

*Remembering the Wives  
of  
Joseph Smith*



MISSION and PURPOSE

Acknowledge and remember these largely forgotten women

# THE WIVES OF JOSEPH SMITH

Wife	Date	Age	Husband*
Emma Hale	Jan 1827	22	
Fanny Alger	1833	16	
Lucinda Morgan Harris	1838	37	George W. Harris
Louisa Beaman	Apr 1841	26	
Zina Huntington Jacobs	Oct 1841	20	Henry Jacobs
Presendia Huntington Buell	Dec 1841	31	Norman Buell
Agnes Coolbrith	Jan 1842	33	
Sylvia Sessions Lyon	Feb 1842	23	Windsor Lyon
Mary Rollins Lightner	Feb 1842	23	Adam Lightner
Patty Bartlett Sessions	Mar 1842	47	David Sessions
Marinda Johnson Hyde	Apr 1842	27	Orson Hyde
Elizabeth Davis Durfee	Jun 1842	50	Jabez Durfee
Sarah Kingsley Cleveland	Jun 1842	53	John Cleveland
Delcena Johnson	Jul 1842	37	
Eliza R. Snow	Jun 1842	38	
Sarah Ann Whitney	Jul 1842	17	
Martha McBride	Aug 1842	37	
Ruth Vose Sayers	Feb 1843	33	Edward Sayers
Flora Ann Woodworth	1843	16	
Emily Dow Partridge	Mar 1843	19	
Eliza Maria Partridge	Mar 1843	22	
Almera Johnson	Apr 1843	30	
Lucy Walker	May 1843	17	
Sarah Lawrence	May 1843	17	
Maria Lawrence	May 1843	19	
Helen Mar Kimball	May 1843	14	
Hanna Ells	1843	29	
Elvira Cowles Holmes	Jun 1843	29	Jonathan Holmes
Rhoda Richards	Jun 1843	58	
Desdemona Fullmer	Jul 1843	32	
Olive Frost	1843	27	
Melissa Lott	Sep 1843	19	
Nancy M. Winchester	1843	14	
Fanny Young	Nov 1843	56	

\* Living husband at the time of marriage to Joseph Smith

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\* All books available through Deseret Book and [www.deseretbook.com](http://www.deseretbook.com)

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# EMMA HALE



In late 1825, Joseph Smith was working as a hired hand on a farm in South Bainbridge, New York. He was tasked with finding and unearthing buried treasure presumed to be located there. Joseph boarded at the nearby home of Isaac Hale, where he met Emma, Isaac's twenty-year old daughter. She has been described as 5'9" tall, "*Fine looking, smart, a good singer*" and "*well turned, of excellent form...with splendid physical development.*" Joseph's mother recalls, "*...he had come to the conclusion of getting married...and he thought that no young woman...was better calculated to render [him] happy than Miss Emma Hale...*" Joseph twice asked Emma's father, for her hand in marriage, but was refused because he was a "*stranger*".

On January 17, 1827, Joseph and Emma rode away from the Hale residence on a horse and the following evening were married by a judge in South Bainbridge. Emma remembers, "*I had no intention of marrying when I left home...[but] Preferring to marry him to any other man I knew, I consented.*" Emma and Joseph retreated to Palmyra to live with Joseph's parents. Months later they returned to the Hale home to retrieve Emma's belongings. Isaac Hale was angered: "*You have stolen my daughter and married her. I had much rather have followed her to the grave.*" In an attempt at reconciliation, Joseph promised Isaac he would give up the treasure seeking business.

A month later, on September 21, Joseph announced he had obtained gold plates, inscribed with an ancient language, that were buried in a hill near his home. Emma had gone with Joseph to the hill, waiting patiently in the wagon until he returned; the plates wrapped in his coat. Emma described that she later wrote as Joseph translated the plates, "*with his face buried in his hat...hour after hour.*" The plates "*lay on the table...wrapped in a small linen table cloth*". Emma was not allowed to see the plates, but she remembers touching them beneath the cloth. By spring of 1830, the gold plates had been published as the Book of Mormon, and a new church founded, with Joseph as its prophet.

In 1831 Emma and Joseph moved to Kirtland, Ohio where the church was rapidly growing. There, on April 30, 1831 Emma prematurely gave birth to twins, but both died. The following day Julia Murdock died while also giving birth to twins. The father, feeling unable to care for the children allowed the Smiths to adopt them as Joseph and Julia. A year later young Joseph would die.

In the fall of 1832, Joseph was visiting New York City. Writing home, he said, "*the thoughts of home, of Emma and Julia, rushes upon my mind like a flood and I would wish for moment to be with them. My breast is filled with all the feelings and tenderness of a parent and a Husband...cumfort yourself Knowing that God is your friend in heaven and that you have one true and living friend on Earth your Husband.*" On the same day Joseph returned home from New York, Emma gave birth to a baby boy. They named him, Joseph. A few years later, Emma would give birth to another son, Frederick. In January 1838, lawsuits and dissention over the failure of the church run Kirtland Banking Society plagued Joseph. After dark on January 12<sup>th</sup>, he fled Kirtland on a horse headed for Missouri, designated by revelation as "*Zion*". Five months pregnant, Emma

and the children would pack the wagon and begin the 800 mile trip without him. Once in Missouri, Emma would give birth to another son, Alexander.

The peace hoped for in Missouri would not last. Tensions between Missourians and migrating Mormons soon erupted into conflict. Joseph was jailed for his participation in the clash. Fearing for his life, he wrote to Emma: "*If I do not meet you again in this life may God grant that we may meet in heaven, I cannot express my feelings, my heart is full, Farewell Oh my kind and affectionate Emma. I am yours forever.*" In another letter he wrote, "*Oh my affectionate Emma, I want you to remember that I am a true and faithful friend to you ... My heart is entwined around yours forever and ever*"

Emma and the rest of the church were soon forced to leave Missouri. In February 1839, with Joseph still in jail, Emma moved their family to Illinois, crossing the frozen Mississippi River with her four young children age eight-months to seven-years. Emma herself was 4 months pregnant with another son, Don Carlos. Joseph would soon join his family in what would become the thriving city of Nauvoo.

In the relative stability of Nauvoo, Joseph would try to establish polygamy, a practice he had flirted with in Kirtland and Missouri. Between the years 1841 and 1843, Joseph would marry more than thirty wives. He kept the practice veiled from the public and from his wife, Emma. When she discovered that he was taking additional wives, she struggled to accept it. Joseph received a revelation regarding this "*new and everlasting covenant*" of plural marriage, part of which was directed at Emma:

*D&C 132:1 Verily, thus saith the Lord...*

*D&C 132:4 ...no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.*

*D&C 132:52 And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those [wives] that have been given unto my servant Joseph...*

*D&C 132:55 But if she will not abide this commandment, then...I will...give unto him an hundred fold in this world, of...wives..."*

*D&C 132:62 And if he have ten virgins given unto him...he cannot commit adultery...*

*D&C 132:64 ...if any man have a wife...and he teaches unto her [this] law...then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed...*

Emma surrendered to Joseph's revelation, even allowing several of his wives to live in her home. But her submission soon faltered and Joseph arranged for these wives to live elsewhere. On August 16, 1843 William Clayton wrote in his diary, "*This A.M. Joseph told me that...Emma...had resisted the P[rinciple] in toto, and he had to tell her he would relinquish all for her sake...He however told me he should not relinquish anything.*"

In early 1844, dissenters in Nauvoo learned of Joseph's polygamy, and published the "*Nauvoo Expositor*" which accused him of introducing the doctrine of "*the plurality of wives*". As Mayor of Nauvoo, Joseph ordered the printing press destroyed. He was subsequently arrested, soon to be jailed in nearby Carthage. Before Joseph was taken away, Emma asked him for a blessing. He instructed her to write the blessing down and he would authorize it upon his return. In part, Emma wrote, "*I desire with all my heart to honor and respect my husband as my head, ever to live in his confidence and by acting in unison with him retain the place which God has given me by his side...*"

While jailed in Carthage, Joseph was killed by a mob action on June 27, 1844. When his body was returned to Nauvoo, Emma knelt by his side and cried, "*Oh, Joseph, Joseph! My husband, my husband! Have they taken you from me at last!*"

## FANNY ALGER



Benjamin Johnson, a close friend of Joseph Smith, described Fanny as, “*vary nice and comly, [to whom] everyone Seemed partial for the ameability of her character.*” She is generally considered the first plural wife of Joseph Smith. Although undocumented, the marriage of Fanny and Joseph most likely took place in Kirtland, Ohio sometime in 1833. She would have been sixteen years old. At the time, Fanny was living in the Smith home, perhaps helping Emma with house work and the children. Ann Eliza Webb recalls, “*Mrs. Smith had an adopted daughter, a very pretty, pleasing young girl, about seventeen years old. She was extremely fond of her; no mother could be more devoted, and their affection for each other was a constant object of remark, so absorbing and genuine did it seem*”.

Joseph kept his marriage to Fanny out of the view of the public, and his wife Emma. Chauncey Webb recounts Emma’s later discovery of the relationship: “*Emma was furious, and drove the girl, who was unable to conceal the consequences of her celestial relation with the prophet, out of her house*”. Ann Eliza again recalls: “*...it was felt that [Emma] certainly must have had some very good reason for her action. By degrees it became whispered about that Joseph’s love for his adopted daughter was by no means a paternal affection, and his wife, discovering the fact, at once took measures to place the girl beyond his reach...Since Emma refused decidedly to allow her to remain in her house...my mother offered to take her until she could be sent to her relatives...*”

Book of Mormon witness, Oliver Cowdery, felt the relationship was something other than a marriage. He referred to it as “*A dirty, nasty, filthy affair...*” To calm rumors regarding Fanny’s relationship with Joseph, the church quickly adopted a “*Chapter of Rules for Marriage among the Saints*”, which declared, “*Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with...polygamy; we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife...*” This “*Article on Marriage*” was canonized and published in the Doctrine & Covenants. In 1852, the doctrine of polygamy was publicly announced, thus ending eighteen years of secret practice. “*The Article on Marriage*” became obsolete and was later removed.

Fanny stayed with relatives in nearby Mayfield until about the time Joseph fled Kirtland for Missouri. Benjamin Johnson remembers: “*Soon after the Prophet[’s] flight in the winter of ’37...The Alger Family left for the west and Stop[ped] in Indiana for a time...Soon [Fanny] Married to one of the Citizens of ther & altho she never left the State She did not turn from the Church nor from her friendship for the Prophet while She lived..*” Benjamin continued, “*And I Can now See that as at Nauvoo – So at Kirtland That the Suspicion or Knowledge of the Prophets Plural Relations was one of the Causes of Apostacy & disruption at Kirtland altho at the time there was little said publickly upon the Subject.*” Fanny lived the rest of her life in Indiana with her children and husband, Solomon Custer.

## LUCINDA MORGAN HARRIS



Lucinda Harris, and her husband George, joined the “Church of the Latter Day Saints” during the fall of 1834. The missionary, Orson Pratt, records in his journal: “*At Terre haute I preached a few times, and baptized George W. Harris and his wife...*”. The following year, George and Lucinda moved to Missouri, to gather in “Zion” with the rest of the Saints.

In early 1838, amidst growing dissent and legal problems, Joseph Smith fled Kirtland, Ohio for Far West, Missouri. A leader in Far West, George Harris met Joseph and Emma upon their arrival. Joseph wrote: “*We were immediately received under the hospitable roof of George W. Harris who treated us with all kindness possible. here we refreshed ourselves with much satisfaction after our long and tedious journey.*”. The Smiths lived in the Harris home for two months before moving into a home of their own.

