

VINSON KNIGHT

Biography of a Nauvoo Bishop

by

Elden J. Watson

Ancestry and Early Life¹

Vinson Knight was born on March 14, 1804 in the small town of Norwich (now Hunnington), Hampshire County, Massachusetts. His father, Dr. Rodolphus Knight, was a direct descendant of the pilgrim Richard Knight of the sixteenth century and his mother, Rispah Lee, descended through the seven Saxon kings of England, including King Alfred the Great, to Judah. The early years of his life must be left to supposition, for there are no records or even family tradition available of his childhood; still, the absence of records demonstrates to a great extent a normal life. Vinson's memory of his father would have been vague and in treasured bits and pieces, for he died when Vinson was only five years old, but he had a devoted mother to whom he was close, and two older brothers. Samuel Lee was two years older than Vinson and Rudolphus Elderkin was four years his senior. The facts that his father bore the title "Dr." and his mother descended through royalty, lead one to believe that he had a far better education than was typical for those growing up in New York State in his day. This is substantiated by numerous aspects of his later life.²

When he was twenty-two, Vinson Married Martha McBride, the daughter of a Campbellite minister, and they settled down in a log cabin on a

piece of rocky timberland in Perrysburgh, New York, which he had inherited from his father.³

Martha was the youngest of a family of ten, born to Daniel McBride and Abigail Mead. Family tradition remembers Martha as being small and dainty, with delicate features. As a young woman she had dark hair, and gray-blue eyes, and was especially remembered for her capabilities as a seamstress. In her day, before the invention of the sewing machine, being a seamstress began with application of the wool and flax grown on their own farm, to the spinning wheel and ended with straight seams and fine and delicate stitching all tediously done by hand.

Vinson is remembered as being a strong, handsome man with broad shoulders and a tender and affectionate disposition. He had dark eyes, rather dark hair, and was a hard worker and a keen business man, known for being honest in his dealings. During the eight years they lived in Perrysburgh, they developed their property from a log cabin in a timberland clearing, to a large frame house on what was described as a beautiful farm. They had fields of wheat, potatoes and corn, with patches of hemp and flax. They had sheep, some horses, and a large flock of geese, and had planted a large fruit orchard. Some maple trees were left which were tapped for their sugar and syrup, and they killed and cured their own meat and made their own soap for the household.

The eight years in Perrysburgh also blessed them with three daughters and one son. By 1835, Almira was eight, Rizpah was six, Adaline was four, and James Vinson was two years old. Vinson's mother was also living with them. Both Vinson and Martha were devoutly religious and active in the Campbellite faith.

The Kirtland Years

The occurrence which was indirectly responsible for the removal of Vinson and his family from New York as well as their conversion to the Church of Jesus Christ was the driving of the Saints from their homes by a mob in Jackson County, Missouri, in the Fall of 1833. When news of the depredations reached the Prophet Joseph Smith in Kirtland, he asked the Lord what he should do in the matter. In answer to his inquiry Joseph received a revelation (D&C 103) in which he was commanded to take Parley P. Pratt as a companion and to "gather up strength" until they could obtain companies "to go up unto the land of Zion by tens, or by twenties, or by fifties, or by an hundred." No less than one hundred men were to march to Zion, and if possible, five hundred. Lyman Wight and Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith and Fredrick G. Williams, and Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt were commanded to set out upon similar missions.⁴ In obedience to this call Joseph Smith records in his diary under the date of February 26, 1834 that he started from home to obtain volunteers for Zion.⁵

Joseph Smith and Parley P. Pratt arrived at the home of Vinson Knight in Perrysburgh, New York, in the evening of March 22, 1834⁶ where they initially received a cool greeting. Vinson was resting from a long day's labor on a buffalo robe in a corner of the dining room and was too indifferent to rise to greet them, which annoyed Martha since they were friends of her family. Vinson's mother actually donned her bonnet and fled the house so she would not have to stay under the same roof with "Mormons." They were more receptive to the missionaries message, however, and stayed up much of the night discussing religion.

On the next day the Knights attended a meeting at Father Nickerson's which more of the family and other friends attended. When at the end of the meeting Joseph asked for volunteers to march to Zion. Martha's brother, Reuben McBride volunteered to join the march and Vinson agreed to drive him by buggy to Kirtland.⁷

Vinson immediately employed Newell Knight and Lydia Gold(th)wait, and a niece, Mario Crandall, to care for his wife and children, and in company with Reuben McBride, followed the Prophet to Kirtland. Vinson must have been impressed by both the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the appearance of Kirtland itself, for he and Martha were baptized sometime in the spring of 1834, and not long thereafter began to make preparations to move their family to Kirtland. Martha's mother and others of her immediate family ultimately joined the Church, but Vinson's relatives, and particularly his mother, remained aloof and basically opposed to Vinson's actions.⁸

It was probably early in June of 1835 that Vinson moved his family the 135 miles down to Kirtland. The trip would have been made by stage coach and canal boat, which would have taken five or six days. Martha's niece, Maria Crandle, made the trip with them and stayed with the Knight family in Kirtland for some time.

Vinson purchased a double lot on Cowdery Street, just where it crosses Joseph Street, which located him about a block south and a block west of the Kirtland Temple.⁹ This was a period of religious excitement, and frequent meetings were held, both on Sunday and in the evenings during the week. There were typically two services on Sunday, one in the morning and another in the afternoon, held in the Temple even though it was unfinished. On Tuesday evenings, during 1835, there

were regular religious meetings held in the schoolhouse on the flats, where Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon and others expounded doctrines of the gospel.¹⁰ On Wednesday, June 24th, Vinson and Martha attended one of the frequent blessing meetings that were held in various homes around the city, and under the hands of Joseph Smith Sr., they each received their Patriarchal blessing.¹¹ That same evening, under the influence of the spirit that filled his soul, Vinson sat down and penned a letter to his mother.

In his letter he told her they were all well and indicated that he was satisfied with his new situation. He mentioned his delight with the religious meetings he had been attending and mentioned with pleasure that his children would now have the opportunity of attending a nearby school. Then, being caught up in the zeal of his own conversion, he attempted to share some of his new religious convictions with her. Although not successful in converting his mother, his letter expresses his own deep feelings for his new religion and demonstrates the beginnings of his great faith in the Gospel:

...I am strong in the faith that I have embraced. It is the thought that will save my soul if I am faithful and do as the Lord has and does require of me, from day to day. I can say to you that this is the gospel of Jesus Christ that was preached anciently...

He assured his mother that the Lord was behind the work going on in Kirtland and expressed his desire that she might also partake of the blessings he was experiencing.¹²

During the next two years Vinson became much more closely acquainted with the Prophet and his family, and when Martha had a son, born on the last-day of December, 1835, it was Joseph Smith Sr. who blessed him and gave him the name of Nathaniel.¹³

The Kirtland temple was under construction during 1835, and both Vinson and Martha would have had the privilege of working on it. They would have also had the opportunity of attending local adult education classes in such subjects as geography, writing and debate. During December of 1835 Vinson and Sidney Rigdon taught a series of classes in English Grammar.¹⁴

Spiritual Blessings

January of 1836 must have been one of the most rewarding months of Vinson's entire life. On the second, during one of the many special Council meetings in Kirtland, the Council voted that Vinson Knight and Thomas Grover should be ordained Elders. Vinson subsequently received this ordination and his name was entered in Kirtland as one of the ministers of the gospel belonging to the Church of the Latter-Day Saints.¹⁵ Only eleven days later the Presidency of Kirtland¹⁶ met with the Twelve Apostles, the High Council of Kirtland, the Bishops of Zion and Kirtland, the presidency of the Seventies and many more of the Elders, in a council meeting. At this meeting Newell K. Whitney, bishop of Kirtland, nominated Elder Vinson Knight to be one of his counselors in the Bishopric. This nomination was seconded by the Presidency, and the vote carried in every quorum and council present, each voting in its respective order; "and Elder Knight was received by the universal voice and consent of all the authorities of the Church. Elder Knight was then ordained under the hands of Bishop Newel K. Whitney, to the office of High Priest and Bishop's counselor, to fill the place of Elder Hyrum Smith, who had been ordained to the Presidency of the High Council of Kirtland."¹⁷

Later on in that same month Vinson had the privilege of participating in the events in the temple which have become known as "Pentacostal times at Kirtland." At "early candlelight" on the 21st of January, 1836, Joseph Smith met with the church Presidency, Father Smith (the church Patriarch), and the bishoprics of Kirtland and Zion at the west school room in the Kirtland Temple to attend to the

ordinances of anointing their heads with holy oil. The anointings and blessings proceeded according to age, beginning with Father Smith. "The-heavens were opened upon us," records the Prophet Joseph, and while Vinson was present, Joseph received the vision that is now recorded in section 137 of the Doctrine and Covenants.¹⁸

Several of the brethren who received their ordinances then also saw glorious visions. Joseph records that the bishops and their counsellors received their anointings under the hands of Father Smith. This anointing was confirmed by the Presidency, and the glories of heaven were unfolded to them also.¹⁹ The High councils of Kirtland and Zion which had met in prayer in adjacent rooms of the temple were then invited into the west room. The president of each quorum then anointed the heads of his colleagues, each in his turn, beginning at the oldest. The visions of heaven were opened to them also. These experiences of Vinson Knight fulfilled a prophesy recorded in the patriarchal blessing which had been given him by Father Smith.²⁰

Toward the end of January, Vinson enrolled in the Hebrew School taught by Professor Seixas which was usually held in one of the upper rooms of the temple, and which lasted for nearly three months.²¹

On the last day of October, 1836, Vinson and Martha suffered the loss of their youngest son, Nathaniel, barely 10 months old. This type of loss, although always tragic, was much more common in the 1830's than it is today. They would have needed and received much consolation and comfort from Joseph and Emma Smith, who, because they had experienced the loss of four of their own children, understood their grief and deep feelings.²²

On November 2, 1836 the "Kirtland Safety Society" was organized of

which Vinson Knight was a member. This society applied to the Ohio State Legislature for a charter for a bank to be known as the "Kirtland Safety Society Bank," but when the charter was denied, proceeded, issuing bank notes under the name of the "Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Bank-ing Company." This society prospered for a short time, but ultimately ended in failure.²³ Vinson's good business mind appears to have kept him from suffering serious losses during this financially troubled period,²⁴ and on at least one occasion he was able to lend money to the Prophet to help him in his financial situation.²⁵

There is one brief mention of Martha Knight, and the suggestion that she functioned in Kirtland as a midwife, in the diary of Caroline Barnes Crosby. Caroline and her husband Jonathan had moved to Kirtland in January of 1836, where they boarded, mostly with Parley P. and Thankful Pratt, while they began building their own home on a lot they purchased west of the temple. Because good weather persisted well into the fall, they were able to move into their new home about the middle of November. Winter came abruptly with a heavy snow storm about the middle of December, and then, on the 19th, her first child, Alma, was born. Caroline records that those attending her at the birth of her son included her physician, Dr Warren A. Cowdery, and Sisters Warren Smith, Sherwood, Vinson Knight and Drury. Although the first names of the husbands are recorded, it is obvious from the context that it was the sisters who were present.²⁶

On September 1, 1837 Vinson was one of thirty-one co-signers of a note to borrow \$2,251.77 for one year from a firm of Halstead and Haines at Painesville, Ohio. This note was to cause Vinson some concern in later years, because according to the Joseph Smith Estate

Papers, it was apparently never paid back.²⁷

On September 3, 1837, at a conference at Kirtland, it was voted that Newell K. Whitney hold his office as bishop and continue to act as such in Kirtland and that Reynolds Cahoon and Vinson Knight continue to act as counselors to the bishop. On the 18th of that same month a letter was sent to the Saints scattered abroad from the bishop at Kirtland and his counselors. The letter admonished the Saints to faithfulness and reminded them of the importance of tithes and offerings in the building up of Zion.²⁸ On the same day the Bishop's letter was written, a general conference of Elders was held in the temple at Kirtland, and in that conference, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were appointed to establish places of gathering for the Saints. They, in company with Vinson Knight and William Smith, left Kirtland on September 27, 1837 for Far West "with the object in mind of finding suitable conditions for the gathering of the Saints where they might escape the wrath of God which was to be poured out upon that generation." During their journey they held meetings in Norton township (Ohio), Dublin, Tere Haute (Iowa) Palmyra, Huntsville, and Carlton (Missouri).²⁹ Upon arrival at Far West a two-day conference was held at which the Church organization in Missouri was re-structured and the officials of the Church sustained.³⁰

The party arrived back at Kirtland about December 10, 1837 to find a general feeling of dissension and apostasy. Two of the Quorum of the Twelve, John F. Boynton and Luke S. Johnson with some others led a group to renounce the church as heretics. This was a difficult time for the Prophet, and only a few of his friends remained loyal.

Joseph was presiding at a meeting in the temple, for example, when many of the apostate elements were there, and one of them arose in anger and threatened vocally in the presence of the group that he was going to put Joe Smith out of the temple. Since the room was well-crowded and the aisles were filled, he got up on the back of the benches and began walking up to the head of the room endeavoring then to get to the Prophet. As he approached, the Prophet looked at Brother Vinson Knight and said, 'Brother Vinson, take that man out of here.' Brother Vinson caught the man by the legs, tossed him head downward over his shoulders, and kicking, struggling, and pawing, he carried him out of the building.³¹

Eventually, however, those who were loyal to the Prophet had to flee Kirtland.

The Missouri Period

It was probably sometime in March of 1838 when Vinson and his family left their home in Kirtland and moved to Missouri.³² This move of nearly a thousand miles would have been especially exciting to the children. Almira was now ten years old, Rizpah and Adaline, who both had their birthdays during the trip, would have turned nine and seven, respectively, and James Vinson was four. Obviously, the trip would have been the hardest on Martha. The family arrived in Caldwell County (Far West)³³ during the last days of May, and they then went into Davies County (Adam-ondi-Ahman) and prepared to settle there. Vinson purchased one of the largest and best farms owned by any of the saints in Missouri. He bought it from Adam Black, a Justice of the Peace, who later became a judge in Davies county.³⁴

Adam-ondi-Ahman was laid out on an elevated piece of land so that there was an extensive view in all directions. There the stakes were set for the four corners of a temple block, which was dedicated by Brigham Young as the site of a temple. Shortly after the dedication, the Prophet Joseph called upon Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and several others and showed them Adam's altar. The following description is by Chapman Duncan:

I think the next day (after arriving the night before) he (Joseph) said to those present, Hyrum Smith, Bishop Vincent [Vinson] Knight, myself and two or three others, "get me a spade and I will show you the altar that Adam offered sacrifice on." ...We went forty rods north of my house. He placed the spade with care, placed his foot on it. When he took out the shovel

full of dirt, it bared the stone. The dirt was two inches deep on the stone I reckon. About four feet or more was disclosed. He did not dig to the bottom of the three layers of good masonry well put wall. The stone looked more like dressed stone, nice joints, ten inches thick, eighteen inches long or more. We came back down the slope, perhaps fifteen rods on the level. The Prophet stopped and remarked that this place where we stood was the place where Adam gathered his posterity and blessed them, and predicted what should come to pass to later generations. The next day he returned to Far West.³⁵

June of 1838 found Vinson Knight in attendance at a conference of Elders and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints at Adam-ondi-Ahman. The Prophet Joseph Smith called the conference for the purpose of organizing a stake of Zion at that place. It was moved, seconded, and carried by the unanimous voice of the assembly that John Smith (an uncle of the Prophet) should act as president of the Stake of Adam-ondi-Ahman. Reynolds Cahoon was unanimously chosen first counselor and Lyman Wight second counselor. Vinson Knight was chosen acting Bishop pro tempore by the unanimous voice of the assembly, after which the high counsel was organized.³⁶

But Vinson was not destined to be bishop of Adam-ondi-Ahman for very long. In August active hostilities broke out between the Saints and the Missourians at an election held at Gallatin, the county seat of Davies county, Missouri.³⁷ William P. Peniston, candidate for representative of the state legislature of Davies County (who had previously led a mob against the Saints in Clay County) was afraid that

if the Mormons were allowed to vote, he would lose the election; hence, he had been stirring up the old settlers against the Saints.³⁸ About eleven o'clock on the morning of the election (August 6, 1838) he climbed up on a barrel and began exciting the people against letting the Saints vote. In attempting to stop some of the brethren from voting, a brawl was started in which the brethren were outnumbered about five to one³⁹ and which Missouri history admits was no fault of the Saints. In the following days the fight became general, although none were killed on either side.

Two days after the Gallatin incident more trouble arose. Adam Black had received partial payment for his farm from Vinson Knight according to agreement. Afterwards, he united himself with a band of mobbers to drive the Saints from, and prevent their settling in Davies county. When Joseph Smith and some of the brethren rode out and questioned him, he confessed what he had done. Adam Black then personally wrote and signed an agreement that he would have nothing to do with any mob, and if they would leave him alone he would not molest them.⁴⁰

Twenty days after giving Joseph and his company this document, Mr. Black made an affidavit that "He had been threatened with instant death, by an armed force of 154 men if he did not sign a certain instrument binding himself, as a Justice of the Peace for said County of Davies, not to molest the people called Mormons; he also swore that they had threatened the lives of himself and other individuals. William P. Peniston, the candidate for public office mentioned above, went into Ray County and swore before Judge Austin A. King that a large body of men had committed violence against Adam Black by surrounding his house, taking him, and forcing him under threats of death to sign a

writing of a very disgraceful character." He also swore that they had threatened to kill him (Peniston) on sight and also to drive all the old citizens of Davies county from the county and to take possession of their property. The leaders of this body of men were, according to Peniston, Joseph Smith and Lyman Wight.⁴¹ Three other mobbers made similar accusations. This aided in stirring up the non-Mormon settlers of Davies county who were already unjustly irate because of the happenings at the election. The result was the expulsion of the Saints from Davies County and eventually from the State of Missouri.

In the midst of all this excitement, Vinson was actively trying to preserve the peace and assist those within the jurisdiction of his bishopric. On the 9th of August, Vinson was present in his capacity as bishop as several of the brethren of the Church and several of the citizens of Mill Port, a small nearby town, met at Adam-ondi-Ahman. There they entered into a covenant that they would preserve the peace and each others rights; and that they would stand up in defense of each other. It was also agreed that if any member of either group should break this covenant, the law and not the members of the other group should deal with the offenders.⁴²

The militia arrived on the scene in late October of 1838, and on the 27th of October Governor Boggs issued the Exterminating Order, in which it was stated that the Mormons were to be treated as enemies and either exterminated or driven from the state. At this time Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, Parley P. Pratt, Lyman Wight, Amasa Lyman and George W. Robinson were taken prisoner and put in Liberty Jail.

Vinson was in Far West while the troops were there and stated that for nearly a week he did not dare go home as the troops threatened his

life. As bishop, he determined to help those of Adam-ondi-Ahman who wished to move to the more centralized location of Far West. To accomplish this he had to resort to a disguise, as everyone who was known to be a leader was taken by the mob. Adaoline was always pleased to remember that although she was only eight at the time, she was the first to recognize her father in his disguise. While Vinson was on the road helping others, he sent a Brother Fisk to aid his own family. The children ever after remembered the mud and the raid and the ride of twenty-five miles under a quilt.

Martha later remembered this period of their lives with sorrow:

"It causes my bosom to heave and tears steal down my cheeks. Vinson enjoyed his usual health until we went to Missouri and the scenes which he passed through there I think together with the change of the climate somewhat impaired his health for his life was sought for most of the time he was there, which drove him to the necessity of hiding himself when he could find a place, sometimes it was in the hazel brush and sometimes in old barns. This sort of thing continued until we left Missouri."⁴³

At one time, Vinson, Alanson Ripley, Lyman Wight, Sylvester Stoddard, Alanson Brown, George A. Smith, and one other associate were arrested by a constable with a posse of forty men. They were taken before a court of three magistrates at Netherton Springs, near General Atchison's camp and harassed. Their lives were repeatedly threatened, and Br. Brown despairing of ever seeing his family again, had decided to try and take one of the mob with him when he was killed. Once, however, during the two days of harassment, Br. George A. Smith was

able to provide some comic relief to the scene:

A man named Riggs came to George, swaggering and yet curious, and asked if he would tell him the secrets of the Danites. "Well, yes," George replied, "if you're willing I'll put you through the passes and ceremonies in due form." The fellow consented and allowed George, with mock seriousness, to clamp a split stick on his nose. "now get down on your knees," George told him, "and I'll put you through the signs." Even the watching mobsters forgot their hatred long enough to snicker in high glee. Before George had time fully to confer the imaginary degrees on his victim, one of the latter's friends exclaimed, "You are a damned fool to let that _____ Mormon impose on you that way." As the credulous one observed that everyone within sight was laughing at him, he got up and whipped out at George: "What will you take, sir, for enough off your tongue to make the devil a pair of britches?"

