

Twelve Documents Supporting Joseph Smith's Sexual Polyandry

As demonstrated in the previous section, several authors like Fawn Brodie wrote confidently that Joseph Smith practiced sexual polyandry. However, the specific supportive evidence that they cited to support their views was minimal or nonexistent. I have found twelve documents that could be interpreted as supporting the observation that Joseph Smith practiced sexual polyandry. Nine are from published sources, and three are from private writings. I discuss

34. Carrie A. Miles, “‘What’s Love Got to Do with It?’: Earthly Experience of Celestial Marriage, Past and Present,” 196.

35. Ehat, “Pseudo-Polyandry,” 19.

36. Royal Anthropological Institute, *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* (1951), 110, quoted in Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage*, 27.

ten of these documents in this chapter. The eleventh, involving Sylvia Sessions Lyon, is investigated in Chapter 13 and the twelfth, concerning Mary Heron Snider, in Chapter 16. All twelve are examined to help determine the level of their reliability and believability. Eight of the accusers/reporters were openly anti-Mormon writers. (See Table 12.1.)

This chapter also examines newer assertions from researcher D. Michael Quinn and a possible case of sexual polyandry in Utah.

No. 1: John C. Bennett, 1842

The earliest allegation that Joseph Smith was involved in sexual polyandry was written July 2, 1842, by John C. Bennett, whose meteoric rise in Joseph Smith's favor in the fall and winter of 1841 was equaled only by his stunningly speedy fall from favor in the spring of 1842. His affidavit, the only allegation published during Joseph Smith's lifetime, appeared three weeks after its composition in *The Pittsburgh Morning Chronicle* on July 29. As was customary for nineteenth-century affidavits, the names of Joseph's alleged sexual partners were left blank.

Bennett asserted that Joseph Smith was sexually intimate with at least seven married women. The phrase "the blessing of Jacob" implies that plural marriages occurred between Joseph and each woman; however, it is also possible to interpret the statement as Joseph's quasi-biblical language used to persuade the women to become his sexual partners in relationships that were simply repeated adulteries.³⁷ More specifically, Bennett claims to have personally witnessed sexual relations between the Prophet and four of these women. On the face of it, the level of voyeuristic detail is quite improbable. Given the mores of sexual propriety that characterized the nineteenth century, it seems impossible that either Joseph or, perhaps even more improbably, a plural wife, would have allowed Bennett to observe these activities. Furthermore, my evaluation of the available evidence leads me to conclude that John C. Bennett never learned of eternal and plural marriage from Joseph Smith. Bennett's own sexual liaisons were not polygamous "marriages" because he did not require wedding ceremonies prior to sexual relations. (See Chapter 20.)

That Bennett did not identify the women by name may be due to ignorance of their identities (which seems unlikely if he was actually present, as he claims), to a desire not to embarrass the women, a nod in the direction of nineteenth-century conventions for treating scandalous material, fear of a suit for libel, or a combination of factors. Importantly, it appears that Bennett's accusation of numerous sexual polyandrous unions—perhaps the most explosive of all his charges—was published only in the *Pittsburgh Morning Chronicle*.

37. See Volume 2, Appendix E.

TABLE 12.1
 TWELVE STATEMENTS ABOUT POSSIBLE POLYANDROUS WIVES

	Woman or Women Reportedly Involved	Year Allegation Was First Published	Author of Statement	Anti-Mormon Writer?	First-hand?	Second Witness?
1	Seven unnamed married women	1842	John C. Bennett	Yes	alleged	No
2	Marinda Nancy Johnson	1850	William Arrowsmith	Yes	No	No
3	Zina Huntington Jacobs	1851	William Hall	Yes	No	No
4	“Mrs. Dibble”	1857	John Hyde	Yes	No	No
5	Presendia Huntington Buell	1860	Mary Ettie Coray Smith	Yes	No	No
6	Zina Huntington Jacobs	1875	Ann Eliza Webb Young	Yes	No	No
7	“Merchant’s wife”	1886	Wilhelm Wyl	Yes	No	No
8	Lucinda Pendleton Harris	1886	Sarah Pratt via Wilhelm Wyl	Yes	No	Possibly
9	Elvira Cowles Holmes	undated	Phebe Louisa Holmes Welling	No	No	No
10	Margaret Creighton	1929	Edwin Mace	No	No	No
11	Sylvia Sessions Lyon	1997	Todd Compton	No	No	No
12	Mary Heron Snider	1850	Joseph E. Johnson	No	Unknown	No

State of Illinois, }
 Hancock County. } ss.
 Personally appeared before me, S. Marshall,
 a Justice of the Peace in and for said coun-
 ty, John C. Bennett, who being duly sworn,
 according to law, deposeth and saith—that
 the affidavit taken before Esq. Wells on the
 17th of May, and the statement before the
 City Council of Nauvoo on the 19th, as
 published in the Wasp of the 25th of June,
 1842, are false, and were taken under du-
 resse, as stated in this letter—that he has
 seen Joseph Smith in bed with Mrs. _____,
 Mrs. _____, and that he has seen him in the
 act of cohabitation with Mrs. _____, and
 Mrs. _____, all four of whom he seduced by
 telling them that the Lord had granted the
 blessing of Jacob, and that there was no
 sin in it—that he told him that Bates Noble
 married him to _____, and that Brig-
 ham Young married him to _____, that
 he had free access to Mrs. _____, Mrs. _____,
 Mrs. _____, and various others, whose hus-
 bands he had sent off preaching, and not
 now necessary to mention—and further this
 deponent saith not.
JOHN C. BENNETT.
 Sworn to and subscribed this 2d day of
 July, 1842.
 SAMUEL MARSHALL, J. P. [seal.]

State of Illinois
 Hancock County

Personally appeared before me, S. Marshall,
 a Justice of the Peace in and for said coun-
 ty, John C. Bennett, who being duly sworn,
 according to law, deposeth and saith—that
 the affidavit taken before Esq. Wells on the
 17th of May, and the statement before the
 City Council of Nauvoo on the 19th, as
 published in the Wasp of the 25th of June,
 1842, are false, and were taken under du-
 resse, as stated in this letter—that he has
 seen Joseph Smith in bed with Mrs. _____,
 Mrs. _____, and that he has seen him in the
 act of cohabitation with Mrs. _____, and
 Mrs. _____, all four of whom he seduced by
 telling them that the Lord had granted the
 blessing of Jacob, and that there was no
 sin in it—that he told him that Bates Noble
 married him to _____, and that Brig-
 ham Young married him to _____, that
 he had free access to Mrs. _____, Mrs. _____,
 Mrs. _____, and various others, whose hus-
 bands he had sent off preaching, and not
 now necessary to mention—and further this
 deponent saith not.