The date of the marriage between Joseph and Lucinda is uncertain. Sarah Pratt, a friend of Lucinda’s (and wife of Apostle Orson Pratt), indicated that the wedding occurred sometime during Joseph’s stay in Missouri. After marrying Joseph, Lucinda continued to live with George. This was typical of Joseph’s other polyandrous unions. It is uncertain if Lucinda’s first husband, George, was aware of the marriage.

Unrest in Missouri forced Joseph Smith to flee to Illinois. From Nauvoo, Joseph wrote to Lucinda and George, that he had selected a lot for them, “*just across the street from my own*”. Shortly thereafter, Lucinda and George moved from Far West to Nauvoo.

As “Acting Associate Justice” in Nauvoo, George presided over the city council meeting on June 10, 1844 when the claims of the dissenting newspaper, the “*Nauvoo Expositor*” were discussed. The minutes of the meeting record: “*Alderman Harris spoke from the chair, and expressed his feelings that the press ought to be demolished.*”. The city council passed a resolution that directed the destruction of the press. Joseph Smith was soon arrested for abetting this destruction and was later killed in Carthage on June 27<sup>th</sup>.

Joseph’s body was returned to Nauvoo. B.W. Richmond, a visiting journalist, unaware of Joseph and Lucinda’s relationship wrote, “*[Mrs. Harris was] standing at the head of Joseph Smith’s body, her face covered, and her whole frame convulsed with weeping.*”

Lucinda later divorced George Harris and according to one biographer, “*Mrs. Harris afterward joined the (Catholic) Sisters of Charity, and at the breaking out of the civil war, was acting in that capacity in the hospitals at Memphis Tennessee...*”.

## LOUISA BEAMAN



Louisa Beaman first met Joseph Smith in 1834 when Joseph and several missionaries stayed in the Beaman home in Avon, New York. Louisa's sister, Mary, remembered the visit: "*His society I prized, his conversation was meat and drink to me*". One of the missionaries, Parley P. Pratt, also noted the stay: "*Among those whose hospitality we shared in that vicinity was old father Beeman and his amiable and interesting family. He was a good singer, and so were his three daughters; we were much edified and comforted in their society...*".

The Beaman family joined the church and moved to Kirtland, Ohio in 1835. While there, Louisa's father died at the age of 62. Amid church dissention in Kirtland, Louisa, and her Mother, Sarah, made the trip to Missouri and then finally to Nauvoo. Shortly after arriving in Nauvoo, Louisa's Mother also died, most likely of malaria, which was rampant. Louisa moved in with her sister Mary and brother-in-law, Joseph Bates Noble.

In the fall of 1840 Joseph Smith taught Joseph Bates Noble, "*the principle of celestial marriage or plural marriage*", which Joseph said was given by revelation. Joseph then asked Noble to perform a marriage ceremony between himself and twenty-five-year-old Louisa. Smith also warned, "*In revealing this to you, I have placed my life in your hands, therefore do not in an evil hour betray me to my enemies.*"

Joseph and Louisa were married on April 5, 1841, "*in a grove Near Main Street in the City of Nauvoo, The Prophet Joseph dictating the ceremony and Br Nobles repeating it after him.*", remembers Erastus Snow, Louisa's brother-in-law. To help keep the union secret, Louisa wore a man's hat and coat as disguise. Joseph Bates Noble recalled that after the ceremony, the couple spent their wedding night, "*Right straight across the river at my house*". Noble said he encouraged them to, "*Blow out the lights and get into bed, and you will be safer there*".

After Joseph Smith's death, Louisa married Brigham Young. Louisa bore five children by Young, all of whom preceded her in death. Tragically, Louisa died of breast cancer at the age of 35.

For many years, Louisa Beaman was widely recognized as the first plural wife of Joseph Smith. In 1851, the city now known as Parowan, Utah was christened Fort "Louisa". According to John D. Lee, this was, "*in honor of the first Woman who listened to the light & voice of Revelation - & yielded obedience to the Seal of the covenant...for this noble act, her Name is held in honorable remembrance in the History of the Saints*".

## ZINA HUNTINGTON JACOBS



In 1839, the Huntington family arrived in Nauvoo, along with daughter, Zina. Within months, Zina's Mother died from the malaria epidemic which claimed the lives of many of the early Nauvoo settlers. About this same time, Zina met and was courted by Henry B. Jacobs, a handsome and talented musician. Sometime during Henry's courtship of Zina, Joseph Smith explained to Zina the "principle of plural marriage" and asked her to become one of his wives. Zina remembers the conflict she felt about Joseph's proposal, and her budding relationship with Henry: "*O dear Heaven, grant me wisdom! Help me to know the way. O Lord, my god, let thy will be done and with thine arm around about to guide, shield and direct...*" Zina declined Joseph's proposal and chose to marry Henry. They were married on March 7, 1841.

Zina later wrote, that within months of her marriage to Henry, "*[Joseph] sent word to me by my brother, saying, 'Tell Zina, I put it off and put it off till an angel with a drawn sword stood by me and told me if I did not establish that principle upon the earth I would lose my position and my life'*". Joseph further explained that, "*the Lord had made it known to him she was to be his celestial wife.*"

Zina chose to obey this commandment and married Joseph on October 27. She later recalled, "*When I heard that God had revealed the law of celestial marriage...I obtained a testimony for myself that God had required that order to be established in this church...I made a greater sacrifice than to give my life for I never anticipated again to be looked upon as an honorable woman by those I dearly loved...*". Zina continued, "*It was something too sacred to be talked about; it was more to me than life or death. I never breathed it for years*".

Zina's first husband, Henry, was aware of this wedding and they continued to live in the same home. He believed that "*whatever the Prophet did was right, without making the wisdom of God's authorities bend to the reasoning of any man.*" Over the next few years, Henry was sent on several missions to Chicago, Western New York and Tennessee. Henry missed his family and wrote home often. One of Henry's missionary companions, John D. Lee, said, "*Jacobs was bragging about his wife and two children, what a true, virtuous, lovely woman she was. He almost worshiped her...*".

Shortly after Joseph Smith's death in 1844, Zina married Brigham Young. In May of 1846, Henry was sent on a mission to England. In Henry's absence, Zina began to live openly as Brigham's wife and remained so throughout her life in Utah. Henry seemed to struggle with this arrangement and later wrote to Zina, "*...the same affection is there...But I feel alone...I do not Blame Eny person...may the Lord our Father bless Brother Brigham...all is right according to the Law of the Celestial Kingdom of our God Joseph.*"

## PRESENTIA HUNTINGTON BUELL



Presentia Huntington Buell and her husband Norman, joined the church in 1836 in Kirtland, OH and subsequently journeyed with Joseph Smith's wagon company to Missouri and then later to Illinois.

Presentia's biographer, Emmeline B. Wells wrote, that in the fall of 1841, "*Joseph himself taught the principle of plural marriage to Sister Presentia...She knew Joseph Smith to be a man of God...and consequently...she accepted the sealing ordinance with Joseph as a sacred and holy confirmation.*"

Presentia married Joseph Smith on December 11, 1841. Joseph had married her sister, Zina two months prior. As with Zina, Presentia's brother, Dimick, performed the ceremony. Another brother, Oliver wrote, "*Dimick had given our sisters Zina & Presentia to Joseph as wives.*" In return, Joseph offered him any reward he wanted. Alluding to eternal salvation, Dimick replied, "*that where you and your fathers family are, there I and my fathers family may also be.*" Presentia continued to live with her first Husband, Norman. In November 1843, she bore her seventh child, John Hiram, but he passed away a year later. Only two of Presentia's children had survived.

After Joseph Smith's death in summer 1844, Presentia married Heber C. Kimball. She continued to live with her first husband, Norman, until May 1846. Her brother Oliver wrote, "*Presentia's Husband would not follow the Church any longer...so she left him and followed after her Lord [Kimball]*" Presentia took her six year old son, Oliver, with her, leaving behind her 16 year old son George and husband, Norman. Of the experience, Presentia wrote, "*No tongue can tell my feelings in those days of trial; but I had considered well, and felt I would rather suffer and die with the saints, than live in Babylon.*"

Norman tried unsuccessfully to find Presentia in her flight. By 1848 he located her at Winter Quarters, Nebraska, living with other Mormons migrating to the Salt Lake Valley. Presentia's brother Oliver wrote, "*Norman Buell...had been up to Winter Quarters on a visit...and wanted she should not marry but wait a while and he would come over to the valley, and be glad to live with her again*". Norman was apparently unaware of Presentia's marriage to Kimball, and his offer to accompany her to Utah was refused. Presentia later bore two children by husband Heber.

On June 27, 1859, Presentia and several friends climbed Ensign Peak to commemorate the death of her second husband, Joseph Smith. "*We offered up our prayers to God and thanks that He had raised up a prophet in these last days and the Gospel had been restored to the earth, and that we had been of the few that had received the truth*".

## AGNES COOLBRITH SMITH



Agnes Coolbrith was baptized in Boston in July of 1832 and gathered with the saints in Kirtland, Ohio. There she boarded in the home of Joseph and Emma Smith. In 1835, Agnes married Joseph's brother, Don Carlos. Three years later, when Joseph fled Kirtland for Missouri, Agnes and Don Carlos followed. Eventually they settled in Nauvoo with their three daughters. During the summer of 1841, Don Carlos contracted malaria and passed away.

Five months later Agnes would marry Joseph Smith. The marriage was guarded with secrecy. On January 6, 1842 Brigham Young wrote a cryptic entry in his journal using Masonic symbols. Decoded, it reads: "*I was taken in to the lodge J Smith was Agness*". The abbreviation "was" means "*wedded and sealed*". On the same day in Joseph's diary we find: "*Truly this is a day long to be remembered by the saints of the Last Days; a day in which the God of heaven has began to restore the ancient order of his Kingdom...all things are concurring together to bring about the completion of the fullness of the gospel*".

Later that spring, at a meeting of the women's "Relief Society", Emma Smith announced that a young woman, Clarissa Marvel, "*was accused of [telling] scandalous falsehoods on the character of Prest. Joseph Smith*". Eager to prove her husband innocent of improper behavior, Emma initiated an investigation. A few days later, Clarissa signed the following statement: "*This is to certify that I never have at any time or place, seen or heard anything improper or unvirtuous in the conduct or conversation of either President Smith or Mrs. Agnes Smith...I never have reported any thing derogatory to the characters of either of them*". By this time, Joseph and Agnes had been married almost four months.

After Joseph Smith's death, Agnes married Joseph and Don Carlos' cousin, George Albert Smith. As George Albert and the rest of the Saints were leaving for Utah, Agnes wrote, "*I have no other one to ask but you my mind is much troubled about comeing...I want to come and I do not want to come I feel alone all alone if there was a Carlos or a Joseph or Hyrum there how quickly would I be there*". Agnes ultimately did not migrate to Utah. She married a fourth husband, William Pickett, and eventually moved to California, essentially leaving her Mormon past behind.

Many years later, her marriage to Joseph Smith still shrouded in secrecy, Agnes wrote to her nephew, Joseph F. Smith: "*I acknowledge none greater...than those that belong to the household of Joseph our Dear Dear Dear departed one Joseph...I could say many things to you...that I know and that has been told me by those that are dead and gone but perhaps you would not believe me no I know that you would not so it is best for me to keep silent*".

## SYLVIA SESSIONS LYON



Sylvia Sessions left Maine for Zion (Missouri) with her parents, Patty and David, in June of 1837. While in Missouri, Sylvia met and married Windsor Lyon. Sylvia's Mother, Patty, wrote about the wedding in her journal, "*Sylvia was married to Windsor P. Lyon, Joseph Smith performed the ceremony...The next day the Prophet was there and a good time it was.*"

Sylvia, and husband Windsor, left Missouri for Nauvoo in February of 1839. There, Windsor established a mercantile business, selling "*Dry Goods, Groceries, Crockery, Glass, and Hardware, Drugs, and Medicines, Paints and Dry Stuffs.*" By this time, they were the parents of two children.