"I have none to spare for that purpose, sir," George retorted. Thereafter the humiliated dupe was known to his associates as "the Danite." 44

The Establishment of Nauvoo

Once again Vinson was required to move his family to a new home, but this time things were harder. They must have left in early January, they were not certain where they were going, they had very little means with which to provide sustenance, and because he was Bishop others probably relied upon Vinson for help. To make matters worse, Martha was eight months pregnant. Fortunately they were able to find refuge with some old friends in Spencerburg, Pike County, Missouri, which was about 25 miles below Quincy, Illinois. These friends put them up until the river was navigable, which was sufficient time for Vinson to write a lengthy letter of the Missouri difficulties to a Mr. Wm. Cooper of Perrysburg, New York, (dated February 3rd); and for Martha to give birth to a baby girl, (born February 9th). They named their new daughter Martha Abigail.⁴⁵

In his letter to Mr. Cooper, Vinson stated that he wanted to move to the state of Illinois as soon as possible, but he apparently allowed Martha a full month to recover from her delivery. In a letter to the Prophet Joseph in Liberty Jail from Bishop Partridge dated March 5, 1839, the bishop states that to his knowledge Vinson Knight had not yet arrived at Quincy.⁴⁶ Many of the Saints were not as fortunate as the Knights and had to camp, with meager supplies, on the snow and ice at the riverbank across from Quincy until the ice stopped running and they could be safely ferried across.⁴⁷

After Vinson and his family arrived in Quincy, he was appointed to a committee which was called to seek out a good place for the Saints to locate. The committee visited a number of locations, including

Commerce, where several thousand acres were offered the Saints at a good price by Dr. Isaac Galland. A few of the Saints were in favor of scattering instead of locating in one area, but upon receiving word from Joseph Smith, negotiations were entered into to purchase land.

On April 22, on returning from Commerce, Vinson Knight and Wandle Mace saw two men standing as if they had just alighted from their horses. Suddenly Vinson exclaimed, "There is Joseph and Hyrum!" The Prophet and most of those incarcerated with him had escaped their enemies in Missouri and made their way to Illinois to join the Saints.⁴⁸ Two days later in a council meeting held at Quincy it was resolved that President Joseph Smith, Bishop Knight and Alanson Ripley visit the Iowa Territory immediately for the purpose of finding a permanent location for the Church.⁴⁹ These three brethren examined several places in Lee County, Iowa and Hancock County, Illinois. Commerce in Hancock County was chosen as the most suitable place for the Saints to locate, and large tracts of land were later purchased by the Saints there.

A general conference of the Church was held on a Presbyterian camp ground near Quincy, Illinois on May 4, 5 and 6, 1839, and on the first day of this conference Brother Vinson Knight was received into the Church in full bishopric. It was at this same conference that George A. Smith was acknowledged one of the Twelve Apostles.⁵⁰

References to Vinson Knight in Church history between April and October conference 1839 are fragmentary and brief. Enough exists, however, to show that Vinson was closely involved with Joseph Smith and with the other bishops of the Church in helping the Saints to get established in their new locations, and to ease their distress as much

as possible. One example of the close association that Vinson had with the Prophet during this period of time is indicated in a letter by Edward Partridge. Bishop Partridge had written a query in a note to Vinson, but the reply was given in a letter directly from the Prophet.⁵¹

It is significant that even at this early period of time Vinson was deeply involved with Church financial matters. In order to become established in Commerce, the Church made purchases, entered into contracts and promised payments which were at times difficult to fulfil. In order to meet some of these payments a letter signed jointly by Joseph Smith and Vinson Knight was written to Father Bigler, in May of 1839, requesting that he give monetary aid to the Church.⁵² Again, on the 2nd of July, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, and Bishop Whitney crossed the Mississippi with Vinson Knight to the Iowa side to examine a tract of land which had been purchased for the Church by Vinson with the idea in mind that it be appointed as one of the gathering places for the Saints. Joseph Smith advised that a town be built there and that its name be Zarahemla after the ancient city of the Muleckites.⁵³ Between May 13 and June 26, of 1839, Vinson Knight and Oliver Granger, acting as agents for the Church, made two purchases of land in the Iowa Territory. The purchases were made in the Half-Breed Tract in Lee County, Iowa, from Dr. Galland, of 2,638 acres for \$6000, and then of 12,745 acres for \$32,342.22. The Mormons were never able to obtain clear title to this land because as it turned out, Galland did not own it.⁵⁴

The Prophet Joseph Smith had moved himself and family to a log house on the banks of the Mississippi on May 10th, but one entry in his

journal indicates that possibly as late as June 17th, Vinson and his family were still living in Quincy. Joseph records that on June 17th, Bishops Whitney and Knight arrived at Commerce, but that later, Bishop Knight returned to Quincy.⁵⁵

On the first day of a conference held at Commerce, Illinois, October 5, 6 and 7, 1839,⁵⁶ it was unanimously agreed that the city of Commerce be appointed a Stake of Zion and William Marks was appointed to be president. The city was divided into three sections, and Bishop Partridge was appointed bishop of Upper Ward, Bishop Whitney was appointed bishop of Middle Ward, Bishop Knight was appointed Bishop of Lower Ward,⁵⁷ and a High Council was then appointed. Immediately following, a stake of Zion was organized on the Iowa side of the river (Zarahemla Stake) with Elder John Smith as president and Alanson Ripley as bishop.⁵⁸

It is important to realize that our preconceived notions of a bishop residing in his own ward did not apply in 1839. All four bishops and their families lived in Lower Ward, which was presided over by Vinson Knight. Other important members of Vinson's ward included the families of: Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff, to name a few.

Some of the references to Bishop Knight in Joseph's history are somewhat cryptic without further information. On the afternoon of October 15, 1839 Joseph records that he went to Quincy in company with Hyrum Smith, John S. Fullmer, and Bishop Knight, but he makes no mention of why. Twelve days later on the 27th of October, the High Council of Nauvoo (the new name which the Saints gave to Commerce) voted that Vinson Knight be paid for the Iowa side of the ferry at

Montrose as per charter, but without understanding what that charter was, we are left with nothing but speculation and surmises.⁵⁹

Working with the Nauvoo High Council

During the month of November Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon and Orrin Porter Rockwell went to Washington D. C. to personally deliver before Congress, a petition of the Saints to obtain redress for the depredations they had sustained as a result of their expulsion from Missouri. Vinson Knight had been forced to vacate his farm, which was one of the largest and most expensive farms owned by the Saints, so his signature was on the petition, with those of hundreds of other Saints in an attempt to get redress for the loss of their property in Missouri.⁶⁰

After his calling as bishop of Lower Ward in Nauvoo, Vinson and the other bishops (including Bishop A. Ripley of Montrose) met more or less regularly with the Nauvoo High Council to assist in regulating the daily affairs of the Church. During the winter of 1839 this Council usually met on Sunday evenings at the home of Oliver Granger, although occasionally they would meet elsewhere, such as the home of William Law or Joseph Smith. One or more of the bishops were usually present, and assisted in carrying out the resolutions of the High Council. Because of the added insight into his responsibilities as a bishop and the high regard in which Bishop Knight was held, gleanings from the minutes of the Nauvoo High Council meetings which pertain to Vinson are included here.⁶¹

On December 1st Vinson Knight, A. Ripley and H. G. Sherwood were appointed to assist Hyrum Smith, Geo. W. Harris and Oliver Granger as a committee to carry out all needful acts in regard to the cities of Nauvoo and Commerce, including maps and alterations in size and

boundaries and to petition the state legislature for appropriate changes where necessary. Vinson was therefore probably involved the laying out of the city of Nauvoo, determining its size and shape, selecting of street names, locations for public buildings and other things such as the size and location of the cemetery and steamboat landings, etc. At the same meeting, it was decided to put all of the funds that had been donated for the benefit of the poor at October conference into Bishop Knight's hands. He was to make use of it as he saw fit, but he was to make a full account to the High Council. Vinson was also to be sustained in cutting and providing 500 cords of steamboat wood.

At the next meeting, on December 8, the subject of a cow owned by Sister Orson Pratt came up, and it was decided that Bishop Knight secure the cow and that it be kept in Nauvoo for Sister Pratt's use whenever needed.

By the December 15th High Council meeting Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon and Orrin Porter Rockwell had not yet returned from their trip to Washington D.C., so Vinson was assigned to "provide in his own way and use his own judgment in providing for" their families until their return. On December 22nd, it was decided to have Bishop Knight appropriate the donation of a Brother Bently to use in the support of Sister O. Pratt as he saw fit. On Dec 30th 1839 it was decided that Bishops Partridge and Knight be designated as counsellors to the Saints arriving in Nauvoo that they might be better instructed as to current problems and opportunities.

Not all reports of Bishop Knight's efforts were favorable. Brigham Young once stated that Bishop Vinson Knight collected \$70 for the

families of the Twelve while they were on their mission to England, but said that they never got the money.⁶² Nevertheless, whenever the High Council had a needy family to watch over or Church funds to be taken care of, they usually put them into the hands of Vinson Knight, in preference over the other bishops.

Nauvoo records indicate that Vinson owned block 1 of Lot 126, which would have placed him on Main Street, just around the corner to the east, but on the same block with Brigham Young, and just three blocks north of Joseph Smith. He also owned blocks 3 and 4 of lot 141, which would be on the corner of Hyde and Sidney streets, but it would be some time before he had the time or the means to build on either property. The records of Nauvoo Restoration show that from November 29, 1839 through April 13, 1840, Vinson was employed as a clerk or bookkeeper for a store operated by Peter Haws and Oliver Granger. There is some indication that during that initial Nauvoo time period he and his family lived in the room above the store.⁶³

On May 27, 1840 the Church suffered a great loss with the death of Bishop Edward Partridge. He had not been well since the persecutions in Missouri, and the sickly climate of Nauvoo had not helped matters. He was taken with pleurisy in his side about ten days prior to his death. As bishop of Upper Ward, Bishop Partridge was one of Vinson's close associates in the Church and together they had spent many hours in councils and meetings and providing for the poor, the sick and the needy of Nauvoo.

On April 19th, 1840, the Nauvoo High Council voted that a house be procured for Br. Parrish by Bishop Vinson Knight.⁶⁴

During the semi-annual General Conference of the Church in 1840,

which was held on the 3rd of October, Joseph Smith indicated that there had recently been several depredations committed against the citizens of Nauvoo, and it was determined that a committee be appointed to search out the offenders and to bring them to justice. The assigned committee members were, Joseph Smith, Elias Higbee, William Marks, William Law, Charles C. Rich, Dimick Huntington, and Vinson Knight.⁶⁵

A Revelation for the Bishop

Knight family tradition records that near the middle of January 1841, Vinson was walking on the street in Nauvoo with Joseph and Hyrum, when Joseph was overcome with the spirit of revelation. Hyrum and Vinson thought perhaps he was conversing with angels, as he had done many times before, so they carried him quietly thru the school room to his office above. Vinson prayed silently that the Lord's will concerning himself might be revealed through Brother Joseph, and to his delight his prayer was answered in the revelation that Joseph received in what is now recorded as the 124th section of the Doctrine and Covenants.⁶⁶

There are three items in this revelation which affect Vinson Knight's history. First, in verses 20 and 21, George Miller is called to take the place of Edward Partridge, who had died the previous May. His death must have put an additional load on Bishops Knight and Whitney and their counsellors in their administrations to the populace of Nauvoo. Second, Vinson had been earnestly seeking to know the will of the Lord concerning him, and in verses 73 through 76 the Lord answers him specifically:

And there are others also who wish to know my will concerning them, for they have asked it at my hands. Therefore, I say unto you concerning my servant Vinson Knight, if he will do my will let him put stock into that house [the Nauvoo House] for himself, and for his generation after him, from generation to generation. And let him lift up his voice long and loud, in the midst of the people, to plead the cause of the poor and the needy; and let him

not fail, neither let his heart faint; and I will accept of his offerings, for they shall not be unto me as the offerings of Cain, for he shall be mine, saith the Lord. Let his family rejoice and turn away their hearts from affliction; for I have chosen him and anointed him, and he shall be honored in the midst of his house, for I will forgive all his sins, saith the Lord. Amen.⁶⁷

The third significant item in D&C 124 relating to Vinson Knight is the introduction of the sustaining vote of priesthood authorities at general conference. Beginning at verse 123 the Lord listed the offices belonging to his Priesthood, specified the names of those who were currently filling those offices (filling one vacancy and leaving a few to be filled), and commanded in verse 144 that the names be presented and either approved of or disapproved of in general conference. Verse 141 reads:

And again, I say unto you, I give unto you Vinson Knight, Samuel H. Smith, and Shadrach Roundy, if he will receive it, to preside over the bishopric; a knowledge of said bishopric is given unto you in the book of Doctrine and Covenants.⁶⁸

This verse has almost universally been mistakenly assumed to be the call of Vinson Knight to the office of Presiding Bishop in the Church. Questions have then arisen as to whether he ever functioned in that capacity. However, closer examination of the last 23 verses of section 124 verifies that with a few specific exceptions the Lord was not calling people to priesthood leadership positions, but was acknowledging those who already functioned in those offices, and

commanded that they be presented in general conference for approval. A critical examination and detailed analysis will be presented following the biographical portion of this essay.

Into the Political Arena

On the 16th of December 1840 the Illinois state legislature passed an act to incorporate the City of Nauvoo, the Nauvoo Legion and the University of the City of Nauvoo. The first municipal election for city officers was scheduled for 1 February, 1841, and Vinson Knight was nominated in at least one public meeting to have his name put on the ballot (with 16 other names) to be one of nine elected city councillors.⁶⁹ The results of the election introduced Vinson into politics as one of the city's first councilmen. He held the office with some rather illustrious associates, including two members of the First Presidency. The elected officials were announced by the following notice:

MUNICIPAL ELECTION

The first election for members of the City Council took place to-day; and the following ticket was elected by majorities varying from 330 to 337 votes; to-wit:

REGULAR TICKET.

For Mayor.

John C. Bennett.

Aldermen.

William Marks,

Samuel H. Smith,

Daniel H. Wells,

N. K. Whitney,

Counsellors.

Joseph Smith,

Hyrum Smith,
Sidney Rigdon,
Charles C. Rich,
John T. Barnett,
Wilson Law,
D. C. Smith,
J. P. Greene,
Vinson Knight.

The Council will be organized on Wednesday the 3rd inst.⁷⁰

The council was organized on February 3, as advertised, and they lost no time in passing ordinances. In the organizational meeting Joseph Smith presented two bills, one for organizing the University of Nauvoo, and the other for organizing the Nauvoo Legion. Vinson was named as a regent of the University of Nauvoo, and a member of the board of trustees - as was everyone else on the city council from the mayor on down, as well as many of the church leaders who did not get elected to political office. Although the ordinance defining the various offices in the Nauvoo Legion was passed on the 3rd, it was at a separate meeting at Joseph Smith's office on the 4th of February that those positions were filled. At that meeting Vinson Knight was elected one of twelve personal guards⁷¹ and assistant aides-de-camp to Joseph Smith, who had been elected Lieutenant-general just minutes earlier. Then, on March 9, 1841, when the selections were made official, Vinson Knight was appointed by Thomas Carlen, Governor of Illinois to be aide-de-camp to Lieutenant-general Joseph Smith of the Nauvoo Legion.⁷²

Numerous other ordinances were enacted in the initial months of

1841, and Vinson Knight was a part of nearly all of them. On February 15th a temperance act was passed by a unanimous vote of the council, making it an offense punishable by a \$25 fine to sell whiskey less than a gallon at a time, or spiritous liquors in quantities less than a quart. On February 23, an act was passed to incorporate the Nauvoo Agricultural and Manufacturing Association in the county of Hancock. Vinson was one of 20 trustees. On March 1, Vinson Knight, Daniel H. Wells and Charles C. Rich were appointed as both a building and a finance committee for the University of Nauvoo. Also, the City of Nauvoo was divided into four wards, with each ward represented on the city council by one alderman and two councillors. For the first term, Samuel H. Smith was appointed Alderman and John P. Greene and Vinson Knight were appointed councillors for the first ward, which included everything north of Knight Street and West of Wells Street, to the city limits (i.e. the northwest quarter of the city, which included all of the old city of Commerce).⁷³

Bishop Knight's responsibilities were not all political. In the January 15th edition of the Times and Seasons we find the following notice:

Those of the lesser priesthood, in the City of Nauvoo, are requested to meet at my house, on the 24th inst. at 6 o'clock P.M. for the purpose of organizing and regulating that quorum. A general attendance is requested.

V. KNIGHT, Bp.⁷⁴

First of all, the notice indicates that by this time Vinson and Martha had moved into their home, and hence had a place large enough to accommodate a reasonably large meeting. The next thing -

their home was on the corner of Hyde street and Sidney Street, facing Hyde,⁷⁵ and it may have been built during the summer of 1840. We have no record of employment for Vinson between April 13, 1840 when he left the establishment of Peter Haws and Oliver Granger for whom he had been a clerk or bookkeeper, until he was elected to the Nauvoo City Council in February of 1841. If he was without regular employment during at least part of that period it would have given him time to work on building a home. The records of Nauvoo Restoration, however, indicate that Vinson was directly involved in the Nauvoo & Montrose Ferry with Dan Jones & Co., either as an employee, or even as a partner in the firm. Some of the Nauvoo High Council minutes indicate an involvement with things relating to ferry and steamboat operations, during 1839,⁷⁶ so he may have left Haws and Granger because of more pressing business matters.

Secondly, something must have happened to cause a postponement of the advertised meeting: some of the key people being ill or out of town? another conflicting meeting? too many people to accommodate at Bishop Knight's home? because there is no indication that such a meeting was held on January 24th. A meeting organizing the lesser priesthood was held on March 21st,⁷⁷ and it would seem redundant to hold the March 21st meeting if the priesthood had been organized on January 24th. In the March 21st meeting the quorums and officers of the lesser priesthood were organized in preparation for their presentation in general conference in April. In the meantime Bishop Knight had been making other preparations for April conference, and had placed the following notice in the March 1st issue of the Times and Seasons:⁷⁸

PROCLAMATION.

-To the Saints who are coming to the conference--Forget not your tithes, and your offerings, for we have in this place the blind, the halt, the widow and the orphan, and we desire that they all may have a blessing. Forget not those whom God has placed at your head to instruct and teach you, for they have to eat and drink and be clothed. I will say that if the poor can eat, and the needy have their wants supplied, the Saints will get a blessing worthy of their profession; I say it by the authority of my office, and in the name of Jesus Christ.

V. KNIGHT Bishop.

Nauvoo March 1st, 1841

It is interesting to know that Ezra T. Benson, great-grandfather of President Ezra Taft Benson, arrived in Nauvoo, with his wife, and a wagon piled high with provisions, just in time to attend April conference:

In Nauvoo, until he could get started, he stayed with Bishop Vincent [Vinson] Knight, and he asked what he should do with his goods in the wagon parked in front of the house, while he attended Conference.

"Let them remain in the wagon," Knight answered.

"But will they be safe?" Benson asked. For he had heard some bad rumors about the safety of property in the City of the Saints.

"They'll be safe enough," the Bishop assured him. "Besides, I'll be responsible for anything that's taken."