JOHN C. BENNETT

Sworn to and subscribed this 2d day of
 July, 1842.

SAMUEL MARSHALL, J. P. [seal]

John C. Bennett's affidavit in the *Pittsburgh Morning Chronicle*, June 29, 1842.

The *Sangamo Journal*, which received much wider circulation in Illinois, published the same affidavit on July 15, 1842, two weeks before it appeared in the Pittsburgh paper—but only its first half. It stops after the phrase “He [John C. Bennett] has seen Joseph Smith in bed with Mrs _____” but there is no blank; instead he provides the name of “Fuller.”³⁸ The repeated “Mrs. _____’s” are absent.

“Mrs. Fuller” is undoubtedly Catherine Fuller Warren, who confessed to sexual relations with Bennett. Notes from her trial before the Nauvoo High Council relate:

The defendant confessed to the charge and gave the names of several others [beside John C. Bennett] who had been guilty of having unlawful intercourse with her [Chauncey Higbee, Lyman O. Littlefield, Joel S. Miles,

38. John C. Bennett, “Further Mormon Developments!! 2d Letter from Gen. Bennett,” *Sangamo Journal*, July 15, 1842; see also Bennett, *The History of the Saints*, 253.

State of Illinois, }
 Hancock County, } ss.
 Personally appeared before me, Samuel Marshall, a Justice of the Peace in and for said county, John C. Bennett, who being duly sworn, according to law, deposeth and saith—that the affidavit taken before Esq. Wells on the 17th of May, and the statement before the City Council of Nauvoo on the 19th, as published in the Wasp of the 25th of June, 1842, are false, and were taken under DURESS as stated in this letter—that he has seen Joseph Smith in bed with Mrs. Fuller.

JOHN C. BENNETT.
 Sworn to and subscribed this 2d day of July, 1842. SAMUEL MARSHALL, J. P. [seal.]

State of Illinois
 Hancock County
 Personally appeared before me, Samuel Marshall, a Justice of the Peace in and for said County, John C. Bennett, who being duly sworn, according to law, deposeth and saith—that the affidavit taken before Esq. Wells on the 17th of May, and the statement before the City Council of Nauvoo on the 19th, as published in the Wasp Of the 25th of June, 1842, are false, and were taken under DURESS as stated in this letter—that He has seen Joseph Smith in bed with Mrs. Fuller.

JOHN C. BENNETT
 Sworn to and subscribed this 2d day of July, 1842. SAMUEL MARSHALL, J. P. [seal]

Sangamo Journal, June 15, 1842. This version failed to include the expanded accusations found in the *Pittsburg Morning Chronicle*. Underlining added.

George W. Thatcher, and J. B. Backenstos] stating that they taught the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women and that the heads of the Church also taught and practiced it which things caused her to be led away thinking it to be right but becoming convinced that it was not right and learning that the heads of the church did not believe nor practice such things she was willing to confess her sins and did repent before God for what she had done and desired earnestly that the Council would forgive her and covenanted that she would hence forth do so no more.³⁹

If the *Pittsburgh Morning Chronicle* version was accurate (and the whereabouts of the original affidavit is not known), it is unclear what Bennett stood to gain by circulating two forms of the same July 2 affidavit, severely limiting the dissemination of the more damaging version. That Bennett chose to not include it in the *Sangamo Journal* or in his book suggests that they were overstatements, if not prevarications. Bennett obviously saw his scandalous disclosures as a money-maker, as witnessed by his rush to book publication followed by a lecture tour. If he had, in fact, witnessed such shocking activities as his affidavit implies, it seems more likely that he would have capitalized on them, even perhaps enhancing them with lurid details.

Another detail in Bennett’s Pittsburgh affidavit is that the Prophet had sent men on missions so he could marry their wives in Nauvoo. This statement is contradicted by historical data. Of the twelve “polyandrous” husbands iden-

39. Nauvoo Stake High Council Minutes, 1839 October–1845 October, LR 3102 22, published in Fred Collier, *The Nauvoo High Council Minute Books of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 57–58.

tified by Todd Compton,⁴⁰ ten were not on missions at the time Joseph was sealed to their legal wives. Of the two possible exceptions, only one, Orson Hyde, is documented as on a mission at the time of Marinda Johnson Hyde's sealing to Joseph Smith. The second possible case involves George Harris, who left on his fourteen-month mission in July 1840. His wife, Lucinda may have been sealed to Joseph Smith at some point, but the date is unavailable.⁴¹

Undoubtedly the biggest problem with Bennett's accusations is Bennett himself. As shown in Chapter 20, the evidence is strong that Joseph Smith never privately instructed Bennett concerning plural marriage or authorized, by example or innuendo, Bennett's seduction of at least "six or seven" women in Nauvoo.⁴² The record also provides evidence that Bennett lied; for example, he described the organization of three echelons of "spiritual wives" in Nauvoo.⁴³ No other author ever referred to them, leading to the conclusion that the three levels are fictional.⁴⁴

A telling piece of corroboration to me is that Bennett portrays Joseph Smith as blatant, brazen, and aggressive in conducting sexual polyandry; yet the next allegation of sexual polyandry was not made until eight years later and, according to an unfriendly report, involved a different woman than any Bennett identified in his affidavit, letters to the *Sangamo Journal*, or his book, *History of the Saints*.

No. 2: John Bowes/William Arrowsmith

The second narrative, chronologically speaking, was published in 1850 and accused Joseph Smith of sexual polyandry with Marinda Nancy Johnson Hyde, wife of Apostle Orson Hyde. Methodist minister and anti-Mormon

40. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 49, 81, 123, 179, 185, 213, 239, 260, 278, 383, 548.

41. See "No. 8: Wilhelm Wyl quoting Sarah Pratt" later in this chapter and Chapter 16.

42. Hyrum Smith's comment at the trial of Francis Higbee, May 6, 1844, in "Municipal Court," *Times and Seasons*, 5 (May 15, 1844): 540.

43. Bennett, *The History of the Saints: Or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, 220–25. Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century*, 173, suggested one possible parallel between Bennett's descriptions of polygamy in Nauvoo and Joseph Smith's teachings on plural marriage: "Thus, 'wives and concubines' could well correspond to Bennett's two upper levels of plural wives." There is no evidence of women being designated as concubines or of concubines being married in Nauvoo. Nor is there any form of official sanction of concubinage in the Church before or after Joseph Smith's death.