Sylvia married Joseph Smith on February 8, 1842, when she was 23 years old. It is uncertain if her husband, Windsor, was aware of the marriage, but she did continue to live with him. Brigham Young taught that "*if the woman preferred a man higher in authority, and he is willing to take her and her husband gives her up-there is no Bill of divorce required...it is right in the sight of God*". Brigham also explained that the woman, "*...would be in a higher glory*". This may help shed light on Sylvia's complex marriage arrangement.

10 months later, on December 24th, Joseph's journal mentions a visit to his wife, Sylvia, who was giving birth to her third child: "*Walked with Sec[retary Willard Richards] to see Sister Lyons who was sick. Her baby died 30 minutes before [we] arrived*". Sylvia had lost two of her three children in death. On September 18, 1843, another of Joseph's visits to Sylvia is recorded by William Clayton, "*Joseph and I rode out to borrow money, drank wine at Sister Lyons P.M. I got \$50 of Sister Lyons and paid it to D.D. Yearsly.*"

On January 27, 1844 her only surviving child, Philofreen, also died. At this time, Sylvia was eight months pregnant with her fourth child, Josephine Rosetta Lyon. Josephine later wrote, "*Just prior to my mothers death in 1882 she called me to her bedside and told me that her days were numbered and before she passed away from mortality she desired to tell me something which she had kept as an entire secret from me and from all others but which she now desired to communicate to me. She then told me that I was the daughter of the Prophet Joseph Smith*".

## MARY ROLLINS LIGHTNER



Mary Rollins first met Joseph Smith in early 1831. She and her family were new converts and Joseph Smith had just arrived in Kirtland from New York state. Twelve-year-old Mary remembers, "*when he saw me, he looked at me so earnestly, I felt almost afraid [and I thought, 'He can read my every thought,' and I thought how blue his eyes were.] after a moment, or too he came and put his hands on my head and gave me a great Blessing, (the first I ever received)*". Joseph also prepared Mary for their eventually marriage: "*[He] told me about his great vision concerning me. He said I was the first woman God commanded him to take as a plural wife.*" In the fall of that year, Mary and her family left Kirtland for "Zion", which was being established in Missouri.

Three years later, Mary and Joseph would be reunited when Joseph led the Zion's Camp expedition from Ohio to Missouri. Mary remembers, "*In 1834 he was commanded to take me for a Wife, I was a thousand miles from him, he got afraid*". At the close of Zion's Camp, Joseph returned to Kirtland. Mary stayed in Missouri, living in Liberty and Far West. Perhaps thinking her marriage to Joseph was off, she married Adam Lightner in 1835. By 1840 they had settled in Nauvoo, and were raising two children.

Early in 1842, Joseph approached Mary about becoming his wife. According to Mary, Joseph said, "*The angel came to me three times between the year of '34 and '42 and said I was to obey that principle or he would slay me.*" Furthermore, Joseph told her, "*I was his before I came here and he said all the Devils in hell should never get me from him...*" and "*I know that I shall be saved in the Kingdom of God. I have the oath of God upon it and God cannot lie. All that he gives me I shall take with me for I have that authority and that power conferred upon me.*"

Initially, Mary did not accept Joseph's proposal. She wanted a witness from God. Mary recalls, "*If ever a poor mortal prayed I did*". By February 1842 Joseph had convinced her it was a correct principle and she, "*went forward and was sealed to him. Brigham Young performed the sealing...for time, and all Eternity.*" Mary said her husband Adam was "*far away*" out of town at the time of her marriage to Joseph.

Mary continued to live with her first husband, Adam. Of this arrangement, she later wrote, "*I could tell you why I stayed with Mr. Lightner. Things the [current] leaders of the Church does not know anything about. I did just as Joseph told me to do...*"

After Joseph Smith was killed in 1844, Mary and her first husband Adam continued to live in Nauvoo and the Midwest. In 1863 they moved to Utah. In her elderly years, Mary wrote to an acquaintance, "*...I Love to talk about the Prophet and the Early days of the Church [I] will always remember how Joseph looked...at that first sealing...he was tall and of a commanding figure, full of Life...Yes; I could tell you many things that I cannot write – I remember every word he...ever said to me of importance...*"

## PATTY BARTLETT SESSIONS



Patty Bartlett was born and raised in southwest Maine. Speaking of Patty's Father and her upbringing, her oldest child, Perrigrine wrote: "*[her Father] made no pretentions to religion and never belonged to any sect he was a very liberal man to the poor and was honest and upright in all his Deporment and taught his children to work and always to speak the truth*"

On June 28, 1812 Patty married David Sessions. They stayed in Maine and "*bought land and made a farm built a log house and a large fraim barn...my husband by his industry on his farm and with his mills And by keeping a public house procured considerable wealth*". Patty and David had seven children only three of which lived into adulthood.

While in Maine, Patty was trained as a midwife by her mother-in-law. Later, as a midwife in Illinois and Utah, Patty would deliver nearly 4000 babies.

In August 1833, Patty came into contact with Mormon missionaries. Again, Perrigrine wrote, "*And as soon as my Mother herd she believed and she was baptized and Confirmed into the Church of laterday Saints...*" Apostles Brigham Young and Lyman Johnson later visited and "*the gathering of the Saints was taught and preparations began to bee made to remove to Zion...we began to dispose of property as my Father and I had considerable*".

The Sessions spent a year in Missouri and then settled in Nauvoo. There, Patty wrote in her journal: "*I was sealed to Joseph Smith by Willard Richards March 9 1842 in Newel K Whitneys chamber Nauvoo, for time and all eternity...Sylvia my daughter was presant when I was sealed*". Patty was 47. Her daughter Sylvia had married Joseph a month earlier on February 8. It is unclear if Patty's first husband, David, was aware of the marriage.

After her marriage to Joseph, Patty continued to live with David. Three months later, he left on a mission to his former home state of Maine. Of the occasion, Patty wrote in her journal, "*He left me alone, and I am very lonesome.*" Two months later she wrote that she was "*making shirts for Joseph.*"

Patty's duties as Joseph's plural wife included approaching and educating prospective wives, serving as a messenger and go between, and acting as a witness at the wedding ceremonies of Joseph and the other plural wives he took. Patty continued in this role until Joseph's death in 1844. Patty and David later left Nauvoo for Utah with the other migrating Saints.

## MARINDA JOHNSON HYDE



Fifteen-year-old Marinda Johnson and her family were baptized into the church during the winter of 1830, near Kirtland, Ohio. "*The [following] fall*", Marinda wrote, "*Joseph came with his family to live at my father's house. He was at that time translating the Bible...*" For the next year, Joseph lived in the Johnson home.

In 1833, Marinda met and was courted by Orson Hyde. A year later they would marry. Within months of the marriage, Orson was called to be an Apostle of the church, a calling which meant he would spend two of the next three and one-half years in the Eastern States and England in missionary service. Back home Marinda raised their two children. By June 1839 Marinda and Orson had relocated to Nauvoo. A third child soon arrived.

On April 6, 1840, Orson wrote, "*I was appointed, in company with Elder John E. Page, to go on a mission to Jerusalem*". A week later, Orson left for what would be a three year mission. On October 24, 1841, Orson stood on the Mount of Olives and consecrated Palestine for the gathering of Judah in the last days.

While Orson was gone, Marinda, "*had to live in a little log house whose windows had no glass but in place of which were pieces of greased paper...A little cornmeal and a few groceries were all the provisions remaining to sustain her and the little ones.*". Noting Marinda's living conditions, Joseph Smith received the following revelation dated December 2, 1841: "*Verily thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph. that inasmuch as you have called upon me to know my will concerning my handmaid Nancy Marinda Hyde Behold it is my will that she should have a better place prepared for her than that in which she now lives...and let my handmaid Nancy Marinda Hyde hearken to the counsel of my servant Joseph in all things whatsoever he shall teach unto her...*"

Marinda soon moved to a better home. In the Spring of 1842 she married Joseph. In Joseph's diary is a list of his marriages. It includes the entry: "*Apr 42 Marinda Johnson to Joseph Smith.*". Eight months later, in December, Orson returned from his mission. It is not clear when, or if, Orson learned about his wife's marriage to Joseph. However, by March, Orson had learned about plural marriage himself and married two additional wives.

After Joseph's death in 1844, Marinda and Orson continued to live in Nauvoo. In April of 1846, shortly before leaving for Utah, Orson dedicated the Nauvoo temple. Over the next 20 years, Marinda would bear 7 more children. Orson would continue to serve missions and marry seven additional wives. In 1870 Marinda and Orson divorced.

Marinda's grandchildren later wrote of her caring and thoughtful demeanor: "*She was so loving and sympathetic with...all... She was a lovely creature, dignified and...took a keen interest in life and people*".



# ELIZABETH DAVIS DURFEE



When Elizabeth met Jabez Durfee in 1834 she was a widow, having lost her first two husbands in a shipwreck and sickness. Jabez was a widower, his wife having passed away earlier that year. They combined their families, 10 children between them, and were married in March of 1834 in Clay County, MO.

Elizabeth and Jabez moved to Nauvoo in 1839. There, Elizabeth participated in the newly established women's organization, the Relief Society. On April 14, 1842 Elizabeth was administered to by Society President Emma Smith and her two counselors. Later Elizabeth, *"bore testimony to the great blessing she received when administered to...by Prest. E.S. & Councillors Cleveland and Whitney. she said she never realized more benefit thro' any administration-that she was heal'd, and thought the sisters had more faith than the brethren"*. In response to complaints about women giving blessings, Joseph shared his approval saying, *"If the sisters should have faith to heal the sick let all hold their tongues...if God gave his sanction by healing...there would be no...sin"*.

In the Spring of 1842 Elizabeth, now fifty one, married Joseph Smith. Like Patty Sessions, another one of Joseph's relatively older wives, Elizabeth was a "Mother in Israel" who helped introduce younger women into plural marriage. In the Spring of 1843, nineteen-year-old Emily Partridge recalls being approached by Joseph: *"If you will not betray me, I will tell you something for your benefit...[he] asked me if I would burn it if he would write me a letter"*. Emily declined Joseph's letter thinking, *"it was not the proper thing to do"*. Soon after, Elizabeth invited Emily to her home. Emily remembers, *"She introduced the subject of spiritual wives as they called it in that day [and wondered] if there was any truth in the report she heard...[I thought to myself] I could tell her something that would make her open her eyes if I chose"*. Emily kept quiet but later noted, *"I learned afterward that Mrs. Durfee was [already] a friend to plurality and knew all about it"*. On March 4<sup>th</sup>, Elizabeth again met with Emily. Emily wrote, *"Mrs. Durf- came to me one day and said Joseph would like an opportunity to talk with me. I asked her if she knew what he wanted. She said she thought he wanted me for a wife...I was to meet him in the evening at Mr. Kimballs"*. Aided by Elizabeth's prompting, Emily met and married Joseph that evening.

After Joseph's death in 1844, Elizabeth separated from her first husband, Jabez, and soon married Cornelius Lott. Lott's daughter Melissa had also been a wife of Joseph Smith. Elizabeth and Cornelius started west with the majority of the saints. Elizabeth's son, John remembers, *"we went with [Brigham] as far as the Missouri River and then we saw so much of their manner of doing business, that we went back to Quincy"*. Cornelius continued on to Utah, eventually taking 5 plural wives. In Quincy, Elizabeth renewed her friendship with "President" Emma Smith.