That satisfied Benson, the goods stayed in the wagon, and the two went to Conference. "When the conference was over," says the owner of the parked wagon, "nothing had been touched." He was surprised, in view of that rumor about theft in Nauvoo, and his opinion of its inhabitants went up. The conference had continued for six days.⁷⁹

April Conference, 1841

The first day of April conference of 1841 was a gala affair, to which many honored visitors and special guests were invited. It was the first opportunity to show off the newly organized Nauvoo Legion, and it was to be the time of the laying of the cornerstones of the Nauvoo Temple. The first day of conference began with an early assembly of the Nauvoo Legion, with the 7:30 arrivals of Brigadier-Generals Law and D. C. Smith announced by the discharge of artillery and the 8:00 arrival of Major-General Bennett announced by the discharge of cannon. At 9:30 the arrival of Lieutenant-General Joseph Smith and his party, which included Vinson Knight as his personal aide-de-camp, sixteen bodyguards and other staff and field officers, was celebrated by the presentation of a beautiful silk national flag which had been made by the ladies of Nauvoo, the acceptance of which was hailed by cannon fire. Following the presentation, General Smith and his party passed the lines in review.

At noon the procession arrived at the temple grounds, which they enclosed on all four sides, when the senior officers, honored guests, band etc. were conducted to a stand at the principle cornerstone. After a stirring oration by President Sidney Rigdon, Lieutenant-General Joseph Smith laid the first (south-east) cornerstone of the Nauvoo temple in full military dress uniform, after which they adjourned for one hour.

Following adjournment, the other three cornerstones were laid, the fourth or last (north-east) cornerstone being laid by the bishops, after which Bishop Whitney pronounced the following:

The fourth and last corner stone, expressive of the Lesser Priesthood, is now duly laid, and may the blessings before pronounced, with all others desirable, rest upon the same forever. Amen.⁸⁰

It has been asked, if Bishop Knight was the presiding bishop, why Bishop Whitney made the pronouncement at the laying of the last cornerstone. The answer is that as aide-de-camp, he was seated at Joseph Smith's side while the cornerstone was laid by the other bishops and the bishop's counsellors.

It may be significant that on April 8th, when the authorities of the church were presented to the conference, Bishop Knight's name was presented first:

Bishopric - Vincent [Vinson] Knight, counselors Samuel H. Smith and Shadrac Roundey. Newel K. Whitney, coun[selors] Jonathan H. Hale, William Felshaw. George Miller, councillors Peter Haws and John Snider. Isaac Higbee, coun[selors] Graham Coultrin and John S. Higbee. Alanson Ripley had his Bishopric taken from him for frequently being drunk and not fit for business.⁸¹

It was, however, Newel K. Whitney and not Vinson Knight who presented the names of the priesthood leaders to the lesser priesthood for their sustaining vote. On the last day of this Conference (Sunday the 11th) the bishops of the stake were called upon to speak.⁸²

In Support of the Prophet

On the 5th of June, 1841, Sheriff King and an Illinois posse arrested the Prophet Joseph Smith at Heberlin's Hotel, at Bear Creek (about 28 miles South of Nauvoo), on the threadbare charges of murder, arson, and burglary etc. but Joseph was able to get a writ of habeas corpus at Quincey, Illinois. Judge Stephen A. Douglas appointed a hearing on the writ at the town of Monmouth, Adams County, for the 8th of June where a court would begin a regular term. Accordingly, the Prophet and twelve of his friends who came along as witnesses in the case (including Vinson) left Nauvoo for Monmouth early on the morning of the 7th. They traveled all that day and well into the night and then camped in the road about midnight. Early the next morning they resumed their journey and arrived at Monmouth in time for breakfast. The trial was postponed one day until the 9th and lasted all of that day and from eight o'clock until about eleven o'clock (a.m.) on the 10th. The trial was a complete farce, with the courtroom so crowded with spectators anxious to see "the Mormon Prophet" that the sheriff was fined by the Judge for neglecting to keep them back.

A young lawyer from Missouri volunteered to plead against me; he tried his utmost to convict me, but was so high with liquor, and chewed so much tobacco, that he often called for cold water. Before he had spoken many minutes, he turned sick, requested to be excused by the court and went out of the court house, puking all the way down stairs. As the Illinoisians called the Missouri people "pukes," this circumstance caused considerable amusement to the members of the bar.⁸³

Some of the defence lawyers had been told that if they sought to defend Joseph Smith, they could never again look to the citizens of that county for political favors. Joseph Smith was left totally innocent but nevertheless with a large bill for court costs. The party returned to Nauvoo arriving about 4 p.m. on the 11th of June.

Joseph Smith later petitioned the Deputy Sheriff of Adams County for costs of the expenses involved in the trial, including those of traveling to and from Monmouth for himself and for the twelve witnesses. It is very unlikely, however, that either Joseph or any of his party ever received compensation.⁸⁴

On August 16, 1841, there was a special conference held in Nauvoo for the purpose of completing certain items of business before the October Conference. One of the items to be taken care of was that of sending experienced missionaries to the field. It was moved by Bishop Knight "that the quorum of the Twelve select the individuals to go and preach in such places as they may judge expedient, and present the same to the conference, with a view of expediting the business of the day."⁸⁵ Another item of business taken up by the conference was that of the poor in Nauvoo. Bishops Knight and Miller presented the situation at the conference, and a collection was taken for the benefit of those in need.

In the fall of 1841, the note which had been co-signed by Vinson on Sept. 1, 1837, and which had never been repaid, was given over to agents for collection. Although Vinson was only one of 31 co-signers, he would nevertheless have been pressed for payment. In 1837 the loan was only for \$2,251.77, but by 1841 the interest would have made the amount due considerably larger.⁸⁶

On Tuesday, September 28, 1841 the Knight family was blessed with another addition. Martha gave birth in Nauvoo to a son whom they named Rodolphus Elderkin Knight. This was their seventh child, although Nathaniel had died at the age of 10 months in 1836 in Kirtland. By this time Almira was fourteen, Rizpah was twelve, Adaline was ten, James Vinson had just turned eight and Martha Abigail was two.⁸⁷

On February 7 of 1842 George A. Smith and his bride of 7 months moved into a room which they rented from Bishop Knight at his home in Nauvoo, while they were preparing another place. They stayed for three months at the rate of \$2 per month. They had previously lived at Montrose, and moved to try and avoid the unhealthy situation they found there.⁸⁸

On March 9, 1842 the Prophet Joseph Smith records in his journal that in the afternoon he called at Bishop Knight's home with the recorder. No information is given as to what needed recording, and could have been some land titles or Church financial transactions, but there is another interesting possibility. In 1899, Hyrum Belnap (a grandson of Vinson Knight) wrote a letter to Andrew Jensen about his grandfather. Part of the letter is as follows:

At the [time] plural marriage was revealed there was difficulty to find persons that would consent to go into it on the female side. Martha Knight says the prophet Joseph told her that she was the first one who consented to [her] husband to have another wife. And her husband Vinson Knight did take another woman and was sealed to her. A mis Murrick.⁸⁹

40

Joseph's journal entry is not atypical of other journal entries on dates when plural marriages were performed.

41

Masonry and Bankruptcy

In March of 1842, Vinson applied to enter the Masonic Lodge and on the evening of the 17th, his name appears, along with forty others, on a petition for initiation. It is interesting to note that on the application he lists his occupation as "Bishop." His application was approved on April 7th and on the 9th, he and Samuel H. Smith and William Smith were introduced into the lodge as Entered Apprentice Masons. On April 12th, the three were balloted for, found clear, and passed to the degree of a Fellow Craft Mason. Then, on Wednesday, April 13th, D. Hibbard, Samuel H. Smith, Wm. Smith and Vinson Knight were raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason, and signed the by-laws. Although Vinson's name appears as #136 of those men Initiated, Passed, and Raised by Nauvoo Lodge U.D. between April 7, 1842 and August 11, 1842, he appears to have never attended another meeting.⁹⁰

In April the Nauvoo Wasp contained an advertisement that representatives of the legal firm of Ralston, Warren and Wheat, of Quincy, would be in Nauvoo about the 14th to attend to applications for bankruptcy under the newly established bankruptcy law. Joseph Smith and Vinson Knight were two of many who decided to make use of this new law to ease their financial situations. It appears that Joseph Smith's interest in the new law was mainly to rid himself of the numerous vexatious and irresponsible law suits which were being continually brought against him, without ignoring legitimate personal and Church debts.⁹¹ Vinson had also been heavily involved in Church finances since 1839, and the same reasoning seems nearly as applicable to his situation as it does to Joseph's. If we had more details of Vinson's

life we would probably find his finances entangled with those of the Church. On Monday, 18 April 1842 Joseph and several of the Mormon leadership (probably including Vinson) rode to Carthage to swear to their affidavits of insolvency before the clerk of the County Commissioners Court as required by law.⁹² When on May 11th the Prophet Joseph records that he called at Bishop Knight's,⁹³ it most likely had to do with some of the arrangements for the impending bankruptcies.

(Vinson is also made mention of in Journal History under the date of May 11, when he and two other bishops signed a statement in concurrence with the Quorum of the Twelve.)⁹⁴

On May 14, 1842, the following notice appeared in The Wasp:

DISTRICT COURT OF THE UNITED STATES, WITHIN AND FOR THE DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS.

In the matter of the petition of Vinson Knight, of Hancock county, to be declared a Bankrupt, and to be discharged from his debts.

Notice is hereby given, that Vinson Knight, of Hancock county has filed his petition in this court to be declared a Bankrupt, and to be discharged from his debts under the Act of Congress, in such case made and provided: and that an order has been duly entered in this Court appointing the 6th day of June next, at the District Court room in the City of Springfield in this District, as the time and place for the hearing of said Petition; all persons interested may then and there appear and show cause, if any they have, why the prayer of said Petition should not be granted.

Dated this 28th day of April A.D. 1842

J.H. RALSTON, WARREN & WHEAT,

Solicitors for Petitioner

Attest: James F. Owings Clerk.⁹⁵

Other notices for Bankruptcy appearing on the same page are:

1. George Backster
2. Amos Davis
3. Charles Warner
4. Windsor P. Lyon
5. Arthur Morrison
6. George Morey
7. John P. Green
8. Joseph Smith [President]
9. Sidney Rigdon [1st Counsellor]
10. Vinson Knight [bishop]
11. Reynolds Cahoon
12. Samuel H. Smith [bishop's counsellor]
13. Hyrum Smith [patriarch]
14. Jared Carter
15. Henry G. Sherwood [high councilman]
16. Elias Higbee [church recorder]

Vinson's application was granted a primary decree from the District Court in Springfield on 8 June 1842, and scheduled hearings for their finalization on 1 October 1842.⁹⁶

In the summer of 1842 Mayor John C. Bennett's sheep's clothing began to wear thin, and he was seen for the first time in his true light. On the 20th of July, Vinson signed his name with the other members of the

City Council to a sworn statement regarding the character of John C. Bennett and touching also upon some of the statements he (Bennett) had made.⁹⁷ [HC5:68]

There is an indication that Vinson may have been one of those few selected by the Prophet Joseph to receive their temple ordinances prior to the completion of the Nauvoo Temple. If this was the case Vinson would have received these ordinances in the room above Joseph's store.⁹⁸

In the Fullness of Life

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote the following in his diary on Sunday, July 31, 1842:

In council with Bishops Miller and Whitney, Brigham Young, John Taylor, &c., concerning Bishop Vinson Knight's sickness. Brother Knight has been sick about a week, and this morning he began to sink very fast until twelve o'clock when death put a period to his sufferings.⁹⁹

Martha, in a letter to Vinson's mother gives a few more of the particulars of Vinson's death as follows:

...the fatigue and hardships and experiences through which he had just passed was too much for him. He was soon taken sick vomiting. It was in the morning and he vomited until evening and could get no relief although the doctor had stood over him about four or five hours constantly. He was much exhausted and I thought he would not live until morning. I then sent for President Joseph Smith.¹⁰⁰

In the August 15 issue of the Times and Seasons the following obituary appeared:

DIED--In this city, on Sunday the 31st day of July last, VINSON KNIGHT, aged 38 years. Brother Knight was one of the bishops of this church, and a man favored of God, and respected by all good men. He had been long in the church and had always adorned his life, works and profession, with that decorum virtue and

humility, which ever characterizes the true followers of our blessed Jesus.

Warring the great warfare of a saint, he has waded through the midst of persecution, over the blood stained prairies of Missouri, in the chilling blasts of winter, comforting the fleeing saints, and administering to the wants of his own family; yea, through great tribulations, heart and hand with his brethren; he was ever ready to give a reasonable answer for his hope in things to come; and showed by his actions as well as words, that he meant to live godly in Christ Jesus, although he suffered persecution. Though he has been removed, as it were in the midst of life, yet in the assurance of a glorious resurrection, he has died the death of the righteous: henceforth there is laid up for him a crown that fadeth not away. 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord!'¹⁰¹

The Prophet Joseph Smith delivered the funeral sermon himself; and pointing to Vinson's casket he said, "There lies the best friend I had on earth."

VINSON KNIGHT

March 14, 1804 - July 31, 1842

pages
48-52
missing

To Preside Over the Bishopric

Verse 141 of D&C 124 has typically been considered to be the call of Vinson Knight to be the Presiding Bishop of the church. Discussion then turns to whether Bishop Knight functioned in that calling prior to his death in July of 1842. In 1880, Andrew Jenson, as assistant Church Historian indicated that from the documents then available to him, he was unable to ascertain whether Bishop Knight officiated in the office to which he had been called. Again, in 1885, in a series of articles on the Aaronic Priesthood appearing regularly in The Contributor, Elder Orson F. Whitney quotes verse 141 of D&C 124 and then records:

These were the first nominations made for the Presiding Bishopric, but if the brethren named ever acted in that capacity, the fact is not recorded in the Prophet's history.¹⁰⁷

Many historians find it unnecessary to broach the problem, being content to note the duties of a Presiding Bishop, or to state that Bishop Whitney was sustained as Presiding Bishop in 1847.¹⁰⁸

It should be noted that not all General Authorities and/or Church Historians had difficulties with the question of Vinson Knight being the first presiding bishop of the Church. In a discourse given in the tabernacle in Ogden on July 18, 1880, President John Taylor (then president of the Quorum of the Twelve which at that time was the presiding Quorum in the Church) made a few remarks on the subject. He had been reading from the Doctrine and Covenants about the Priesthood and then he said:

I would remark, again, that Bishop Whitney was chosen and set

apart as a Bishop, to manage the affairs in Kirtland, Geauga County, Ohio, and not only there, but to preside over all affairs associated with that Bishopric in all of that country, and occupied the position of a general Bishop, presiding over a large district of country, the same as Edward Partridge did in Zion. But these are not what we call presiding Bishops. In the same revelation that George Miller was called to occupy the place of Edward Partridge, and to hold the same kind of Bishopric that he held, we find that there was a Presiding Bishopric appointed.

"141. And again, I say unto you, I give unto you Vinson Knight, Samuel H. Smith, and Shadrach Roundy, if he will receive it, to preside over the Bishopric."¹⁰⁹

About a month later, on August 5, 1880 President Taylor gave a discourse at Paris, Bear Lake of which the following is an excerpt:

But neither of them [Bishops N. K. Whitney and E. Partridge] was presiding Bishop of the Church at that time. But you will find that afterwards George Miller was appointed to the same Bishopric that Edward Partridge held; and that Vinson Knight was appointed to the Presidency over the Bishopric, with Samuel H. Smith and Shadrach Roundy as his counselors.¹¹⁰

In his "Items on Priesthood," President John Taylor again reviewed the matter. "Items on Priesthood" was presented to and unanimously sustained by the Quorum of the Twelve, and then, on the day that President Taylor was sustained as President of the Church (August 9, 1880), it was presented to and accepted by the assembled body of the Priesthood, in General Priesthood Meeting. In his review of of the

Presiding Bishopric from the scriptures, President Taylor says:

- There seems to be a difference in the duties of Bishops; Brother Miller's was to be like Edward Partridge's whose duties are distinctly marked out as follows: "And again, verily I say unto you, my servant George Miller is without guile; he may be trusted because of the integrity of his heart; and for the love which he has to my testimony I, the Lord, love him." - Sec. 124, par 20 (see also par. 21), p. 431.

At the same time and in the same manner Vinson Knight, Samuel H. Smith, and Shadrach Roundy were appointed to preside over the Bishopric.

"And again, I say unto you, I give unto you Vinson Knight, Samuel H. Smith, and Shadrach Roundy, if he will receive it, to preside over the Bishopric; a knowledge of said Bishopric is given unto you in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants." - Sec. 124, par. 141, p. 446. Vinson Knight was a Bishop, the two others were of course his Counselors.¹¹¹

The following day, in general conference, Orson Pratt discussed some of the topics that had been presented by President Taylor on the previous evening:

Here were two Bishops, then, one having jurisdiction in the West, a thousand miles from the other; the other having jurisdiction in the East. Their duties were pointed out, but neither of them was a Presiding Bishop. But what were they? As was clearly shown by President Taylor at the Priesthood meeting

on last evening, they were general Bishops. By and by, after the Church of God was driven from the State of Missouri, it became necessary to have a Presiding Bishop; and the Lord gave a revelation, saying:

"Let my servant Vinson Knight, and my servant Shadrach Roundy, and my servant Samuel H. Smith, be appointed as Presidents over the Bishopric of my Church."

Here, then, is the first intimation that we have of a Presiding Bishop. Neither Bishop Partridge nor Newel K. Whitney at that time was a presiding Bishop, but each one held distinct jurisdiction, presiding in a distinct locality, neither presiding over the other. But when Vinson Knight, in years afterwards, was called it was his duty to preside over all of the Bishops that were then appointed."¹¹²

By the time Martha McBride Knight Smith Kimball died in 1901, her obituary stated unequivocally that Vinson Knight had been a presiding Bishop of the church.¹¹³

The most detailed examination of the subject to date has been by D. Michael Quinn in examining the Presiding Quorums of the Church.¹¹⁴ In his review of the subject Mr. Quinn advances the theory that Bishop Knight was not allowed to act in his office because of "an act of presumption on his part." Pointing to the announcement calling a meeting at Vinson Knight's home to reorganize the Lesser Priesthood, which was placed by Bishop Knight in the 15 January edition of the Times and Seasons (four days prior to the writing of the January 19th revelation), he presumes that Bishop Knight, by anticipating the

calling which he was to have received, forfeited his right to that calling. Mr. Quinn continues by evidencing:

When announcement was made in Times and Seasons on February 1, 1841, of the most important new appointments in the recent revelation, there was no mention of Knight's appointment, even though George Miller's lesser appointment to succeed Partridge was announced.¹¹⁵

Some of Mr. Quinn's supportive arguments, and those of others which will be addressed here include the following:¹¹⁶

1. Mr. Quinn indicates that although his calling is recorded in D&C 124, there is [apparently] no record that Vinson Knight was ever ordained or set apart. [Hyrum Smith was ordained to his calling in January of 1841 and George Miller remembers being set apart in February of that year.]¹¹⁷ By contrast we shall show that Vinson Knight was properly ordained to his office.

2. Mr. Quinn and others state that there is no distinct indication that Vinson Knight ever acted in the capacity of Presiding Bishop of the Church. We shall discuss three separate occasions when Vinson Knight clearly acted in his capacity as Presiding Bishop.

3. Mr. Quinn feels that it is significant that when the Lesser Priesthood was organized, Bishop Knight's signature on the minutes was last of the four Bishops, not first, as it should have been were he the Presiding Bishop. We shall demonstrate the frailty of that assumption.

4. Mr. Quinn indicates that when those who had been called to new positions by D&C 124 were listed in the Times and Seasons, if Vinson Knight were Presiding Bishop, then his name should have been among them. We shall demonstrate that the absence of Vinson Knight's name from the Times and Seasons list is supportive evidence that he was Presiding Bishop.

5. Mr. Quinn documents that at the laying of the fourth cornerstone of the Nauvoo temple by the Bishops, it was Bishop Whitney, not Bishop Knight who gave the brief speech of acknowledgement. We shall demonstrate that in the existing circumstances that would have been totally proper.

6. Mr. Quinn indicates that when Bishop Knight was sustained in April 1842 conference, his name was presented as one of the Bishops of Nauvoo, not as Presiding Bishop of the Church. We shall demonstrate that Vinson Knight was in fact sustained as Presiding Bishop of the church.

7. Mr. Quinn queries, If Vinson Knight was Presiding Bishop, why did he continue to preside over a local ward in Nauvoo until his death in 1842, and why did his obituary in the Times and Seasons lists him as "one of the Bishops of this church" and not as Presiding Bishop of the Church? We shall demonstrate that at that time he was Presiding Bishop of the church precisely because he was Bishop of Lower Ward in Nauvoo.