44. For example, at the time Bennett left Nauvoo, only three men and three women besides Joseph Smith had been sealed in authorized polygamous marriages. Brigham Young, Heber Kimball, and Vinson Knight each had married one plural wife. The numbers of participants implied in Bennett's descriptions have not verified and appear to be fictional.

writer in England, John Bowes (1804–74), made many unsubstantiated claims in his 1850 exposé, including “hidden orgies of Mormonism practiced in the Nauvoo Temple.”⁴⁵ In this exposé, he quotes William Arrowsmith, of Augusta, in Lee County, Iowa, which he locates as “about sixteen miles from Nauvoo” across the Mississippi River.

“He never was a Mormon,” according to Bowes, “but he married the sister of the Mormon apostle John Taylor. The Mormons persuaded his wife to leave him and they robbed him of 100 dollars worth of property.” According to Arrowsmith’s March 27, 1849, statement given to Bowes, “He says. . . that he, William Arrowsmith, slept at his mother-in-law’s, who was a Mormon, when Joseph Smith slept with Orson Hyde’s wife, under the same roof.”⁴⁶

Some details are correct. On January 29, 1839, when both of them were twenty, Arrowsmith married in Hale, Westmoreland, England, Elizabeth Taylor, sister of future Church President John Taylor and daughter of Agnes Whittington Taylor and James Taylor. It is also true that Arrowsmith never joined the Church. Elizabeth left him and went west in 1847 with the company of her brother, Captain William Taylor, taking their son John Taylor Arrowsmith. Elizabeth married George Boyes on July 16, 1847, during the trek.

According to available documents, Marinda was sealed to Joseph Smith in April 1842, so the alleged cohabitation would have occurred during the next twenty-six months.⁴⁷ At that time, she lived in an apartment above the *Times and Season’s* printing office while Orson was on a missionary trip to Palestine.⁴⁸ On December 7, he returned; and by summer they moved into a newly built home in Nauvoo. In mid-February 1843, Marinda became pregnant with Orson Washington Hyde (b. November 9, 1843). If Joseph had been experiencing conjugal relations with Marinda since the April 1842 sealing, it is curious that she did not become pregnant until a few weeks after Orson’s return to Nauvoo. Orson served a two-month mission during September–October; and then in April 1844, he left for a mission to Washington, D.C., to meet with President John Tyler, returning after the martyrdom.⁴⁹ Since Agnes Taylor’s home was located outside of Nauvoo, the described visit between Joseph Smith and Marinda would have likely occurred while Orson was gone. Plausibility issues arise regarding the Prophet’s ability to slip out of Nauvoo to spend an entire night with Marinda, without other witnesses questioning the behavior.

45. John Bowes, *Mormonism Exposed*, 17.

46. William Arrowsmith, quoted in *ibid.*, 63.

47. Scott Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, 396.

48. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 235–40.

49. Howard H. Barron, *Orson Hyde, Missionary, Apostle, Colonizer*, 144–55.

Another problem involves how public Arrowsmith's allegations were. I have found no evidence of their specific reactions, but neither woman considered the tale a reason to lose faith in the Prophet Joseph or the Church. Agnes was endowed in the Nauvoo Temple on December 15, 1845, and was sealed to her husband on January 17, 1846. Elizabeth received her endowments on January 27, 1846. Both women lived the rest of their lives in Utah and died in Salt Lake City, Agnes on November 15, 1868, and Elizabeth on July 31, 1909.⁵⁰

An additional concern surrounds John Bowes's willingness to exaggerate. He continued his exposé by accusing Joseph of "all kinds of evil, adultery, seduction, etc."⁵¹ One section of his pamphlet warns his readers: "I trust that the fathers, and mothers, and husbands of England, will take care of their wives and daughters, and preserve them from ever being contaminated by the pestilential breath of adulterers and fornicators."⁵² If Arrowsmith indeed made the charge as reported by Bowes, I have found no additional supportive evidence or corroborative witnesses to this particular allegation about Joseph and Marinda.

No. 3: William Hall

The next document dealing with Joseph Smith's alleged sexual polyandry was published in 1851, the year after Bowes's book appeared, and was, again, an exposé, suggesting that such denunciations in print were financially rewarding for their authors. This work, *The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed* by William Hall, contains three critical accounts concerning Joseph Smith and polygamy, one of which alleges polyandry. He dictated a questionable report regarding an 1839 incident with Orson Hyde and Marinda Nancy Johnson that was discussed in Chapter 3. A third story mentioning Jane Law will be addressed in Chapter 31. Larry Foster assessed: "William Hall's accounts are of extremely dubious accuracy and must be evaluated with the caution used in evaluating any malicious gossip."⁵³

The specific allegation of sexual polyandry involves Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs: "A Mr. Henry Jacobs had his wife seduced by Joe Smith, in his time, during a mission to England. She was a very beautiful woman, but when Jacobs returned, he found her pregnant by Smith. Jacobs put up with the insult, and still lived with her."⁵⁴

50. www.FamilySearch.com (accessed September 14, 2011).

51. John Bowes, *Mormonism Exposed*, 12.

52. *Ibid.*, 62.

53. Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century*, 308 note 93.

54. William Hall, *The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed; Containing Many Facts and Doctrines concerning That Singular People during Seven Years' Membership with Them, from 1840 to 1847*, 43.

As already mentioned above, only one of the husbands of Joseph Smith’s polyandrous wives was on a mission when the sealing was performed (and the date of sealing of a second cannot be determined). Henry Jacobs was a diligent elder who served several missions, but he was definitely in Nauvoo when Zina’s sealing to Joseph occurred on October 27, 1841. Zina’s only child conceived during Joseph Smith’s lifetime was Zebulon William Jacobs whose conception date would have been about April 11, 1841, just a month after the couple’s wedding on March 7.⁵⁵

Recently geneticist Ugo A. Perego and his associates performed DNA testing comparing DNA from the Y chromosome of Joseph Smith’s progeny to the Y chromosome of a descendant of Zebulon. They concluded: “We can confidently exclude Joseph Smith as Zebulon Jacobs’s father and identify Henry Bailey Jacobs as his and his brother’s likely father on the basis of combined genetic and genealogical evidence.”⁵⁶ Fawn Brodie admitted: “There is no record other than this bald statement [from William Hall] that Zina ever bore Joseph a child.”⁵⁷

Regarding Joseph’s sealing to Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs, which occurred when she was pregnant by her legal husband, Compton accurately points out: “Nothing specific is known about sexuality in their marriage,” but he then adds, “though judging from Smith’s other marriages, sexuality was probably included.”⁵⁸

Martha Sonntag Bradley and Mary Brown Firmage Woodward, in their study of Zina Diantha, hypothesize: “Sexual relations with Joseph Smith [and Zina], if any, had been infrequent and irregular.”⁵⁹ However, they include no documentary evidence either confirming or denying this hypothesis.

