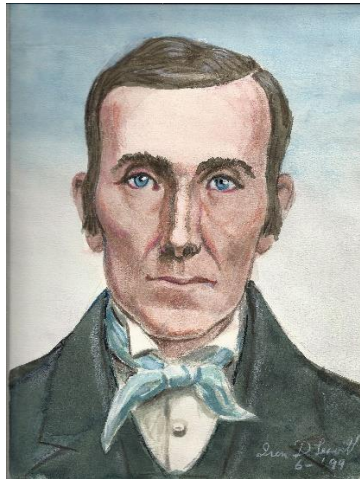


Newel Knight

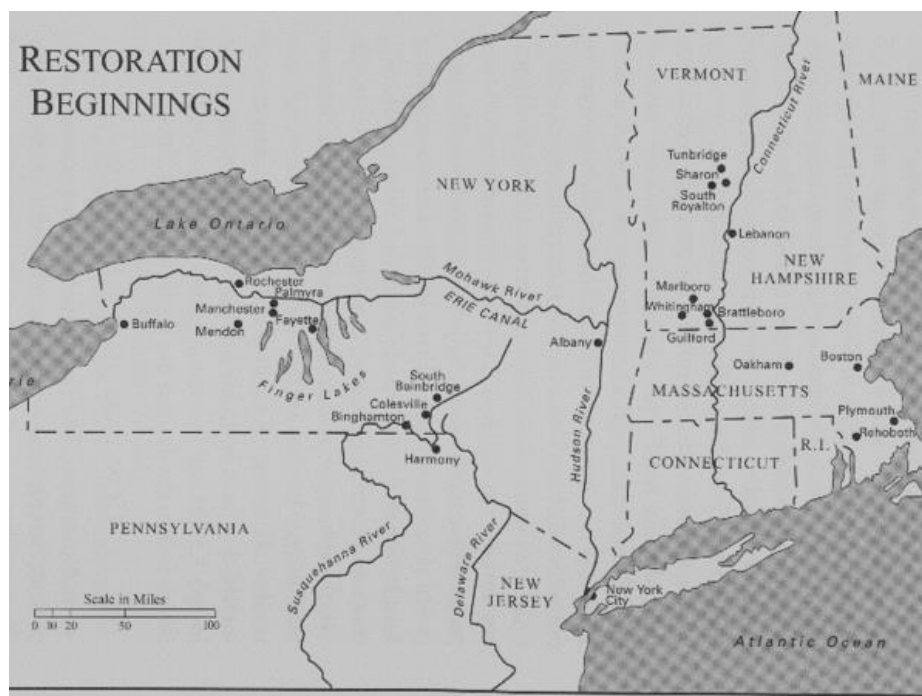
Sept. 13, 1800 – January 11, 1847
Son of Joseph Knight, Sr. and Polly Peck

Newel Knight, Faithful Witness of the Restoration of Gospel
By John Knight Mangum, Jr. for a class at the Knight Reunion 2014.

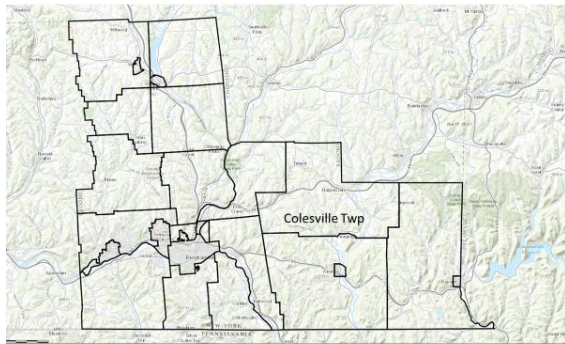


Painting of Newel by Iren D. Leavitt, 1999

Newel was the third child of Joseph Knight, Sr. and Polly Peck. He was born in Marlborough, Windham County, Vermont, in 1800, one year before Brigham Young born just ten miles west in Whittingham, and 5 years before Joseph Smith born 70 miles north in Sharon, Vermont. The Joseph Knight, Sr. family moved from Halifax, Vermont to Bainbridge Township, New York in 1808 or 1809. By 1811, Knights settled 6 miles south in Colesville Township, an area of many mills settled about 1795. The Knight family remained there the next 19 years, until early 1831.



Colesville Township, is a, sub-unit of Broome County, New York. Most maps won't show it. The township was formally established 1821. It was not a 6-mile square survey township like we have in West.



Townships of Broome County, New York



The Knight home and farm in Colesville, Township

Marriage to Sally

Three months before his 25th birthday, Newel married Sally Coburn (1804-1834) on June 7, 1825. She was about 21. They continued to live near Newel's parents. Their firstborn child did not live and their second child was also stillborn. For reasons we are not told, doctors of the day did not think that Sally would ever bear a living child. But she later proved them wrong, with help from a Priesthood blessing.

As Joseph Knight Sr.'s children got married and established homes of their own, he needed more help on his farm in his mills. One of the workers on the farm was Freeborn DeMill, who later married Newel's sister Anna. Another young man hired by Joseph Knight was Joseph Smith, Jr. in the fall of 1826. That season while he worked on the farm, Joseph Smith sometimes ate supper with the Knight family and slept in their home. Newel lived nearby and got to know Joseph Smith well.

Newel knew Prophet Joseph Smith personally from late 1826, three and a half years before Church was organized in 1830 up through the time Joseph and Hyrum Smith were murdered in Carthage, Illinois, in June 1844

Newel wrote a brief personal history in the first pages of his extensive journal, and he included his thoughts of Joseph Smith, and his own growing testimony.

During this time we were frequently visited by my young friend, Joseph Smith, who would entertain us with accounts of the wonderful things which had happened to him. It was evident to me that great things were about to be accomplished through him, that the Lord was about to use him as an instrument in his hands to bring to pass the great and mighty work of the last days, . . .

So honest and plain were all his statements that there was no room for any misgivings with me on the subject. Besides, I found by reading and searching the Bible that there would be

a great falling away from the gospel as preached and established by Jesus and his Apostles, that in the last days God would set His hand again to restore that which was lost.

Then why should anyone persecute this boy? I could not. Yet, to my certain knowledge, many did; and those who professed to be preachers of the gospel, were often his vilest persecutors; and notwithstanding they all professed to doubt the reality of his having the plates of which he had spoken, yet so eager were they to get them from him, that it was only by the Lord, or a kind angel, warning him from time to time of the pursuit of his enemies, that he was enabled to preserve the sacred records.

In fact, it seemed very much like it was with Joseph and Mary, the mother of Jesus, being warned of God to flee from place to place, to save the young child; so, has Joseph Smith been warned many times, and then barely escaped his pursuers. Of this I can bear a faithful testimony.¹

It is very probable that Newel was among other Knight family members, nearly 20 of them, who were present when the Church was organized on April 6, 1830 in Whitmer farmhouse at Fayette, 100 miles to the northwest from Coleville. (Now a two-hour drive.) At that time, it probably took a couple of days to travel that distance by wagon. There were about 60 people present at that meeting in Fayette, not just the 6 formally named. Historian William G. Hartley reports that nearly one third of group were Knight family members, but there are no known records that tell us exactly which Knights were there.