Answers: A Response

Some of the flaws in Mr. Quinn's arguments and assumptions lead to questions and troubles more problematic than the original difficulty of Vinson Knight apparently attempting to function as Presiding Bishop before being called to that office. As an example: why would an act of presumption which would leave Vinson Knight unworthy in the eyes of the Lord to function as Presiding Bishop, nevertheless leave him fully worthy to continue to function as Bishop of Lower Ward in Nauvoo? The difficulty again lies in the assumption that Vinson Knight was called to be Presiding Bishop on February 19, 1842.

As is frequently the case, the best commentary of a revelation is a detailed reading of that revelation itself. In section 124, the last segment, beginning with verse 123, forms an independent portion in which the Lord names the priesthood officers in the Church and requires that they be presented in general conference.

In verse 123 the Lord declares his intent, to name those in the offices which belong to the Priesthood, and then begins, in verse 124, by naming Hyrum Smith as Church Patriarch. Hyrum had been appointed patriarch by the Lord, earlier in the same revelation, where it was explained that he was to fill the office that was left vacant by his father, Joseph Smith Sr., through his death on September 14, 1840.

Joseph Smith is then named as "a presiding elder over all my church" (verse 125), a position which he had held since he was sustained as First Elder at the organization of the Church in 1830.¹¹⁸

In verse 126 the Lord names Sidney Rigdon and William Law as counsellors to Joseph, the three to constitute the First Presidency. Sidney Rigdon had been functioning in his role as counsellor in the

First Presidency since March 18, 1833, and William Law had also been previously assigned to his position, in verses 91 and 97 through 102 of this same revelation, where it was clearly explained that he was to fill the void made by Hyrum Smith when he was made Patriarch.¹¹⁹

The Lord next names Brigham Young as President of the Twelve, a position which he had held for almost two years, since Marsh's apostasy on March 17, 1839.¹²⁰

The remainder of the Twelve are then individually named by the Lord (verses 129-130), noting specifically the vacancy left by the death of David W. Patten which had not yet been filled. No one is called to fill this vacancy, but the Lord indicates that this should be done.

In verses 132-133 the Lord names the Nauvoo High Council, but like the Twelve, these brethren were not being called to those positions, they had served in them since the organization of the Nauvoo Stake on October 5, 1839. The one exception is Aaron Johnson, who the Lord specifies may be ordained to fill the vacancy left by the death of Seymour Brunson.¹²¹

In verses 133 and 136 the Lord names Don Carlos Smith as the quorum president of the High Priests and names Amasa Lyman and Noah Packard as his counselors. But again these brethren were not being called to those positions. Don Carlos Smith had been president of the High Priests since 1836 in Kirtland, and the position was re-confirmed in October conference of 1839. That Amasa Lyman and Noah Packard were already functioning as his counsellors is indicated by a document entitled "Names of members of the High Priests quorum, organized at Nauvoo April 7, 1840" in which the names of Don Carlos, Noah Packard and Amasa Lyman are the first three of 26 names on the list.¹²²

The Lord next names the Elders Quorum presidency as John A. Hicks, Samuel Williams, and Jesse Baker, (verse 137). There are no extant records of Nauvoo Elders Quorum members prior to 1842, however there is nothing to indicate that these brethren were not functioning in those offices prior to January of 1841. It should be noted that John A. Hicks was rejected as Elders quorum president in April Conference of 1841.

Again, the Lord names the presidents of Seventy (verse 138) and again it is brethren who were already functioning in those positions, some since 1835, some as recently ordained as March 6, 1838.¹²³

The total context of verses 123-142 of D&C 142 is that of the Lord acknowledging those who are functioning in presiding capacities in the Church, never of calling them to new positions unless specifically so designated as replacing someone who has died.

In summary, the priesthood offices designated by the Lord, taken from Section 124, and the persons filling those offices, with the dates of calling, ordination or setting apart are as follows (references have already been given):

Patriarch:

Hyrum Smith	(Previously in the same revelation)
-------------	-------------------------------------

First Presidency:

Joseph Smith	(Apr 06, 1830)
--------------	----------------

Sidney Rigdon	(Mar 18, 1833)
---------------	----------------

William Law	(Previously in the same revelation)
-------------	-------------------------------------

President of Twelve:

Brigham Young	(Mar 17, 1839)
---------------	----------------

Quorum of Twelve

-[Brigham Young]	(Feb 14, 1835)
Heber C. Kimball	(Feb 14, 1835)
Parley P. Pratt	(Feb 21, 1835)
Orson Pratt	(Apr 16, 1835)
Orson Hyde	(Feb 15, 1835)
William Smith	(Feb 15, 1835)
John Taylor	(Dec 19, 1838)
John E. Page	(Dec 19, 1838)
Wilford Woodruff	(Apr 26, 1839)
Willard Richards,	(Apr 14, 1840)
George A. Smith	(Apr 26, 1839)
.[vacancy]	(to be filled)

Nauvoo High Council:

Samuel Bent	(Oct 05, 1839)
Henry G. Sherwood	(Oct 05, 1839)
George W. Harris	(Oct 05, 1839)
Charles C. Rich	(Oct 05, 1839)
Thomas Grover	(Oct 05, 1839)
Newel Knight	(Oct 05, 1839)
David Dort	(Oct 05, 1839)
Dunbar Wilson	(Oct 05, 1839)
[Aaron Johnson]	(to be ordained)
David Fullmer	(Oct 05, 1839)
Alpheus Cutler	(Oct 05, 1839)
William Huntington	(Oct 05, 1839)

High Priest Quorum Presidency:

-Don C. Smith (Jan 15, 1836 - reconfirmed Oct 05, 1839)

Amasa Lyman (by Apr 7, 1840)

Noah Packard (by Apr 7, 1840)

Elders Quorum Presidency:

John A. Hicks (no record)

Samuel Williams (no record)

Jesse Baker (no record)

Presidents of the Quorum of Seventies:

Joseph Young (Feb 28, 1835)

Josiah Butterfield (Apr 06, 1837)

Daniel Miles (Apr 06, 1837)

Henry Herriman (Feb 06, 1838)

Zera Pulsipher (Mar 06, 1838)

Levi Hancock (Feb 28, 1835)

James Foster (Apr 06, 1837)

Presiding Bishopric:

Vinson Knight (Oct 05, 1839 as Bp of Nauvoo Lower Ward)

Samuel H. Smith (no record)

Shadrach Roundy (no record)

Priests Presidency:

Samuel Rolfe (no record)

[not named]

[vacancy]

Teachers Presidency:

[not named]

[not named]

[not named]

Deacons Presidency:

[not named]

[not named]

[not named]

Nauvoo Stake Presidency

[not named]

[not named]

[not named]

It should be noted that just because an individual was not named does not mean that the office was vacant. William Marks held the office of Stake President, but was not named in the revelation.

It is clear from the above list that when the Lord named Vinson Knight, Samuel H. Smith and Shadrach Roundy as presiding over the bishopric, he was not calling them to that position, but rather was acknowledging that they were already functioning in that position, and had been since October 5, 1839. He then required that they be presented to the general conference in April.

In support of this, note that when the announcements of new callings were made in the February 1 issue of the Times and Seasons, Hyrum Smith, William Law and George Miller, each of whom had been called to a new position, were mentioned, but none of the individuals whom the Lord

acknowledged as already functioning in their respective positions (including Vinson Knight) were named.¹²⁴ Another verification of this interpretation is the example of Charles C. Rich, who was functioning as a member of the Nauvoo High Council when the revelation was received. He was named as a member of the High Council in the revelation, but by April conference, he had been called as a counsellor in the Stake Presidency, and was sustained as such. Naming Charles C. Rich as a high councilman in the revelation was not calling him to that position.

If we insist that verse 141 of section 124 is calling Vinson Knight, Samuel H. Smith and Shadrach Roundy to the presiding bishopric, we are seriously violating the intent of the last 23 verses of that revelation, because in every instance of over 40 individuals named, the Lord is acknowledging someone already functioning in their respective office, and only in the instance of Aaron Johnson, who was specifically called to replace Seymour Brunson, who had died, was there indication that this should be, or could be, callings to positions within the Church.

The notice that Bishop Knight placed in the Times and Seasons calling the lesser priesthood together to be organized is an excellent example of his functioning as Presiding Bishop, and this notice was published four days prior to his supposed calling on January 19, 1841.¹²⁵ That the meeting was not held does not detract from the fact that he called it.

When the Lesser Priesthood was reorganized on March 21, 1841, Vinson's name appearing fourth on the list of the bishops conducting the meeting has no more significance than George Miller's (the newest

bishop) appearing first; or of Joseph Smith's name appearing 11th of 20 elders who signed Bishop Edward Partridges "Bishop's License," or that Hyrum Smith's name was last.¹²⁶

Another notice, placed by Bishop Knight in the Times and Seasons just prior to April Conference 1842 also demonstrates his functioning as Presiding Bishop. First, the notice is to "the Saints who are coming to the conference," which includes Saints throughout the entire Church. This alone would have placed it out of his jurisdiction had he been merely the bishop of Lower Ward in Nauvoo. Second, he promises the Saints (all of them) a blessing "by the authority of my office, and in the name of Jesus Christ," which conveys the impression that Bishop Knight considered his office to be far more general than that of bishop of one of the local wards.¹²⁷

On October 5, 1839 the general conference of the church had appointed Vinson Knight to be Bishop of Lower Ward in Nauvoo. A careful examination of the Nauvoo Stake records has allowed the boundaries of Upper, Middle and Lower Wards to be determined. Upper Ward extended from the northern boundary of Nauvoo to Joseph Street. Middle ward extended from Joseph Street on the north to approximately White Street on the south. Lower Ward extended from approximately White Street to the southern border of Nauvoo.¹²⁸

Some of the more recognizable families who lived in Lower Ward in Nauvoo, and hence came under Vinson Knight's jurisdiction as Bishop included:¹²⁹

Joseph and Emma Smith and family

Heber C. and Vilate Kimball and family

Wilford and Phoebe Woodruff and family

Alanson Ripley and family

Edward Partridge

Levi Hancock and wife

Vinson and Martha Knight and family

George and Mary Miller and family

Mosiah Hancock and family

George A. Smith and family

James Mulholland

N. K. Whitney and family

John and Leonora Taylor and family

Brigham Young and family

Sylvester Stoddard and family

Joseph Fielding and family

Hyrum Smith and family

It is significant to note that Bishops Edward Partridge, Newel K. Whitney, Alanson Ripley and even George Miller, all lived in Nauvoo Lower Ward, and were therefore presided over by Bishop Knight. Although the office of Presiding Bishop was in its formative stage and would yet undergo definitive development, in January of 1841 the Lord simply acknowledged the fact that Vinson Knight presided over the other bishops, and required that he and his counsellors be sustained in conference.

The Sustaining Vote in Conference

Because of the significance of the sustaining vote of a general conference, it is important to make a few additional comments on the presentation of the general authorities in April of 1841. It has been objected that Vinson Knight was not presented as "Presiding Bishop" in conference, yet that claim is not entirely accurate. It was well known among the general populace of the Church that Vinson Knight was Bishop of Lower Ward in Nauvoo. It was also known that all of the other bishops in the Church (as well as most of the church authorities) lived in Nauvoo Lower Ward, and hence were presided over by Bishop Knight. Prior to the sustaining of the general authorities, the new revelation (D&C 124) was read to the assembled Saints,¹³⁰ so even though the term "presiding bishop" was not yet in usage among the saints, they all knew when making their vote that "Vinson Knight, Samuel H. Smith and Shadrach Roundy" were to "preside over the bishopric."

It is important to note that the voting was not a stereotyped one in which the names revealed in the new revelation were presented wholesale. The order of the presentation is described by William Clayton in his journal as follows:

On the 7th I was organized with the High Priest quorum and set with them during the conference. I was much pleased with the order of the meeting. When any case was to appear before the church it was first put by the Bishop to the quorum of the Lesser Priesthood. Then by the president of the Elders to that quorum - then the 70 then High Priests - then High Council and lastly to the presidency. If any objection arose it had to be tried by

that quorum who objected but a majority of the quorums decided the matter.¹³¹

Following is a presentation in tabular form of the General authorities presented in April 1841 Conference according to the William Clayton Diary, in parallel columns with the list of authorities named in D&C 124. Discrepancies between the two lists are in bold print.

Title	William Clayton	D&C 124
First President	Joseph Smith	Joseph Smith
Councillor	Sidney Rigdon	John C. Bennett*
Councillor	William Law	William Law

* until Sidney Rigdon's health improves

Traveling High Council

Brigham Young	Brigham Young
Heber Chase Kimball	Heber C. Kimball
Parley P. Pratt	Parley P. Pratt
Orson Pratt	Orson Pratt
Orson Hyde	Orson Hyde
William Smith	William Smith
John Taylor	John Taylor
John E. Page	John E. Page
Wilford Woodruff	Wilford Woodruff
Willard Richards	Willard Richards
George Albert Smith	George A. Smith
Lyman Wight	[TBD]

Standing High Council

Samuel Bent

Henry G. Sherwood

George W. Harris

[-]

Thomas Grover

Newel Knight

[-]

Lewis D. Wilson

Aaron Johnson

David Fullmer

Alpheus Cutler

William Huntington Sr.

William Alread

Leonard Sowby

Samuel Bent

Henry G. Sherwood

George W. Harris

Charles C. Rich

Thomas Grover

Newel Knight

David Dort

Dunbar Wilson

Aaron Johnson

David Fullmer

Alpheus Cutler

William Huntington

High Priests' Quorum

President Don C. Smith

Councillor Noah Packard

Councillor Amasa Lyman

Don C. Smith

Amasa Lyman

Noah Packard

Elders Quorum

President John A. Hicks

Councillor Samuel Williams

Councillor Jesse Baker

John A. Hicks

Samuel Williams

Jesse Baker

70's Quorum

Joseph Young

Isaiah Butterfield

Joseph Young

Josiah Butterfield

Daniel Miles	Daniel Miles
Henry Heremond	Henry Herriman
Zera Pulcipher[sic]	Zera Pulsipher
Levi Hancock	Levi Hancock
James Foster	James Foster

Lesser Priesthood

Priests	Samuel Rolphe	Samuel Rolphe
Counselor	Stephen Markam	[unnamed]
Counselor	Hezekiah Peck	[unnamed]
Teachers	Elisha Everett	[unnamed]
Counselor	James W. Huntsman	[unnamed]
Counselor	James Hendrick	[unnamed]
Deacons	Phineas R. Bird	[unnamed]
Counselor	David Wood	[unnamed]
Counselor	William W. Lane	[unnamed]

Bishopric

Bishop	Vincent Knights[sic]	Vinson Knight
Councilor	Samuel H. Smith	Samuel H. Smith
Councilor	Shadrach Roundy	Shadrach Roundy
Bishop	Newel K. Whitney	[]
Councilor	Jonathan H. Hale	[]
Councilor	William Felshaw	[]
Bishop	George Miller	[George Miller]
Councilor	Peter Haws	[]
Councilor	John Snider	[]
Bishop	Isaac Higbee*	[]

Summary and Conclusions

Vinson Knight became a Presiding Bishop on October 5, 1839, when he was sustained at general conference as Bishop of Lower Ward in Nauvoo. He was the only bishop who presided over other bishops, and this by virtue of the fact that all of the Nauvoo bishops lived in Lower Ward.

Three specific examples that he functioned as Presiding Bishop are as follows:

1. He placed an ad in the February 15, 1841 issue of the Times and Seasons requesting all those holding the lesser priesthood to meet at his home for the purpose of organization.

2. At the organization of the lesser priesthood, which was finally held on March 21, 1841, Vinson presided. The minutes of the meeting are over the signatures of the four Nauvoo bishops, and although Vinson's signature was last, he clearly presided because each of the other bishops lived in his ward - he was their bishop.

3. Vinson placed a proclamation in the March 1, issue of the Times and Seasons addressed to all the saints coming to conference, and promised them a blessing "by the authority of my office, and in the name of Jesus Christ," clearly indicating that respecting tithes and offerings, the authority of his office was to all the saints, and not just to those living in his ward in Nauvoo.

In February of 1841 the Lord acknowledged Vinson Knight as the Presiding Bishop, and indicated that he, along with the other priesthood officers of the church, should be sustained in general conference.

In general conference, April 8, 1841, Vinson was sustained. Although the minutes of the conference show that Vinson was sustained as bishop of Lower Ward, the minutes are clear that prior to the sustaining, the February 19, 1841 revelation was read to the conference, making it perfectly clear to those participating that Vinson Knight was being sustained to "preside over the bishopric."

It may be argued that there were bishops outside of the Nauvoo area over whom Vinson Knight did not preside, but the fact that the sustaining vote was in general conference seems to override that consideration. Should there still be doubt, in May of 1841, all stakes of Zion outside of the Nauvoo area were discontinued, leaving their bishops without jurisdiction, and the saints were encouraged to gather to the central location.¹³²

Vinson Knight functioned as Presiding Bishop of the church from October 5, 1839 until his death on July 31, 1842.

APPENDIX 1

Patriarchal Blessings of Vinson and Martha Knight

VINSON KNIGHT:

Vinson Knight was born in Norwich, Hampshire county, Massachusetts, March 4 [14 is correct], 1804.

Brother Knight in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I lay my hands upon thee, and seal upon thy head a father's blessing, which shall be for thee and for thy children, and thy childrens' children, even to the last generations; and if thou art faithful thou shalt have power to confirm it upon thy children, and thy children shall confirm it upon their children, and thus, by the authority of the holy priesthood, shall the blessings remain to all thy generations. And thou shalt have all the blessings that a father could bestow upon thee, where [were] he even here present; for thou art of the seed of Israel, and an heir to the blessings which were pronounced upon the head of Abraham under the hands of Melchisedek, and by virtue of my calling in the Church I seal them upon thee. The Lord loves thee. He has looked upon all thy ways, and brought thee thus far that he might make thee useful in his church. Thy family shall be blessed, and when thy children are afflicted with sickness thou shalt have power to rebuke the disease, and Satan shall have no power over thee if thou wilt teach them in the ways of righteousness: for thou must attend to their instruction in the principles of the gospel, that at the age of eight years they may be baptized. Thou art a chosen vessel unto the Lord, and if thou art faithful before him thou shalt be sanctified and enjoy a fulness of

glory. If thou wilt seek it diligently, by lifting a warning voice, thou shalt yet see many of thy friends embracing the truth and bowing to the requirements of the everlasting gospel. Thou shalt open thy mouth and the Lord shall fill it with words of wisdom upon the principles of righteousness that thou mayest teach thy fellow men. And thou shalt have success in this ministry and words and wisdom to thine own astonishment. The heavens will yet be open before thee, and thou shalt have the ministering of holy angels. Thy faith shall be increased, becoming more and more perfect, until by the power of the Holy Spirit, thou shalt behold within the vail. Thou shalt see many afflictions, calamities and wars in thy day, for great tribulations await the wicked, and many desolations must fall upon them. But thou shalt escape if thou art faithful, and the Lord will give thee many great and unspeakable blessings, and grant thee life as long as life shall be for thy good and his name's glory. I seal these blessings upon thee in the name of Jesus Christ and in his name I [seal it ?]

MARTHA MCBRIDE KNIGHT

Martha Knight, wife of Vinson Knight, was born in Chester, Orange County, New York, March 17, 1805. Sister Knight, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I lay my hands upon thy head, and ask for thee a blessing, even a father's blessing. The Lord thy God loves thee, and notwithstanding Satan has tempted thee many times and sought thy overthrow, yet thou hast been sustained and upheld by the hand of thy God because of thy youth and the tenderness of thy mind. Let thy heart now be lifted up that thou mayest receive the desires of the same blessings. Thou shalt have all blessings in common with thy husband,

and thy age shall be as his age, thy comfort as his comfort, and thy joy as his joy. Thou hast [] [] desires for thy friends, and the Lord will hear and answer thy prayers; yea, all the desires of thy heart, for thy friends, shall be given thee, and if thou art faithful to thy covenants, all that thou desirest in righteousness, shall be thine; for the Lord delights in blessing the pure and upright in heart. The Lord will teach thee wisdom and thou shalt have understanding to bring up thy family in the way of truth; but thou must be in subjection to thy husband in all things, according to the law of the Lord. Lift up thy heart in gladness, for great things await thee. Thou shalt be satisfied in beholding the glories which shall come upon the -- faithful in these last days, and thy children shall rise up and call the blessed. With these blessings I seal thee up unto eternal life, in the name of Jesus Christ; even so, Amen.

