

John Killian's History

John Killian was born April 25, 1796 in Lincoln County, North Carolina. His father was Philip Killian and his mother was Mary Hoskings. Not much is known about John's childhood. His family moved to Missouri after the War of 1812. They were among the first settlers there. Missouri became a territory in 1812 and a state in 1821. There, he met and courted a widow by the name of Lydia Ann Hopper Conley. Lydia was born October 11, 1795 in Burke County, North Carolina. Her parents were Thomas Hopper and Rebecca.

John married Lydia Hopper on August 25, 1818 in Howard County, Missouri. John and Lydia settled down in Lexington, Lafayette, Missouri and began raising a family. Lydia had three young daughters from her first marriage; Susan, Rebecca Emma and Mary Ann. John and Lydia had their first son, George Hamilton, on September 10, 1819. A second son, Thomas, was born on April 30, 1821. Their first daughter, Letha Jane, was born on October 11, 1822. Their next child was Nancy, born on April 17, 1824. Franklin was born the next year in 1825. At this time the Killian family made a small move and Almira Josephine was born in Perry County, Missouri on March 27, 1827. The last child, Jacob, was born in Caldwell County, Missouri on December 31, 1828.

While living in Caldwell County the family met Oliver Cowdery, who was one of the six original members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. John joined the Church in September 1831 and was baptized by Oliver.

John was called to serve a mission to Illinois on August 7, 1834. His companion was Jesse Hitchcock, who later married one of Lydia's sisters, Kisiah. Before he could leave for Illinois, Lydia Ann passed away on October 18, 1834. The older children took care of the younger children so John could serve his mission. He served as a leader of the mission for several years.

John returned from his mission to what is now called Far West, Missouri. He was remarried on August 28, 1837 to Sarah (Sally) McClure. Sally was a cousin of his first wife, Lydia.

The members of the Church started to face ever increasing hostilities from the local citizens. John became a captain in the Caldwell County Militia during this time. He was called upon several occasions to protect the members of the Church from mob violence. Sidney Rigdon wrote; "The militia of the County of Caldwell were now all under requisition, armed and equipped according to law. The mob, after all the authority of the state had been recalled except from the force of Caldwell county, commenced the work of destruction in earnest, showing a determination to accomplish their object. Far West, where I resided, which was the shire town of Caldwell County, was placed under the charge of a captain by the name of John Killian, who made my house his headquarters."

Another journal shares another story about John. Brother Haun repaired to the city, and as the Prophet was but a private citizen and minister of the gospel, in the legal sense, he first went to Captain John Killian, of the Caldwell County militia, informed him of his appointment, and inquired what he and his brethren should do.

Daniel Tyler "Recollections," JI 27 (1892), p.95 "Move into the city was the prompt reply." Brother H.—"What! and leave the mill?" Captain K.—"Yes, and leave the mill." Brother H.—"What! to the mob?" Captain K.—"Yes, to the mob." Brother Haun then left the Captain and went to "Brother Joseph," as the Prophet was familiarly called. He asked him the same questions, and received the same answers, word for word. "But," responded the selfish mill-owner, "Brother Joseph, we think we are strong enough to defend the mill and keep it in our own hands." "Oh, well," replied he, "if you think you are strong enough to hold the mill you can do as you think best." What more could he say? His method had always been when his counsel was asked to give it freely and leave parties to receive or reject it. He could not, nor would not if he could, take away people's agency.

Daniel Tyler "Recollections," JI 27 (1892), p.95

Brother Haun returned and reported that Brother Joseph's counsel was for them to stay and protect or hold the mill. The