# SARAH KINGSLEY CLEVELAND



Sarah Kingsley and John Cleveland were married on June 10, 1826. Sarah was recently widowed, losing her first husband to illness. Sarah and John had two children, Augusta and Alexander. In the mid 1830's Sarah and Augusta joined the Mormon Church. Although they were friendly to Mormonism, John and Alexander did not join but attended another church. In 1836 the family moved to Quincy, Illinois which, unknown to them at the time, would soon become the center of Mormonism.

In early 1839, church members were relocating from Missouri to Nauvoo (near Quincy). At the time, Joseph Smith was a prisoner in the Liberty Jail and his wife, Emma, and children lived with the Clevelands in Quincy. On March 21, Joseph wrote to Emma, *"I would ask if [Mr.] Cleveland will be kind enough to let you and the children tarry there untill [I] can learn something fu[r]ther concerning my fate [I] will reward him well if he will..."*. Near the end of April, after being in prison for five months, Joseph was freed. He reunited with his family at the Cleveland home and lived there for another three weeks, before moving to Nauvoo. Two weeks later the Clevelands received a letter from Joseph indicating that he had selected a lot for them in Nauvoo, just across the street from his own.

Sometime in early 1842, the Clevelands relocated from Quincy to Nauvoo. Emma soon chose Sarah as her counselor in the women's Relief Society organization. About this same time Sarah, now fifty-four, also became one of Joseph Smith's wives. As was common practice for Joseph's wives, Sarah stood as witness at a subsequent wedding ceremony when Joseph married Eliza R. Snow in June of 1842. That same spring, rumors surfaced in the Relief Society about Joseph's recent marriage to Agnes Coolbrith. Sarah came to his defense, warning *"the Society against speaking evil of Prest. J. Smith...that it would not be a light thing in the sight of God...[she] express'd her fears that the Lord would cut off those who will not take counsel"* and *"said we would have none among us who would speak against the prophet of the Lord"*

After Joseph Smith was killed in 1844, the Mormons migrated west to Utah. On February 8, 1846, Sarah's son-in-law wrote, *"This day Started for the Mountains...myself, wife, Mother-in-law [Sarah] &...Alexander...they [are] feeling to go with the Saints & leave husband & father as he John Cleveland does not belong to the church"* On the day Sarah and Alexander left, John *"was away in the Country at work"*. Four days into the trip, *"it being extremely cold [the leaders] advised Mother Cleveland & Son Alexander to Return & Stay with Father Cleveland untill we were located Some where & could return for them"*. Sarah returned to her husband John, but she never did journey to Utah. Her biography later reported that, *"Brigham Young...counciled her to stay with her Husband as he was a good man, having shown himself kind ever helping those in need..."*

# DELCENA JOHNSON SHERMAN



In late 1831 Delcena and Lyman Sherman were visited by Mormon missionaries at their home in Pomfret, New York. They were soon baptized and gathered with the other Saints in Kirtland, Ohio. Sherman quickly became a church leader, helping to lay the cornerstone of the Kirtland Temple. Wilford Woodruff remembered Lyman's spiritual nature at a particular Kirtland temple meeting: "*Elder Sherman sung in the gift of tongues & proclaimed great & marvelous things while clothed upon by the power & spirit of God*".

In winter 1838, amid church dissention in Kirtland, Delcena and husband Sherman moved to Missouri, declared by revelation as "Zion". Several months after arriving in Far West, Sherman died. Delcena's brother, Benjamin remembers, "*I arrived at Far West and found my sister Delcena a widow, with six small children for whom I must do my best to provide for their... support*". Due to unrest in Missouri, Delcena's stay there would be short. The same winter Benjamin helped relocate her family to Illinois "*Here my sister Delcena with her children concluded to remain until it should be known where the next gathering place would be*". The next gathering would soon take place in nearby Nauvoo.

About this time, Delcena's brother Benjamin left for Canada on a mission. He returned in July of 1842. He later wrote, "*The marriage of my Eldest Sister to the Prophet [Joseph Smith] was before my Return to Nauvoo. and it being...admitted I asked no questions*". In Nauvoo, Delcena was living with another one of Joseph's wives, Louisa Beaman. Less than a year later, Benjamin, Delcena and Louisa would be influential in introducing Delcena's younger sister, Almera, to plural marriage and persuading her to become one of Joseph wives.

After Joseph Smith's death in 1844, Delcena married Almon Babbitt. Maria Lawrence, another one of Joseph's wives, would also marry Babbitt. As most of the Nauvoo citizens left for Utah, Delcena and Almon, stayed behind as Almon was involved in the disposal of church assets in Nauvoo. In 1848, Babbitt left for Utah, without Delcena. Finally in 1850 anxious to settle in the new gathering place, Delcena along with her mother and five children, struck out on her their own for Utah. She wrote a letter to her brother Benjamin, now serving a mission in Hawaii, expressing her desire, "*My health has been very poor for the last nine months we have been very lonesom ... we expected to have gone to the valley this season but was disapointed...I wish we were to the valley your sister Delcena...*"

After a delay in Council Bluffs, and enduring failing health on the journey, Delcena arrived in Utah, her final "Zion", in late 1854. Her time there would be short, as she died a few months later, on October 21.

# ELIZA R. SNOW



In her youth, Eliza's talent as poet was evident. Still in her early twenties, she published poetry in local magazines and newspapers, winning awards for her work. In 1828, twenty-four year old Eliza joined Alexander Campbell's Christian primitivist movement, and would later join Mormonism. Wanting to be near others of her new faith, Eliza moved to Kirtland in December of 1835.

Upon her arrival in Kirtland, Eliza donated a large sum of money to the in progress temple project. In appreciation, the building committee insisted that she take "*a very valuable [lot]-situated near the Temple, with a fruit tree-an excellent spring of water, and house that accommodated two families.*" Eliza was already boarding at the home of Joseph Smith, so her older sister Leonora lived in one half; renters in the other half.

In 1838 Eliza, relocated to Missouri, and then Illinois. In 1842 Emma Smith selected her to be Secretary of the newly organized, "*Female Relief Society*". Eliza remembers it was about this time she "*first understood that the practice of plurality was to be introduced into the church. The subject was very repugnant to my feelings...I consoled myself with the idea that it was far in the distance and beyond the period of my mortal existence.*" However, a few months later, on June 29, 1842, Eliza married Joseph Smith. She wrote, "*I was sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, for time and eternity, in accordance with the Celestial Law of Marriage which God has revealed*". Eliza fondly wrote of Joseph, "*my beloved husband, the choice of my heart and the crown of my life.*"

It is uncertain when Joseph's first wife, Emma, became aware of his marriage to Eliza. In any case on August 14 Eliza wrote, "*Yesterday Mrs. Smith sent for me, having previously given me the offer of a home in her house...This...I trust is for good.*" Eliza soon moved in with the Smith's, schooling the Smith children, and performing other duties. She recalls, "*I was entirely governed by the wishes of Prest. and Mrs. Smith, I desire and aim to be submissive to the requirements of those whom [God] has place'd in authority over me.*"

A week later Eliza revealed in poem her own anxious feelings about these recent events:

*[We are] apt to conclude, from the medly of things;  
We've got into a jumble of late-  
A deep intricate puzzle, a tangle of strings,  
That no possible scheme can make straight*

*From the midst of confusion can harmony flow?  
Or can peace from distraction come forth?  
From out of corruption, integrity grow?  
Or can vice unto virtue give birth?*

*Will the righteous come forth with their garments unstained?  
With their hearts unpolluted with sin?  
O, yes; Zion, thy honor will be sustained.  
And the glory of God usher'd in.*

Eliza stayed in the Smith home for six months, until February 11, 1843, when she wrote in her diary: *"Took board and had my lodging removed to the residence of br. Holmes."* Several acquaintances of Eliza spoke of Emma discovering Eliza's relationship with Joseph, leading to her departure.

When Joseph Smith was killed in 1844, Eliza was overcome with grief, even praying that she might also die and be reunited with her husband. She said that Joseph appeared to her in a vision and *"told her that his work upon earth was complete...but hers was not; ...she must be of good courage and help to cheer, and lighten the burdens of others."* Eliza later married Brigham Young, and continued to influence others with her poetic talents. In 1845, she wrote the words to the, now popular, Mormon hymn, *"O My Father"*.

## SARAH ANN WHITNEY



Sarah Ann Whitney married Joseph Smith in a private ceremony during July of 1842. A revelation through Joseph Smith to Sarah Ann's father authorized the union: *"Verily, thus saith the Lord unto my servant N.K. Whitney, the thing that my servant Joseph Smith has made known unto you and your family and which you have agreed upon is right in mine eyes and shall be rewarded upon your heads with honor and immortality and eternal life to all your house, both old and young..."* Sarah Ann's Mother, Elizabeth wrote, *"we were convinced in our own minds that God...approved...we were willing to give our eldest daughter, then only seventeen years of age, to Joseph, in...plural marriage"*.

Her father, Newel K. Whitney, performed the ceremony: *"You both mutually agree to be each other's companion so long as you both shall live, preserving yourselves for each other and from all others and also throughout all eternity, reserving only those rights which have been given to my servant Joseph by revelation...If you both agree to covenant and do this, I then give you, S.A. Whitney, my daughter, to Joseph Smith, to be his wife, to observe all the rights between you both that belong to that condition..."*

About the time of the marriage, Joseph sent Sarah Ann's brother, Horace, on a mission. Helen Mar Kimball, another one of Joseph's plural wives, wrote, *"But Joseph feared to disclose it, believing that [others] would embitter Horace against him...and for this reason he favored his going East"*.

On August 18<sup>th</sup>, several weeks after the marriage, Joseph Smith wrote a letter to his new bride and her parents. He was hiding from the law at a home on the outskirts of Nauvoo: *"...my feelings are so strong for you since what has passed lately between us...it seems, as if I could not live long in this way; and if you three would come and see me...it would afford me great relief...I know it is the will of God that you should comfort me now in this time of affliction...the only thing to be careful of; is to find out when Emma comes then you cannot be safe, but when she is not here, there is the most perfect safety...burn this letter as soon as you read it; keep all locked up in your breasts...You will pardon me for my earnestness on this subject when you consider how lonesome I must be...I think Emma wont come tonight if she dont fail to come tonight..."*

In April of the following year, Sarah Ann publicly married Joseph C. Kingsbury. Kingsbury said of this marriage: *"...according to President Joseph Smith[s] Council & others [I] agreed to Stand by Sarah Ann Whitney as Supposed to be her husband & had a pretended marriage for the purpose of Bringing about the purposes of God in these last days..."*

After Joseph Smith's death, Sarah Ann married Apostle Heber C. Kimball, becoming one of his thirty-nine wives. This essentially ended her faux marriage with Kingsbury.

## MARTHA MCBRIDE KNIGHT



Martha McBride married Vinson Knight in 1826 at the age of twenty-one. Eight years later, while living in New York State, the couple met Joseph Smith and together they joined the church. In the spring of 1835, Martha and Vinson sold their property and joined the Saints in Kirtland. Thinking he had found the truth, Vinson wrote a letter to his Mother, "*Now you think that your priests are holy...I do know that the foundation you stand on is an abomination in the sight of God*". He continued, "*...we are blessed with the privelege of going to meeting such as we never had before.*"

By 1841, Martha and Vinson were in Nauvoo, where Vinson was appointed Bishop of one of the three Nauvoo wards. About this same time, Joseph taught Vinson the doctrine of plural marriage and he soon took a second wife, Philinda Merrick. In mid 1842, Vinson became sick. Joseph Smith's diary records, "*Bro Knight has been sick about a week and this morning he began to sink very fast untill 12 o clock when death put a period to his sufferings.*"

Less than a month after Vinson's death, Martha married Joseph Smith. The details of the wedding and subsequent married life with Joseph are sparse. Joseph did inquire about Martha's seventeen-year-old daughter, Almira, wondering if she would be willing to become a plural wife of his brother, Hyrum. Martha discussed the issue with her daughter, but Almira chose to marry another man instead, eventually leaving Nauvoo and the unfolding of polygamy. Martha's other daughter, Adaline, would follow her mother's path by entering polygamy. Many years later, Martha received a letter from Almira discussing her apprehension about polygamy: "*I can never like [polygamy] for [it] has robbed my Sister & her family of their just dues by dividing...substance between more than the law allows & what is still worse divided affection worse than none at all would have killed me in a vary little time but God spared me my heart bleeds for her... write soon from your affectionate daughter...*". Since Almira mentions her sister in this letter, she was perhaps unaware that her mother, Martha, was a plural wife of Joseph Smith.