No. 4: John Hyde

The fourth document is an 1857 exposé written by excommunicated Mormon John Hyde, a British convert (no known relation to Orson Hyde): “There is a Mrs. Dibble living in Utah, who has a fine son. She was sealed, among others, to Joseph Smith, although living with her present husband before and since. On the head of her son, Smith predicted the most startling prophecies [sic] about wielding the sword of Laban, revealing the hidden Book of

55. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 80–81.

56. Ugo A. Perego, Natalie M. Myres, and Scott R. Woodward, “Reconstructing the Y-Chromosome of Joseph Smith: Genealogical Applications,” 59–60.

57. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 466.

58. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 82.

59. Martha Sonntag Bradley and Mary Brown Firmage Woodward, *Four Zinas: A Story of Mothers and Daughters on the Mormon Frontier*, 132–33.

Mormon, and translating the sealed part of the records. There is not a person at Salt Lake who doubts the fact of that boy being Smith's own child."⁶⁰

Hyde thus posits a polyandrous marriage between Joseph Smith and Hannah Dubois Dibble and her legal husband Philo Dibble. Hannah married Philo on February 11, 1841, in Nauvoo with Joseph Smith performing the ceremony.⁶¹ Compton lists her as one of his eight "possible" plural wives of the Prophet in part based on Hyde's assertion but also because of a comment by Benjamin F. Johnson, whose sister Almera was sealed to Joseph Smith and who had acted as Joseph's go-between in teaching his sister about plural marriage. Johnson stated: "At this time [May 16, 1843]⁶² I knew that the Prophet had as his wives, Louisa Beeman, Eliza R. Snow, Maria and Sarah Lawrence, Sisters Lyon and Dibble, one or two of Bishop Partridge's daughters, and some of C. P. Lott's daughters."⁶³ Out of the ten women whom Johnson links with Joseph, he is correct about eight: Beeman, Snow, the Lawrence sisters, Lyon, the Partridge sisters, and one of C. P. Lott's daughters. However, only one—Malissa—was married to the Prophet. No evidence has been found to support that either of her sisters, Mary Elizabeth (b. 1827) or Almira Henrietta (b. 1829), was sealed to Joseph Smith at any time. Therefore, despite Johnson's general reliability, he may also have been mistaken about a plural marriage between Hannah Dibble and the Prophet. No sealing date has been documented or even proposed for such a union. Also weakening the case for a sealing is that, unlike the Prophet's other plural wives, Hannah was not resealed to him when the Nauvoo Temple was completed. Instead, on January 15, 1846, she was married for eternity to Philo Dibble with Brigham Young officiating.⁶⁴

The only Dibble son that fits Hyde's narrative is Loren Walker Dibble, born May 29, 1844 (conceived approximately September 6, 1843). As another anomaly, Hyde mentions "startling prophesies [sic] about wielding the sword of Laban, revealing the hidden Book of Mormon, and translating the sealed part of the records." Logically, such remarkable predictions would have been

60. John Hyde, *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs*, 84–85. I have found no evidence to corroborate this assertion. Hyde was capable of extreme claims, asserting that proxy marriages for the dead had "to be consummated in the same manner as that of the living. . . . And as a marriage ceremony is not valid till completed, there is practiced in consequence more abomination" (88–89). This claim is unfounded and is contradicted by more reliable evidence.

61. "Hannah Ann Dubois Dibble" (obituary), *Deseret News*, November 25, 1893, 32; see also "Philo Dibble's Narrative," 92–93.

62. George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, May 16, 1843, 101.

63. Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review*, 96.

64. Lisle G. Brown, *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings: A Comprehensive Register of Persons Receiving LDS Temple Ordinances, 1841–1846*, 83.

recorded, at least in family documents if not in more formal Church records. However, I have been unable to find corroborating evidence of these predictions or indications that Loren Dibble made remarkable contributions to the Church.⁶⁵ Hyde’s assertion that Loren Dibble was widely known as Joseph Smith’s child is completely unsupported by other reports, rumors, or even denials of Hyde’s claim.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Benjamin Winchester launched the rumor that Joseph had fathered Hannah’s son in 1839, which the Prophet flatly denied.⁶⁶ Chapter 11 examined the problems regarding a very late report that some of the children born to Joseph Smith’s plural wives may have been raised in other families including one with the surname of “Dibble,” but sexual polyandry was not alleged in either of these cases.

No. 5: Mary Ettie V. Smith

Mary Ettie V. Coray Smith (see Chapter 3), was born January 31, 1827, so she would have been seventeen when the Prophet died. Her brother, Howard Coray, served as a clerk and scribe of Joseph Smith. She can be identified with several different spellings of her first name besides “Mary Ettie,” including “Mariette,” “Marietta,” “Maryette,” “Mary Eti,” “Mary Etta,” and “Mariet.”⁶⁷ She married Samuel Goforth Henderson on January 30, 1844, and they were sealed in the Nauvoo Temple on January 20, 1846, by Brigham Young.⁶⁸ The couple apparently divorced, and Mary Ettie traveled to Salt Lake City where she received numerous plural marriage proposals and spent time in Heber C. Kimball’s home.⁶⁹ She reported that Brigham Young arranged for her to be

65. The only biographical details I have found identify him as participating in an Indian altercation on June 26, 1866. Peter Gottfredson, *History of Indian Depredations in Utah*, 214. See also <http://www.blackhawkproductions.com/diamondbattle.htm> (access July 19, 2010). John W. Rockwell, *Stories from the Life of Porter Rockwell*, 145, calls him a “gunfighter.”

66. Joseph Smith related on May 27, 1843: “I disagreed [with] him [Winchester] before the conference and to be revenged he told one of the most damnable lies about me. [I] visited Sister Smith, Sister Dibble [and]. . . told her to come to Nauvoo with me . . . and Benjamin Winchester set up a howl that I was guilty of improper conduct.” Joseph Smith, in Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Minutes of Meetings, May 27, 1843.

