

Lydia Goldthwaite Knight

New Gravestone Marker, St. George City Cemetery, St. George, Utah



In the summer of 2009, Mavon Nelson Herring of Manti, Utah, started a project to raise funds to honor her beloved great-great-grandmother Lydia Goldthwaite Knight by restoring her gravestone in the St. George City cemetery. The monument, which is a 24" diameter polished granite sphere resting on the point of a 24" tall tapered octagonal block of granite was a revered spot in the cemetery and according to Mavon, was always a happy gathering place for Lydia's many grandchildren who would form circles and dance around. Although the dark grey granite sphere and inscription has remained in very good condition, the granite base, which we speculate was granite from the Wasatch canyons, is softer and has been subject to much weathering and spalling on its top and sides, causing chunks of granite split off. Worried that the base may soon be unable to bear the sphere, Mavon began to call on family members to make them aware of the situation and ask for financial help. Also knowing that the reunion was around the corner gave her hope that many could be told and share in this project. One of her first contributors was Harold Redd.

Mavon's project really started when she, with the help of other family members including Robert Newel Reynolds, began to write a wonderful book about three great ladies named Lydia: Her grandmother mother, Lydia Young; her great-grandmother, Lydia Knight; and her great-great-grandmother, Lydia Goldthwaite Bailey Knight Dalton McClellan. The book, which is really a compilation of journal entries, stories, photos and documents, is written in the first person, as if one of the Lydia's was speaking to the reader and so is very insightful of the life and example these great women left for us to learn from. Mavon decided that the book could be made available to family members and reunion attendees and the proceeds donated to the refurbishing of the monument. Now that the reunion is over, we are happy to say that we have been able to help Mavon fulfill her dream of honoring Lydia Knight by donating enough money, with the help of many contributors and the added help of nephew Scott Bonham.

Once the required amount of money was raised, another project began to determine just how the monument was to be restored. Following a couple trips to the cemetery taking measurements and making drawings, it was determined that the base may have actually been taller when new and had sunk into the ground 6 or 7 inches. Close examination of the sides revealed a "split" face panel detail on each side framed by cut stone with sloped top edges and the recessed resting space of the sphere which was found to be held by metal dowel into the base. Speculation also led us to wonder if it could have been Jesse Knight who commissioned this large monument to be made for his mother with granite taken from the walls of Little Cottonwood Canyon not far from his mines and because of the fact that the sphere does not include the last names Lydia's husbands after Newel. Many of the other headstones of the same era were probably made from local sandstone.

Soon after our visits to the cemetery, Lydia's headstone and many other around were vandalized by a couple of youth under the influence. Lydia's sphere was knocked off the base and rolled over to the street curb but miraculously remained unharmed. Other sandstone grave markers were not so lucky. American Monument of Ogden, who had been hired to help reconstruct the gravestone, retrieved the dismantled headstone sphere and base and stored them in their shop until a new base was built. The sphere was cleaned of its deposits and polished and the base was broken up into smaller pieces which will be available as mementos at the next reunion.

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

The book entitled "The Three Lydia's" will also be available for purchase at our next reunion in 2012.