In April of 1830, Joseph Smith visited Colesville and held “several meetings in the neighborhood,” and Newel was one of the frequent attenders. However, Newel was hesitant to pray vocally, and Joseph Smith encouraged him to do so. Newel went alone to the woods and made several attempts to pray. Newel began to feel uneasy and soon became worse. When he arrived home his wife Sally was alarmed at what she saw. Newel asked Sally to call for Joseph Smith. Joseph came, along with a number of others who saw Newel suffering and contorted and acting as if he was being tossed about the room. Joseph took him by the hand and Newel earnestly asked that the devil be cast out of him, and that he knew he was in him. Joseph Smith recorded that he “almost unconsciously” rebuked the devil and commanded in the name of Jesus Christ. Immediately Newel spoke and said he saw the devil depart. Both Newel and Joseph were amazed and humbled by the event.²

Newel’s Baptism

Newel was baptized late May 1830 at the age of 29, and he was the member of the Knight family to be baptized, and the 27th member of the new Mormon Church. After 1844, Newel was considered “oldest” or most senior member of the Church, based on the date of his baptism, and

¹ *The Journal of Newel Knight*, Allen unpublished typed transcript version, 1. This article was written in 2014, five years before the publication of the Newel Knight journals in *The Rise of the Latter-day Saints, The journals and histories of Newel Knight*, edited by Michael MacKay and William G. Hartley. There are some variations between the published journal and Allen typescript version of the journal. This article retains all of the original citations to the Allen version from which it was first written. Identical or sometimes similar passages are usually found in the published version of the journal.

² William G. Hartley, *Stand By My Servant, Joseph*” Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for History and Deseret Book, 2003, 62-65.

the death or excommunication of others baptized before Newel. He was so greeted in May 1846 by apostles George A. Smith & Amasa Lyman at Mt. Pisgah, Iowa.³

Newel wrote few details about his baptism, just a sentence, and then went on to discuss the church conference he attended in May.

Newel Journal:

During the last week in May I went on a visit to Fayette and was baptized by David Whitmer. On the first day of June, 1830, the first conference was held by the Church. Our number consisted of about thirty, besides many others who came to learn of our principles, or were already believers, but had not been baptized. Having opened the meeting by singing and prayer, we partook of the emblems of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. A number were confirmed who had lately been baptized, and several were called and ordained to various offices in the Priesthood. Much good instruction was given, and the Holy Ghost was poured out upon us in a marvelous manner. Many prophesied, while others had the heavens opened to their view. It was a scene long to be remembered. I felt my heart filled with love, with glory, and with pleasure unspeakable. I could discern all that was going on in the room and a vision of futurity also suddenly burst upon me, and I saw, represented, the great work, which, through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith, was to be accomplished. I saw the heavens opened, I beheld the Lord Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High, and it was made plain to my understanding that the time would come when I should be admitted into His presence, to enjoy His society for ever and ever.

Such scenes as these were calculated to inspire the hearts of the Saints with joy unspeakable, and fill us with awe and reverence for that Almighty Being, by whose grace we had been called and made the happy partakers of such glorious blessings as were poured out upon us--to find ourselves engaged in the very same order of things as were observed and practiced by the holy apostles of old. To realize the importance and solemnity of the great work which had fallen upon our young friend Joseph, and to witness and feel with our natural senses the like glorious manifestations of the power of the Priesthood, the gifts and blessings of the Holy Ghost and the goodness and condescension of a merciful God unto such as obey the everlasting gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, combined to create within us sensations of rapturous gratitude and inspire us with fresh zeal and energy in the cause of truth, and also to confirm our faith in Joseph Smith being the instrument in the hands of God to restore the Priesthood again to man on earth and to set up the kingdom of God, which shall never more be overcome.⁴

Newel also attended the Church's second conference in Fayette in early Sept. 1830. Following that conference, Joseph Smith asked his brother Hyrum and wife Jerusha to go to Colesville to preside over the Colesville Branch. The couple with their two young daughters came to live with Newel and Sally in Colesville, and Hyrum was made first President of Colesville Branch, first

³ Journal, Allen Transcript, 151

⁴ Journal, Allen typescript, 3. This passage does not appear in *The Rise of the Latter-day Saints* version of Newel's journal. See the introduction of *The Rise of the Latter-day Saints* to learn more about the three versions of the journal. It is thought Lydia perhaps added some passages that Newel left notes about what he planned to come back and add.

official branch of Church. Hyrum was just 7 months older than Newel, and baptized after Newel was, even though Hyrum was oldest, at age 30, of 6 official organizers of Church.

Newel and Hyrum were mission companions in the greater Colesville area. Most of their success was with Newel's mother's Peck relatives. In fact, Newel's first use of the power of the priesthood that he had been recently given was to bless his Aunt Martha ("Patty") Peck, wife of Polly Peck Knight's brother, Hezekiah, on Oct. 15, 1830.⁵

Newel's Journal, Oct 15, 1830.

After the close of the meeting, Bro. Hyrum and myself intended going to spend the night with one of the brethren who lived a short distance from my uncle's, but as we were ready to start, the spirit whispered to me that I should tarry there at my uncles' all night. I did so, and retired to bed, where I rested till midnight when my uncle came to my room and desired me to get up, saying he feared his wife was about to die. This surprised me, as she was quite well when I went to bed. I dressed myself, and having asked my Heavenly Father to give me wisdom and power to rebuke the destroyer from the habitation, I went to the room where my aunt lay.

She was in a most fearful condition, her eyes were closed, and she appeared to be in the last agonies of death. Presently she opened her eyes and bade her husband and children farewell, telling them she must die for the redemption of this generation, as Jesus Christ died for the generation in his day. Her whole frame shook and she appeared to be racked with the most exquisite pain and torment. Her hands and feet were cold, and the blood settled in her fingers, while her husband and children stood weeping around her bed.

This was a scene new to me, and I felt she was suffering under the power of Satan, that it was the same spirit that had bound and overpowered me at the time Joseph cast him out. I now cried unto the Lord for strength and wisdom that we might prevail over this wicked and delusive power. Just as this time my uncle cried aloud to me saying, "O brother Newel, cannot something be done?"

I felt the Holy Spirit of the Lord rest upon me as he said this, and I immediately stepped forward, took her by the hand and commanded Satan, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to depart. I told my aunt she would not die, but that she would live to see her children grow up, that Satan had deceived her and put a lying spirit in her mouth, that Christ had made the only and last atonement for all who would believe on his name, and that there should be no more shedding of blood for sin. She believed and stretched for her hand and cried unto me and Satan departed from her.⁶

Newel attended the third Church conference in Fayette in early January, 1831 with his brother-in-law, Freeborn DeMille. It was announced that the church would gather in Kirtland, Ohio.