67. See, for example, listings in Brown, *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings*, 135; AncestralFile; <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=33912889> (accessed September 14, 2011); and Lyndon W. Cook, comp., *Nauvoo Deaths and Marriages, 1839–1845*, 109.

68. Cook, *Nauvoo Deaths and Marriages*, 109; Brown, *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings*, 135.

69. Nelson Winch Green quoting Mary Ettie V. Smith in *Fifteen Years among the Mormons: Being the Narrative of Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith*, 172.

sealed to Nathaniel Vary Jones as a plural wife on May 12, 1851. Although the sealing was apparently for “time and eternity,” she considered it as applying only after death.⁷⁰ Subsequently, Reuben P. Smith, an unbaptized Church attendee arrived in town and began to court her. They were married on May 3, 1852, by Elder Jared Porter of the Fifteenth Ward in Salt Lake City, and the notice was published in the *Deseret News*.⁷¹ Reuben’s employment required him to travel to California the following year. Mary Ettie stayed behind until 1856 when she traveled to New York. There, in 1857, she dictated a narrative to her editor, Nelson Green, who may have also been her ghostwriter. Together they produced *Fifteen Years among the Mormons: Being the Narrative of Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith*. Reuben caught up with Mary Ettie in New York on August 13, 1858, and escorted her back to California where she died of “consumption” in San Francisco in January 1867.⁷²

In her book, Mary Ettie V. Coray Smith asserts that she heard one of Joseph Smith’s plural wives, Presendia Huntington Buell, “say afterwards in Utah, that she did not know whether Mr. Buel [her legal husband, Norman Buell] or the Prophet was the father of her son.”⁷³ It is true that Presendia had been sealed to Joseph Smith on December 11, 1841. As discussed in Chapter 3, Fawn Brodie theorized that this child was Oliver Buell.⁷⁴ However, genetics researcher Ugo A. Perego has shown through DNA testing of parallel descendants that Oliver was not Joseph Smith’s son.⁷⁵

From internal evidence in Mary Ettie’s narrative, the son in question could only have been John Hiram, who was conceived approximately October 20, 1842, when Presendia Huntington Buell lived at Lima, Illinois, thirty miles south of Nauvoo. According to Joseph Smith’s journal, he was hiding from Illinois law officers who were cooperating with Missouri sheriffs in trying to extradite him to that state. Joseph was staying out of the public view in the home of James Taylor in Nauvoo; available records provide no support for a trip south to Lima or elsewhere. Also, there is no indication that Presendia made visits to Nauvoo at that time.⁷⁶

70. *Ibid.*, 182.

71. “Married,” *Deseret News*, May 15, 1852, 2.

72. John W. McCoy, “True Grit and Tall Tales: How Mary Ettie Coray (1827–1867) Got Her Man,” 9–11.

73. Green quoting Mary Ettie V. Smith, in *Fifteen Years among the Mormons*, 35.

74. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 301–2.

75. Ugo A. Perego, Jayne E. Ekins, and Scott R. Woodward, “Resolving the Paternities of Oliver N. Buell and Mosiah L. Hancock through DNA,” 128–36.

76. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Volume 2, Journal, 1832–1842*, 598. Presendia was a member of the Nauvoo Relief Society and traveled to Nauvoo to attend its meetings. However, its last meeting in 1842 occurred on September 28. See <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/nauvoo-relief-society-minute->

While several authors have treated Mary Ettie’s statement as reliable,⁷⁷ it is problematic for four reasons. First, she wrote that she heard this report from Presendia personally. It appears that the two women may have crossed paths sometime after her arrival in Salt Lake City in early 1850: “I spent, during the winter, much of my time in the family of Heber C. Kimball who had over thirty wives; not all of whom were at home, however, as they lived in different houses.”⁷⁸ If accurate, she might have met Presendia who became a plural wife (for “time”) of Heber C. Kimball on February 4, 1846. Presendia joined Kimball’s family during the western exodus and by the end of 1849 was settled in Utah. She did not live with Kimball’s other wives during the early 1850s, so if Mary Ettie met her, it would probably have been as Presendia was visiting Kimball’s primary residence; however, there is no evidence supporting this scenario.⁷⁹

Second, it is questionable whether Mary Ettie was sufficiently close to Presendia in a social sense to have heard the admission. Mary Ettie mentions “Mrs. Buel” three times in her book, each time misspelling her name and never referring to her as “Presendia.”⁸⁰ Presendia makes no mention of Mary Ettie in any known document. That Presendia would have confided in Mary Ettie, a divorced woman who had separated from her sealed husband and was also seventeen years her junior, seems less probable.

Third, it is equally unlikely that Presendia would have made the statement publicly. If she had, virtually all listeners would have been greatly surprised and scandalized. They could have interpreted the declaration in only one way, that Presendia experienced sexual relations during the same period with both Norman Buell and Joseph Smith so that when she became pregnant with her son, she could not accurately determine which man was the father. Such a bald announcement would have violated the reticence about sexual matters that was standard for nineteenth-century women.⁸¹ As Todd Compton

book#86 (accessed September 14, 2011). It is unknown if she attended that particular meeting; but if conception had occurred on or around that date, Oliver, her sixth child, would have been three weeks overdue. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 122. Carrying a viable fetus during a sixth pregnancy two or three weeks past the due date would have been extremely rare.

77. See for example, George D. Smith, “Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy, 1841–46: A Preliminary Demographic Report,” 11; Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 671, is skeptical but does not dismiss it completely. The statement is treated as credible on numerous anti-Mormon websites. For example, it is quoted in “Joseph Smith and Whorehouses,” at http://www.mormoncurtain.com/topic_joesephsmith_section3.html (accessed September 17, 2011).

78. Green quoting Mary Ettie V. Smith in *Fifteen Years among the Mormons*, 172.

79. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 130–34.

80. Green quoting Mary Ettie V. Smith in *Fifteen Years among the Mormons*, 34, 35, 45.

81. Compton, “Fawn Brodie on Joseph Smith’s Plural Wives and Polygamy: A

notes: "One wonders if Presendia would have said such a thing. Talk of sexuality was avoided by the Victorian, puritanical Mormons; in diaries, the word 'pregnant' or 'expecting' is never or rarely used."⁸² In addition, polyandrous sexual relations violated accepted moral standards both in and outside of the Church in the 1850s. (See Chapter 14.) No Latter-day Saint would have then viewed sexual polyandry as an acceptable practice.

