

Joseph Knight Family donates Joseph Smith cane to the LDS Church History Department



A walking cane, given as a symbol of friendship from the Prophet Joseph Smith to Joseph Knight Sr., is now in the possession of the Church History Department, an historic donation from descendants of Joseph Knight Sr., one of the early faithful members of the LDS Church.

The donation was made in a May 29, 2009 presentation at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, at which Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy, Church Historian and Recorder, received the cane from Jim Knight of Arizona, a spokesman for the Knight family descendants gathered for the presentation. Nearly 100 Knight descendants were in attendance.

"This cane is a memorial of friendship, of mutual faith, that Joseph Smith and the Joseph Knight family share," Jim Knight said. "Our family often talks about what transpired when Joseph Smith presented the cane to Joseph Knight Sr. Joseph Smith spotted his dear friend, Joseph Knight, hobbling down a Nauvoo street. Father Knight, in his 70s, had been the Prophet's friend for almost 20 years. Joseph stepped up to him, put his arm around him, pressed his elderly friend's gnarled fingers onto the top of the cane and said, 'Brother Knight, you need this cane more than I do.' The Prophet told Father Knight to keep the cane as long as he lived and to pass it on to Knight descendants with the first name of Joseph.

The cane has passed in turn to five succeeding generations of Joseph Knights. "Now, it's my generation's responsibility to ensure that the cane is safely preserved for the Knight family descendants and the Church members to enjoy," stressed Jim Knight, son of Joseph Adair Knight, who was the last "Joseph" Knight to hold the cane.



Pictured: Joseph Robert, Joseph Adair, Joseph Byron and Joseph Knight with cane.

Elder Jensen, in receiving the cane, said, "This speaks volumes about the history of our Church and is a direct link, if you will, between your Joseph Knight Sr., who I think can be called one of the 'founding fathers' of the Church, and you as descendants of that wonderful man and all of us as members of the Church today. We can feel this connection in a very tangible way because of your generosity in parting with this cane."



Jim Knight on left, Elder Jensen on right

Thoughts of Jim Knight as he presented the cane:

May 27, 2009

I am grateful to be here today to fulfill my father's desire to donate a very special cane which had been passed down from Joseph Knight to Joseph Knight and now to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I am very proud to be a part of fulfilling my father's wish to preserve the Knight family cane. This cane is

a memorial of the friendship and mutual faith that Joseph Smith and the Joseph Knight family shared. Our family often talked about what transpired when Joseph Smith presented the cane to Joseph Knight Sr. I never get tired of hearing it nor telling it.

Joseph Smith spotted his dear friend, Father Knight, hobbling down a Nauvoo street. Father Knight, an elderly man, in his seventies, had been the prophet's friend for almost 20 years. Joseph stepped up to him, put his arm around him, pressed his elderly friend's gnarled fingers onto the top of his cane and said. "Brother Knight, you need this cane more than I do."

The prophet told Father Knight to keep the cane as long as he needed it, and then to pass it on to Knight Descendants with the first name of Joseph. In time, the cane passed to Joseph Knight Jr., to Joseph Knight, to Joseph Byron Knight, my grandfather and then to my father, Joseph Adair Knight.

My father knew that his life was coming to an end and he expressed concern for the preservation of the Knight Family Cane. We spoke and my Father felt that he had done his part to preserve and protect the cane since it was entrusted to him by his father. Now, it is my generations' responsibility to ensure that the cane is safe and preserved for all Knight family descendants and church members to enjoy.

My father was afflicted with Parkinson's disease during his latter life. He was still sharp minded, but his body was frail. Sometimes he could hardly speak above a whisper and he was confined to a wheelchair or his hot red electric scooter. He was a kind and lovable person, and he was greatly adored by his family and many dear friends. These friendships gave him great comfort throughout his life. One of his greatest joys was sharing the cane and its history with church members. Because my father could not speak loud enough for any one to hear him, his dear friend took over. This friend wrote an articulate script and spoke at all the firesides while my father listened. My father and I never got tired of hearing the presentation regarding the history of the cane and the friendship between Joseph Knight Sr. and Joseph Smith. I can still picture my father sitting in his wheelchair with his small grin, glowing with pride and honor that he was able to share this special story with others.

I can remember when I first saw the cane while visiting my grandfather during a visit to Salt Lake City. I was residing in California at that time, so this trip was already adventure. To celebrate this trip, a photo was taken and I was confused as to why I was not included in the picture with my father, grandfather, great grandfather and brother. This photo had four generations of Joseph Knights. As I sat dejected, my father explained that this photo was for those with the first name Joseph. I was young and didn't understand the significance of what had just transpired. I do remember asking my Dad to change my first name to Joseph instead of Jim so I could be in the photo too. My father smiled and hugged me....and my name remained Jim.

We cherish the fact that Joseph Knight Sr. chose to accept the gospel. We are

grateful for the gift of the gospel and how it has blessed our lives and will bless the lives of those yet to come. It took great courage to become a member of the Church so long ago.

The year 1830 was not a popular time to affiliate with the Mormons, but when the Knights put their names on the records of the Church, they were there as permanently as if they had been carved in granite. Their testimonies carried them through years of persecution and sacrifice. In the first generation of Knights being in the Church, seven died, in some measure, because of their commitment to the restored gospel. But theirs was a willing sacrifice, counted unto them for righteousness.

[On 22 August 1842, while reflecting upon the "faithful few" who had stood by him "in every hour of peril," Joseph Smith recorded the following sentiments about Joseph Knight:

Joseph Smith indicated the great respect he had for Joseph Knight and his family in the 1842 entry made in the Book of the Law of the Lord: "My aged and beloved brother, Joseph Knight, Sen. was among the first to administer to my necessities while I was laboring in the commencement of the bringing forth of the work of the Lord. For fifteen years, he has been faithful and true, and even-handed and exemplary, and virtuous and kind never deviating to the right hand or to the left. Behold he is a righteous man, may God Almighty lengthen out the old man's days; and may his trembling, tortured, and broken body be renewed, and in the vigor of health turn upon him if it be Thy will, consistently, O God; and it shall be said of him, by the sons of Zion, while there is one of them remaining, that this was a faithful man in Israel; therefore his name shall never be forgotten. As for his sons, Newel and Joseph, Jr., the Prophet added, "I record [their names] in the Book of the Law of the Lord with unspeakable delight, for they are my friends."

We have a great legacy to live up to. Generation after generation has been blessed because of Joseph Knight's decision to become a member of the church. We have many wonderful memories of family get-togethers where we spoke of our pioneer heritage and held the cane of friendship. We feel strongly that this donation to the church would please Joseph Knight Sr. The journey of the cane, prior to its disposition as a donation to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, has been a rough and trying experience.

I am grateful that this day is here, and for all the work that had gone on to organize this celebration. And I am grateful for all of you taking the time to be here.

Thank you,