After Joseph Smith was killed in 1844, Martha obtained a cut of his hair, which she kept in a locket and treasured throughout her life. A few months later, she married Heber C. Kimball. Martha joined the westward migration to Utah, building friendships with several of her "sister wives". For a few months she lived in Salt Lake City with three of Heber's thirty-nine wives, although she lived most of her life with relatives in the Ogden and Weber County area, essentially living apart from Heber. At one point she wrote in a letter to her daughter Adaline, "*to tell you all my feelings would be hard to do but feel some like a wanderer for truly I have not a home on the earth. I do not know where I shall go nor what I shall do. I have no one to look to but the Lord alone...I trust in him and do not dispair*". Martha died in 1901.

## RUTH VOSE SAYERS



Ruth Vose was born in 1808 near Boston, Massachusetts. She was very close to her aunt, Polly, and they worked together in Polly's Boston upholstering business.

Although acquainted with the church as early as 1832, Ruth finally joined on August 14, 1836. On that date, Boston missionary, Brigham Young wrote in his journal: "*I Preached in fore noon...in afternoon I then returned to Boston I Baptized...Ruth Vose*". Members who joined the church around this time, typically congregated in Kirtland, Ohio, but Ruth chose to stay in Boston, lending her support in other ways. Biographer Emmeline Wells wrote, "*During the building of the Kirtland Temple, although then residing in Boston, she donated every dollar that she earned, except what she needed for her bare support, towards its erection*". And also, "*The Elders of the Church in traveling in the Eastern States were the recipients of [Ruth's] unbounded liberality*".

In early 1841 the following notice was printed in the church newspaper, *The Times and Seasons*: "*MARRIED...In St. Louis, Mo. Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>... Mr. E. Sayers to Miss Ruth D. Vose, formerly of Boston, Mass.*" Ruth and her new husband, Edward Sayers, made their way to Nauvoo, arriving sometime in 1841. They moved to a home and farm just north of Nauvoo. In August of 1842, Joseph Smith was arrested, but soon escaped and went into hiding. Smith's clerk, William Clayton, recorded that Smith floated a short distance up the Mississippi River and then, "*proceeded through the timber to Brother Sayers' house where [he was] very kindly received and made welcome.*" A few days later a group of friends, including Joseph's wife Emma, visited Joseph at the Sayers' home: "*We soon arrived at brother Sayers and was pleased to find President Joseph in good spirits, although somewhat sick*". Joseph stayed with Ruth and Edward for a week, and then moved his hideout to another nearby home.

Six months later, in February 1843, Ruth married Joseph Smith. Typical of Joseph's other wives who already had husbands, Ruth continued to live with Edward. When Joseph Smith was killed in June of 1844, Ruth was in Boston visiting her Aunt Polly and heard about Joseph's death through a letter from her husband, Edward. Heber C. Kimball, Wilford Woodruff and Brigham Young were near Boston on missions, and visited Ruth. Together they returned to Nauvoo. Upon Joseph's death, many of his wives married Brigham Young or Heber C. Kimball and migrated to Utah. Ruth and Edward chose to return to Boston where they stayed until 1849. After 5 years in Boston, Ruth and Edward moved to Utah, reuniting with old acquaintances.

Ruth's 1884 obituary gives a glimpse of her demeanor: "*Tall and erect in figure; a countenance always beaming with human kindness...She was a woman of brilliant conversational powers...She was never tired of dwelling upon Gospel themes and the days of Joseph and Hyrum.*"

## FLORA ANN WOODWORTH



By 1843 Lucien Woodworth had become a close associate of Joseph Smith and was the architect of the Nauvoo House hotel (D&C 124). In spring of that year, Joseph married Lucien's, sixteen-year-old, daughter Flora Ann. William Clayton, Joseph's personal secretary, noted subsequent visits the Prophet made to Flora. She is mentioned in Clayton's diary more often than any of Joseph's other plural wives: May 2<sup>nd</sup>: "*Joseph rode out today with Flora W.*" June 1<sup>st</sup>: "*Evening Joseph rode in the carriage with Flora.*" August 26<sup>th</sup>: "*Hyrum and I rode up to my house and Joseph met Mrs. Wdth and F[lora] and conversed some time.*" August 28<sup>th</sup>: "*President Joseph met Ms Wdth at my house.*" August 29<sup>th</sup>: "*A.M. at the Temple. President Joseph at my house with Miss Wdth.*"

In the midst of these encounters, Emma, became aware of the relationship when she recognized a gold watch that Joseph had given to Flora as a gift. On August 22<sup>nd</sup> Clayton recorded: "*President Joseph told me that he had difficulty with E[mma] yesterday. She rode up to Woodworths with him and called while he came to the Temple. When he returned she was demanding the gold watch of F[lora]. He reproved her for her evil treatment. On their return home she abused him much and also when he got home. He had to use harsh measures to put a stop to her abuse but finally succeeded.*"

The secrecy surrounding Joseph and Flora's marriage caught nineteen-year-old Orange Wight by surprise. He wrote, "*[Having just returned from a mission] I concluded to lo[o]k about and try to pick up one or more of the young Ladies before they were all Gone, so I commenced keeping company with Flora Woodworth... [We were walking near Joseph's home when he rode up in a carriage and invited us to take a ride]...he drove to the Woodworth house and we got out and went in - After we got in the house sister Woodworth took me in an other room and told me that Flora was one of Joseph's wives...Sister Woodworth gave me all the information nessary, so I knew Joseph Believed and practiced Poligamy...Now as a matter of corse I at once...left [Flora] and looked for a companion in other places and where I could be more sure.*"

When Joseph Smith was killed in 1844, Flora became a widow at age seventeen. Later that year she married Carlos Grove, a non-Mormon. In 1846, they left Nauvoo, headed for Utah, but stopped for a time at Winter Quarters. There they met up with members of the Whitney Family. Helen Mar, another one of Joseph Smith's wives wrote, "*Flora...had been very sick, but is now slowly gaining her health. [She felt] condemned [for marrying a non-Mormon and] made this confession to me while I was nursing her, and said she desired to cling to Joseph hereafter.*"

Never making it to Utah, Flora passed away in Kanessville, Iowa around 1850. Helen Mar wrote, "*I never saw her again as she died at that place, leaving two or three children.*" Flora would have been in her mid-twenties at the time.

## EMILY AND ELIZA PARTRIDGE



Emily and Eliza were the daughters of Nauvoo Bishop, Edward Partridge. When he died in 1840, Emily, sixteen, and Eliza, twenty, looked to "hire out" as maids to help support their family. Emily recalls, "*The first door that opened for us was to go to [President] Smiths, which we accepted.*" Emily said she was "*a nurse girl, for they had a young baby...That is what I delighted in, tending babies...Joseph and Emma were very kind to us; they were almost like a father and mother, and I loved Emma and the children.*"

After a year in the Smith home, Emily remembers: "*...in the spring of 1842...Joseph said to me one day, 'Emily, if you will not betray me, I will tell you something for your benefit.' Of course I would keep his secret...he asked me if I would burn it if he would write me a letter. I began to think that was not the proper thing for me to do and I was about as miserable as I ever would wish to be...I went to my room and knelt down and asked my father in heaven to direct me...[At Joseph's insistence] I could not speak to any one on earth...I received no comfort till I went back...to say I could not take a private letter from him. He asked me if I wished the matter ended. I said I did.*" Emily recalls, "*he said no more to me [for many months].*"

Soon after Emily refused Joseph's letter, Elizabeth Durfee, who had married Joseph the previous year, invited Emily and Eliza to her home. Emily recalls being tested, "*She introduced the subject of spiritual wives as they called it in that day. She wondered if there was any truth in the report she heard. I thought I could tell her something that would make her open her eyes if I chose, but I did not choose to. I kept my own council and said nothing.*" Emily later learned "*that Mrs. Durfee was a friend to plurality and knew all about it.*" On their walk home from Mrs. Durfee's, Emily raised courage enough to mention Joseph's offer to her sister: "*[Eliza] felt very bad indeed for a short time, but it served to prepare her to receive the principles that were revealed soon after.*"

Joseph approached Emily again on February 28, 1843, her nineteenth birthday. Emily said, "*He taught me this principle of plural marriage...but we called it celestial marriage, and he told me that this principle had been revealed to him but it was not generally known.*" A week later, "*Mrs. Durf[ee] came to me...and said Joseph would like an opportunity to talk with me...I was to meet him in the evening at Mr. [Heber C.] Kimballs.*" Not wanting to incur any suspicion, Emily didn't change from the dress she had been working in that day. "*When I got there nobody was at home but [the Kimball children] William and Hellen Kimball...I did not wait long before Br. Kimball and Joseph came in.*" Emily recalls that Heber and Joseph sent the Kimball children to a neighbor's home, and pretended to send Emily away as well: "*I started for home as fast as I could so as to get beyond being called back, for I still dreaded the interview. Soon I heard Br. Kimball call, 'Emily, Emily' rather low but loud enough for me to hear. I thought at first I would not go back and took no notice of his calling. But he kept calling and was about to overtake me so I stopped and went back with him.*"

Back at the Kimball home, Joseph spoke to Emily: *"I cannot tell all Joseph said, but he said the Lord had commanded [him] to enter into plural marriage and had given me to him and although I had got badly frightened he knew I would yet have him...Well I was married there and then. Joseph went home his way and I going my way alone. A strange way of getting married wasn't it?"* Although they did not spend their wedding night together, Emily said she *"slept with"* Joseph on other occasions. Joseph's property caretaker in Macedonia, Benjamin Johnson, remembers the couple traveling there, *"The prophet...Came and...occupied the Same Room & Bed with...the Daughter of the Late Bishop Partridge"*.

Four days after his marriage to Emily, Joseph married Emily's sister, Eliza. The details of the proposal and marriage are sparse. Eliza kept a journal but later burned it because it was *"too full"*. Years later she wrote, *"While [living in Joseph's house] he taught to us the plan of Celestial marriage and asked us to enter into that order with him. This was truly a great trial for me but I had the most implicit confidence in him as a Prophet of the Lord and [could] not but believe his words and as a matter of course accept the privilege of being sealed to him as a wife for time and all eternity."* Of the marriages, Emily said, *"neither of us knew about the other at the time, everything was so secret."*

About this time Joseph introduced select men to the endowment ceremony. He taught that it was necessary for exaltation. Women would also be receiving the endowment and Joseph wanted his wife, Emma, to be the *"Elect Lady"*: the first women to receive the endowment. She would then disseminate it to the other women. The endowment requires a wife to be obedient to her husband. Because Emma was resisting plural marriage, Joseph would not let her participate in the endowment, thus risking her own exaltation as well as delaying ceremonial endowments for other women. Carrying this burden, Emma agreed to let Joseph marry additional wives; provided she could select them. Unaware of their marriage to Joseph months earlier, Emma selected her live-in helpers, Emily and Eliza. Emily recalls, *"I do not know why she gave us to him, unless she thought we were where she could watch us better..."* Emily continued, *"To save the family trouble Brother Joseph thought it best to have another ceremony performed...[Emma] had her feelings, and so we thought there was no use in saying anything about it so long as she had chosen us herself...Accordingly...we were sealed to JS a second time, in Emma's presence."* Within a week, Emma received her endowment.