⁵ Ibid, 9-10.

⁶ Ibid.

When Hyrum left Colesville for Kirtland in the spring of 1831, Newel was made the acting Branch President of Colesville Branch. Newel continued to preside over the Colesville Branch as it travelled from state to state for nearly the next ten years.

In March of 1831, the family of Joseph and Polly Knight, including Newel and Sally and all of Newel's siblings, and many of the Peck and Knight aunts and uncles and their families in Colesville started selling their land to prepare to leave New York for Ohio.

The Colesville Branch left for Kirtland in April of 1831. They traveled by wagon and headed north to Buffalo to meet up with Saints from other areas of New York. Newel wrote that they were to travel by sloop from Buffalo to Ohio, but the harbor at Lake Erie was filled with ice, so they were detained for two weeks. When they did get on the boat, "the winds continued boisterous" wrote Newel, and nearly all in the group were seasick.⁷

The Colesville branch, made up of mostly Knight relatives arrived in Kirtland and within a short time they were asked to settle in Thompson, Ohio, 25 miles northeast of Kirtland. They were to build a community on lands owned by Leman Copley, a recent convert from Shakers, and they were the first to be asked to live the United Order. But after Newel attended Church's 4th conference in early June 1831, Colesville branch was forced to leave Thompson when Brother Copley broke his promise, reverted to being a Shaker, and was excommunicated. The Colesville branch then called to go on to Missouri. See D&C 54.

Journey to Missouri

Newel continued as the leader of the Colesville group as they headed west to Missouri. The group of about 60, including about two dozen children of various ages, took wagons to the Ohio River, when by steamboat down the Ohio to the Mississippi, up the Mississippi River to the Missouri, and upstream on the Missouri River to Independence. It was a long journey, made more worrisome because mother Polly Knight was very sick. At one-point Newel was so worried about his mother that he left the ship to buy lumber to build her a coffin in case she died along the way.

Almost as soon as they arrived, many in the family including Newel were asked to participate in the dedication of the temple site in Independence, Missouri.

Dedication of Independence Temple Site

Newel's Journal

But our feelings can be better imagined than described . . . when we, found ourselves upon the Western [Eastern] frontiers, . . . the country itself presented a pleasant aspect with its rich forests bordering its beautiful streams, and its deep rolling prairies spreading far and wide, inviting the hand of industry to establish for itself homes upon its broad bosom. And this was the place, where the Lord had promised to reveal unto us where Zion should be established, where the New Jerusalem should be built up, and our hearts went forth unto the Lord desiring the fulfillment, that we might know where to bestow our labors profitably. We had not long to wait, for during the month the Lord gave a revelation

⁷ Ibid, 13.

to Brother Joseph, designating the spot. Being no longer at a loss to know where the exact spot for the building of the temple and the city of Zion was, we immediately prepared for our labors.

On the 2nd day of August, Brother Joseph Smith, Jun., the Prophet of God, assisted the Colesville Branch to lay the first log as a foundation for Zion in Kaw township, twelve miles west of Independence. The log was carried by twelve men, in honor of the twelve tribes of Israel. At the same time, through prayer, Sidney Rigdon consecrated and dedicated the land of Zion for the gathering of the Saints. This was truly a season of joy and rejoicing to all the Saints, who took part in, or witnessed the proceedings.

On the 3rd of August the spot for the temple, a little west of Independence, was dedicated in the presence of Joseph Smith, Jun., Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, Edward Partridge, Martin Harris, Joseph Coe, and myself.

On the 4th, the first conference held in the land of Zion, convened at the house of Brother Joshua Lewis, in Kaw township. The Colesville Branch was present, and much good instruction was given, and we felt to give thanks to that God who had brought us out of the land of our nativity and planted us in the land of Zion.

On the 6th, my mother died. She quietly fell asleep rejoicing in the new and everlasting gospel, and praising God that she had lived to see the land of Zion and that her body would rest in peace, after all the suffering she had endured from the persecutions of the wicked.

On the 7th, Brother Joseph attended the funeral, and addressed us in an impressive and consoling manner. This was the first death that had occurred in this church in this land.⁸

The members of the Colesville Branch struggled to build homes and create a community in Kaw Township on the very edge of the American frontier. It was a challenge being far from stores, supplies, and doctors. It was too late in the year to plant much when they arrived, so it was a struggle to feed their families.

Newel and Sally settled in to life in Jackson County with their neighbors being much the same people as they were in New York. Newel's wife Sally had always been in frail health, but she got along in Missouri.

Birth of son, Samuel

Newel wrote in his journal about the birth of his son.

Journal, Oct. 14, 1832:

On the fourteenth of October my wife bore to me a son. She had never before given birth to a living child, and the doctors who attended her before had said it was impossible that she should. But Brother Joseph blessed her and said she should have the desire of her heart. She never doubts the prophet's words and as soon as her son was born she desired

⁸ Ibid, 14-15.

him to be called Samuel for she said she had asked him from the Lord. My wife soon recovered from her sickness and she and her child are doing well.⁹

Reconciliation with Aunt Patty Peck

Being the ecclesiastical leader of a group of relatives sometimes had its challenges for Newel. One experience in Missouri was with his Aunt Patty Peck, his mother's sister-in-law. From time to time Joseph Smith sent revelations to Newel to read to the Branch. On one occasion after Newel read the revelation to the group, Aunt Patty arose and contradicted the revelation, and Newel 'felt constrained to rebuke her' by the authority of the priesthood. This caused a great division in the Branch, and eventually led Patty Peck to great torment and sickness over what she had done. Aunt Patty sent for the Elders to administer to her to get relief. Newel wrote:

Newel's Journal:

My soul was drawn out in pity for her, yet I knew not what to do. I felt impressed to call the branch together that evening. When the meeting had been opened as usual, I arose, not knowing what to do or what to say. After requesting the prayers and united faith of all present, the Spirit of the Lord came upon me, so that I was able to make plain the cause of Sister Peck's illness--that she had risen up in opposition to the priesthood which had been placed over that branch of the Church, and contradicted the revelations of God, and that by the sympathies shown her, a division of feeling had gained advantage over them, until Sister Peck had fallen completely under the power of Satan, and could not extricate herself. I told the brethren and sisters, if they would repent of what they had done, and renew their covenants one with another and with the Lord, and uphold the authorities placed over them, and also the revelations which the Lord had given unto us, it would be all right with Sister Peck, for this would break the bands of Satan and make us free.

