

Ether Crosby Knight

1834 – 1900

Son of Joseph Knight, Sr. and Phebe Crosby Peck

The members of the Colesville Branch were asked in the summer of 1831 to move to Jackson County, Missouri to form a community. Most of the members of that group were related in one way or another. Among them were Joseph Knight, Sr., his wife Polly Peck and their seven children, and several of Polly's siblings, including Phebe Crosby Peck, the widow of Polly's brother, Benjamin, and her four children, ages 5 to 11 years-old. The Peck children were Hezekiah, Samantha, Henrietta and Sarah.

Polly Knight passed away just 10 days after arriving in Missouri, leaving Joseph Knight, Sr. a widower with four married children and three still single and living at home: Joseph, Jr., age 23, Polly, age 20, and Elizabeth, age 14. Father Joseph Knight maintained his own home with his three unmarried children. It was a struggle for all in the group to build shelter and create a community that first year.

Two years after the death of his wife of 35 years, Joseph Knight, Sr. remarried, to the widow, Phebe Peck. Phebe's first husband was Benjamin Peck, the younger brother of Polly Peck Knight. Benjamin died in Bainbridge, New York in 1829.

Phebe and Joseph Knight were married 12 March 1833 in Jackson County. Phebe was almost 33 and Joseph was 61 years old. By the end of that year, mobs, groups of 10 to 20 men were attacking homes of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All members of the church were forced to leave, including the members of the Colesville group, and they made their way to Clay County to once again build homes.

Ether Crosby Knight was born 14 June 1834 to Joseph and Phebe Knight in Liberty, Clay County, Missouri. The month of his birth was when Joseph Smith brought the volunteers of Zions Camp to Missouri to try to help with the Saints who felt under siege from their Missouri neighbors.

Ether joined his four half siblings in the Joseph and Phebe Knight home. Life in Missouri continued to be a struggle to build homes, find employment, and avoid contention with their fellow citizens. Joseph Sr.'s son, Joseph Jr., had married in 1832 in Jackson County. His daughter Polly married in 1835 in Jackson County, and it appears Elizabeth Knight lived with her sister Polly.

A childhood in troubled times

In the summer of 1836 Joseph Knight, Sr., and all the many other extended Knight-Peck relatives packed up their families and moved to Caldwell County, with the hopes that they could avoid bloodshed. Far West, Missouri, became the new headquarters for the Missouri Saints, and once again they had to first find shelter and then build homes and a community.

Joseph and Phebe with their family moved to Far West, but returned in 1837 to Clay County to tend a mill that Joseph's son Newel had built. In November of 1836, another baby son was born to Phebe and Joseph, Charles Coulson Knight. Joseph Knight was the step-father to Phebe's children who were quickly becoming teenagers

Trouble with Missourians began again in October of 1838, with the extermination order of Governor Lilburn Boggs and the attack at Haun's Mill. By January of 1839, the forced exodus from Caldwell County began for all members of the church and they head east towards Commerce, Illinois. Young Charles Knight died 13 August 1839 in Quincy, Illinois, near what would become Nauvoo.

Joseph Knight, Sr. had been a robust and prosperous farmer and miller in Colesville, but he built and had to leave behind homes in Thompson, Ohio (near Kirtland,) and three homes in Missouri. In 1839 as he arrived in Nauvoo with a family of young children, he was 67 years old, in declining health, and struggling to support a family.

Joseph Knight had been generous with young Joseph and Emma Smith in the early years of their marriage, and was a stalwart in the earliest years of the church. In recognition of that, and knowing of his need, in January of 1840 the Nauvoo City Council voted to give Joseph Knight, Sr. a building lot and help in building a home. On May 27th that year, Emma Smith, the president of the newly formed Female Relief Society, announced in a Relief Society meeting that she had hired a man to plough and fence Brother Knight's yard, and asked for contributions to help with furniture and provisions. Joseph Knight's son Newel also contributed to the support of his father's family, and wrote in 1845 that "It was a pleasure to me to supply his wants and add to his comfort."

Ether's childhood home in Nauvoo was a brick home on the northeast corner of Bain and Hotchkiss streets, where he was surrounded by relatives, and many of them were children near his age. His older half-sister Polly and her husband William Stringham lived across the street with three children. Joseph Knight, Jr. and his three girls were just a few blocks away for several years. Half-sister Anna DeMille and her children were a few blocks away. Newel and his children were a little further, they were down near the river. There were also a number of Peck cousins, uncles and aunts from his mother's side of the family.

The children of Nauvoo usually attended school in held in a home and were baptized at the age of eight in the Mississippi River. Church ordinance records show Ether and his wife in later years were baptized in Salt Lake City in August of 1857. This is probably a record of a second baptism done in that time period as a covenant of recommitment.