But Emma's surrender waned. Emily remembers: *"We remained in the family several months after this...She sent for us one day to come to her room. Joseph was present, looking like a martyr. Emma said some very hard things ...She would rather her blood would run...than be polluted in this manner...Joseph came to us and shook hands with us, and the understanding was that all was ended between us. I for one meant to keep this promise I was forced to make."* Emily continued, *"We looked upon the covenants we had made as sacred"*. Joseph arranged for Emily and Eliza to move out of the Smith home. Emily wrote, *"I do not remember [speaking to] Joseph but once...after I left the Mansion house and that was just before he started for Carthage."* Joseph was killed in Carthage on June 27, 1844.

Speaking of Emma, Emily said, *"I think Emma always regretted having any hand in getting us into such trying circumstances. But she need not have blamed herself for that... for it would have been the same with or without her consent...I have never repented the act that made me a plural wife...of Joseph Smith and bound me to him for time and all eternity."*

## ALMERA JOHNSON



Almera and her family gathered with the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio, then Missouri and eventually Macedonia, Illinois, approximately twenty miles east of Nauvoo. Almera's brother, Benjamin, had a close association with Joseph Smith and was the agent for church property in Macedonia.

On April 1, 1843, Joseph visited Macedonia and stayed at the Johnson home. Of the visit, Benjamin recalls, *"[One morning Joseph said] 'Come brother Bennie, let us have a walk'. [As we walked Joseph explained] that the Lord had revealed to him that plural...marriage was according to His law; [and] had commanded him to obey it...He had Come now to ask me for my Sister Almera - His words astonished me and almost took my breath - I Sat for a time amazed...[I could not] comprehend anything. I....Said: 'Brother Joseph This is something I did not Expect...You know whether it is right. I do not. I want to do just as you tell me...But how...Can I teach my Sister what I myself do not understand'"*.

Joseph told Benjamin to listen to the sermon he would preach that evening, saying it would relate to this doctrine in a way that only Benjamin would understand. That evening Joseph spoke on the parable of the talents, which in this case Benjamin understood to mean wives: To him who increased his talents, more talents would be given; but to him that had only one, the talent would be taken away (Matthew 25:15).

*"To me there was a horror in the idea of speaking to my sister upon such a subject; the thought of which made me sick. I stood before her trembling, my knees shaking; Just...as I found powr to open my mouth it was filled...and the subject that had Seemed So dark, now appeared...most lucid & plain"*. However, *"her heart was not yet won"* so Joseph asked Benjamin to bring Almera to Nauvoo. *"...my sister accompanied me to Nauvoo, where at my sister Delcena's we soon met the Prophet with his brother Hyrum and William Clayton"*. Almera's sister, Delcena, had married Joseph ten months earlier and was living with another one of Joseph's wives, Louisa Beaman.

Hyrum spoke: *"I know that Joseph was comanded to take more wives and he waited Untill an Angel with drawn Sword Stood before him and declared that if [he] longer delayed fulfilling that command he would Slay him...The Lord has revealed the principle of plural marriage to me and I know that it is true. I will have you for a sister, and you will be blest"*. Almera later wrote, *"[Hyrum] came to me and said I need not be afraid. I had been fearing and doubting about the principle and so had he, but he now knew it was true. After this time I lived with the Prophet Joseph as his wife"*.

Benjamin recalls the ceremony: *"the Prophet with Louisa Beeman and my Sister Delcena had it agreeably aranged with sister Almara and after a little instruction, She Stood by the Prophets Side & was Sealed to him as a wife by Brother Clayton. After which the*

*Prophet asked me to take my Sister to occupy Room No 10 in his Mansion Home during her Stay in the City.” Almera and Benjamin stayed in Nauvoo for three weeks, and then returned to Macedonia.*

Three weeks later, Joseph visited his new wife, Almera, in Macedonia. Describing one aspect of their relationship, Benjamin said, *“The Prphet again Came and at my house occupied the Same Room & Bed with my Sister that the month previous he had occupied with the Daughter of the Late Bishop Partridge...”*

After Joseph Smith’s death, Almera married Reuben Barton. Together they had five daughters. Their third daughter, Lois, was mentally impaired. Feeling responsible for her child’s condition, *“Almera wondered if it was punishment because she remarried”*. In 1860, amid marital discord, Almera and Reuben separated and Almera traveled to Utah, settling in Parowan. For three more decades she would care for Lois, until they both passed away in the mid 1890’s.

## LUCY WALKER



The Walker family arrived in Nauvoo in the spring of 1841. Later that summer Lucy’s Mother contracted malaria and died, leaving ten children. Her Father, John, was heartbroken and his health, *“seemed to give way”*. Lucy remembers, *“The Prophet came to the rescue. He Said, if you remain here Bro. Walker, you will soon follow your wife. You must have a change of scene, a change of climate. You have Just such a family as I could love. My house shall be their home...place the little ones with kind friends, and the four Eldest shall come to my house and [be] received and treated as my own children...”* The change of scene and climate that Joseph had in mind for John Walker was a two year mission to the eastern states. In response to this arrangement Lucy said, *“I rung my hands in the agony of despair at the thought of being broken up as a family, and being sepparated from the little ones...”* Never-the-less, fifteen-year-old Lucy moved into the Prophets house.

While living in the Smith home, Lucy remembers: *“In the year 1842 President Joseph Smith sought an interview with me, and said, ‘I have a message for you, I have been commanded of God to take another wife, and you are the woman.’ My astonishment knew no bounds. This announcement was indeed a thunderbolt to me...He asked me if I believed him to be a Prophet of God. ‘Most assuredly I do I replied. ‘...He fully Explained to me the principle of plural or celestial marriage. Said this principle was again to be restored for the benefit of the human family. That it would prove an everlasting blessing to my father’s house.”*

*“What do you have to Say?” Joseph asked. “Nothing” Lucy replied, “How could I speak, or what would I say?” Joseph encouraged her to pray: “tempted and tortured beyond endureance until life was not desirable. Oh that the grave would kindly receive me that I might find rest on the bosom of my dear mother...Why – Why Should I be chosen from among thy daughters, Father I am only a child in years and experience. No mother to council; no father near to tell me what to do, in this trying hour. Oh let this bitter cup pass. And thus I prayed in the agony of my soul.”*

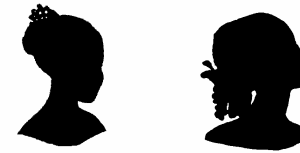
Joseph told Lucy that the marriage would have to be secret, but that he would acknowledge her as his wife, *“beyond the Rocky Mountains”*. He then gave Lucy an ultimatum, *“It is a command of God to you. I will give you untill to-morrow to decide this matter. If you reject this message the gate will be closed forever against you.”* Lucy said, *“This arroused every drop of scotch in my veins...I felt at this moment that I was called to place myself upon the altar a liveing Sacrafice, perhaps to brook the world in disgrace and incur the displeasure and contempt of my youthful companions; all my dreams of happiness blown to the four winds, this was too much, the thought was unbearable.”*

Now, bearing the burden of her own eternal salvation and that of her family, and with a deadline approaching, Lucy prayed more fervently for an answer. She couldn't sleep the entire night. Just before dawn, and Joseph's deadline, she "*received a powerful and irristable testimony of the truth of the marriage covenant called 'Celestial or plural marriage'*" and "*I afterwards married Joseph as a plural wife and lived and cohabited with him as such.*" Lucy married Joseph on May 1, 1843. At the time, Emma was in St. Louis buying supplies for the Nauvoo hotel. Lucy remembers, "*Emma Smith was not present and she did not consent to the marriage; she did not know anything about it at all.*" Of the relationship, Lucy said, "*It was not a love matter, so to speak, in our affairs, -at least on my part it was not, but simply the giving up of myself as a sacrifice to establish that grand and glorious principle that God had revealed to the world.*"

When Joseph was killed in June 1843, Lucy married Heber C. Kimball. Explaining the relationship, Lucy said, "*...The contract when I married Mr. Kimball was that I should be his wife for time, and time only, ...and in the resurrection [he] would surrender me, with my children, to Joseph Smith.*"

Brigham Young taught that "*no man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith.*" As Heber lay on his death bed he called Lucy to his side and hoping to win favor with Joseph Smith, asked her, "*What can you tell Joseph when you meet him? Cannot you say that I have been kind to you as it was possible to be under the circumstances? I know you can, and am confident you will be as a mediator between me and Joseph...*"

## SARAH AND MARIA LAWRENCE



When Joseph Smith visited Canada in August of 1837 he converted to the church, Edward and Margaret Lawrence and their daughters Sarah and Maria. The Lawrence family subsequently journeyed to Illinois, arriving in 1840. Sarah and Maria's father, Edward, passed away soon after their arrival. In 1842, Sarah and Maria, sixteen and eighteen years-old, began living in Joseph Smith's home, perhaps as hired help like Emily and Eliza Partridge who were also living at the Smith residence.

In the summer of 1842 rumors circulated in Nauvoo regarding Joseph Smith's polygamy. Joseph published a statement in his own defense: "*We are charged with advocating a plurality of wives...now this is as false as the many other ridiculous charges which are brought against us. No sect has a great reverence for the laws of matrimony...we practice what we preach.*" Several of Joseph's close associates also published a proclamation that Joseph "*is a good, moral, virtuous...man [and bore] testimony of the iniquity of those who had [made false statements about] Pres. J Smith's character*". One of those defending Joseph was William Law, Joseph's counselor in the First Presidency. William had been a family friend of the Lawrence's in Canada. He was unaware of Joseph's polygamy, or that Joseph had just married his sixteenth wife, Sarah Ann Whitney.

In the spring of 1843, Joseph married Sarah and Maria. A friend of Maria's in Nauvoo recalls, "*...[Maria] suffered her doubts, her fears, her uncertainty as to whether she was acting right or wrong, for she had a conscience and wanted to be right*", and also remembers Maria saying: "*...if there was any truth in Mormonism she would be saved for...My yoke has not been easy nor my burden light.*"

By October 1843, William Law became aware that Joseph was indeed practicing polygamy. He didn't agree with the doctrine, or its secret practice, and tried to get Joseph to abandon it. William, "*with his arms around the neck of the Prophet...[and] tears streaming down his face...pleaded with him to withdraw the doctrine of plural marriage.*" Joseph said he couldn't, and released William from the First Presidency. Finally in late spring 1844, William resolved to take Joseph's polygamy public. As polygamy was against the law, William filed a lawsuit against Joseph for living "*in an open state of adultery*" with Maria Lawrence. The following Sunday Joseph commented on William's suit in his sermon, "*Another indictment has been got up against me...What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.*" By this time, Joseph had married at least thirty-four women.

William also announced Joseph's polygamy in the "*Nauvoo Expositor*". Within days, Joseph declared the newspaper a "*public nuisance*" and ordered the city marshal to "*destroy the printing press...and burn all the Expositors.*" Joseph was subsequently arrested and jailed in nearby Carthage, where he was killed on June 27, 1844. After little more than a year of marriage, Sarah and Maria were widows.