I had no sooner closed my remarks than with one united voice, all came forward and agreed to do so. I then went to Sister Peck, and in the name of Jesus Christ, and by virtue of the Holy Priesthood, commanded the evil powers to depart from her, and blessed her with peace and strength, both of body and mind. I then dismissed the meeting and told the family to go to bed, and rest as usual, and all would be well. Early the next morning I called to see her, she stretched out her hand as soon as she saw me, and said, O, Brother Newel, forgive me! I did not believe one word you said last night, but when I awoke this morning, I found I was not in hell. Her rejoicings were very great, and union again prevailed with us, and we all felt we had learned a lesson that would be of lasting benefit to us.¹⁰

Church 3rd Birthday, April 6, 1833

As the third anniversary of the day in Fayette when the Church was founded, a great celebration was planned by the members in Jackson County, Missouri. Newel wrote about the day:

⁹ Ibid, 15.

¹⁰ Ibid, 15-16.

Newel's journal:

On the 6th of April, 1833, the Church met together at the ferry on Big Blue River to celebrate the Church's birthday. Three years ago today and the church consisted of but six members, met together in a private house, and this was the foundation of the kingdom of our God which is to spread forth until it fill the whole earth, and although Satan and all hell may wage war against it, yet they cannot overcome it, but it shall take rule and dominion, for it is the Lord's work, and none can stay his hand.

This was the first celebration of the kind and the Saints felt their privilege and enjoyed themselves in the worship of their Heavenly Father, and praised His holy name. It was a feast of fat things and the brethren returned to their homes renewed in spirit, and rejoicing in heart. Such peace and happiness were not however, to continue long without an interruption from our enemies, for when the Saints rejoice, the devil is mad, and his children and servants partake of his spirit.¹¹

Troubles in Missouri 1833

Newel relates the trouble from the mobs meant that he needed to guard even his mill, even though it was doing business for people in the community generally. One-night Parley Pratt was on guard, when two spies from a mob came over. When Parley stopped them, one of the men struck Parley in the head "Cutting a large hole." Parley called to the other men on guard who came and grabbed the men, who were held for the night and then let go in the morning.

A Mormon store was ransacked and all their goods were dumped in the streets. When the Mormons caught the offenders in the act, no one would issue an arrest warrant and the mob announced they would kill anyone who tried to execute such a warrant.

They felt helpless in a community where there was no redress in the courts for the acts of violence committed upon them. Newel said what could be expected when the head of the mobs were the judges, lawyers, justices of the peace, sheriffs, constables and jail keepers.

A rumor reached Independence that Mormons had killed 20 of a mob and injured many others. The news flew "like on the wings of the wind" according to Newel and men rushed into Independence "determined to massacre the whole of the Saints. It was a scene of wild confusion."

Newel's journal:

The next day the fury of the mob was in no way abated and the Saints saw that their lives could be saved only in flight. Consequently, women and children protected only by 6 men wandered into the prairie south, and their tracks could be followed by the blood stains on the ground. The prairie grass had been burned and the sharp stubble lacerated their uncovered feet, cutting and wounding them in a terrible manner. . . some went to the Missouri River intending to cross over into Clay County for they had already proven that the people in the adjoining counties were far from being their friends.

¹¹ Ibid, 20.

Thus homeless, and without the means of talking much to sustain them did the whole church in Jackson county flee before the mob, and at night those who went to the river camped in the rain, which poured down in torrents, the frail mother, the helpless infant, the sick and the dying all alike without the means of sheltering themselves from the storm. One man by the name of Bennet opened his house to a number of women and children, who were making their way to the Missouri [River.]¹²

All of the Saints were forced to flee into Clay County, in mid-winter. Newel reported in his autobiography that when mobs learned of one settlement where four families of very old men remained behind, they went to those houses and broke down windows and doors, hurled stones in their houses and harassed them until they fled. There was no mercy.

Newel's Journal – spring 1834

I think I will mention one more instance to show in what contempt the mob held the law, . . . A young man who was living with me, Ira Willis, went back to Jackson County to hunt for a cow that had strayed. He went with his brother Follett to the . . . the Justice of the Peace to prove his title to the animal. Whilst there Moses Wilson with another of others took him and whipped him in a most disgraceful manner in the presence of the Justice of the Peace, being no restraint to their inhuman proceedings.

In the spring the members of the Colesville Branch had to separate and seek land or employment, and I went back from the river about half of a mile on a beautiful little stream of water, and build a mill. My brother Joseph lived nearby and assisted me in the mill.

My father had married again after the death of my mother a widow Peck with four small children, and he was now getting old, and it seems to be a hard struggle for him to get along.

During the spring many of us were taken sick, and it would be impossible to describe the sufferings of the Saints, drive from our homes, stripped of all our comforts, and even the [necessities] of life, exposed to hunger, nakedness a deprivation of all kinds. We had but little strength left to resist disease.

Our brethren in Kirtland on hearing of our sufferings did all in their power to help us, and immediately on receiving the revelation concerning the redemption of Zion, began to gather together young men and middle-aged men to come to our relief. . . We received the news of the brethren coming with much joy and thankfulness, for we felt that our brethren were brethren indeed. . .

When news got abroad of this movement, the mob once more became infuriated. They got together in large bodies, well-armed themselves and provided themselves with cannon. Hundreds from the surrounding counties volunteered to help them in case Governor Dunklin should attempt to restore our homes, which he had said he would do

¹² Ibid, 27.

as soon as enough of our brethren came together to enable us to protect ourselves in them.¹³

Death of Sally & Eli September 1834

In Clay County in the spring of 1834. Newel reports that the locals seemed to get along well enough with them. They had a nice visit from Prophet Joseph that encouraged their spirits. But after the awful winter, there were many who were still suffering physically with fever and ague.

The summer passed and Newel made plans to travel to Kirtland for a short labor mission to spend time working on the Kirtland Temple. Just as preparations for the journey were under way, Newel and Sally, and Newel's widowed Aunt Esther who lived with them all took sick. Sally had never been very strong, and she was expecting a baby soon. The malaria was too much for her.

Newel's journal:

On the fifteenth of September, Sally my wife, died; truly she had died a martyr to the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. She was of a frail constitution and the hardships and privations she had to endure were more than she could survive. A short time previously she had given birth to a son which had also died. She was buried, her grave and her infant's is in a lonely grave where they will remain undisturbed by all enemies until the wicked cease to rule and the righteous possess the earth forever and ever.¹⁴

Work on the Temple – Marriage to Lydia

In the spring Newel's health was a little better and he made arrangements with family to look after his little boy Samuel and aged Aunt Esther, and he got on a canoe and generally headed via waterways toward Kirtland. In Kirtland he found lodging in the home of old friends Hyrum and Jerusha Smith, and he began work on the temple, and was promptly called once again to serve on the Kirtland High Council.

Work progressed on the temple and in October of 1835, a new boarder came to live in the Smith home. It was Lydia Goldthwaite Bailey, a quiet young woman who had been married but deserted by her husband and then faced the death of her two young children. She had joined the church in Canada, and come alone, with no other family members to Kirtland to join the saints. Newel and Lydia met at the boardinghouse, but Lydia was reluctant to speak to Newel because she believed she was still married to the husband that abandoned her.