Wm. M. Geene, Clerk.

Given in Kirtland, Ohio, June 24, 1835, and recorded April 14, 1836.

O. Cowdery Rec:

APPENDIX II

Letter No. 1:

-

Kirtland, June 24, 1835

Dear Mother,

I sit down to write a few lines to you, to let you know that I am well and that we are as well as usual. I feel that the Lord has blessed me in all my undertakings since I left there, both in spiritual and temporal blessings. Our children are blessed with the privilege of school and we are blessed with the privilege of going to meeting such as we never had before. I can say to you that I am strong in the faith that I have embraced. It is the thought that will save my soul if I am faithful and do as the Lord has and does require of me, from day to day. I can say to you that this is the gospel of Jesus Christ that was preached anciently and has been lost or in other words has been taken from the children of men on account of their disobeying the commandments of God and swallowed up into the church of Rome and come under the Pope and he is the one who exalted himself above God and all that is called God. I have not written these lines for to injure your feelings, but I want you should know on what grounds that you stand for I must refer you to the parable where Christ tells them not to build on a sandy foundation but to build on the rock which is Christ the chief corner stone. Now you believe there is enough in the Bible to save all mankind. I will refer you to good old Cornelius whose prayers were heard and who was worthy to receive the administration of an angel but you see that would not save him, for the heavenly messenger says to him - send for Peter, he will come and tell you [how you] and your

household may be saved. Now you think that your priests are holy and now you show me one who has seen a heavenly messenger among all your society from first to last and he will want a Peter to tell him how he can be saved for God is the same now that He was then and it takes as much to save a soul now as it did then. Now I wish you would sit down and look at old father Peter and you will see that he was not satisfied only by being with Christ, but said he thou art the Christ for flesh and blood has not revealed, but my Father who is in heaven. Now I ask you, do you uphold that Peter saw God or do you suppose that he saw a spirit only. Now if we believe Peter saw, we believe he saw God and if he had faith to see God do you not suppose that he conversed with him, and told him all things from first to last. Now I want you should look and see if God is not the same now that He was then and if that is not necessary that we should have a Peter to tell us how we may be saved for we have come far short of being old Cornelius. Now I have written these few lines to you hoping you may see the ground that you stand on, that unless you repent of your sins and are baptized for the remission of your sins you may come under condemnation before God, for I do know that the foundation you stand on is an abomination in the sight of the Lord and that the evil spirit is the foundation of it. Perhaps you will think these are hard sayings, but if they are hard now, they were anciently. I do not write these for to hurt your feelings but I want you should see the foundations that the church that you belong to is not good, neither do I want to justify my evil acts but I want that your soul should be saved in the Celestial glory of God and that I may stand in my proper lot and place for God has seen fit to instruct my weak mind so that I can see the ground that I stand on and has through

the administration of those that have authority to call me blessed inasmuch as I am faithful and live in obedience to his commandments and I want you should pardon all mistakes and write to me.

V. Knight

P.S. I want you should understand that I say this gospel and this church is from God, Christ being the head and that I am willing to stand and proclaim it to all that I see, though they seek my life they may destroy this body but they cannot destroy the soul. I want you should tell all that inquired where I am that I am in Ohio, serving with all my heart, powers and faculties that I am in possession of and that my trust is in God, not man and so I say to you as you said to me, may the blessings of God rest on you day and night until you are saved in the Kingdom of God, even so Amen.

Letter No. 2:

February 3, 1838 [1839].

Dear Sir,

I received yours of the 8th and am glad to hear that you are well and doing well. I have my family with me at this time and shall move into the state of Ill. as soon as I can. We are well and in very good spirits. I will attempt to answer your request by writing you some facts I received in the Co. of Caldwell the last days of May last about which time there was some men in the Church that was disposed to do things that was not right from which we have been injured. I then went into Davis [sic] Co. and prepared for to settle there being about 120 families of Mormons in that Co. and about 140 of the old inhabitants. I soon heard that election would be along and that the old citizens were trying to get the Mormons to vote for them and there being 2 parties they sought hard for their vote but the Mormons were all for the democate candidates, but the thing passed along until the day of election when the federal candidate for representative mounted on to a barrel and called on the citizens and made a long speech abusing the Mormons all that he could and said that he had been to drive the Mormons and he would do it again and then he got down and in a few minutes there was one of the Missourians struck one of the Mormons and then another Mormon stepped in between them. When he was knocked down and then both parties gathered some clubs and they commenced. There was about 20 Mormons and 100 Missourians and the Mormons knocked them down as fast as they could get them away until they got out of the way, but the Missourians got guns and kept the Mormons from voting the next

morning.

The Mormons in Far West (Caldwell Co.) heard that the Missourians had ~~two~~ Mormons on the ground dead and would not let them be buried and about 100 of the Mormons got on their horses and went out to get them, but found when they got there that there had not any of them been killed, and then they went to see some of the judges and wished to have the matter settled, wishing him to sign a paper that he would do all that he could to keep the peace, which he was willing to do and he then went to the circuit judge and made oath that the Mormons compelled him to sign it, and got out writs for a number of the Mormons and made some attempt to take them, but the sheriff was afraid and made a great complaint but after some bustle Lyman Wight and J. Smith, Jr. gave themselves up and had an examination and were put to bail, and the Mormons hoped that it would stop here. But the Missourians began to move their families out of the neighborhood where the Mormons lived, and gathered together all the help that they could and said that the Mormons should leave the county, and they took some Mormons prisoner and used them very bad, and shot at some others and then the Mormons made some complaint to the circuit judge in Ray Co. and the Major General of Clay Co. and they ordered about 200 troops out which came on and stayed about 15 days and we thought that the matter was settled, and we all went about our business, but the mob soon gathered against a small place called Dewitt at the mouth of Grandriver which place was half owned by the Mormons. The mob got them a cannon and came on very strong and the militia officers said that they could not do anything with them. The mob then burned some houses and shot at some of the Mormons but not killed any at that time. The mob then proposed to make

a treaty with them, which they did, hoping that it would stop there, and that the difficulty would be settled but as soon as the Mormons left Dewitt the mob gathered around Davis Co. In two companies, one on the west in Clinton Co. and the other on the east in Livingstone Co. and commenced by burning some of the Mormons houses, and we saw that unless there was something done to stop them that we must have a battle as they were moving away their families and some of them setting fire to their houses for to raise excitement, which the Mormons saw that they would to. Then the Mormons made the best moves that they could to defend themselves and their families, and the mob saw that mobing [sic] was not what they thought it was and they fled and left their cannon and their houses and then it was mob for mob and the Missourians most all left the county. So you see that they were fairly at it and we concluded that we would as soon die as live in this way. The Mormons then went at their work except a few that was kept out for to see the movement of the mob. As the militia officers said that they could not do any more and it appeared that the mob did not know what to do when the Rev. Mr. Boyard of Ray Co. had got permit of the general to call out a company of 36 to guard that Co. and he got about as many more that volunteered and they came into the south part of Caldwell Co. and made some threats and took some of the Mormons prisoners. When the Mormons heard it they went to relieve them, and came on them unawares, it being the first time that the Mormons could get to have a battle with them, when there was 3 Mormons killed and some wounded. I have not been able to ascertain how many of the mob were killed, (but I think some 20 or 30). There was one of the men here at my house last week that was taken prisoner. He said that when Mr. Boyard saw that

they had got to fight he took him and place him in front of his line between the 2 companies and then had their guns reserved to shoot him if he attempted to run. He waited until the first fire when he started. They shot him through the left shoulder. This skirmish was what they wanted. They then sent to the Governor to have help and he ordered out about 5000 troops and gave General Clark the command to come and settle the difficulty.

They came up and without letting the Mormons know who they were they made an attempt to march into the town when the Mormons met them, and they came back in the morning. They sent word into the Mormons that they must give up their leader, and guns, their property and leave the state or be exterminated. So you see that the cause was not inquired into but you must do this or be killed, when we as a people are ready to have the whole subject investigated. The men that they first wanted was J. Smith, Jr., S. Rigdon, H. Smith, L. Wight, P. P. Pratt, G. W. Robison. These men they expected to shoot without any trial but General Doniphan of Clay Co. said that if they were going to murder he would not have any hand in it, and he took his troupes and went home. They then proceeded and took from the remainder all the guns and swords and then put 4 companies to guard all the Mormons, as they were all in Caldwell Co. towns, and they did not allow them to go out for a week in which time they took about 200 horses, cattle, sheep, hay and corn and took some money, some bed clothes and then they went to Davis Co. and served them the same. I was at Far West while the troops were there and I did not go home as they threatened my life, then they took about 60 more prisoners and took them to Richmond, Ray Co., where they pretended to examine them when they let some go and

some they put to bail, some they have kept in gaol, charged with almost all crimes that can be mentioned. I saw 2 men the first day of February. They told me that J. Smith, Jr. and those that were with him in prison would be let out on bail or set free and that all their proceedings had been contrary to law and that they have no business with any of them. Such is the ignorance of the people in that Co. that they wind themselves up and if any man which they have confidence in tells them anything they will do it. While the troupe was at Far West there was about 30 Mormons that was moving and got within about 15 miles of the town where about 100 of the mob fell upon them and killed 17 men; 2 boys and wounded some more and took their wagons and horses and left the women to bury the dead. They dragged them and put them into a well that had no water in and covered them up. Amongst the wounded is one man that has 11 ball holes in his skin, 2 balls passed through his body, one through his hip and he is now a walking and riding about. They say that they will not shoot him again. A man by the name of McBride was killed, but not Reubin.

There is one more circumstance that I will mention. There is one man taken prisoner by the troupes that came into Far West and one of the men took his gun and struck him on the head and killed him. I mention this that you may see that what the troupes were. So sir, the Mormons have made all the exertions that they could to have their abuse taken notice of, but not the first thing can they get done. I could mention numerous abuses such as whipping, tying ropes to their heels and put them into wells, and make them deny J. Smith, tar blacking them and most all ways to torment them. There has been petitions sent to the Legislature and they quarrel about it and then they dropped it. The

Mormons do all calculate to leave the state as fast as they can get away. But what the final end will be I am not able to tell. I would not have you think that all that the Mormons have done is exactly right but when men are pushed as were the Mormons, they will do almost anything to save their lives and the lives of their families. So, sir, I do not believe that we should have had any difficulty had they not been afraid that the Mormons would have carried the election next year. There is not a Mormon in this church that has had a better chance to know the minds of the leading men than I have, and I do know that they would let the Missourians alone had they been let alone.

This letter has been written to tell you the persecution as near as I could. There is much more that I could write but have not time now. Perhaps there may be mistakes, but I have not time to copy it and you must get the best sense of it that you can. Now, sir, I ask you and every republican in these U. States how you would like to be brought up and compelled to lay down your arms. I think that you would feel same as I did, that death would be a welcome messenger if you could not have the privilege of fighting as long as life lasted and I ask not to live one moment but to get revenge. Now I will let you know something of my situation and the situation of that country. I was placed in as good a situation as any man in this state to get a living but now am deprived of it all except my health and the faith I have in that God that has created and preserved me thus far through life. I expect to go from here as soon as the river is navigatable. Where I shall stop I do not know as yet and I am of the opinion that all citizens of these U. States that do not know how to pity Mormons will some time know it.

This country is the best country to get a living in that I have seen. A man that is industrious can get a good property in 2 or 3 years. It is 2 years last August that the Mormons settled in the small county of Caldwell. It is 24 miles square and there is now more potatoes for sale than in all the rest of Missouri south of the river, and corn can be bought for 10c per bu. in large quantities.

I must close this lengthy communication by sending my best respects to you and family and old neighbors, hoping that the time will come when I can see them again in this world or the one to come, and as my fathers have done, so have I been willing to lay down my life for my liberty and I am willing to do it for my friend that is deprived of his liberty. I wish you would send word to my mother, tell her that my family are all well and that they send their love to her and we are of the same faith that we were when we left there. Say to Sister Clarrissa that I was glad to hear from her and from those that belong to the same faith and that I am not in a situation to advise them now but as soon as I can find out what is best for the eastern brethren, I will write to them. I and my companion send our best respects to her and all in that place.

Yours in good spirit and good feeling to all that are republicans. Indeed I go the whole hog for liberty or I die.

V. Knight

Wm. Cooper

Spencerburg, Mo.

Feb. 8, 1838 [1839]

Wm. Cooper Esq.

Perrysburg

Catteraugus Co.

N.Y.

City of Nauvoo, Feb. 14th, 1842

Respected parent,

I received a few lines from you a few days since and was glad to hear that you enjoyed yourself so well. I can truly say that when any of my friends are enjoying the comforts of life, I hope that I may at all times feel willing to be as charitable to my friends as they can be to me. The cause why I am separated so far from my relatives is well known to you and to all my relatives who are and have been known for seven years. However fluctuating my mind was in the fore part of my life, or might have been, I can say for seven of the last years of my life I have been one mind as to those things which pertain to the future happiness of mankind. I looked at myself and at mankind. I thought they were fluctuating in all their movements. It looks to me as though they had no surety whereby they might rest their salvation. It is true when we talk about the future state of man and say that a man can know what will be his situation there. The greater part of the people startle at the idea and are ready to say that no such thing is possible, but as far as myself is concerned, I am satisfied as to yourself but we have all that part to look at and if we judge from what we read that mankind were not always destitute of that knowledge (that is of their future state). I can truly say that it is a satisfaction to me when I contemplate those things and see what a joy it is and must be to a man to know that the course that he is taking is approved by those powers which are superior and which we have no reason to doubt we shall have to be subject to.

Perhaps I have written enough on that subject and hope the time may come when I can see you and talk freely about all matters.

The winter season here has been very mild. We have not had any sleighing and the weather most of the time has been mild and all things seem to move in good order and good feelings. I think we have no reason to complain but on the other hand to rejoice and praise that God who has ever been willing to hear the prayers of the righteous, notwithstanding we have been persecuted. It is nothing more than we might expect when we take into consideration of the traditions of the human family in this age of the world. You seemed to censure me, or rather that Daniel had reason to complain because I had not written. I can say that I have been punctual in answering all letters I have received from any of my relatives and inasmuch as they have favored me with a few lines, they shall be answered. I have not written to Lee but I suppose he knows where I live and I know no excuse why he should not have written to me, but still I find no fault and am as free as any man on the earth and enjoy myself as well.

My family are in good health at this time. The children are all glad to hear from Grandmother and all of their relatives. Almyra is a good girl. She is a great help to her mother. We have no reason to complain at any of our children. They are a good and peaceable family and as soon as they have come to the age to become accountable, they are desirous to move in the path that their parents have set for them. In fact, it has been almost impossible to constrain them. They are all members of the church that are over eight years old. It has not been my persuasion, but it has been their desires and I hope that I may be blessed to that degree that I may set forth your examples that my

children may follow them.

One great object in writing these lines is to obtain information about my forefathers. I am here all alone and I am deprived of advantages of records which my friends may have. You will do me a great favor to send me a list of names of all my relatives, or the genealogy of my forefathers as far back as you can and of your forefathers and the names of all relatives that are dead and living. By so doing you will confer a great favor on me and may be of great use to my children as much as you can give me the genealogy as full as you can.

I have a great many things on my mind but not time to write. Martha and all the children send their love to you. Rodolphus E. grows finely. The children all love him and sometimes cry to hold him. I wish you could see him. You would say he was a fine boy.

V. Knight

Rizpah Knight

I have not heard from Rodolphus in some time.

Mrs. Rizpah Knight

Persia Pa.

Cattaraugus Co.

N.Y.

pages
92-93-94
missing

. . .

I have already written a good deal but I know not where to stop when I see mankind going down to ruin as fast as time can roll them over for destruction awaits this generation if they do not repent and turn to the Lord for I can see myself that it is high time that I awoke and see on what ground that I stand on and when I see myself then I am able to judge others for I see here upon this land mankind are a going to destruction. If we go, we go with our eyes wide open for we have been warned and warned and the servants of God leave their testimony where they go. They say that it is the faithful that will obtain the crown of glory. If not, the presence of that God who upholds and created all things. I say is it not worth living for or worth dying? For my part I do not want to live any longer unless that I live in the service of God for in him is all things that hold in our present and future state, if we are obedient to his commands. He does not want an outward show but He wants our hearts. He does not want us to obey one command only, but he wants us to obey all of them - not in our way but in His way or we cannot obtain the blessings that are in store for those that walk uprightly before God. I must say to you in this letter that you must repent of your sins or you cannot be saved in the kingdom of God and be baptized for the remission of them for the inspired men of old saw it and I say it. Come life, come death - it reads so and let it be. Don't let us try to fancy to ourselves that we can go to heaven with all our pomp and show and with all our riches, but let us come to the feet of Jesus and plead for mercy.

I must not write any more now for I have not time and so may the blessings of heaven be with you, even so, Amen.

V. Knight

Endnotes

[For a full description of the references in the Endnotes, see the Bibliography.]

1. Much of the personal information of Vinson Knight's early life comes from an unpublished sketch of his life by Lola Belnap Coolbear, which she compiled from stories and family traditions that were related by Martha McBride Knight, and later by her children James Knight and Adaline Knight Belnap. A copy of this "Sketch of the Life of Vinson Knight" is in the Church Archives.
2. Vinson's letters were written with a strong, confident hand and he was certainly above average in spelling, vocabulary and grammar, all of which indicate an excellent education for his day. This is further supported by the fact that in connection with Sidney Rigdon he taught an English grammar class in Kirtland (see the text for note 10). His employment in early Nauvoo as an accountant and his subsequent involvement in the handling of Church finances indicate that he was educated in basic mathematics as well.
3. Coolbear, "Sketch," page 1. Vinson's brothers, Rudolphus and Samuel Lee also inherited property in the immediate vicinity.
4. HC 2:38 see also D&C 103:37-40.
5. HC 2:40. See also Jessee, Personal Writings page 27 and Faulring, An American Prophet's Record, page 21.
6. HC 2:45 (also Jessee, Personal Writings, page 31, and Faulring, An American Prophet's Record, page 24). Joseph's journal entry implies

that he and Parley P. Pratt sought out the Knight home. Martha Knight's father had been a Campbellite minister and Parley P. Pratt had been a Campbellite and a member of Sidney Rigdon's congregation prior to his conversion to Mormonism. It would appear that they sought out Vinson Knight and his family intentionally, as reasonable prospects for conversion.

The personal details of the meeting are from Coolbear, "Sketch," page 2 which places their arrival on the evening of March 21st. Joseph's journal entry, which was presumably written at the time, states that they arrived on March 22 and "tarried," and then moved on to Father Nickerson's (still in the town of Perrysburgh) on the 23rd, where they held a meeting.

7. History of Reuben McBride, unpublished typescript, a copy is in possession of the author.

8. A careful reading of Vinson's letters gives the impression that Vinson's family were Catholic, but that Vinson joined the Campbellite faith in conjunction with his marriage to Martha, probably against his mother's wishes. Then, when they both became converts to Mormonism, Vinson's mother somewhat indignantly assumed they were religiously unstable, changing faiths at a whim. In his letters Vinson keeps assuring her that they are the same faith as when he left her.

9. See The Ensign, January 1979 page 41 for a map of Kirtland.

10. Backman, The Heavens Resound, page 278.

11. The two patriarchal blessings were recorded in book A of Joseph Smith Sr's patriarchal blessings, and are included in Appendix 1.
12. Letter of Vinson Knight to Rizpah Knight, dated Kirtland, June 24, 1835 (see Appendix 2). Vinson was more blunt than tactful, in that he tells his mother however gently, that "I do know that the foundation you stand on is an abomination in the sight of the Lord and that the evil spirit is the foundation of it."
13. Coolbear, "Sketch," page 3.
14. Journal of Lorenzo Barnes as cited in Backman, The Heavens Resound, page 275. Vinson's occupation in Kirtland is listed as Druggist by Lyndon W. Cook, but he gives no indication of the source of the information. See Cook, The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith page 265.
15. M&A pages 335-336.
16. At that time the Presidency of Kirtland was comprised of Joseph Smith, Sen., Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, David Whitmer, John Whitmer and W. W. Phelps.
17. HC 2:365-6.
18. See HC 2:378-382 (also Jessee, Personal Writings, pages 144-148 and Faulring, American Prophet's Record, pages 117-120). It is interesting that Joseph Smith Sr. was present in the room while the Prophet Joseph saw this vision of him with Mother Smith and their oldest son Alvin, then deceased, all together in the celestial kingdom.