# HELEN MAR KIMBALL



In 1843 Apostle Heber C. Kimball had an important talk with his only daughter, fourteen-year-old Helen Mar. She wrote: *"Without any preliminaries [my Father] asked me if I would believe him if he told me that it was right for married men to take other wives...The first impulse was anger...my sensibilities were painfully touched. I felt such a sense of personal injury and displeasure; for to mention such a thing to me I thought altogether unworthy of my father, and as quick as he spoke, I replied to him, short and emphatically, 'No I wouldn't!'...This was the first time that I ever openly manifested anger towards him...Then he commenced talking seriously and reasoned and explained the principle, and why it was again to be established upon the earth. [This] had a similar effect to a sudden shock of a small earthquake."*

Then father *"asked me if I would be sealed to Joseph...[and] left me to reflect upon it for the next twenty-four hours...I was sceptical-one minute believed, then doubted. I thought of the love and tenderness that he felt for his only daughter, and I knew that he would not cast her off, and this was the only convincing proof that I had of its being right. I knew that he loved me too well to teach me anything that was not strictly pure, virtuous and exalting in its tendencies; and no one else could have influenced me at that time or brought me to accept of a doctrine so utterly repugnant and so contrary to all of our former ideas and traditions."* Unknown to Helen Mar, Heber and Joseph had already discussed the prospect of Helen Mar becoming one of Joseph's wives. Heber now sought her agreement. Helen recalls, *"Having a great desire to be connected with the Prophet Joseph, he offered me to him; this I afterwards learned from the Prophet's own mouth. My father had but one Ewe Lamb, but willingly laid her upon the altar"*

The next morning Joseph visited the Kimball home. *"[He explained] the principle of Celestial marriage...After which he said to me, 'If you will take this step, it will ensure your eternal salvation & exaltation and that of your father's household & all of your kindred.['] This promise was so great that I willingly gave myself to purchase so glorious a reward. None but God & his angels could see my mother's bleeding heart-when Joseph asked her if she was willing...She had witnessed the sufferings of others, who were older & who better understood the step they were taking, & to see her child, who had scarcely seen her fifteenth summer, following in the same thorny path, in her mind she saw the misery which was as sure to come...; but it was all hidden from me."* Helen's mother reluctantly agreed and in May of 1843, Helen married Joseph Smith.

During the winter of 1843-44, there were weekly parties at Joseph Smith's Mansion House. Many of Helen's friends attended, as well as her sixteen-year-old brother William. Disappointed, Helen wrote, *"my father had been warned by the Prophet to keep his daughter away...I felt quite sore over it, and thought it a very unkind act in father to allow [William] to go and enjoy the dance unrestrained with others of my companions, and fettered me down, for no girl loved dancing better than I did...and like a wild bird I longed for the freedom that was denied me; and thought myself an abused child, and that it was pardonable if I did murmur."*

In June 1844, Heber was away from home on a mission and wrote to Helen: *"MY DEAR DAUGHTER-...be obedient to the counsel you have given to you...If you should be tempted, or having feelings in your heart, tell them to no one but your father and mother; if you do, you will be betrayed and exposed...You are blessed, but you know it not. You have done that which will be for your everlasting good for this world and that which is to come. I will admit there is not much pleasure in this world...Be true to the covenants that you have made...Be a good girl;...your affectionate father."* A few weeks later Joseph Smith was killed in Carthage. After one year of marriage, Helen was a widow.

Helen's father would eventually marry thirty-nine wives. She wrote, *"I had, in hours of temptation when seeing the trials of my mother, felt to rebel. I hated polygamy in my heart."* Helen later fell victim to a prolonged illness: *"For three months I lay a portion of the time like one dead...I tasted of the punishment which is prepared for those who reject any of the principles of this Gospel."* Eventually she was converted to polygamy and recovered from her illness, *"I fasted for one week, and every day I gained until I had won the victory...I learned that plural marriage is a celestial principle, and saw... the necessity of obedience to those who hold the priesthood, and the danger of rebelling against or speaking lightly of the Lord's anointed"*. Helen later summarized her experience with plural marriage in a poem:

*I thought through this life my time will be my own  
The step I now am taking's for eternity alone,  
No one need be the wiser, through time I shall be free,  
And as the past hath been the future still will be.  
To my guileless heart all free from worldly care  
And full of blissful hopes and youthful visions rare  
The world seemed bright the thret'ning clouds were kept  
From sight and all looked fair...*

*...but pitying angels wept.  
They saw my youthful friends grow shy and cold,  
And poisonous darts from sland'rous tongues were hurled,  
Untutor'd heart in thy gen'rous sacrafise,  
Thou did's't not weigh the cost nor know the bitter price;  
Thy happy dreams all o'er thou'st doom'd also to be  
Bar'd out from social scenes by this thy destiny,  
And o'er thy sad'nd mem'ries of sweet departed joys  
Thy sicken'd heart will brood and imagine future woes,  
And like a fetter'd bird with wild and longing heart,  
Thou'lt dayly pine for freedom and murmur at thy lot;*

*But could'st thou see the future & view that glorious crown,  
Awaiting you in Heaven you would not weep nor mourn.  
Pure and exalted was thy father's aim, he saw  
A glory in obeying this high celestial law,  
For to thousands who've died without the light  
I will bring eternal joy & make thy crown more bright.  
I'd been taught to reveire the Prophet of God  
And receive every word as the word of the Lord,  
But had this not come through my dear father's mouth,  
I should ne'r have received it as God's sacred truth.*

Helen Mar Kimball

# HANNA ELLS



Hanna was born in England in 1813. She later immigrated to America and lived several years in Philadelphia. By 1841, Hanna had relocated to Nauvoo.

In Nauvoo, Hanna opened a dressmaking business. She advertised her business in the Nauvoo Newspaper, the *Times and Seasons*:

## MILLINERY AND DRESS MAKING

Miss H.S. Ells begs leave to respectfully inform the Ladies of Nauvoo, and its vicinity, that she intends carrying on the above business, in all its varied branches: and further states, that she has had several years experience in one of the most fashionable French establishments in Philadelphia...  
Nauvoo, Sept. 30, 1841.

According to LDS Church Historian, Andrew Jenson, Hanna married Joseph Smith sometime in the first half of 1843. In Nauvoo, Hanna lived in the home of John Benbow. Benbow recalls, "*President Smith frequently visited his wife Hannah at [my] house.*" A little more than a year after their marriage, Joseph was killed by a mob in Carthage and Hanna became a widow.

Hanna was close friends with the Wilford Woodruff family. In August 1844, as Wilford and Phoebe Woodruff were leaving Nauvoo on a mission, they all visited the unfinished Nauvoo Temple to pray. Wilford wrote, "*As we approached it we lifted up our eyes and beheld the greatness grandure and glory...[we climbed to the top] and their with up lifted hands towards heaven, I called upon the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph by Prayer and supplication.*" Wilford prayed for a successful mission. He also prayed that God would avenge the blood of Hanna's husband, "*Joseph the Seer*". Wilford noted that they all left the temple, "*with Joy and peace.*"

Hanna died in Nauvoo sometime in 1845. There are few details of her death, but another one of Joseph's wives, Eliza R. Snow, was with Hanna at the time. Eliza said, "*I loved her very much-was present at her death*". Historian Jenson wrote, "*[she was] a lady of culture and refinement-somewhat tall in stature. Those who were acquainted with her speak of her as a good and noble woman.*"

# ELVIRA COWLES HOLMES



Austin Cowles was living in New York in 1830, when he and his family joined the church. By 1839 the Cowles family, including Austin's daughter Elvira, were living in Nauvoo, where Austin was soon selected to be a counselor in the Stake Presidency.

In the spring of 1840 Elvira secured work in the home of Joseph Smith, perhaps as a nanny and a maid. There Elvira would become friends with several other women who would also become wives of Joseph: Emily and Eliza Partridge, Lucy Walker, Eliza R. Snow and Desmodona Fuller. Elvira would also meet Jonathon Holmes, a long time friend of Joseph Smith's. In September 1842, Elvira and Jonathon became engaged. Joseph Smith performed their wedding ceremony a few months later, and Elvira moved out of the Smith home. In honor of the new couple, Eliza R. Snow penned:

*Conjugal, To Jonathan & Elvira.*

*Like two streams, whose gentle forces  
Mingling, in one current blend-  
Like two waves, whose onward course  
To the ocean's bosom tend-*

*Like two rays that kiss each other  
In the presence of the sun-  
Like two drops that run together  
And forever are but one,*

*May your mutual vows be plighted-  
May your hearts, no longer twain  
And your spirits be united  
In an everlasting chain.*

In June 1843, six months after her marriage to Jonathan, Elvira married Joseph Smith. It is unclear if Jonathan was aware of the marriage, however he would know by 1846. As the Nauvoo temple neared completion, Joseph's wives would re-perform their marriages, or sealings, to him within its walls. Since Joseph had been killed in 1844, Jonathan would stand proxy as Elvira was sealed to Joseph for eternity. Jonathan would be Elvira's earthly companion, eventually surrendering Elvira and their children to Joseph Smith in the eternities. Many years later, as she lay sick and dying, Jonathan would ask Elvira, "*what reports she would give to the Prophet Joseph. She replied, 'Only the best report. You have always been a kind and devoted husband and father.'*"

Elvira's father, Austin, opposed polygamy and resigned as counselor in the Stake Presidency. He also helped write the *Nauvoo Expositor* which revealed the secret practice, but Elvira continued to love him: "*[He spent] a long life in making the world better, an example to all who knew him, with charity for all and malice toward none.*"

## RHODA RICHARDS



Rhoda was born and raised in Boston, the second of eleven children. Her brother, Willard Richards, would later become an apostle in the church. Rhoda's niece Lula Richards Greene remembers Rhoda: "*When grown she was a little below medium height, possessed a small trim figure and a face usually expressive of innocent fun and merriment. Her eyes were dark and brilliant...she was a girl and a woman of rare beauty.*"

In her twenties, Rhoda fell in love with and became engaged to Ebenezer Damon. Ebenezer had a three-and-a-half-year old daughter, Susan, to whom Rhoda became attached. Lula wrote, "*Ebenezer Damon was a man of sterling worth and integrity whom Aunt Rhoda loved as such a woman loves but once in a life time.*" In December 1813 Ebenezer fell ill and was sick for several weeks. Rhoda and her mother cared for him while he hovered near death and finally passed away. Rhoda wrote, "*As he was so comfortable the evening before we thought he would soon be up with us, it was the more sudden and dreadful. My fond hopes were then blasted. For what. God only knows.*" On New Year's Day Rhoda wrote in her diary, "*Mr. Damons remains were deposited near the meeting house...Farewell to all joys, my comforts are fled. The friend of my choice is now numbered with the dead.*"

Rhoda first heard about the Mormon church many years later when her cousin, and recent convert, Joseph Young visited her in 1835. Joseph was a brother with future church leader Brigham Young. Rhoda wrote, "*My cousin...stood and preached to us...for about half an hour, finishing his discourse with, 'There, Cousin Rhoda, I don't know but I have tired you out!'*" Rhoda suggested they end with a prayer. "*In an instant [Joseph] was on his knees, offering up a prayer. That was the first Mormon sermon and the first Mormon prayer I ever listened to.*" A year later Rhoda was baptized.

In the fall of 1842, Rhoda moved to Nauvoo and soon met Joseph Smith. Her brother, Apostle Willard Richards, was a close associate of Joseph Smith and perhaps introduced Rhoda to Joseph. In the spring of 1843, Rhoda made her home in "*the Prophets store.*" The following month, on June 12, Rhoda married Joseph Smith. Her brother Willard performed the marriage. Rhoda wrote, "*In my young days I buried my first and only love, and true to that affiance [pledge], I have passed companionless through life; but am sure of having my proper place and standing in the resurrection, having been sealed to the prophet Joseph, according to the celestial law, by his own request, under the inspiration of divine revelation.*"

Rhoda immigrated to Utah and lived in Salt Lake City for the remainder of her life. On January 1, 1879, the sixty-fifth anniversary of Ebenezer Damon's passing, Rhoda remembered, "*it was the first 'Happy New Year' she had known for sixty-six years. She said the snow looked exactly as it did the day 'Mr. Damon' was buried.*"

## DESDEMONA FULLMER



As a thirteen-year-old girl, Desdemona Fullmer remembers studying various churches and praying to know which one to join. On one occasion as she prayed she fell to the ground unconscious. For several hours she laid there, as if dead. She wrote, "*Their was a voice said to me stop yet a little longer. their is something better for you yet...so I stopt till I heard the laterday santes preach the gosple I joined them soon after.*"

Some ten years later, in 1835, the Fullmer family obtained a Book of Mormon. They spent time reading it aloud together. Desdemona's brother, Almon remembers, "*it provoked mirth [amusement] since it so often came to pass. It riveted, however, a conviction of its truth upon our minds.*" Desdemona was baptized a year later and soon gathered with the church in Kirtland and later in Missouri.