Church leader Joseph Smith and his brother were murdered at Carthage Jail in 1844, and tension continued to escalate between church members and those who wanted them to leave. In 1845 the exodus from Nauvoo began, but it required owning a wagon, oxen and a great number of supplies. Frequently there were no buyers for their homes, they would walk away

and start over once more. Most of the Knight and Peck families left Nauvoo with 14,500 other residents of the city and they traveled to Winter Quarters in the fall of 1845 or early 1846.

Leaving Nauvoo

Ether was 12 when his family was driven out of Nauvoo in September of 1846.

Both the Joseph Knight, Sr. and Joseph Knight, Jr. families, as well as the family of Uncle Hezekiah Peck didn't leave as soon as the others because they didn't have the means to go. The mobs grew impatient with the stragglers and in the summer of 1846 the serious harassment began. The Anti-Mormons who wanted the church members in Nauvoo gone called themselves "The Regulators," and the men 130 to 150 men who defended their homes in Nauvoo declared themselves to be "The Spartan Band."

On 10 September 1846 the Anti-Mormon Regulators attacked Nauvoo with cannon fire and men ransacked homes. The church members left behind were hopelessly outnumbered by 10 to 1. The Spartan Band fought valiantly, even building a makeshift cannon out of a steamship chimney pipe. Joseph Knight, Jr.'s, daughter Mary recalled that she and her sisters filled cloth bags with scraps of iron to use as missiles to be shot out of their cannon. But most of the young and strong men had already left the city. Ether's father was almost 72 years-old, and his Uncle Hezekiah was 64, and no match for the men who attacked their city.

After the deaths of several church members, the Spartan Band capitulated. On September 17, 1846, approximately 1500 men marched down the streets of Nauvoo pushing the stragglers down Mulholland Street to the ferry at the river as they were forced out of town with what they could carry.

Ether and his family spent some weeks in what was called "The Poor Camps of Missouri" before church leaders could get some wagons to them to bring the group west to Winter Quarters and surrounding communities.

Joseph and Phebe and family made a new home in the Latter-day Saint community of Mt. Pisgah, Iowa. Phebe's daughter Sarah, who had married Charles Rich, was living in Mt. Pisgah and had just delivered a new baby when Phebe and Joseph arrived. Father Joseph Knight had two daughters and their families also in Mt. Pisgah, Anna DeMille and Elizabeth Johnson.

Ether's father dies

Joseph Knight, Sr.'s health had been declining over the last several years, and on 3 February 1847 he died in Mt. Pisgah and was buried there. His son Newel had died a month earlier in Fort Ponca.

Ether's mother quickly remarried as a plural wife after Joseph's death. Phebe married Cornelius Peter Lott on 30 March 1847 in Winter Quarters, Nebraska. She was 46 years old at the time

and Cornelius Lott, age 48, at the time he married Phebe and another woman, Eleanor Wayman, age 54 on the same day.

There are no known records to give insight to what Ether thought or where he lived once his mother remarried.

Cornelius Lott was father to 10 children ages 3 to 23 by his first wife, Permelia. Before leaving Nauvoo in 1846, he was been sealed to four other women: Charity Dickson, a widow and age 69; Eliza Davis, who had been widowed twice and was age 55; Rebecca Faucett age 16; and Jane Rodgers, age 18. And then in March of 1847 in Winter Quarters, at the same time Cornelius married Phebe Peck Knight who was then 46, he married Eleanor Wagner, age 54.

It is difficult to sort out what the actual relationship was between Cornelius Lott and the women he married, particularly Ether's mother. None of the 6 polygamous wives traveled west to Salt Lake City with the Lott family. Charity apparently left the relationship and died in St. John, Missouri in 1849. Eliza in her later years lived with her son, joined the RLDS church and died in White Cloud, Kansas in 1876.

Lott family stories found on Family Search report that Rebecca Fausett left her husband Cornelius in Winter Quarters, and that she gave birth to a son Isiah Lott in November of 1846 that Cornelius "never saw." Rebecca later remarried in Iowa in 1850, came to Utah and had 3 daughters with her second husband. We know nothing more about Jane Rodgers or Eleanor Wayman.

When Cornelius Lott he left for the Salt Lake Valley in the Heber C. Kimball Company, Cornelius was accompanied only by his first wife and their children, and they had another child in the Salt Lake Valley in 1848. Phebe and her son were not with them. In fact, in the Overland Data base, there are no records of Phebe Peck Knight Lott, ever coming to the Salt Lake Valley in any company in under any name. Family records report that Phebe Knight died in Nauvoo on 6 May 1849, with no clues as to why she left Winter Quarters and returned to Nauvoo.