19. In dictating (to Lola Belnap) about her husband Vinson Knight concerning these times, Martha McBride Knight said, "What pleasure did he take in the new temple (Kirtland) with his brethren, anointing and blessing them and prophesying their future and they in turn anointing, blessing and even prophesying to others. Vinson Knight not only received his anointings and blessings at that time, but had the power given him to officiate in that ordinance from day to day. Years afterwards, one Bro. Taylor, of the Mormon Battalion, told Brother Vinson's daughter that her father was a true prophet, for he had given him his anointings and blessings in the Kirtland Temple and prophesied things to him that he had seen fulfilled all during his life, especially during his trials in the Mormon Battalion." (Coolbear, "Sketch," 4-5.)

20. Part of Vinson's patriarchal blessing reads as follows:

The Heavens will be opened before thee, and thou shalt have the ministering of holy angels. Thy faith shall be increased, becoming more and more perfect, until by the power of the Holy Spirit, thou shalt behold within the veil...

I seal upon thy head a father's blessing, which shall be for thee and thy children and thy childrens children, and thus, by the holy Priesthood, shall the blessings remain to all thy generation. (See Appendix 1.)

21. That Vinson attended the Hebrew class in the temple is from Coolbear, "Sketch," page 4. Other information about the Hebrew School is from Backman, The Heavens Resound, pages 271-272.

22. By this date, Joseph and Emma had suffered the loss of four of their children. Their first son Alvin, lived less than a day, June 15, 1828; the twins, Louisa and Thadeus lived only three hours on 30 April 1831 (after which Joseph and Emma adopted the Murdock twins, Julia and Joseph, whose mother died in childbirth on the same day). Joseph Murdock Smith died 29 March 1832, just one day short of 11 months old.
23. On January 2, 1837 Vinson Knight's signature was 11th of 187 to adopt 16 articles by which the Kirtland Safety Society was to be governed. (See Journal History under the January 2nd date) An excellent history of the Kirtland economy during this time period can be found in "The Kirtland Economy Revisited: A Market Critique of Sectarian Economics" by Marvin S. Hill, C. Keith Rooker and Larry T. Wimmer, published in Brigham Young University Studies 17:391-475.
24. Vinson Knight held 1000 shares of Kirtland Safety Society stock, which he had purchased for \$262.50. BYUS 17:468.
25. Together on December 4, 1836, Vinson Knight and the Prophet Joseph Smith drew a fairly large sum of money out of the Painesville Bank on three months credit, giving the names of Fredrick G. Williams & Co., Newel K. Whitney, John Johnson, and Vinson Knight. Most of this money was given to Vinson to cover a previous debt. (HC 2:324)
26. Godfrey, Women's Voices, pages 49, 54.
27. See Flanders, Nauvoo, page 166.
28. The letter was published in M&A 561-564.

29. Elders Journal 27-28. This trip established Vinson Knight as a missionary companion of the Prophet Joseph Smith, see Backman, The Heavens Resound, page 115.

30. For minutes of the conference meetings see Cannon, Far West Record, pages 119-124. See also, M&A 28-29.

31. Andrus, "Little Known Friends of the Prophet Joseph Smith," page 61.

32. The trip would have taken approximately two months. According to the Knight Family, the Vinson Knight home in Kirtland is still standing and is presently owned by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

33. The date of their arrival in Far West and the information of their subsequent removal to Adam-ondi-Ahman is from a letter of Vinson Knight to a Mr. William Cooper in Perrysburgh, New York, written Feb. 3, 1839. (See Appendix II - the letter is dated February 3, 1838, which is an error). It may be that Vinson Knight purchased some land at Far West. According to a historical plaque depicting the Far West City Plat, located at the visitor's center in Independence, someone with the initials "V. K." owns plots 19 and 20.

34. On the size and value of Vinson's farm, see Journal History for 29 November 1839. For the original owner of the Knight property in Adam-ondi-Ahman, see Jenson, Historical Record page 441.

35. Corbett, Hyrum Smith, Patriarch, pages 174-175 This is quoted in Dyer, The Refiner's Fire, page 173, but the reference is incorrectly

- given as Autobiography of Hyrum Smith pp. 174-175.
36. HC 3:38 and Jenson, Historical Record, page 46.
37. For a detailed analysis of the election difficulties at Gallatin see Durham, "The Election Day Battle at Gallatin," BYUS 13:36-61.
38. According to Vinson, there were about 120 Mormon families and 140 of the old inhabitants in the county. William Peniston was the candidate from the Federal party, but the Mormons were all for the Democratic candidates. (Letter, Knight to Cooper, February 3, 1839, see Appendix II.)
39. Jenson, Historical record, page 440, indicates that the Mormons were outnumbered at least ten to one, but Vinson says there were were about 20 Mormons and 100 Missourians. (Letter, Knight to Cooper, see Appendix II.)
40. The A. Black affidavit is found in Jenson, Historical Record, page 441, (and with corrected grammar in HC 3:59-60)
41. See Peniston's affidavit, HC 3:61.
42. HC 3:60. This is an excellent instance to show that the Saints were trying to preserve the peace in Missouri.
43. Letter, Martha McBride Knight to Rizpah Knight, July 8, 1845, see Appendix II.
44. Puesy, Builders of the Kingdom, p 45; see also "My Journal," Journal of George A. Smith, The Instructor 82:63.

45. Knight Family genealogical records.
46. _ HC 2:273.
47. Wandle Mace Journal, Typescript, pages 32-38.
48. Wandle Mace Journal, Typescript, page 36.
49. HC3:336, Jenson, Historical Record, 7:464.
50. HC 3:344-345
51. HC 3:376.
52. This letter was dated May 27, 1839 and was written from Joseph Smith's home in Commerce. See HC 3:366.
53. HC 3:382, Jenson, Historical Record, 7:467.
54. McKiernan, Sidney Rigdon, page 107; Flanders, "Dream and Nightmare, Nauvoo Revisited" Published as Chapter 5 of McKiernan, The Restoration Movement; also Jenson, Historical Record, pages 747-8.
55. HC 3:377-378
56. These dates are erroneously given in T&S 1:30 as October 6, 7 and 8. HC 4:12 has been corrected. In October of 1839, the 5th was a Saturday.
57. Arrington, From Quaker to Later day Saint erroneously has Vinson Knight as bishop of Nauvoo Middle Ward, with Newel K. Whitney bishop of Lower Ward (page 119). Compare HC 4:12, which is taken from T&S 1:30, and see also Whitney, History of Utah 1:176. It is of major importance

to note that our preconceived notions of a bishop living within his own ward did not apply in Nauvoo. In fact all three bishops lived in Lower Ward, which was presided over by Vinson Knight.

58. Three stakes had been organized previous to this time: Kirtland, Clay-Caldwell, and Adam-ondi-Ahman. These three stakes had been discontinued as the Saints were expelled from the various locations, hence at this time there were three bishops in the Church: Bishops Whitney, Partridge and Knight. Alanson Ripley was not ordained bishop until Dec. 3, 1839 (see HC 4:42)

59. HC 4:15; 17

60. For Vinson's name on the Congressional petition, see Journal History, 29 November 1839.

61. Nauvoo High Council Minutes. See each entry under the appropriate date.

62. Journal History, September 4, 1859, p 2.

63. See Bennett, History of The Saints, page 90.

64. Nauvoo High Council Minutes, page 6.

65. T&S 1:185; HC 4:204.

66. Coolbear, "Sketch," page 11.

67. D&C 124:73-76.

68. D&C 124:141

69. For a ticket of the election see T&S 2:287.

70. T&S 2:309

71. This is what Shadrach Roundy had reference to as is recorded in Journal History under the date of June 28, 1844:

Shadrach Roundy says that Vinson Knight was one of Joseph Smith's first body guards, as also was Albert P. Rockwood. Alpheus Cutler was captain, but not captain of the guard. Each of the guards were captains (A. P. Rockwood). William Marks was nominated as one of Joseph's guards, but did not accept the nomination, and never qualified, so states Shadrach Roundy, who was nominated by Joseph in Marks stead and who qualified (RLC). Albert P. Rockwood was Colonel of Heavy Dragoons, commander of the guard, and consolidated staff and drill master of the Nauvoo Legion, so he says himself September 1866.

72. Personal papers of the Knight family. This would have corresponded to the commission given to Joseph Smith by the Governor as published in HC 4:309-310, under the date of March 10, although no date is on the letter of appointment. The commission was retroactive to February 4, 1841.

73. All of the ordinances cited can be found in T&S 2:321, 336-337. For additional information see HC 4:303, and Flanders, Nauvoo, Kingdom on the Mississippi, page 149.

74. T&S 2:287

75. Nauvoo personal property records in possession of the Knight family.
76. Nauvoo Restoration, records of Ferries and Steamers.
77. Manuscript minutes of a meeting of the Lesser Priesthood of this date are located in the Historical Library of the Church. The minutes appear over the names of Bishops Miller, Whitney, Higby and Knight.
78. T&S 2:341
79. Evans and Anderson, Ezra T. Benson, page 45. See also Journal History 16 July 1846, p 12.
80. HC 4:330. The details of the events of the first day of conference can be found in HC 4:326-330.
81. Allen and Alexander, Manchester Mormons, pages 206-207.
82. T&S 2:388.
83. HC 4:368.
84. A copy of this petition may be found in HC 4:420.
85. HC 4:403.
86. Flanders, Nauvoo, page 166.
87. Knight family records, family group sheet.
88. G. A. Smith, "My Journal," Instructor 83:217.

89. Letter, Hyrum Belnap to Andrew Jenson, December 30, 1899, Historical Department of the Church.
90. Hogan, Official Minutes of Nauvoo Lodge pages 24-28, 51. Journal History merely says that Joseph Smith introduced them into the lodge on 13 April 1842.
91. See Flanders, Nauvoo, pages 167-175.
92. BYUS 19:180.
93. DHC 5:6.
94. Journal History, 11 May, 1842.
95. The Wasp Vol 1, #5, 6 & 8 (last page of each issue). Note: see also Flanders, Nauvoo page 169 for additional information.
96. BYUS 19:180n.
97. HC 5:68.
98. Ehat, Introduction of Temple Ordinances, page 103.
99. HC 5:84.
100. Martha McBride Knight to Rizpah Knight, [date]. See Appendix II.
101. T&S 3:894.
102. Smith, Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage, page 72. Austin and Alta Fife in Saints of Sage and Saddle, Folklore among the Mormons, state on page 167, that Martha was married to Joseph Smith two months before Vinson died. This is possible, as other such marriages

are known to have occurred. It is, however, unlikely, as the recorded instances all involve problematic marriages, which does not seem to be the case here. See Bachman, Plural Marriages during the lifetime of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pages 124-126.

103. Nauvoo Baptisms for the Dead file, LDS Church Genealogical Library.

104. Nauvoo Sealings, Wife to Husband, page 369 and pages 505-506. Film 18374, LDS Church Genealogical Library. It is interesting to note that both Adaline (age 15) and Rizpah (age 18) Knight, received their endowments in the Nauvoo temple on January 5, 1846. Adaline was then sealed to Br. Belnap and Rizpah was sealed to Br. Gibbons. See Nauvoo Temple Endowment Record, pages 103 and 104.

105. Ogden Standard Examiner, November 21, 1901.

106. Fife, Saints of Sage and Saddle, pages 167-168.

107. Contributor, 6:405.

108. See for example Smith, Essentials in Church History, page 585; Roberts Comprehensive History of the Church, 2:371; and Whitney, History of Utah 1:124-126.

109. JD 22:200

110. JD 21:362

111. Taylor, Items on Priesthood, page 19.

112. JD 22:34

113. See page 50 herein.

114. See Quinn, Mormon Hierarchy, Chapter 1. A revised form of Chapter 1 appears as "The Evolution of the Presiding Quorums of the LDS Church," Journal of Mormon History, 1:21-38.

115. Quinn: "Presiding Quorums," page 35.

116. See Jenson, Church Chronology, page xvii; Orson F. Whitney, "The Aaronic Priesthood," The Contributor, 6:405, August 1885; Quinn, "The Evolution of the Presiding Quorums of the LDS Church," Journal of Mormon History 1:35, 1974; Letter, D. Michael Quinn to Elden J. Watson, July 3, 1973, page 2 (copy in possession of the Author).

117. For Hyrum Smith's ordination see Corbett, Hyrum Smith, Patriarch, page 249 and Smith, Essentials in Church History, page 576. For William Miller's ordination see Miller, A Mormon Bishop and His Son, page 35.

118. Smith, Essentials in Church History, page 563.

119. For Sidney Rigdon, see Smith, Essentials in Church History, 564. For William Law, see Ibid. page 566.

120. See Smith, Essentials in Church History, page 568.

121. See T&S 1:30, HC 4:12 and Jenson, Historical Record 8:750

122. For Don Carlos Smith as president of High Priest's quorum in Kirtland, see HC 2:370. For his reappointment in Commerce, see HC 4:12. For "Names of members..." see unpublished manuscript, Historical Department of the Church.

123. See Smith, Essentials in Church History, pages 580-581.
124. T&S 2:310
125. T&S 2:287
126. Contributor, 6:5-6. Note that this license was given in retrospect as it is dated February 4, 1831 and bears the name of William W. Phelps who did not arrive at Kirtland until the middle of July 1831.
127. T&S 2:341
128. The determination of the Upper, Middle and Lower Ward boundaries were made from drawing on the Nauvoo map the boundaries of the 11 Nauvoo Wards which were discontinued at the time of the Exodus, whose precise boundaries are known, and whose origin as portions of Upper, Middle and Lower Wards are described.
129. Records of Members 1841-1845, Nauvoo Illinois, Historical Department of the Church.
130. Allen, Manchester Mormons, page 209.
131. Allen, Manchester Mormons, pages 205-206.
132. HC 4:233, 236. These stakes were officially discontinued in June of 1841 when the following notice appeared in the June 1 issue of the Times and Seasons:

TO THE SAINTS ABROAD

The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, anxious to promote the prosperity of said church, feel it

their duty to call upon the saints who reside out of this county, to make preparations to come in, without delay. This is important, and should be attended to by all who feel an interest in the prosperity of this the corner stone of Zion. Here the Temple must be raised, the University be built, and other edifices erected which are necessary for the great work of the last days; and which can only be done by a concentration of energy, and enterprise. Let it therefore be understood, that all the stakes excepting those in this county, and in Lee county, Iowa, are discontinued, and the saints instructed to settle in this county as soon as circumstances will permit.

JOSEPH SMITH

City of Nauvoo, Hancock Co., Ill.,

May 24th 1841.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts, Theses and Unpublished Collections:

- Bachman, Daniel, Plural Marriages during the lifetime of the Prophet Joseph Smith, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, 1975.
- Coolbear, Lola Belnap, "Sketch of the Life of Vinson Knight." A copy is on file in the Church Archives. Referenced as "SKETCH."
- Ehat, Andrew F., Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question, unpublished Master's Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1982.
- "History of Reuben McBride," unpublished typescript, a copy is in possession of the author.
- "High Council Minutes - Nauvoo Illinois 1842-1845," in the Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Q 1428 R (includes minutes from 1839). Cited as Nauvoo High Council Minutes.
- Journal History, Historical Department of the Church.
- Knight Family Records, Family Group Sheet.
- Knight Family Records, Nauvoo personal property records.
- Names of Members of the High Priest's Quorum, Kirtland, Ohio, Historical Department of the Church.
- Names of members of the High Priests quorum, organized at Nauvoo April 7, 1840, Historical Department of the Church.
- Nauvoo Baptisms for the Dead file, LDS Genealogical Library.
- Nauvoo Restoration, records of ferries and steamers.
- Nauvoo Sealings, wife to husband, LDS Genealogical Library.
- Nauvoo Temple Endowment Record, Microfilm, LDS Genealogical Library.
- Quinn, D. Michael, Organizational Development and Social Origins of the Mormon Hierarchy, 1832-1934: A Prosopographical Study, unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Utah, 1973.
- Quinn, D. Michael, "The Evolution of the Presiding Quorums of the LDS Church," published in Journal of Mormon History, 1:21-38.
- Records of Members 1841-1845, Nauvoo Illinois, Historical Department of the Church.
- "Wandel Mace Journal," typescript copy in Brigham Young University

special collections.

Newspapers, Magazines and Periodicals:

Brigham Young University Studies, published quarterly in Provo, 1961-present. Cited as BYUS.

The Contributor, monthly magazine, the Contributor Company, Salt Lake City, 1879-1896, 17 volumes.

Elders' Journal of the Church of Latter Day Saints, published in Kirtland, Ohio and Far West, Missouri, 1837-1838 (four numbers only). Cited as Elders Journal.

The Ensign of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Published monthly by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in Salt Lake City, since 1971. Cited as Ensign.

The Historical Record, monthly periodical, published by Andrew Jenson in Salt Lake City, 1882-1890.

The Instructor, monthly periodical, Salt Lake City, 1866-1970.

The Journal of Discourses, published semi-monthly in Liverpool, England, 1853-1886, 26 volumes. Cited as JD.

Journal of Mormon History, published yearly by the Mormon History Association, 1974 to present.

The Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate, published monthly in Kirtland, Ohio, 1834-1837, 3 volumes. Cited as M&A.

The Standard Examiner, Daily Newspaper, published in Ogden Utah.

The Times and Seasons, monthly periodical published in Nauvoo, Ill., 1839-1846, 6 volumes. Cited as T&S.

The Wasp, weekly newspaper published in Nauvoo, Ill., 1842-1843.

Books, Pamphlets and Articles::

Allen, James B. and Alexander, Thomas G., Manchester Mormons, The Journal of William Clayton, 1840 to 1842, Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1974.

Andrus, Hyrum M., "Little Known Friends of the Prophet Joseph Smith," 1963 seminar on the prophet Joseph Smith, held March 2, 1963 at Brigham Young University, Published by Extension Publications Division of Continuing Education, Brigham Young University, 1963.

Arrington, Leonard J., From Quaker to Latter-day Saint, Deseret Book Company, 1976.

- Backman, Milton V. Jr., The Heavens Resound, Deseret Book Company 1983.
- Bennett, John C., The History of The Saints, published by Leland & Whiting, Boston, 1842.
- Cannon, Donald Q. and Cook, Lyndon W., Far West Record, Deseret Book company, 1983.
- Cook, Lyndon W. The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Seventys' Mission Bookstore, 1981.
- Corbett, Pearson H., Hyrum Smith, Patriarch, Deseret Book Company, 1963.
- The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981. Cited as D&C.
- Dyer, Alvin R., The Refiner's Fire, Deseret Book Company, 1968.
- Evans, John Henry and Anderson, Minnie Egan, Ezra T. Benson, Pioneer, Statesman, Saint, Deseret Book Company, 1947.
- Faulring, Scott H., An American Prophet's Record, Signature Books, 1987.
- Fife, Austin and Alta, Saints of Sage and Saddle, Folklore Among the Mormons, Indiana University Press 1956.
- Flanders, Robert Bruce, Nauvoo, Kingdom on the Mississippi, University of Illinois Press, 1965.
- Godfrey, Kenneth W.; Godfrey, Audrey M. and Derr, Jill M., Women's Voices, An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints. Deseret Book, 1982.
- Hill, Marvin S., Rooker, C. Keith and Wimmer, Larry T., "The Kirtland Economy Revisited: A Market Critique of Sectarian Economics," published in Brigham Young University Studies, 17: 391-475.
- Hogan, Mervin B., The Official Minutes of Nauvoo Lodge U.D., 1974, Research Lodge No. 2, "Further Light in Masonry," 2602 Terrace Road, Des Moines, Iowa, 103 pages.
- Jenson, Andrew, Church Chronology, Deseret News Press, 1899.
- Jessee, Dean C., The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, Deseret Book Company, 1984.
- McKiernan, Mark F., Sidney Rigdon, Coronado Press, 1971.
- McKiernan, Mark F. ed., The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History, Coronado Press, 1973.