A fourth difficulty with Mary Ettie's statement is the implausibility of the declared activities themselves. Two factors would have greatly impeded such behavior, the thirty miles separating Presendia (in Lima) and Joseph (in Nauvoo) and the fact that her husband, Norman Buell, was antagonistic to the Mormons and would not have willingly shared his wife sexually with the Prophet under the guise of plural marriage. Mary Ettie's quotation requires Presendia to have rendezvoused with the Prophet for conjugal relations close to a time when she was sexually involved with her legal husband. Both the distance and Norman's presumably watchful eye would have made this difficult. Also important is whether Presendia herself, with her conservative Christian morals, could have accepted such conjugal arrangements.

In her 1875 exposé, Ann Eliza Webb Young repeated and embellished this allegation with patent falsehoods: "Some of these women [Nauvoo polygamous wives] have since said they did not know who was the father of their children; this is not to be wondered at, for after Joseph's declaration annulling all Gentile marriages, the greatest promiscuity was practiced; and, indeed, all sense of morality seemed to have been lost by a portion at least of the church."⁸³ Born in 1844, Ann Eliza could only have been restating secondhand information, most likely Mary Ettie's account, adding her own biased allegations.

In summary, no evidence exists supporting that Presendia and Mary Ettie were close friends in Utah. Nor are there reasons to believe Presendia would have confided such a scandalous detail to her. Mary Ettie also portrays Presendia making a startling confession in rather casual fashion. An admission of sexual polyandry would have created a stir among any who would have learned of it; and if it involved the Prophet, the publicity would likely have been much greater. Importantly, the thirty-mile distance between Joseph Smith and Presendia and Norman Buell's rejection of Mormonism represent significant obstacles to the behavior described. And finally, most historians do not consider Mary Ettie a credible witness. Stanley S. Ivins called her memories

Critical View," 166.

82. Ibid.

83. Ann Eliza Webb Young, *Wife No. 19, or, The Story of a Life in Bondage, Being a Complete Exposé of Mormonism, and Revealing Sorrows, Sacrifices, and Sufferings of Women in Polygamy*, 71,

“inaccurate and of no value.”⁸⁴ In 1875, Fanny Stenhouse, who was writing an exposé of her own based on her disillusionment with polygamy, described Mary Ettie as “a lady who wrote very many years ago and in her writings, so mixed up fiction with what was true, that it was difficult to determine where the one ended and the other began.”⁸⁵ A non-Mormon descendant of Mary Ettie, John W. McCoy, concluded:

Mary Ettie does not seem to have kept a personal journal, and she is recounting events that occurred when she was very young. Moreover, the account was written down by Nelson Green, and then interpreted by the printer. . . . It will not take the reader very long to discover that Mary Ettie’s account is skillfully written, if not deviously clever. Also, her literary license is stretched to the fullest possible extent for a variety of purposes. . . . The line between truth and fiction does not seem to have been regarded as an absolute in every instance. . . . Clearly, *Fifteen Years among the Mormons* is not a primary source. It is not even a reliable secondary source. The specific dates that it includes are most often wrong, and at least some of the names are reported incorrectly. . . . The level of credibility even for statements supported by external facts is reduced by the unavoidable presence of her editor, Nelson Green.⁸⁶

In short, although Mary Ettie’s report that Presendia Huntington “did not know whether Mr. Buell or the Prophet was the father of her son” is often quoted, its credibility is undermined by its numerous weaknesses.

No. 6: Ann Eliza Webb Young

Ann Eliza Webb Young, author of the sixth document reporting sexual polyandry, is, like all of the other authors reported thus far, writing an exposé, *Wife No. 19*, that had the alluring cachet of being written by one of Brigham Young’s divorced plural wives. At one point, she comments: “One woman said to me not very long since, while giving me some of her experience in polygamy: ‘The greatest trial I ever endured in my life was living with my husband and deceiving him, by receiving Joseph’s attentions whenever he chose to come to me.’”⁸⁷

Ann Eliza does not specifically name which of Joseph’s wives she was allegedly quoting. However, her mother, Eliza Jane Churchill Webb, repeated the accusation in two private letters a year later specifying that Zina Diantha

84. Stanley S. Ivins, Notebook 4, Box 1, fd. 4, p. 63.

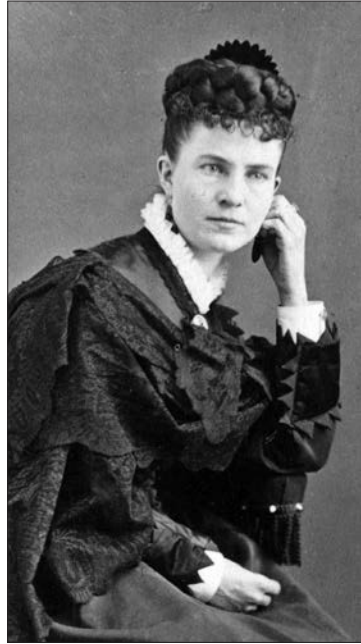
85. Fanny Stenhouse, “*Tell It All*”: *The Story of a Life’s Experiences in Mormonism*, 618.

86. McCoy, “True Grit and Tall Tales,” 4–6, 13.

87. Ann Eliza Young, *Wife Number 19*, 71. See also Eliza Jane Webb, Letter to Mary Bond, August 27, 1876.

Huntington was the woman. I do not count Eliza Jane's letters as separate documentation because Ann Eliza specifies that her knowledge came from her personal conversation with "one woman," and Eliza Jane did not share the information until after her daughter had published the story. Eliza Jane's version of this account is: "There are women living in Utah now who were sealed to Joseph while living with their husbands, and they say it was the greatest trial of their lives to live with two men at the same time."⁸⁸ Four months afterwards, she clarified: "There is Zina,—whose maiden name was Huntington. She says the greatest trial of her life was, to live with her husband and Joseph too at the same time."⁸⁹

Although Jerald and Sandra Tanner quote Ann Eliza's printed statement as primary evidence of sexual polyandry in Joseph Smith's plural marriages,⁹⁰ it raises several important questions. Perhaps foremost is the issue of proximity. Ann Eliza was sealed to Brigham Young in 1868 when she was twenty-four but did not live in the Lion House with Zina and his other wives, but lived in her own house a few blocks away.⁹¹ She apostatized and divorced Brigham in 1872, immediately suing him (unsuccessfully) for alimony.⁹² Yet she claimed that, at some point during those four years, Zina Huntington, who was twenty-three years older, confided that her "greatest trial" nearly three decades earlier in Nauvoo was polyandrous sexuality involving both of her husbands: Joseph Smith and Henry Jacobs. Why she would have confided such a delicate and painful subject to this young and relatively inexperienced woman is not clear.