How that all worked out is a story worth reading in Bill Hartley's book, *Stand by My Servant Joseph*. But in the end, they decided to marry, and when Newel asked Joseph what he thought, the Prophet told him, "The sooner the better." So they did. Joseph Smith performed the marriage ceremony in Hyrum and Jerusha Smith's house just a few days later, and that was the first time Joseph or any Mormon Church leader, had officiated in such a ceremony.

¹³ Ibid., 39.

¹⁴ Ibid., 49.

Newel and Lydia stayed in Kirtland through the winter and attended the dedication of the Kirtland temple. It was a great time in Kirtland.

Newel's journal – Jan. 21st, 1836, Kirtland, Ohio

. . . the Prophet and his Council assisted by several Quorums of the Priesthood in their turn attended to the first annointings. I was among the umber when my Quorum was called, and a blessed time it was to all present. Many of the gifts and blessings of the gospel were manifested. To some the visions of heaven, the past, present and future were opened and they behold such things as made every heart and soul rejoice. Angels administered unto others and all felt good to be there.¹⁵

This was a great experience. Newel goes on to record some of the many visions of those who were present at the time of the annointings. Work continued on the temple, and Newel did not attend the newly organized Hebrew school that some of the Elders attended because he felt he needed to labor more on the temple.

Newel's journal – Jan. 25th, 1836, Kirtland, Ohio

On the 25th I went to my usual labor on the house of the Lord, for I consider this to be of the greatest importance at present for it has been long since the Lord has had a house upon the earth and the Saints are laboring and waiting with prayerful hearts to see it finished so that they may receive the promised endowments from on High.¹⁶

Newel recorded that on March 27, 1836, the temple was dedicated, and it was accompanied by many great spiritual experiences, including speaking in tongues, visions and revelation. Newel writes that when George A. Smith arose and began to prophesy, a “noise like the sound of a might rushing wind was heard to fill the Temple, and all the congregation arose as one, being moved upon by an invisible power. . . a bright light like a pillar of fire rested upon the Temple, and the people around came running thinking the building was on fire, and were astonished when they saw what was transpiring.” The meeting was dismissed at 11 p.m. that night. The meetings were repeated the following two days so that all would have an opportunity to attend.

It was time for Newel to return home to his son. Before leaving Kirtland, Lydia and Newel stopped at the home of Joseph Smith, Sr., so Lydia could receive her patriarchal blessing. On April 7th they left Kirtland for Clay County and arrive on May 6, 1836.

More Missouri troubles

When Newel arrived back in Clay County, he and Lydia set up a home again with little Samuel and the aged Aunt Esther. Lydia was warmly welcomed into the family.

There was more trouble brewing between Mormons and the other residents of Clay County. Newel records the lengthy report from Clay County leaders that was posted on June 1st,

¹⁵ Ibid., 53.

¹⁶ Ibid.

explaining why the Mormons need to leave, and soon, and suggesting they move on to Wisconsin, because it was largely uninhabited.

The complaints of the gentiles in Clay County included the Mormons friendliness to the Indians, their general disfavor with slavery which was legal in Clay County, the fact that they were taken in because they were in distress and local people thought it was only a temporary arrangement, but so many more kept coming. If the Mormons agree to leave, they will try to keep the peace.

A day after this report is published, Newel got word that he is called to attend a council meeting the next day. Notwithstanding the fact that he was suffering from a bout of ague, probably malaria, that left him shaking from chills and fever, and he had no horse, he walked the 12 miles to attend the meeting.

This was just the beginning of 2 ½ more years of trouble in Missouri that eventually led to Joseph and Hyrum's time in Liberty jail in the winter of 1838/39, and a virtual war between Mormons and Missourians that led to the Saints once more being expelled in the early winter months of 1839.

Newel labored those two years in Missouri building mills, one was a government contract. He wanted to leave Missouri in January of 1839, when he finished the work on a government mill, but he had no money. Men angry at Mormons had taken an old loan note for \$100 that had been repaid, and created a forgery which they used to put a lien on Newel's land and property. He couldn't even sell his land. He settled things as best he could, visited his father to give him a little means, and then sold his cook stove and the only cow the mob had not taken to hire a man with a wagon to take his family east to the Mississippi. Deep winter snows rubbed against the wagon hubs. Sometimes they scraped the snow beside the wagon so they could put down a bed at night. At Huntsville, Missouri, the driver said he couldn't go on and left them still 75 miles from the Mississippi River at Hannibal, and 135 miles from Nauvoo.

Newel prayer for divine help for "I knew not how to extricate myself but as I had never been forsaken by my Heavenly Father, I committed my family to His care." For a week they were stranded. But finally, a man with a wagon came and Newel was asked to take the wagon with some of the surplus goods of Brigham Young's family. A few days later Newel's horse ran away, and the oxen that came with the wagon were too weak to carry the load. So, some of the goods had to be left with a friendly local, to be retrieved later. It was early May before the Knight family reached the Mississippi.

Newel was among the many who filed claims against the State of Missouri for wrongful loss because they were driven from the state. It included a bill for \$1500 in lost property.¹⁷

When Newel and Lydia arrived with their family in Nauvoo, they set up a tent made of bedcovers and Newel began cutting timber so he could build a house. Within a week, Joseph Smith came to see his old friend, and told Newel that the Saints needed a mill to grind grain. They had grain, but no mill around to turn it to flour. Knowing that Newel had no money, Joseph brought along a Brother Brown who would finance the venture.

¹⁷ William G. Hartley, *They Are My Friends*, Grandin Book Company, 1986, 131-132.

Newel agreed to build a mill and soon left for Cincinnati to buy the parts necessary to build the mill. When he returned three weeks later, Newel discovered the whole of Nauvoo was plagued with sickness. So many had suffered in the winter exodus from Far West, Missouri that many fell sick to the diseases born along the river.

