



Elizabeth Knight Johnson's Quilt Block

From The Salt Lake City 14th Ward Album Quilt, 1857
 Stories of the Relief Society Women and Their Quilt
 By Carol Holindrake Nielsen

E. Johnson and Mary E. Bassett are aunt and niece, a connection revealed in early Fourteenth Ward records. Painstakingly handwritten by an unknown clerk was an entry "Elizabeth Johnson, born 22 July 1817, Broom[e], New York." The clerk's inclusion of the county, "Broome," verified that this Elizabeth Johnson was Polly Peck's and Joseph Knight, Sr., daughter Elizabeth Knight Johnson. Mary Elizabeth Bassett's parents were Betsey Covert and Joseph Knight, Jr. Her father and grandfather Joseph Knight, Sr., were early acquaintances of Joseph Smith and valorous defenders of his work. Likewise, these women were members of the committed Knight family originally from Colesville, Broome County, New York, who nearly comprised Joseph Smith's first congregation during the early years of the church.ⁱ

Elizabeth Knight's brothers Newel and Joseph, Jr. and their father Joseph Sr.'s lives changed dramatically because of the new found religion. Elizabeth, although her name is seldom seen, was also affected. On November 1, 1830, when she was thirteen, the prophet's brother Hyrum Smith, baptized her. She at the time was the church's youngest adherent.ⁱⁱ

The family moved west with the Saints through the now historic sites of Independence and Far West, Missouri. Elizabeth's mother died along the way. By 1839, they had backtracked to Nauvoo, Illinois.

There in 1842, Elizabeth married Joseph Watkins Johnson. Hyrum Smith performed her marriage ceremony, as he had her baptism. The Johnsons lived near the river, near the homes of both her brother Newel and Joseph Smith.ⁱⁱⁱ

She joined the Nauvoo Relief Society in April 1842. There she sewed clothing for the temple workers under the auspices of the society, as she would applique the ever-popular Rose of Sharon much later for the Fourteenth Ward quilt.

Elizabeth and Joseph's western migration first landed them in Pisgah, Iowa, in 1846, where their daughter Castina was born and where Elizabeth's father died. Two years later, along the Mormon Trail in Wyoming, their twin daughters died on the day they were born. These were not the only babies the couple lost. Of the three more children born in Salt Lake City where they settled, only two survived, Elizabeth Darlin and David Knight.

Elizabeth remained in Salt Lake City until her death June 7, 1887, when she was sixty-six. Since her husband married three additional times, she must have spent much of her time independent of him. Her biography summarily stated, "She lived a life of challenges and hardships as a pioneer."^{iv} The flowers on her quilt square indicate that there were also cheerful days.

The above is pages 70 and 71 of *The Salt Lake City 14th Ward Album Quilt, 1857 Stories of the Relief Society Women and Their Quilt*, by Carol Holindrake Nielsen, University of Utah Press, 2004.

The 14th Ward was one of the first wards in the Salt Lake Valley to have an organized Relief Society. After Nauvoo, during the long exodus west there was no formal Relief Society organization for quite a number of years. The 14th Ward Women petitioned Brigham Young and received approval to organize on Sept. 17, 1856. The next year, they invited Relief Society sisters in the ward to each create a quilt block that was put into a quilt. The quilt was raffled off at a ward event to raise funds for the Society's charitable purposes. Amazingly, the quilt survives today.

Footnotes cited below are listed with the original article. The next article after Elizabeth is one for Elizabeth's niece, Mary Elizabeth Knight Bassett, who is referred in the first paragraph.

ⁱ William G. Hartley, *They are My Friends: A history of the Joseph Knight Family, 1825-1850*, 198.

ⁱⁱ "Records of Early Church Families," *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 26, October 1935, 150.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hartley, *They Are My Friends*, 143.

^{iv} "Elizabeth Knight Johnson," in *International Society Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Pioneer Women of Faith and Fortitude* 2, 1581.