Ann Eliza Webb Young. Courtesy LDS Church History Library.

88. Eliza Jane Webb, Letter Mary Bond, April 24, 1876.

89. Eliza J. Webb, Letter to Mary Bond, August 27, 1876.

90. Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner, *Joseph Smith and Polygamy*, 51.

91. J.J.J. "Two Prophets' Widows: A Visit to the Relicts of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, the Present Occupants of the Lion House and Bee-Hive, A Peep into the Big Parlor Where Brigham Held Family Prayers—Aunt Zinah and Eliza R. Snow, the Poetess," 6.

92. Edwin Brown Firmage and Richard Collin Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900*, 249.

In 1898 when Zina was interviewed by John Wight (1842–1921), an elder in the RLDS Church and son of excommunicated apostle Lyman Wight, she staunchly resisted disclosing details about her sealing to Joseph Smith: “It was something too sacred to be talked about; it was more to me than life or death. I never breathed it for years. . . . You are speaking of the most sacred experiences of my life.”⁹³ It seems unlikely that, after the candid disclosure Ann Eliza reports, Zina would have done a complete about-face more than twenty years later.

Furthermore, about fifteen years after Ann Eliza’s book appeared, Zina vigorously challenged both Ann Eliza’s truthfulness and her general character in an 1887 interview:

The trouble with Ann Eliza. . . was that she was not truthful. She was not grateful, and she was a very bad woman. She has convicted herself out of her own mouth. . . . She never lifted her finger to do a bit of work that she didn’t want to do. She had servants and there was no necessity for her doing anything. She has asserted that President Young opened all his wives’ letters, and that they couldn’t visit anywhere or write to anybody, which is ridiculously untrue. President Young was occupied with too many important matters to give attention to such trivial things as his wives’ letters or his wives’ visits. We wrote to whom we pleased. . . . Ann Eliza knew she was misrepresenting the facts.⁹⁴

Zina did not directly dispute Ann Eliza’s claims regarding sexual polyandry probably because Ann Eliza’s book did not identify her as the “one woman” who deceived her husband “by receiving Joseph’s attentions whenever he chose to come to me”; and few individuals, including perhaps Zina herself, would have concluded that she was the woman in question.

Furthermore, given the attention that surrounded Joseph whenever he appeared on the streets of Nauvoo and the close-knit nature of the community, it seems unlikely that Zina might have been able to keep a sexually polyandrous marriage secret from her husband and to have been available “whenever [Joseph] chose.”

Confusion regarding Zina’s relationship with Joseph Smith has also arisen as the result of a misstatement in Martha Sonntag Bradley and Mary Brown Firmage Woodward’s popular book, *Four Zinas: A Story of Mothers and Daughters on the Mormon Frontier*.⁹⁵ There Bradley and Woodward wrote, “Zina [Huntington] does not record if she and Joseph consummated their union, al-

93. Zina D. H. Young, Interviewed by John W. Wight, October 1, 1898, 29–30.

94. JJJ., “Two Prophets’ Widows,” 6.

95. See, for example, “Extracts from Letters and Emails,” *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 97 (October 2001).

though Zina later signed an affidavit that she was Smith's wife in 'very deed.'⁹⁶ The affidavit appears in virtual duplicate in Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Books 1:5, 4:5. However, neither affidavit mentions a consummation of the marriage in any terms, nor does it use the language of in "very deed."⁹⁷ The "very deed" language also does not appear in any of the eighty-eight affidavits contained in the four affidavit books. It is, however, the term used in an unrelated interview conducted by Joseph Smith III in 1893 who asked Malissa Lott, one of the Prophet's non-polyandrous plural wives, if she was Joseph Smith wife "in very deed" and she answered in the affirmative.⁹⁸

No. 7: Wilhelm Wyl

As discussed in Chapter 3, in 1886, Wilhelm Ritter von Wymetal, writing under the pseudonym, Wilhelm Wyl, produced yet another exposé about Joseph Smith, *Mormon Portraits* that was filled with sensationalized claims. Speaking on the subject of sexual polyandry, Wyl related: "There were in Nauvoo, when Joseph was in his glory as 'the greatest prophet that ever lived,' a young merchant and his wife whom he dearly loved. She bore to him several children, but became fascinated with Joe and with his claims to 'exalt' any woman who would yield to his wishes and become his 'wife.' The husband was sent on a mission, and during his absence Joseph 'gathered' the wife to his embraces, and she was 'sealed' as one of his harem."⁹⁹

96. Bradley and Woodward, *Four Zinas*, 114–15.

97. Zina Diantha Huntington [Young], Affidavit, in Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Book 1:5, affirms:

Be it remembered that on this first day of May A.D. eighteen sixty nine before me Elias Smith Probate Judge for Said County personally appeared, Zina Diantha Huntington \Young/ who was by me Sworn in due form of law, and upon her oath Saith, that on the twenty-Seventh day of October A.D. 1841, at the City of Nauvoo, County of Hancock, State of Illinois, She was married or Sealed to Joseph Smith, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, by Dimick B. Huntington, a High Priest in Said Church, according to the laws of the same; regulating marriage; In the presence of Fanny Maria Huntington.

The affidavit is signed by Zina and by Elias Smith. Affidavit 4:5 contains some minor word changes, but the content is not altered.

98. Malissa Lott Smith Willes, Notarized statement to Joseph Smith III, August 4, 1893.

99. Wilhelm Wyl, [pseud. for Wilhelm Ritter von Wymetal], *Mormon Portraits, or the Truth about Mormon Leaders from 1830 to 1886, Joseph Smith the Prophet, His Family and His Friends: A Study Based on Fact and Documents*, 69.

Wilhelm Wyl’s allegation regarding a nameless “merchant” and his nameless “wife” is difficult to investigate due to its vagueness. Researching Nauvoo merchants 1840–44 fails to identify one with a wife who might fit Wyl’s description. The Prophet was sealed to Sylvia Sessions Lyon, the legal spouse of Windsor Lyon, who was, in fact a merchant; but he is the only merchant who was married to one of Joseph’s plural wives. Furthermore, the date of their sealing is unknown; but when the Prophet wed Sylvia, Windsor had already been excommunicated so he could not have been serving a mission for the Church at that time. (See Chapter 13.)