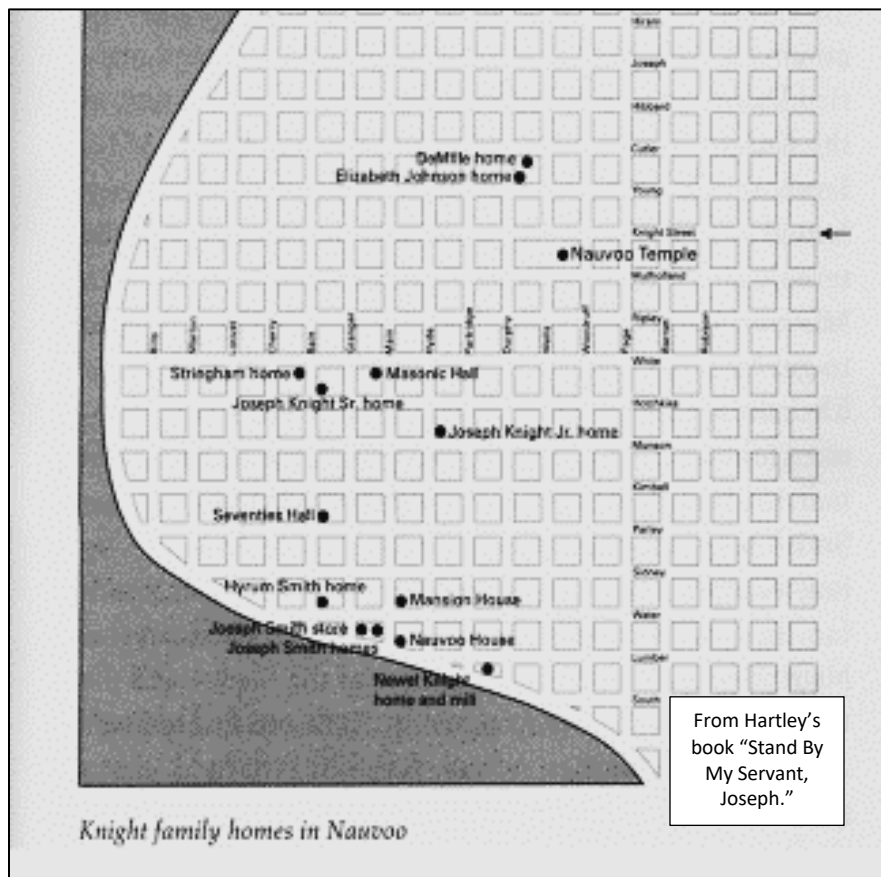
Newel's journal - Summer 1839:

Many died. "I never saw so sickly a time," Newel said; the scene was "enough to make the stones shed tears." Lydia said that "Pestilence and fever were seated at every fireplace."

Despite the heavy rains, Lydia had to cook outside their tent. Soaked and chilled, she caught malaria. Desperately ill, she wanted a blessing from the Prophet Joseph. But fearing he could not come, she sent Newel to bring her a handkerchief blessed by him. He [Newel] did. Lydia grasped it. But instead of improving she sank towards death. Newel had not taken the cloth to Joseph, not wanting to disturb the busy prophet. Repenting he sought out Joseph and returned with the blessed handkerchief. "This is from Joseph," he said, "and he says Heavenly Father shall heal you." She clutched it desperately. Her faith worked, and by morning she improved enough to resume her household chores.¹⁸

The Nauvoo period 1839-1846

The seven and a half years in Missouri had been hard. The Nauvoo years were also hard.



The mill business was a demanding one. The capital expense involved in getting a mill up and running was a hard part for a family that had started over so many times since joining the church a decade earlier. The mills were more complicated because it was a family business and working with his brother and father sometimes led to family conflicts which were enormously stressful for a man who longed for family unity.

Joseph Knight, Sr., by this point was too old to be involved in the actual labor of the mills, and Newel was the primary source of

¹⁸ Hartley, *Stand By My Servant*, 139.

support for his 70-year-old father, and his father's second wife Phoebe, and their son who was about 5 when they arrived in Nauvoo and 11 when they left. Notwithstanding, Newel's financial support of them, Phoebe was not a big fan of Newel, and that grieved him as well. It probably didn't help that Newel's stepmother was his same age.

When Newel and Lydia arrived in Nauvoo, they had 3 small children, Samuel, Sally and James, and four children more were born there, Joseph, Newell, Lydia and Jesse. This was a busy season of life, made much more complicated by angry people who hated Mormons.

Newel had served on the High Council in Kirtland and the Zion Stake in Missouri, and he was again called in Nauvoo to serve on the 12-man High Council, serving under William Marks, who was stake president. He was very involved in church service

Newel was devastated when Joseph and Hyrum were killed. Hyrum had been Colesville Branch president before that job was turned over to Newel. Newel and Hyrum had knocked doors together back in Broome County, New York on brief missionary forays. Newel and Lydia had been married in the home of their friends Hyrum and Jerusha.

Joseph was Newel's beloved friend and revered prophet. Newel wrote in his journal:

Newel's Journal – June 30, 1844

. . . when about three in the afternoon the bodies of the murdered Prophets were brought to the city the fullness of the grief [of the Saints] burst forth until the very heavens were rent with their mourning and lamentations, and like Rachel of old weeping for her children, they refused to be comforted.

The bodies were taken to the mansion and the doors closed, and then the bodies were laid out. I have the privilege of being in the room and saw the wounds which the Prophets received.

On the 29th, the bodies were put into the coffins and all who wished were allowed to see them, when about ten thousand passed through the room.

Near six in the evening the funeral services were performed, and I accompanied the hearse to the graves. There is a secret connected with this funeral which is not known to all the Saints, although it is generally suspected, and this that Joseph and Hyrum were not buried at that time, but the particulars will be made known at the proper time and place.

I have taken up considerable space in telling you the circumstances under which two of the best men that ever lived lost their lives for the truth's sake. I have known them from boyhood, have been associated with Joseph from the time before he received the first revelation until the present, and Hyrum has been his constant companion since the Church has been organized.

I have shared the blessings of the gospel which they have enjoyed, and been a partaker of the sorrows and troubles and fierce persecutions which they have endured. I have

seen them at home and abroad, in the discharge of their religious duties, and I have known them as the founders of a great city, and seen their administration of its government. In every circumstance of life, they have ever been true men of God, humane, upright and just in all their dealings, they loved righteousness and taught it to their followers. Their friends loved them for the good they did, and their enemies hated them because they reprov'd their sins and wickedness.

They died as they had ever lived, faithful and true to that God who has now them as his servants to build up the Church and kingdom in the last days. In the hour of prosperity they taught the people humility and meekness. In the hour of persecution they practiced these virtues, and no men have ever done a greater work on the earth since the days of the Savior than they have, and their names will ever be held in honorable remembrance by all lovers of truth, virtue, integrity, justice and righteousness, whilst their persecutors will sink in shame, confusion and infamy until they will go down to the place prepared for all doers of wickedness.

Oh, how I loved those men and rejoiced under their teachings! It seems as if all is gone, as if my very heart strings will break, and were it not for my beloved wife and dear children, I feel as if I have nothing to live for, and would rejoice to be with them in the Courts of Glory. But I must live and labor and try to do good, and help to build up the kingdom of God here on the earth. And I pray to God my Father, that I may be reconciled unto my lot, and live and die a faithful follower of the teachings of our murdered Prophet and Patriarch.¹⁹

The bright spot in Newel's time in Nauvoo seems to be the building and dedication of the temple. He wrote in his journal:

Newel's Journal, May 24th, 1845

. . . the capstone of the temple was laid this morning a little past 6 o'clock after a little more than four years of hard labor of the Saints, during which time we have passed through scenes of persecution too great to be painted by man. The blood of our best men has stained the floor at Carthage jail, and the earth has drunk of the same blood while our enemies have been thus cruelly satiating their fury, the brethren have been laboring by day and watching by night to raise the House which the Lord has commanded to be built unto His most Holy Name. The morning was cool, clear and beautiful, the Saints rejoiced while the band poured forth it's sweetest strains of music upon the top of the walls. . . . and all hearts rejoiced in the hope that the wrath of our enemies might be until the building shall be completed and the faithful receive their endowments therein.²⁰

Thoughts on Leaving Nauvoo April 1846

¹⁹ Journal, Allen typescript, 131-132.