In Missouri, Desdemona witnessed many of the persecutions suffered by church members. In spring of 1839 a mob came to the Fullmer home and demanded that they leave. Desdemona bravely replied, "*we have no teem or waggon. we may as well dye in the house as a few roods from it. so they said hell let us go.*" Soon, however, the Fullmers were forced to leave for Illinois.

According to the Nauvoo 4<sup>th</sup> Ward records, in the spring of 1842, Desdemona was living in Joseph Smith's home. She probably knew Emily and Eliza Partridge and Elvira Cowles who were also living there at the time. Some time before the spring of 1843, Desdemona moved out of the Smith home.

Desdemona married Joseph Smith in July of 1843. As Joseph continued to secretly accumulate wives, his first wife, Emma, struggled with polygamy. Perhaps Desdemona experienced, or maybe only feared, the anguish of Emma discovering her and Joseph's relationship. She recalls the resultant anxiety, "*In the rise of poligamy i was warned in a dream Amy [Emma] Smith was going to poison me.*" Desdemona was not poisoned and remained Joseph's wife until he was killed in June of 1844. In 1846, before leaving for Utah, Desdemona had her sealing to Joseph re-performed in the Nauvoo temple.

Desdemona would marry twice more in her life, but neither marriage endured. When Desdemona was in her late fifties, she wrote a short autobiography and delivered it to the Church Historian's office where it could be preserved. In it, she wrote, "*I want to write a short history of my life the more particuler part that I think will do the youth som godde [good] and those that come into this church not having the same experience that I have had.*" Desdemona died in 1886 when she was seventy-six and was laid to rest in Salt Lake City as "Desdemona Fullmer Smith".

## OLIVE FROST



In October 1839, twenty-three year old Olive Frost was living in Dixfield, Maine pursuing her interest as a “tailoress”. In a later biography Olive’s sister, Mary Ann, wrote, “*Elder Duncan McArthur visited that place and preached the Gospel as taught by the Latter-day Saints, in such plainness that her willing mind, already prepared by earnest prayer, soon comprehended its vast importance, and she received it joyfully.*”

Mary Ann had joined the church three years earlier and moved to Kirtland, Ohio. There she met and married Apostle Parley P. Pratt. In the spring of 1840, Mary Ann, Parley and their three children left for England on a mission. They stopped in Maine and persuaded Olive to go with them. Mary Ann wrote, “[Olive] willingly forsook father and mother, brothers and sisters, and braved the dangers of the great deep, to aid in spreading the Gospel in a foreign land. These two sisters were the first missionary women of this dispensation to cross the sea going and coming. Sister Olive was not afflicted with seasickness, and was therefore enabled to devote herself to her sick sister and care of the family”

Their mission complete, Olive and the Pratts arrived in Nauvoo in April 1843. There, Olive lived with some old friends from Maine, Patty and David Sessions. She also socialized with Eliza R. Snow. Both Patty and Eliza had become wives of Joseph Smith a year earlier and Olive, herself, was soon introduced to plural marriage. Mary Ann remembers, “*She seemed to realize and appreciate the magnitude of the great and important mission allotted to woman in the perfect plan of this Gospel dispensation, and she desired to do her part in the good work. She freely accorded to man the title of king, and joyfully accepted the place of queen by his side. It was at this time that the principle of plurality of wives was taught to her. She never opposed it, and, as in the case of baptism, soon accepted it to be her creed, in practice as well as in theory. She was married for time and all eternity to Joseph Smith...*”

About the same time as her marriage to Joseph, Olive joined and participated in the Relief Society women’s organization. Said Mary Ann, “*She was very zealous in soliciting aid for and in visiting those who were needy and in distress. Her heart was always tender towards suffering of every kind, and it gave her unbounded joy and satisfaction to be able to relieve it.*”

After a year of marriage, Olive lost her husband, when Joseph Smith was killed in Carthage. The writings of Nauvoo resident, Ettie Smith, indicate the strong attachment Olive must have had for Joseph, “*When the dead bodies arrived at Nauvoo, the spiritual wives of the late prophet, before unknown with certainty, now disclosed by cries, and a general uproar, their secret acceptance of the new doctrine. One of them, Olive Frost, went entirely mad...*”

Olive lived in Nauvoo for another year, until she became ill and died on October 6, 1845.

## MELISSA LOTT



By June of 1842, the Lott family, including daughter Melissa, were living and working on the Joseph Smith farm just a few miles southeast of Nauvoo. Melissa’s father, Cornelius, managed the farm for the Prophet Joseph. This same year, eighteen-year-old Melissa moved to Nauvoo and lived in the Joseph Smith home, most likely helping with the children and household chores. Joseph III, was one of the Smith children Melissa would have cared for. He remembers Melissa was, “*a tall, fine-looking woman with dark complexion, dark hair and eyes. She was a good singer, quite celebrated in a local way. I have heard her sing at parties and receptions in private home [and] on the stage where theatrical performances were given...*”

In June of 1843 Melissa was back at home living on the farm with her parents. Near the end of the month, Eliza R. Snow, Elvira Holmes, Elizabeth Durfee and Elizabeth Whitney visited the Lott farm. Eliza, Elvira and Elizabeth D. had married Joseph Smith a year earlier. Elizabeth W. was the mother of another one of Joseph’s wives, Sarah Ann Whitney. As a “Mother in Israel”, Elizabeth Durfee previously had an influential role in preparing the Partridge sisters to accept a plural marriage proposal from Joseph. Perhaps these women now helped prepare Melissa in the same way.

By Fall of that year, Melissa had agreed to wed Joseph and they were married on September 20, 1843. Melissa’s parents stood witness at the ceremony. Melissa later recalled the wedding vows, “*You both mutually agree to be each other’s companion, husband and wife, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition, that is, keeping yourselves wholly for each other, and from all others during your lives*”. Joseph’s wife, Sarah Ann Whitney, remembered similar vows, with an exception for Joseph who, of course, had many other wives: “*...reserving only those rights which have been given to my servant Joseph by revelation*”

On the same day that Melissa married Joseph, her parents, Cornelius and Permelia, were sealed together for eternity. As with the parents Sarah Ann Whitney, and Helen Mar Kimball, perhaps this was a reward for giving their daughter to Joseph in marriage.

Melissa described the contrasting elements to her and Joseph’s relationship, “*I did not go to church with Joseph Smith, was never seen on the streets or in public places with him as his wife during his lifetime*”. However, Melissa said they did share intimate moments, and that she was Joseph’s wife, “*in very deed*”. The following winter, Melissa returned to the Smith home to live. She continued to help with the Smith children. Joseph III, Fredrick and Alexander, attended the same school as Melissa, and she would escort them to school and back. In the Summer of 1844 Melissa was widowed when Joseph was killed in Carthage.

# NANCY WINCHESTER



Nancy was born August 10, 1828 in Erie County Pennsylvania. She was the only daughter of Stephen and Nancy Winchester. When the younger Nancy was four-years-old the Winchesters were visited in Erie by two Mormon missionaries, John F. Boynton and Evan M. Greene. Nancy's parents and older brother, Benjamin, were soon baptized.

The following year, the Winchesters moved to Kirtland, Ohio to be near others who shared their faith. Following Mormon practice, Nancy was probably baptized when she turned eight- years of age.

By 1842 the Winchesters had spent time in Missouri and were now settled in Nauvoo, living in the "third ward". In May of that year, Nancy joined the Female Relief Society where she served on committees with the charter "*to search out the poor and suffering- To call on the rich for aid and thus as far as possible relieve the wants of all.*"

Nancy's marriage to Joseph is undocumented, although according to Mormon Church Historian Andrew Jenson, Nancy married Joseph sometime before his death in June of 1844. Nancy would have been fourteen or fifteen years old.

A few months after Joseph Smith's death, Nancy and another six of Joseph's wives married Heber C. Kimball. Since the temple had not been completed when Nancy married Joseph, she was re-sealed to him in 1846 in the near complete, but dedicated, Nauvoo temple. Her husband "for time", Heber C. Kimball stood proxy for Joseph Smith in this sealing.

Nancy immigrated to Utah in 1849. Several years later she received a patriarchal blessing from John Smith. She was blessed, "*to heal the sick, cast out devils, and raise the dead, if necessary.*"

Nancy died on March 17, 1876 in Salt Lake City.

# FANNY YOUNG



Fanny Young was born November 8, 1787 to John Young and Abigail Howe. Her younger brother, Brigham, would eventually ascend to the top Mormon leadership position. Fanny's mother, Abigail, died in 1815, and Fanny took on much of the responsibility for raising the Young children. Her younger brother, Lorenzo recalls, "*As she was the oldest of the girls of my father's family then at home, from that time forward she was a mother to me and to the rest of the family...*"

Living near the Young family in Monroe, New York, was the family of Heber C. Kimball. Fanny would occasionally help out in the Kimball home. Heber's daughter, Helen Mar fondly wrote, "*Aunt Fanny Young...took care of me, and she was always ready to defend me if necessary...[She] had been a great reader; and I was named by her after the Scottish Lady, Helen Mar...[She] was a true Saint, and was beloved by all who had the pleasure of her acquaintance...*"

In 1832, Fanny married Roswell Murray. The marriage drew the Kimball and Young families closer together, as Roswell was Heber's father-in-law. In April of that year, Fanny was baptized into the Mormon church along with others in the Young family, including Brigham. Roswell, however, did not join. Helen Mar remembers, "*My Grandfather Murray was not a member of any church...A more noble kind-hearted man never lived, he was generous to a fault, and some were unprincipled enough to take advantage of it...He was never known to refuse a favor, and he would often rise from his bed when he was sick to go and do a job of work to accommodate a neighbor. He was a man of but few words and some called him an Infidel.*"

Fanny and Roswell moved to Kirtland, Missouri and eventually Nauvoo, arriving in 1839. Shortly after arriving, Roswell died and Fanny was left single. In Nauvoo, Brigham Young became a close friend of Joseph Smith and accepted Joseph's teachings on plural marriage. Brigham remembers the fall of 1843 when he, Joseph and Fanny were discussing the Mormon belief in the necessity of entering plural marriage in order to obtain exaltation and enter the celestial kingdom. Not won over, Fanny remarked, "*Now, don't talk to me; when I get into the celestial kingdom, if I ever get there, I shall request the privilege of being a ministering angel; that is the labor I wish to perform. I don't want any companion in that world; and if the Lord will make me a ministering angel, it is all I want.*" Joseph replied, "*Sister, you talk very foolishly, you do not know what you will want.*" and then turned to Brigham, "*Here, Brother Brigham, you seal this lady to me.*" Brigham said that Fanny submitted to Joseph's impromptu proposal and he "*sealed her to him.*" Joseph was killed less than a year later and Fanny was once again widowed.

In 1846, when the Nauvoo Temple was nearly complete, most of Joseph's wives were "resealed" to him, via a proxy husband, within the dedicated structure. For some reason, Fanny was not resealed to Joseph. Perhaps she longed for her "*kind-hearted*" Roswell.

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