Ether comes to Utah 1850

It is hard to know what happened in Ether's life between March of 1847 when his mother remarried and June of 1850 when Ether traveled on his own to the Salt Lake Valley in the William Snow/Joseph Young Pioneer Company. Ether's mother Phebe died in Nauvoo in May of 1849, and there are no records to report whether Ether was with her at that time or not. He may have been living with his married sister, Henrietta Peck Rich and her family. On 21 June 1850, a week after Ether's 16th birthday, Ether Knight left Kanesville, Iowa for the Salt Lake Valley, and he was traveling with his sister Henrietta, he husband Thomas Rich, and their sons Landon and Thomas. They arrived in the valley 1 October 1850.

Henrietta and Thomas made their home in Davis County and it appears that Ether was with them for a time because his name appears on the David County census of 1850.

On 28 August 1854, somewhere in “Utah Territory,” Ether Knight married Sara Jane Terry, who was born in King City, Ontario, Canada. Three years later they were sealed in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City.

Children of Ether and Sara Jane Knight

Over the next two decades, Ether and Jane had ten children. The first six were born in Utah, and the last four were in various California cities. It appears that nine of the children lived to adulthood and married. Based on census records, probably Lawrence Knight passed away before the age of two. The children of Ether and Sara Knight are:

1. Ether Terry Knight, born 18 July 1856 in Utah Territory
2. Charles Coleson Knight born 11 August 1859 in Salt Lake City
3. Hortense Knight, born 13 February 1862, Draperville, Utah
4. William Knight, born June 1864 in Utah
5. Ella Knight, born 6 March 1867 in Richville, Morgan County, Utah
6. Henrietta Knight, born April 1869, in Salt Lake City
7. Phoebe E. Knight, born 1 January 1873 in California
8. George Thomas Knight, born 3 January 1874 in Orange County, California
9. Lawrence Knight, born 1878 in Santa Anna, Orange County, California
10. Lucy Capitola Knight, born March 1880 in California

Life in California

The birth places of the ten children of Ether and Jane seem to indicate that they moved every few years, which often indicates the family didn’t quite find a single spot where they economically thrived.

Ether and Jane Knight’s family appear in the 1870 census living in San Bernadine, California. Apparently, Sara Jane went by the name Jane, as reported to the census taker. Ether’s occupation was listed as teamster. Their first six children are all listed on the census as living with the family. Henrietta was born in Utah in 1869, so the family moved to California sometimes not long after her birth.

Ether was a registered voter in California, and voter registration record show that he lived in Santa Anna, Orange County, California in 1879 and 1880. In 1882 He was registered to vote in Inglenook, Mendocino County, California. And in 1892 Ether Knight was a registered voter living at 507 Haight, San Francisco, California.

Even though voter registration reports Ether living in Santa Anna in 1880, about that time he must have moved, because the 1880 Census reports that Ether and Jane Knight and 8 of their children, live in Kern County, California where Ether was a farmer. Ether’s son Ether was in his

early 20s by then and probably living on his own. Their 18-year-old daughter Hortense is listed as Hortense Brown, “married daughter.” Her husband was not living with the family.

The 1900 census shows that Ether, age 66 and Jane, age 65 had a household of 8 as they lived at 509 Haight Street in San Francisco. Their son Ether, Jr., was 43, single and a farm laborer. Their daughter Ella Little was 33 and divorced. Their son George was 24, single and his worked as a printer. Their youngest daughter is also living with them with her husband Alfred and 1-month old baby that is nameless on the census.

Family records show that Ether’s youngest child was named Lucy Capitola Knight. The census taker recorded her as “Battalia,” but it is clear by birthdate, place and being listed as a daughter that Capitola was actually the child living with them.

Shortly after the 1900 census, Ether died on 10 July 1900 in San Francisco. He was buried in the Green Lawn Memorial Park in Colma, San Mateo County, California. Colma is a small town on the San Francisco peninsula.

On 11 July 1900, the San Francisco Call, a newspaper printed this obituary:

Sudden Death of Ether Knight

Ether Knight, a cigar dealer residing at 507 Haight Street was found dead in bed at 6:20 o’clock yesterday morning. He seemed to be in the best of health and spirits on the Previous evening. He was 66 years old and leaves a family.

Jane Terry Knight died 20 February 1916 in Oakland California. She is buried in the Evergreen Cemetery in Alameda County. Several of Jane and Ether’s children also died in Alameda County: Henrietta Knight Hoffman, Phoebe Knight Teal, George Knight and Lucy Capitola.

Written by Diane L. Mangum, October 2020

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