²⁰ Ibid., 136-37.

Newel's Journal - April 24, 1846

About noon we ascended the bluff from the Mississippi and, halting, took a last fond look at the lovely city we had helped to build up from its very foundations, and also of the magnificent temple which stands there rearing its lofty towers towards heaven, a monument to the wisdom and greatness of our martyred Prophet, and an honor to those whose skill, industry, perseverance and undying devotion reared the holy house, with the sword in one hand, and the trowel in the other.

We also took a farewell look at the comfortable houses we had worked so hard to build for the comfort of our beloved families. Whilst beholding and pondering on all these things, I felt grateful to my Heavenly Father and acknowledged my dependence upon him and asked for his protecting care to be over us on our unknown journey.

And whilst I prayed to God for his protecting care to be over them, and thanked him for our deliverance I felt to offer up the following Prayer:

O God the Eternal Father, I ask thee in the name of thy son Jesus Christ to let thy blessings rest upon us who are now here standing upon thy footstool under the broad canopy of heaven. By this our present situation and sacrifice we do witness unto thee that we are determined to be faithful unto thee all the remainder of our days upon the earth, and to be gathered with thy people, even with those who have made a covenant with thee by sacrifice. Therefore, we ask thee to forgive us all our sins, our frailties and weakness and depravity before thee. Give unto us thy Holy Spirit to enlighten our understanding and let thy angels guard our journey, and thy presence go before us. Preserve us from the power of the destroyer from sickness, from accidents, and from evil of every kind. Incline the hearts of the people favorably towards us, and all the Saints as we journey through the wilderness.

Wilt thou soften the hearts of our enemies, even as thou didst the heart of the Pharaoh towards the children of Israel. And wilt thou O God the Eternal Father, bless the poor amongst the Saints, the widow and the fatherless, send men from the North, from the South, from the East and from the West to buy their houses, their lands, their furniture and all that is left in the hands of the committee for the benefit of the needy Saints, that thy people may be provided with teams and wagons, with provisions, clothing, and every needful thing for the journey. Wilt thou remember my aged father, give thine angels charge concerning him, and provide all needful blessings for him until I shall see him gathered with the Saints in a land of peace, where the wicked do not rule and even then let thy gentle spirit guide and thy holy angels guard him even down to the valley of death, and in the morning of the first resurrection let him come forth to be crowned and receive an inheritance with the sanctified. . . .²¹

Newel's Role in leading Brigham Young Company to West

On May 25, 1846, while visiting with Brigham Young of the Camp of Israel at Mount Pisgah, Iowa, Newel learned that Brigham Young wished Newel to travel with others to go over the

²¹ Ibid., 149.

Rocky Mountains that summer of 1846 to build a mill there for the use of the saints to come later. Ill-prepared as Newel was, he said he would go as instructed, never looking back.²²

Two months later on July 23, 1846, at an Elkhorn River camp in Eastern Nebraska, President Young assigned Newel to be the lead captain of one of three vanguard companies headed west to the Rocky Mountains. Newell was to lead the Brigham Young Company, nominally a company of “50 wagons” but really with seven sub-companies of about 10 wagons each. Each sub-company of “ten” had more or less wagons than that number. The entire Brigham Young Company included 67 wagons and 227 people as it started west from the Elkhorn River. They followed the older, barely discernible “Platte River road” on the north side of the Platte River heading west, or upstream, rather than following the newer Oregon Trail on the south side of the River. They went west for week, covering a little under one hundred miles, nearly to where a Presbyterian Mission for a Pawnee Indian village had been raided by Sioux Indians in mid-June.

Newel’s Journal, July 31st, 1846

The balance of the company came up. After breakfast we called the brethren together with the determination to have an understanding of all matters pertaining to our journey, and if there was a root of bitterness in the camp to pluck it up, and plant the root of peace and union in its place.

Captain Miksel [John A. Miesell] spoke for a short time of the necessity of union of feelings among us, and then I arose and showed the brethren in short the organization of the church, the strength and power of union, and the necessity of this camp being agreed, and acting for the general good, not only for the preservation of our horses and cattle, but also that we ourselves may enjoy the spirit of God, and continually have His presence with us, and his angels to go before us, that we may be kept from the power of the destroyer, and not fall prey to an enemy, or to be overcome with evil.

I endeavored to give the brethren a correct understanding of the organization of the company, and the great benefit it will be to all that are faithful in performing the journey, it being recorded in the church record “President Young’s First Company, regularly organized to cross the mountains.”

I wanted them to act like men, and be valiant in all that is entrusted to us to do, for if we do not prove ourselves faithful in this expedition, we cannot expect to be entrusted with any other important duty, or to accounted faithful stewards over what has been committed to our charge. Not only this, but it will greatly facilitate the emigration hereafter if we accomplish the journey this season, and raise good crops the coming year, for that would supersede the necessity of the future emigration bringing along a year’s provisions as we are obliged to do now.²³

Another earlier Mormon vanguard company under the direction of George Miller had been helping to salvage and transport east the remaining supplies of the Presbyterian mission. Miller personally intercepted Newel’s company just 6 miles shy of the Pawnee village & mission, and told Newel that Miller was to lead both companies. Newel and one of Miller’s men then rode on

²² Ibid., 151

²³ Ibid., 160

horseback two days back east to get clarification from Brigham Young. President Young then decided to reorganize the three vanguard companies, based on new intervening information. According to the revised instructions from President Young, Miller was to preside over a high council of 12 men that included Newel, to govern the three vanguard companies. This was Newel's fourth time to serve on a high council. Instead of proceeding west, the companies were to prepare for winter near the Pawnee village, but were to use their own judgment in deciding how best to winter.

Ponca camp in Nebraska

Newel's Journal – Aug. 9, 1846

At 4 p.m. the council met with four chiefs of the Puncha [Ponca] nation who came to visit us. They were very friendly and offered us the privilege of locating on their lands. We learn that there is a large quantity of rushes that we can have for our stock, and the prospects are that it will be best for us to go there as we can sojourn among them in peace, whereas the Pawnees have already manifested some hostility.²⁴

From August 13-23rd, Newel and the companies travelled about 90 miles north to the vicinity of the Ponca Indian camp, near where the Niobrara River empties into the Missouri River, just a few miles south of the present Nebraska border with South Dakota.

In September they built a fort with 112 lots for the various families to live in during the coming winter.