Miller, George, A Mormon Bishop and His Son, "De Tal Palo Tal Asilla," published by Dr. H. W. Mills, 1917.

Pusey, Merio J., Builders of the Kingdom, Brigham Young University Press, 1981.

Roberts, Brigham Henry, Comprehensive History of the Church, Deseret News Press, 1930, 6 volumes.

Roberts, Brigham Henry, ed., History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, seven volumes published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and printed by Deseret Book Company, 1960-1964. Cited as HC.

Smith, George A., "My Journal," abridged by Alice M. Horne, published monthly in The Instructor, from January 1946 through July 1949, Volume 81 No. 1 through Volume 84 No. 7.

Smith, Joseph Fielding, Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage, Deseret News Press, Salt Lake City, 1905.

Smith, Joseph Fielding, Essentials in Church History, Deseret Book Company, 1967.

Taylor, John, Items on Priesthood, Deseret News Co., 1881.

Whitney, Orson F., History of Utah, George Q. Cannon and Sons Co., Salt Lake City, 1892-1904, four volumes.

SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF VINSON KNIGHT

by Lola Belnap Coolbear

Preface

This little sketch has been written that the true life story of our forefathers may live in the memories of our children; that the coming generations may know how we came to be connected with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints.

Most of the dates have been gleaned from the Church histories, but the stories were told by Martha McBride Knight and later, her son, James Knight and her daughter Adaline Knight Belnap.

Chapter I

Vinson Knight was a man to be admired, well built with strong muscles and broad shoulders, keen dark eyes and rather dark hair. He was an honest law-abiding citizen, and a bright business man. His disposition was probably the most to be admired, having rather set determined ways, yet kind and considerate to his friends, tender and affectionate to his wife and children; He was the son of Rudolphus Knight and Rizpah Lee, and was born in Norwich, Hampshire County, Mass. Mar. 14, 1804. He married Martha McBride, the youngest daughter of Daniel McBride and Abigail Mead, July 6, 1826.

Vinson had two older brothers, Rudolphus and Samuel Lee. The three had inherited some property from their deceased father, Vinson's portion being a little clearing amid the timbers of New York, in the town of Perrysburgh, where his thrifty nature had a splendid chance to develop.

In only eight years time Vinson's clearing grew to a beautiful farm. There was a large frame house in the place of the log cabin. There were fields of wheat, potatoes and corn, patches of hemp and flax. Maple trees were tapped for sugar and syrup, and a fruit orchard planted. He had stock, horses and sheep and a large flock of geese. He raised, killed and cured their meat, and made the soap for the household use. The house-keeper complained of a large sack of money that was always in the way on the bottom shelf of the cupboard.

Martha was a dainty little woman with fine, delicate features, gray-blue eyes and dark hair. Her sensitive nature was the soul of honor, and although her hands were never allowed to do hard work, yet they were never idle. There being no sewing machines, she run the spinning wheel and plied her needle on the woolen goods and yards and yards of linen made from the wool and flax that grew on their own farm. Her hand work was a wonder of neatness, her seams being so small that one could scarcely tell the right side from the wrong, and her stitches could hardly be found. Her mind was submissive to deep religious thoughts, for her father, Daniel McBride had been a Campbellite minister, and that religion appealed to all the family as being nearest the plan of salvation as taught by Jesus; but sometimes her father, when returning from church would say to his family, "Thus sayeth the Lord."

Though he did not live to receive that divine authority, himself, he had called the attention of his family to the lack of it, and prepared their hearts to receive the restoration of that order when it was revealed to Joseph Smith.

Abigail McBride was a widow when the Church of Jesus Christs of Latterday Saints was organized in 1830, but she and others of the family very soon became members and we have her patriarchal blessing given by Father Smith in 1836, June 8. (written by Gilbert Belnap)

This was at the time of the great religious revival, when all people were taking interest in some religion. Vinson's people were reverend Christians, with lofty ideas of their own, and when it was reported that a boy, named Joseph Smith had found a golden book, and saw an angel, and was trying to establish a church, they were inclined to smile and believed him to be a dreamer, or an imposter. But religion had not yet disturbed the peace of this quiet family. Vinson and Martha were contented with their beautiful home and family of four children, Almira, Rizpah, Adaline, and James. Vinson's mother also made her home with them.

So it happened that March 21, 1834 became an eventful evening for them all. Vinson was resting from his days' labor on a buffalo robe in the corner of the dining room when two gentlemen came to the door and made themselves known as Joseph Smith and Parley P. Pratt. Martha had heard of them through her folks and bade them welcome. Vinson's mother had also heard of them, and she hurriedly put on her bonnet, and went to the neighbors, a widow who lived nearby. She told her story hastily and asked to stay all night, for she said, "I never could sleep under the same roof with those Mormons." The widow listened with sympathy, and remarked that it was a good thing that it happened tonight for she says, "My son is away, and you may have his room." Mother Knight felt so thankful when she retired for the night that she at least, was wise enough not to stay and listen to the stories of deceitful men and praying for her dear son and daughter, that they might not be deceived, she soon fell asleep.

Now the widow's son knew that his mother was not expecting him home, and thinking not to disturb her, he unlocked the door with his own key and without making a light, tiptoed to his own room, slipped off his trousers and quickly turned down the blanket. The widow was awakened by a scream. She started for the scene, but was almost run over by the retreating form of the bashful young man.

It took the widow to tell just how her son looked, but she never could find words to describe the expression on the proud face of Rizpah Knight, and had we waited for her (mother Knight) to have told it, this story would never have been written.

Vinson inherited the same proud spirit of his mother and he, like her, felt very indifferent toward the visitors. He knew that Joseph Smith had been the talk and the laughing stock of the people, and news papers for several years, but being a generous man, he could not refuse them entertainment. They were friends of his wife's folks, and she felt annoyed to see her husband too indifferent to arise from the buffalo robe.

The conversation during the evening some what changed the opinion of Vinson and his wife, and caused them to look into the truth of Joseph's

3.
character, and investigate his religion, and even attend some of the meetings. They soon found that Joseph Smith had been misrepresented, and they became convinced that he was no false prophet, but an instrument in the hands of the Lord to restore the true gospel of Christ, that had been taken from the earth.

Many people in New York and Massachusetts accepted the restored gospel, but Vinson's folks were among those who saw and heard no significance in the teachings of Joseph Smith. Therefore, it must have been a trial to them all to see Vinson led off, as it were. It must have grieved the tender feelings of his dear mother, who could not connect the doctrines of Joseph Smith with the teachings of Christ. But the whisperings of the gospel's spirit found an echo in Vinson's heart, and he, with his wife were baptized in the Spring of 1834. New thoughts and a new life seemed to have come to them with glad tidings of great joy for the living and the dead, changing their lives and giving them new desires.

If the new members of the new church were going to Ohio, building the City of Kirtland and a Temple then New York could no longer hold them. for Vinson always did everything with same energy that he worked his farm. Oh, his farm what could he do with it? How could he leave the place where they had spent so many happy years, and which was making him rich. Dispose of it? Of course, at any price. What was this place to them now? They were seeking a new home, not a home of worldly wealth and comfort, but a home eternal.

Chapter II

It was about 135 miles down to Kirtland, but they traveled by stage coach, and canal boat, so it took five or six days. Maria Crandle, a niece of Martha Knight and Lydia Goldwait, who afterwards became the wife of Newel Knight (no relation of Vinson's) came with them and lived with them for some time. It was the early part of June 1835, which was a beautiful time of the year to make the trip. The people were working hard, and the town bid fair to become a beautiful city.

The Saints had tried to settle in Jackson County, Mo. but had been terribly persecuted, and finally driven from their homes.

Brother Joseph had organized a company called Zion's Camp, who went down to Missouri and tried to make peace with the county and get the people back in their homes, but did not accomplish their purpose.

The twelve apostles had been chosen members of Zion's Camp and some of them were now away on their first missions.

The Knight family found peace and quietude in Kirtland, and continued so for two years, probably the most peaceful days in early Church History.

They soon received their patriarchal blessings from Father Smith.

Chapter III

It was Joseph Smith, Sen. who selected the name of Nathaniel for their next baby, and blessed him. Nathaniel was born Dec. 31, 1835 and died Oct. 31, 1836.

By coming to Kirtland, Vinson Knight had the pleasure of studying Hebrew in the school of the Prophets.

At a council meeting, held Jan. 2, 1836, his name was presented, voted upon and approved for the ordination to the office of an Elder, and immediately his busy life in the Church began. On the 13th of the same month, January, he was appointed counselor to Newel K. Whitney (bishop of Kirtland).

Part of the minutes of the Council Meeting at this time read as follows; "Wed. Jan. 13, 1836. A Council Meeting was held and among those present, beside the Prophet, was the president of Kirtland and Zion Stakes, namely Joseph Smith Sen., Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, David Whitmer and W. W. Phelps, also the Twelve Apostles, the High Council of Zion, and the High Council of Kirtland, and the bishops of Zion and Kirtland, and the presidency of Seventies and many of the Elders. The Council came to order by singing Adam-Ondi-Ahmen page 277, and opened by prayer offered by Joseph Smith Sen. The Prophet made some remarks and spoke of the business of the day, which was to supply some deficiencies in the Bishopric, and in the High Council. Elder Vinson Knight was nominated as a counselor in the bishopric at Kirtland, and nomination was made by the bishop and seconded by the presidency. Elder Knight was then ordained under the hands of Bishop Newel K. Whitney, to fill the place of Hyrum Smith, who had been ordained to the presidency of the High Council of Kirtland.

Council adjourned by singing, "Come Let us Rejoice."

The Prophet, in recording his thoughts of the meeting, writes; "This has been one of the best days I ever spent; there had been an entire union of feeling expressed in all our proceedings this day and the Spirit of the God of Israel has rested upon us in mighty power."

This whole year has been a time of rejoicing for Joseph, the Prophet and his people. Vinson Knight enjoyed the spirit and worked with the rest for he was a doer of everything that was asked of him and he felt it a pleasure to mingle with those noble men. He had the pleasure of being present at so many of those glorious meetings held during the year of 1836. The people were overjoyed at the completion of their temple. And the dedication would always be remembered by the saints, the speaking and the prayer and the songs, so full of the grace and glory of God.

That assembly unanimously sustained Joseph Smith Jr. as their Prophet, Seer and Revelator. They also sustained the Twelve and all the other leaders in the different organizations.

The Prophet was so delighted with the unity of Spirit that prevailed, and in speaking to the people that day his very soul was full of blessing for them all. In unity there is strength, and he blessed them in the name of Christ and told them; "So long as they held together in unity that all of the blessings of heaven were theirs, but if not, he said, "The judgments of God will follow close upon you until that City, or that House, which rejects us shall be left desolate."

How dearly did the Prophet love his brethren and sisters, especially the Twelve Apostles. What pleasure did he take in the new temple, with

5-
his brethren, anointing and blessing them and prophecyng their future and they in turn anointing, blessing and even prophecyng to others. Vinson Knight received anointing and blessings at that time and had the power given him to officiate in the ordinance from day to day. Years afterwards, on Brother Taylor, of the Mormon Battalion, told Brother Vinson's daughter that her father was a true prophet, for he had given him his anointings and blessings in the Kirtland temple and prophecyed things to him that he had seen fulfilled all during his life, especially during his trials in the Battalion.

If only that beautiful spirit of unity could have remained, if only the people, as a whole, would listen to the advice of their leader; but, no, that dark year of 1837 must follow, and was even casting its shadows before it.

There were a good many causes for the dissatisfaction that was now creeping into the hearts of the people. It would take volumes to tell all that happened, but suffice it to say that one of the main causes was the failure of their bank. Although, at this time there were banks failing all over the United States, yet some of the Prophet's dearest friends, as well as those more distant, blamed him for the failure of this one.

He had little time to think of it, though, for in spite of everything. Zion was growing. More people were coming into the Church daily. The apostles who were in England and other places were sending emigrants to Kirtland and Joseph must prepare for them. So it was agreed in General Conference that more land should be bought. Bishop Whitney and his counselors issued a proclamation to the Saints, entreating them to assist all that they could in this undertaking.

The Prophet, leaving Apostle Brigham Young to take care of affairs in Kirtland, went to Farr West, sept. 27 accompanied by Brothers Williams and Knight.

It was along trip, taking more than a month. They held conference and looked at all the country around and decided there was a gathering place for the Saints, and returned to Kirtland about Oct. 10.
Dec.

Oh, what a state of affairs now existed in Kirtland. What had the evil powers been doing? One after another had apostatized until the whole Church was in commotion. Apostates had united with non-Mormons and undertook to overthrow the Church and denounce Joseph Smith as a fallen Prophet. Brigham Young was true to Joseph, and declared by all the powers of the Holy Ghost that Joseph Smith was still the same true prophet, but he lost control of affairs and was forced to go away and leave them.

Some had placed themselves at the head of a new Church, declaring themselves to be in the right, that they owned the whole Church, and even the temple. During one of the meetings when Joseph was trying to preside, one of this class of men, who was standing in the back of the room, became excited and declared he would put Joe Smith out of the temple. The aisles being full of standing people, he stepped upon the back of a bench and started for the stand, stepping from the back of one bench to another between the heads of the people. Brother Joseph was equal to the occasion and remained

calm. Turning to Brother Knight he said; 'Brother Vinson, take this man out.' Quick as thought, Vinson caught the man by the legs and tossed him head downward over his shoulders, and carried him struggling and pawing out of the building. Brother Knight's little children always remembered the occasion.

Vinson was only one of the many true friends and faithful Saints that loved and believed in Brother Joseph, but there were enough untrue men to form a mob and disturb and threaten and become more vicious until the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon were forced to take to the saddle and flee for their lives in the cold, bleak January of 1838.

Note. There seems to be some pages lost. The next one available begins; of Seventies consisted of 515.

It had been only 8 years since the Church was organized with six members, but now there were more than 12,000, not all from Kirtland. There were converts from Canada and several of the northern States, and emigrants from England, all headed for Missouri.

No wonder the people along the way were in wonderment, and some of the old settlers in Missouri said, "Here is a chance to sell our blue grass land that is so hard to farm, but most of them said, just as the Jackson County people had said five years before, "Don't let them in here, these people are Mormons and followers of Joe Smith, the Prophet, who has predicted a terrible war between the North and the South, these people may think to bring it about and turn the slaves loose upon us." So the travelers were misunderstood and coolly received.

It is true that they were strong believers in Joseph Smith's prophecies, for the very foundation of their religion is revelation. They believed God to be the same yesterday, today and for ever. Jesus once said to Peter, "Whom do you say that I, the son of Man am." and Peter said, "Thou art Christ, the son of the living God." and Jesus said unto him. "Blessed art thou Simon Barjona, flesh and blood has not revealed this unto thee, but my father, which art in heaven."

However, the travelers, at this time, were not thinking of Joseph's revelation on war; but the one on the glories of Missouri. The Prophet had said that Zion shall be built upon this continent, the center of which would be in Missouri; and the people well knew the Zion meant a home of beauty and order, where a righteous people would live in peace and union. So, with joyous anticipations, they moved toward Missouri, hoping they might be counted worthy of becoming that happy people.

The Knight family arrived with others at Farr West, Mo. some time in June and was sent directly to a new location, twenty-five miles north June 28, 1838. Brother Knight was appointed Bishop, to preside over Adam-Ondi-Ahman. They bought a farm from Adam Black, a justice of the peace, and gave part payment for the same.

All the family were delighted with their new home, and the children played at will along the shady banks of the river there, during the summer all kinds of fruits and nuts grew in abundance.

Home were made and in a few weeks even towns were built. The people were happy, indeed, for they felt that Missouri was their home, perhaps their Zion.

The new town of Adam-Ondi-Ahman was particularly interesting to them for here it was that Adam once dwelt, said the Prophet, and walked and talked with God. Here it was that he and his descendants had built alters and offered sacrifices and to the joy of the Saints there was one of those alters still standing on the bluff above the river, as an emblem of an hallowed spot.

With these sacred thoughts thrilling their hearts, could this people be other than true loyal citizens and very industrious. The old settlers, from the very beginning, although some of them had sold their lands, were determined that the Saints should not live among them with no other excuse than they had an unpopular religion.

In July of that summer the Missourians refused the Saints the right of voting and the trouble was started. The Saints tried to make peace. Joseph Smith led out and offered himself in court to answer false charges, hoping to save further trouble, and he tried to reason with some men in authority and get them to agree to at least wait until the Saints had committed an offense before they were punished. It was of no use. The Government authorities were as determined as were the old settlers to have things go wrong. And more than that, some of these men in authority were rogues in the extreme, and took pleasure in pointing out to the old settlers what wealth they would gain in the coming land sales. Should the Mormons be driven out, they could get possession of their homes without paying for them. The law must have an excuse for expulsion, so they formed mobs and aggravated the Saints by driving off their horses, sheep, cattle, hogs, etc and even burned houses and took prisoners, sending out word that they were torturing them. All the degraded characters in the country soon learned that here was a chance to practice their villainy with no fear of punishment. A lot of these characters surprised a little town of Saints in Hauns Mill and massacred nearly all of them. They fired on De Witt and drove the Saints away. In fact all the scattered Saints in every direction began to flee to the larger towns for protection.

The Saints tried for peace in every way and appealed to the government for help, but were told that the quarrel was between them and the mob, and they could settle it among themselves. That was alright, if the Saints could only feel free to defend themselves, it would be a pleasure. One, Colonel Write, a Mormon, who held a commission in the 5th regiment soon had a force of volunteers determined to disperse the mob or die in the attempt.

The mob were badly beaten, terribly enraged and seeing they could not succeed by force now resorted to strategy. They went home and emptied their log cabins and set fire to them sending reports to the authorities of the State that the Mormons were burning and destroying all before them. This caused Governor Boggs to call out a mob-militia and give the Saints just ten days to leave the State, while the Saints begged to remain in Farr West at least until spring.

Now Bishop Vinson Knight had no time to lose. Just ten days and not half enough teams left to move the people in his ward. They got encouragement that they might stay in Farr West until spring and a few men might go to and fro for four weeks to gather the remains of their crops. Bishop Knight was forced to work in disguise, as every one who appeared to be a leader was taken by the mob.

It had been hard for Vinson's wife to see their crops destroyed and their cows driven off to feed a greedy mob, while their own family

went hungry, but now that ^{to leave a} her little children right at the beginning of winter and ^{she} knew not where, but her faith in God's care never faltered. Gathering up a few clothes and bedding she was ready to go.

Her husband was on the road helping others, but he sent one Bro. Fisk after them and the children, ever remembered the mud and the raid and the ride of twenty-five miles under a quilt. Adaline was the first to recognize her father in disguise.

It was October and the miserable storms of a long dreary winter had set in earlier than usual. The Saints were crowding into Farr West from every direction, under any shelter they could find. They had been driven and frightened from their homes without sufficient clothing for winter and there were not enough provisions in Farr West to feed the multitude. Some of them were already sick and dying with exposure.

The news of the Haun's Mill Massacre added terror to the occasion. The Prophet's kind words and good advice, while he exerted every effort to relieve their suffering, seemed to be their only comfort.

In this sad condition they were forced to face the most appalling event of their experiences. Let us take the account of it from the pen of one who was there.

In Heber C. Kimball's Journal, he writes;

"On the 30 of October, we discovered several thousand of the mob coming to Farr West under pretense of being government troops. They passed thru our corn and wheat fields, making complete desolation of everything in their way.

"Brother Brigham Young and I were appointed captain of fifty in a hurry and commanded to take our position right in the thorough fare on which the mob were seen advancing to the city, momentarily anticipating the awful tragedy of a bloody massacre. Brother Joseph was with us, giving counsel. The word came that Joseph Smith and several others were to be given up, other wise the mob would massacre every man, woman and child.

They had until morning to decide to die or give up innocent men to the abuse of a lawless mob. Think of the suspense of that awful night, men, pale as death, women, frantic, knowing full well they were helpless in the hands of rascalls, men who cared not for law nor order. Every man and woman in the city had time enough during the dark hours of that sleepless night to decide in their own hearts whether they could remain true to the faith or not. They, who were not deep rooted in their faith were shaken off as loose leaves, for they saw an escape. Why stay with a Church that all hell was arrayed against? Why count him a Prophet, now? Is not this the end of his work? Just turn him over to the mob and save their own lives."