On November 4th, Newel wrote, after describing taking in an old Native American woman who had been abandoned and wandered for nearly 300 miles alone, "Circumstances have transpired since we have come among the Indians which have filled my heart with sympathy for these sons of Jacob."

Newel and his family settled into life near the Ponca camp for the winter.

Newel's Journal - Dec. 26th

The weather has been very dry and warm for the season, and for some time past the flames of the burning prairie have warned us of their approach. About eight this evening all hands except a few who sought to save their own effects rallied to extinguish the flames and by dint of much perseverance, for the space of two hours, the fort was saved, but not without the loss of several stacks of hay and some wagons which stood near the hay. The scene was awful yet grand, and we thank God that the flames we not permitted to utterly destroy our property.²⁵

Newel's Last Sermon

Newel's Journal - Jan. 3rd, 1847

I visited a number of the sick and administered to many of them. Meeting at brother Fellows in the evening. I had been requested to preach upon the principle of adoption. I attempted to do so but the Lord did not give me his spirit to do so. I told this to the

²⁴ Ibid. 162.

²⁵ Ibid., 173.

congregation and as the Lord has commanded us not to preach except by the spirit; I said I would give way for others to talk.

Brother Clark talked well, and Brother Bartholomew followed and asked some questions which I arose to answer, I now had full liberty, and the Lord poured out his spirit upon me until I was full. I told the Saints I would talk as the Lord would dictate to me. I exhorted them to faithfulness and diligence in all things pertaining to our present and future salvation, I told them that as there is a perfect order in all organizations of heaven and as in the eternal world all are subject to one great head, and all things move in perfect harmony, so I thought Gods will require union and order in his kingdom on earth. I also showed that as Christ was the "First Fruits" of them that slept in his dispensation, so Joseph will be in this, and that all will be raised from the dead in order, that order and submission always was and always will be the governing principle with the great Jehovah.

I also told them we must cleanse not only our hearts, but also our bodies, our garments, our habitations, and all things around that we may have claim upon the angels of heaven and upon His presence to go before us. But my hand is awkward in writing, so that I cannot tell all I said. But my mouth was filled with words of exhortation to the people.

On returning home, I told my wife I did not know how the brethren will receive it, but I felt easy, and knew that I had spoken the words that the Lord put into my mouth, and if the brethren will lay hold to profit by them, it will save them trouble that otherwise await them. This I also told the congregation.²⁶

The next day after preaching, Newel took sick, and it soon got much worse, Newel lasted but a week. Lydia wrote closing entries in Newel's journal on Jan. 10-11, 1847.

Newel's journal, entry written by his wife, Lydia:

January 10th. I helped him up for a short time, but he could not eat nothing and soon returned to bed. He wanted to see Brother Holbrook, I sent for him and he came. Mr. Knight requested him to go to every house in the camp and ask them all to pray for him.

The Saints all manifest a willingness to remember him in their prayers. From this time he said but little and appeared to fail fast. In the afternoon he again expressed a wish to see Brother Holbrook, and Brother Bartholomew came in about the same time with Brother Holbrook, and Mr. Knight expressed a desire to have the sacrament administered in his family. I told the brethren that if they did not think it improper, I would like to have it done. Brother Holbrook spoke to Mr. Knight and asked him if he would not like to see the Council together. Receiving consent, he immediately notified the members, and in a few minutes, they were all at the house. They first united in the ordinance of laying on of hands and prayer after which they administered the sacrament.

²⁶ Ibid., 173-4.

The scene was solemn and impressive, for we did not expect the privilege of partaking it with him again until we eat and drink it anew in our Father's kingdom. . . The Council withdrew. The rattlings in his lungs ceased, he coughed no more, and the fever bated a little, and he seemed to be less sensible of the objects around him, but toward dark his suffering increased, and were very severe all night.

I felt at last as if I could not endure his sufferings any longer, and that I ought not to home him here. I knelt by his bedside, and with my hand upon his pale forehead asked my Heavenly Father to forgive my sins, and that the sufferings of my companion might cease, and if he was appointed unto death, and could not remain with us, that he might be quickly eased of pain and fall asleep in peace. Almost immediately all pain left him, and in a short time he sweetly fell asleep in death, without a struggle or a groan, his hands and feet remaining warm, and his pulses gently beating until he breathed his last at half past six in the morning on the eleventh of January 1847.

This ended the life of this worthy man who was an exemplary member of the Church almost from its organization. He was firm and unshaken in all the scenes of trial and persecution he was called to pass through. As a companion and father, he was ever noble, kind and affectionate, one on whom, from the time of our union, I have safely relied on for counsel, support and consolation. . .

He was a member of this Church for 16 years and half months during which time he has been a devoted soldier of the cross and steadfast supporter of the Church.

At the time of his death he was the oldest member of the Church, and held the oldest ordination to the priesthood, which he has honorably magnified for more than 16 years.

His remains were interred at sunset on the evening of the day he died.²⁷

Newel was one of 23 who died at Ponca that winter. Newel left behind eight children: Samuel, Sally, James, Joseph, Newel, Lydia, Jesse, and yet-to-be born Hyrum. Lydia and the children stayed on in Ponca until spring, when they moved back to Winter Quarters. She gave birth to Newel's son Hyrum Knight, seven months after he husband's death, in August of 184. Newel's oldest son, Samuel, left in the spring of 1847 with the Brigham Young Company which all of the Knight family had planned to be a part of.

When Lydia still was not ready to cross the plains in 1848, she loaned another family her oxen and two wagons. Lydia lived in a dugout home in Winter Quarters with her seven children and took in wash and sewed for others to keep her family fed. Lydia's wagon were returned in 1850 in broken-down condition, and when she headed west that year, she was in Captain Hunter's company, the first to use the Church's Perpetual Emigration Fund. Upon arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, she signed a note to repay \$60 for the use of the wagon and oxen she used. It took her two years to pay it off.

²⁷ Ibid., 175.

In 1908, Jesse Knight, Newel's son, went back to Ponca camp area near Niobrara, Nebraska and he built a monument to honor his father and the others who died there. The Newel Knight grave monument still exists today.



**Newel Gravesite Memorial at Niobrara, Nebraska
– erected 1908**

Children of Newel Knight and Sally Coburn

1. Samuel, 1832 –
2. Ether, 1834

Children of Newel Knight and Lydia Goldthwaite

1. Sally, 1836 – 1916, md. Zemira Palmer
2. James Filander, 1838 – 1909, md. Elizabeth Jones
3. Joseph Ether, 1840 – 1878, md. Jane L. Judd
4. Newel, 1842 – 1907, md. Jane C. Loveless
5. Lydia, 1844 – 1905, md. John Ray Young
6. Jesse, 1845 – 1921, md. Amanda McEwan
7. Hyrum, 1847 - 1880

Sources consulted:

William G. Hartley's books, *They are My Friends*, and, *Stand By My Servant, Joseph*
Family records of Darrell and Gordon Knight.