Brother Vinson, what thinkest thou? Thy dear mother's eyes are watching you from a distance, her arms seem to reach out to you, as it were, your brothers can remind you that you have seen only trials since you left your little home in Perrysburg. Why not return with your family to the peace and wealth and comfort of that former home? Nay, Vinson, thou art true blue. Thy faith and integrity in the cause of Christ is too great to be shaken by trials. Thou hast taken upon thy self the name of Christ and art willing to bear his cross. He, like

8

fellows, would defend the leaders
is fallen, for the day has dawned and another Judas has shown the
witness of his faith.

The Propnet, with many others, are betrayed into the hands of the
but they are willing prisoners, ready to suffer whatever comes
save the city.

Save the city, nothing will save the city, Heber C. Kimball writes;
the 7th of November, the mob professing to be the regular militia
the State of Missouri, numbering about 7,000 surrounded Farr West.
men were all taken prisoners and then marched a short distance into
hollow, where Col. Lucas had previously appointed his cannon in full
charge, so that if we failed to lay down our arms, he could easily sweep
into eternity, which was his design. We were then formed into a
square and commanded by Col. Lucas to ground arms and deliver up
weapons of war, although they were our private property. After
marched back a short distance on the public square, we were then
formed into a hollow square near the house of widow Beeman.

The mob commenced plundering the citizens of their bedding, money
wearing apparel, and everything of value they could lay their hands upon.
property was destroyed by the burning of houses, logs, rails,
cribs, boards, etc. The use of corn and hay, the killing of cattle
hogs, etc. and all this, without regard to owners, or asking leave
anyone. In the meantime, men were abused and women insulted and
treated with violence by the troops, while the men were kept prisoners.
were compelled at the points of bayonets to sign a deed of trust for
the purpose of making our individual property liable, as they said to
pay all the debts of persons belonging to the Church, and also all
damages the old inhabitants of Davis County might have sustained in
consequence of the difficulties in that county.

When we walked up to sign the deed of trust, to pay those assassinations
murdering our brethren and sisters and their children, ravishing
some of our sisters to death, robbing us of our lands and posessed to
make us cast down and sorrowful. But I testify, as an eye witness that
the brethren rejoiced and praised the Lord and kicked up their heels and
thanked God, taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods. There were
judges, magistrates and Methodist, Presbyterian, Campbellite and other
sectarian priests, who stood by and saw all this going on, exulting
over us and it seemed to make them more angry, that we bore our mis-
fortunes cheerfully. Judge Cameron said, with an oath, "see those
creatures laugh and kick up their heels, They are whipped, but not
conquered."

Although they had permission from the State government to remain
in Far West until spring, they were ready to leave in the midst of
winter and God only knows where. God did know where. His spirit gave
them comfort, while he guided them onward. He softened the hearts of
the people in Quincy, Ill, and many other places, where the Saints found
shelter until spring.

The Knight family found refuge with some friends in Pike County,
where a baby boy was born to them.. They named him Rudolph Elderkin.

Heaven bless those unconquered heroes, who had courage to cling to
our religion, with so many disappointments.

On leaving Missouri, they had not given up the hope of building up
a branch of Zion somewhere.

They did not blame the themselves. Perhaps God had allowed them to be sent away from Missouri for the present. altogether, but

There were many classes of people among them, who though their hearts were converted, time only could bend their natures to be governed by a United Order. Oh! time, how long art thou?

The recent happenings in Missouri only prove how human nature will violate law and order. George Washington and others were inspired to form a glorious Constitution, with religious freedom for its standard. Every one became converted to that kind of government, yet here we find hundreds of people more than seventy years afterwards violating these laws by robbing and driving and murdering their fellow citizens because of their religious belief. The Saints will have the hope that time will straighten the ruffles of nature and teach each and all to live by higher laws. Then will the people of Missouri see their mistake and then will the Saints return and build up the center stake of Zion.

The spring of 1839 finds the Saints gathering together again, still hopeful, though weakened in health. Many of their number have deserted the cause and returned to their former homes, but their places are more than filled by new members. In spite of the persecution their numbers are rapidly growing and a home for a city must be found for the exile Saints.

Brother Joseph, who had been in Missouri on false charges is now with them again. He hears of a chance to get land in Illinois, and he with Alason Ripley and Vinson Knight are chosen as a committee to go to Hancock County, and select the new town site. They decided on Commerce, Hancock County, and bought 135 Acres from Huger White, for which they agreed to pay \$5,000, also a large farm lying west of the White purchase of Dr. Isaac Gallay for \$9,000.

Before leaving Quincy, they held a conference, May 4, in the Presbyterian Camp Grounds near Quincy.

Brother Knight had been bishop, protem, since his appointment in Adam-Onai-Anman until this conference when he was appointed bishop in reality, and after that the purchase of many acres of land for the Church was entrusted to him and he helped to lay out several townsites.

The Saints soon moved to the new location, but the country was swampy and the air full of malaria, and in their weakened state they were ready victims for disease. There was sickness in every camp, thus the faith of the people was tested in another extreme. As the hot summer months passed by, they worked and prayed, were blessed and healed. They drained the lands which improved the climate and were ready in the fall for another spiritual feast at another conference time. Bishops were appointed for three wards, N.K. Whitney for the middle Ward. Edward Partridge of the Upper Ward and Vinson Knight of the Lower Ward.

The Saints were now growing so rapidly and working so industriously that in only two or three years, the world began to hear of a remarkable city called Nauvoo. It was located on the east bank of the Mississippi River on the incline of a hill that sloped gradually to the water's edge. Here the river was a mile wide and swept around the city in a half circle.

The city was remarkable because of its rapid growth, having 9000 inhabitants, whose many virtues were noticed by foreigners.

One visitor wrote to his friend as follows, having found conditions opposite to what he had expected; "I sought in vain for anything that bore the mark of immorality. I could see no loungers on the streets, or any drunkards about the taverns. I heard not an oath in the place and saw not a gloomy countenance, all were cheerfull, polite and industrious."

Brother Knight, like other willing workers, was engaged in all kinds of business affairs for the Church and City. He was elected a member of the first City Council in Feb 1841. He was a member of many committees and an instructor in other communities.. If Bro. Joseph were away, it was he, who looked after the wants of his family. He was always ready to look after the widows and the orphans. Bro Knight, with other bishops organized the Lesser Priesthood on March 21, 1841.

On Monday, June 7, 1841, he with many others accompanied Bro. Joseph to Missouri for a trial on a false charge. Vinson Knight was introduced into the Lodge of Masons by Joseph Smith himself, April 13, 1842, and he was a member of the Nauvoo Agriculture Manufacturing association. He was one of the Prophet's life guards in the Nauvoo Legion.

Thus Vinson's time and talents were spent for the Church for his family and for his country. Nor was he an exception. As a rule the men and women worked the same. Trials, persecution and poverty had driven selfishness from their hearts, refined their thoughts and actions and united them in brotherly and sisterly love. Thus it was easy to build a famous city, that began so soon to loom up and cast a light over the sea of humanity that would attract attention.

Such a people had no need to be concerned over the loss of Missouri for if they continued in righteousness they might build a Zion where ever they went. The people were not sorrowful or sad in the natures but cheerful and pleasure loving and indulged in all kinds of wholesome sports, which were usually begun with singing and prayer. Bro. Joseph taught them to pray without ceasing or always have a prayer in their hearts.

He was once over come with the spirit of revelation while walking with his brethren upon the street. His brother, Hyrum and Vinson Knight carried him quietly thru the school room to his office above. They thought perhaps he was conversing with angels, as he had done many times before and Vinson prayed in his heart that a comforting word might come to him from the Lord thru Brother Joseph, that he might know the Lord's will concerning himself. To his great delight, when the revelation was written Vinson's prayer had been answered. It was a long revelation and is recorded in the 124th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants. It gives instructions to the Prophet about building the Nauvoo House, and there is also advice and comfort to many people. The words directly to Vinson, read as follows; "And there are others, also who wish to know my will concerning them for they have asked it at my hands. Therefore I say unto you concerning my servant Vinson Knight, if he will do my will, let him put stock into that house for himself and for his generations after him, from generation to generation. And let him lift up his voice long and loud in the midst of the people, to plead the cause of the poor and the needy, and let him not fail neither let his heart faint; and I will accept of his offering, for they shall not be unto me as the offerings of Cain, for he shall be mine, Saith the Lord."

"Let his family rejoice and turn away their hearts from affliction; for I have chosen him and anointed him, and he shall be honored in the midst of his house, for I will forgive all his sins, saith the Lord, Amen."

And again in the same revelation, he is called to the office of Presiding Bishop. The 141st verse reads; "And again I say unto you, I give unto you, Vinson Knight, Samuel H. Smith and Shaurach Roundy, if he will receive it, to preside over the bishopric, A knowledge of said bishopric is given unto you in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants."

The magnanimity of these glorious words causes one to pause in wonderment. We can hardly realize without thinking for a moment, that the Lord, himself, the Great Creator of the Universe has actually spoken to our dear grandfather in this revelation and has tenderly given him words of comfort and encouragement. To supply the wants of the poor and the needy in those terrible years of poverty and persecution, must have hung heavily upon grandfather's shoulders.

"Let him not fail, neither let his heart faint and I will accept of his offerings, for they shall not be unto me as the offerings of Cain, for He shall by mine, saith the Lord."

Shall we lay aside the pen and call this little sketch finished. With these precious words they seem to be the answer to his heart's desire. He was one with the Lord what satisfaction this must have been, what a glorious reward for the struggle of life.

Yes, we must close for there is little left to write, but a few months more of work when he became ill and was called to the Great Beyond, and it is no use to question his sad and untimely death.

Dear Grandfather, as thy descendants and, knowing what we have gained thru the gospel, which thou so nobly defended and to which thou remained true to the end of thy mortal life, under such terrible persecutions, we laud thy memory and pause to read once more the words of that wonderful blessing from the Lord:

"Let his family rejoice and turn away their hearts from affliction for I have chosen him and anointed him and he shall be honored in the midst of his house for I will forgive all his sins, saith the Lord."

Oh would that we could
Freaks of nature control,
To graft into our hearts
Some of thy noble soul.

According to Gilbert Belnap's writings, Vinson Knight died July 30, 1842 at Nauvoo, Hancock county, Ill.

A short sketch of Vinson Knight.

They joined the L.D.S. Church in 1834.

Ordained an Elder January 2, 1830 in Kirtland, Ohio.

Set apart as a counselor to Bishop Newel K. Whitney of Kirtland, Ohio on Jan. 13, 1830.

1837 he went with Joseph to Missouri to select Adam-Ondi-Ahman town sight.

June 28, 1838 He was ordained by Jos. Smith Bishop of Adam-Ondi-Ahman. Knight bought a farm from Adam Black the Justice of the Peace of that locality.

He was held bishop protin in their travels across Missouri to Quincy, Ill. May 4, at Quincy on the Presbyterian Camp grounds he was sustained Bishop and set apart. They bought 135 acres of land from Hugh White in Hancock county for \$5,000 and another one west of the White land from Dr. Isaac Golley for \$9,000.

Then when the Saints moved to Nauvoo, Ill. they made three wards. Newell Whitney for the middle ward, Edward Partridge for the upper ward and Vinson Knight the lower Ward. Oct. 5, 1839-

March 21, 1841 these bishops organized and set in order the Lessor Priesthood in Nauvoo.

June 7, 1841 Knight with others went with Joseph Smith into Missouri for trial.

Knight was taken into Mason Lodge by Joseph Smith April 13, 1842.

Jan. 19, 1841 Vinson Knight as Bishop

1st Con. Samuel Smith

2nd Con. Shadmach Roundy These presided over the Bishops of the L.D.S. Church. This place he filled until he died July 31, 1842 in Nauvoo, Ill.

This is a brief history of the Vinson Knight family as taken from family record, journals of Gilbert Belnap, Reuben McBride, Francis Lyman, Evan Green as well as newspapers and church records.

Vinson Knight was the son of Dr. Rodolphus Knight and Rizzpah Lee. He was born 14 March 1804 in Norwich, Mass. He is descended from Royal lineage as follows:

Vinson Knight 1804^①, Rodolph Knight 1768^②, Betty Elderkin 1747^③, James Elderkin 1718^④, James Elderkin 1698^⑤, John Elderkin 1664^⑥, Elizabeth Drake 1626^⑦, John Drake 1600^⑧, William Drake 1564^⑨, Robert Drake 1538^⑩, Amy Grenville 1513^⑪, Roger Grenville 1477^⑫, Sir Thomas Grenville 1455^⑬, Sir Thomas Grenville 1435^⑭, William Grenville 1415^⑮, Margaret Courtney 1395^⑯, Sir Hugh Courtney 1365^⑰, Edw. Courtney 1329^⑱, Margaret de Bohun 1311^⑲, Elizabeth daughter to King Edward I and Eleanor.

He married Martha McBride of Chester, NY children born to this union:

1. Almira, born 21 June 1827 Perrysburg, NY died 23 Jan 1912 Akron Ohio md. Mr Stoddard,
2. Rizzpah, born 13 May 1829 married Andrew S. Gibbons, pioneer to Utah 1847 with Brigham Young
3. Adeline, born 4 May 1831 Perrysburg NY married Gilbert Belnap.
4. James, born 4 Sep 1833 Perrysburg NY
5. Nathaniel, born 31 Dec 1835 Kirtland, Oh
died 20 Oct 1836 Kirtland, Ohio

6. Martha Abigail, born Pike Co, Mo
9 Feb 1839 died Nauvoo, Ill 19 March 1844.
7 Rodolphus, born 28 Sep 1841 Nauvoo, Ill
died 3 Sep 1842 Nauvoo

In 1834 their family was visited by Joseph Smith and Parley P. Pratt in New York. As they opened the door the prophet spoke "We have brought you a message of eternal truth." Martha's mother had told^{her} of her experience as she had already joined the church.

Vinson's mother had left the house as she was a strong Christian and did not wish to hear his teachings. Baptized March 24, 1834
In a letter which Vinson wrote to his mother on June 24, 1835 he stated; "I want should pardon all mistakes and write me".

At another meeting at Martha's brother Reuben McBride's house, Joseph Smith asked for volunteers to go west. They volunteered and thus their journey begins. They (Reuben and Vinson, Martha, Nevel Knight and others) were to meet Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio on April 22, 1834. He sold his farm for a great loss and left on his journey. They arrived on April 21, 1834, 135 miles traveling by coach and Canal boats.

On May 5th, according to Reuben McBride's history, the missionaries (Reuben Vinson) left Kirtland and traveled to New Portage where

they ^{missionaries} were reorganized into companies and were told to turn all their monies over to Fredrick G. Williams, who was called to act as treasurer.

On May 17 they crossed the Ohio River into Indiana and on Sunday the 18th had a very successful meeting. By May 28 they had traveled to Illinois. June 7th they reached Salt River staying 12 days. There was a branch of the church at Salt River.

They now had a company of 205 men. The next days they were hindered by bad storms and persecuted by mobs.

Cholera broke out soon and 13 or 14 died.

They were released to come home to their families only the single men staying.

Vinson stayed at his home in Kirtland at least until Nov. 1836. During his days in Kirtland he presided over ordinances performed in the temple and was given his blessing by Joseph Smith Sr, First Patriarch of the church, as well as Martha receiving hers.

On Sep 1, 1837 he was a co-signer along with Hyrum Smith, acting for the church, to borrow money that would or could never be repaid. During 1837-1842 there were numerous debts ~~that~~ by the saints that could not be repaid. The Quorum of Seventies intailed a program of debt to overcome with the church.

In early 1838 the family moved to
Spenenburg, Missouri. Persecuted they
moved to the banks of the Grand River,
where on June 28, 1838 he was
appointed as Bishop of Adam-ondi-
ahmen. Persecuted again they prepared
to move again. Vinson disguised
so that he could help evacuate
the majority of the saints, sent
Bro. Fish to assist his family who
had gathered up a few clothes and
bedding and rode in the cold and
stormy weather with only a quilt
for covering. Under these conditions
a daughter was born, Martha 9 Feb 1839.
in Pike County, Missouri.

Giving up hope of a Zion in Missouri
they moved to Nauvoo. Despite his
many religious and civic demands in
building the new city, Vinson erected
a story and a half dwelling with a
gateway leading to Brigham Young's
house. (In 1941 it was still standing)
In May (13th to June 26) Vinson and another
were selected by Joseph Smith to purchase
land on the Iowa side of the Mississippi
in Lee County. He purchased 12,745 acres
for \$32,342.22 from Mr. Goffland. This
purchase included parts of Keokuk, Montrose,
and the town of Nashville. On July 2,
1839 Joseph Smith visited this land
and "advised that a town be built here
and called Zarahemla".

but then decided to build on the East side which other agents had purchased. In June 1839 Vinson was appointed once again as Bishop, one of three in Nauvoo.

He also served as State councilor and on one occasion was asked by the prophet to oust a trouble maker (antimormon) during service, which he did by grabbing the man's legs and putting the man over his shoulder.

He was a life guard to the Prophet in the Nauvoo Legion.

On Feb 1, 1841 during the 1st City Election, when the city charter became state law, was one of 9 city councilors and on the first board of trustees of the 12 General Assembly.

On April 13, 1842 he was brought into the Masonic lodge by Joseph Smith.

Tragedy struck the household for on July 31, 1842 Vinson died.

At his funeral the prophet preached, saying: "There lies the best friend I had on earth." Soon another loss in their family, a son, Rudolphus died on the 3rd of Sep 1842. Vinson is buried in the old Cemetery in Nauvoo Ill.

During this time Martha McBride had to re. out the lower floor of

her home her family partitioning off some of the upper rooms with curtains for their abode.

Martha was active in helping the poor on the 17th of March 1842 in the Masonic Hall she became a charter member of the Relief Society. This was on her 37th birthday.

The other Charter Members consisted of the following: Emma Smith, Sarah M. Cleveland, Phoebe Ann Hawkes, Elizabeth Jones, Sophia Packard, Philande Merrick, Desdomnia Hawkes, Elizabeth Ann Whitney, Leonora Taylor, Bathsheba W. Smith, Phoebe W. Wheeler, Elvira A. Cowles, Margaret A. Cook, Sarah M. Kimball, Eliza R. Snow, Sophia Robinson, Sophia Marks.

In 1839 Gilbert Belnap, Martha's future son in law was just hearing of the doctrine in Kirtland and joined the church after much thought in 1842. He was immediately sent on a mission to New York.

On June 1, 1844 he entered into Nauvoo his first ambition was to meet and shake the hand of Joseph Smith, which he did. He was soon asked by the prophet to attend a secret meeting by anti-mormons in Cathage. Before entering he was fought and stilled and then allowed to enter only to be chased after the

meeting by an angry mob. He rode
back to the prophet and conveyed what
they had said. He was, with many others,
with the prophet the day he died.

He was living at the home of Reuben
McBride when introduced to Adaline
Knight. Being run out of Nauvoo they (Gilbert Adaline
Martha, John, James)
wanted to be wed. and on December 21, 1845
they were married in the Nauvoo Temple by
Heber C. Kimball, Only one month
before their departure. On Feb 1, 1846
they crossed the Mississippi on ice during
a blizzard setting up camp on the West
Side. Making their way to Winter Qtr. Neb.
in 1846 ~~they arrived in Salt Lake in 1847.~~

It took only 3 weeks before the saints
had built up 700 cabins. Late in Nov 1846 - ^{early Dec}
Gilbert had gone on a journey to purchase
wheat for the saints. Six weeks when
he returned to find a son which they
named Gilbert Rosel. They had another son
John which died on their journey to
Salt Lake. ~~He~~ He was buried in his father's
tool chest.

In 1850 they arrived in Salt Lake
and were instructed by Brigham Young to
settle in Weber County which they did.
The family being very active in the church
and in civil positions. Gilbert being assessor,
justice of the peace, councilman, Sheriff.

Adaline a renowned midwife.
and Martha since active in the Stake Relief Society
until her death 19 Nov 1901.