Wyl’s use of “harem” and describing Joseph as “the greatest prophet that ever lived” can be dismissed as rhetorical flourishes, meant to evoke socially negative images of Muslims. The 1830 Noah Webster’s dictionary defines “harem” as “a place where Eastern princes confine their women, who are prohibited from the society of others.”¹⁰⁰ While at least four of Joseph Smith’s plural wives (Emily and Eliza Partridge and Sarah and Maria Lawrence) were living at the Nauvoo Mansion with Emma’s permission when the Smiths moved in on August 31, 1843, Emily Partridge later testified that Emma forbade Joseph from cohabiting with them;¹⁰¹ but they were not living in forced isolation and could hardly be considered to be a “harem.” Without better documentation, Wyl’s description of the merchant’s wife can be dismissed.

No. 8: Wilhelm Wyl quoting Sarah Pratt

Wyl is also the source of the eighth document alleging sexual polyandry on Joseph’s part, which was discussed (in Chapter 3), but is revisited here for completeness. In his 1886 exposé, Wyl quoted Sarah Bates Pratt who reported to him a dramatic account of how Joseph Smith had approached her in 1841 during the absence of her husband, Orson, then serving a mission, with a proposal that was described in different ways. In one account, Sarah was to become Joseph’s “spiritual” or plural wife, although specifics of the type of eternal sealing may have been offered are still unclear.¹⁰² In the Wyl account, Sarah called his offer a “dastardly attempt on me,” asserting that the Prophet propositioned her for adulterous sexual relations.¹⁰³ The twenty-four-year-old Sarah apparently told Wyl that she subsequently confided her plight to an

100. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language; Exhibiting the Origin, Orthography, Pronunciation, and Definitions of Words*, 399.

101. Emily D. P. Young, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, pp. 366, 384, questions 363, 747.

102. See John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints: Or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, 228; *Minutes of the Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1835–1893*, 15, January 20, 1843.

103. Wyl, *Mormon Portraits*, 60; see also Bennett, *The History of the Saints*, 175, 227.

older neighbor, Lucinda Pendleton Morgan Harris. According to the Wyl/Pratt version, Lucinda scoffed, “Why *I am his mistress since four years!*” (emphasis Wyl’s).¹⁰⁴ Chapter 3 already outlined numerous credibility problems with this statement. Its ambiguous language does not specify a polyandrous arrangement; it could have been referring to non-polygamous adultery. (The interactions between Orson and Sarah Pratt, John C. Bennett, and Joseph Smith are analyzed in Chapter 21.)

No. 9: Phebe Louisa Holmes

In a refreshing change from the long series of exposés, the ninth document is a family record, though it contains some ambiguous elements. On December 1, 1842, Joseph Smith performed the civil marriage for thirty-six-year-old Jonathan Holmes to twenty-nine-year-old Elvira Ann Cowles in Nauvoo. Five months later, she was sealed to the Prophet on June 1, 1843. Jonathan joined the Mormon Battalion, and Elvira traveled west with the Jedediah M. Grant company, arriving in Salt Lake City October 2, 1847. They eventually settled in Farmington where they raised their family of five daughters, three of whom survived to adulthood. At his death in 1880, Jonathan Holmes was serving on the Davis Stake High Council.

The third of those children was Phebe Louisa, born in 1851 in Farmington. She married Job Welling on December 21, 1868, in Salt Lake City. In 1982, an unidentified descendant of Job Welling compiled historical documents titling the collection: “The Ancestors of Marietta Holmes, Phebe Louisa Holmes and Emma Lucinda Holmes, Daughters of Jonathan Harriman Holmes and Elvira Annie Cowles Smith.”¹⁰⁵ It includes a section entitled: “Written by Phebe Louisa Holmes Welling 2/9/38,” which would have been a year before her death on June 30, 1939, at eighty-eight. It reports: “I heard my mother testify that she was indeed the Prophet’s (Joseph Smith) plural wife in life and lived with him as such during his lifetime.”¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, no other details regarding the declaration are available. The phrase “lived with him” as a “plural wife” in nineteenth-century parlance clearly suggested sexual activity.

It appears that all three individuals in the implied polyandrous triangle, Joseph, Elvira, and Jonathan, lived in Nauvoo during the year between Elvira’s sealing to Joseph in June 1843 and his death in June 1844. However,

104. Wyl, *Mormon Portraits*, 60.

105. Phebe Louisa Holmes Welling, “The Ancestors of Marietta Holmes, Phebe Louisa Holmes, and Emma Lucinda Holmes, Daughters of Jonathan Harriman Holmes and Elvira Annie Cowles Smith,” unpublished manuscript, 1982, LDS Family History Library.

106. *Ibid.*, 25.

no specific evidence is available regarding the issue of sexual relations between them. Polygamy researcher Meg Stout wrote:

Elvira’s lack of children during this time [June 1, 1843 to June 27, 1844] indicates this sealing to Joseph was not physically consummated, despite Phoebe Holmes Welling’s 1939 history (remembered hearsay recorded almost 100 years later). Family tradition and the lack of children also indicate that Jonathan didn’t consummate his marriage to Elvira until after Joseph’s death, as late as February 1845. Elvira’s first child, Lucy, was born nine months later. Elvira’s daughter, Marietta, would be born nine months after Jonathan returned from his Mormon Battalion service. Elvira continued to bear a child every two years thereafter until she was 43 years old.¹⁰⁷

Stout’s conclusions describe a strange relationship where Joseph Smith, her sealed husband, may have been sexually involved with Elvira, while Jonathan Holmes, her legal spouse, was not. This dynamic will be discussed in Chapter 15 but is supported by additional evidences.

Jonathan was a close friend of the Prophet and served as a pallbearer at the funeral. He apparently respected his wife’s sealing to Joseph Smith, standing proxy in the Nauvoo Temple as she was resealed to Joseph vicariously for eternity.¹⁰⁸ Also, their decision to move west indicates a transfer of loyalty from Joseph as Church leader to Brigham Young and the Twelve. Elvira died March 10, 1871, so Phebe’s recollection spanned at least sixty-six years, and the family records that preserve her recollection contain no indication that she made a written record earlier that would have preserved her mother’s words closer to the time when they were spoken.

On June 2, 1931, seven years before Phebe made her report, William Wright, a member of the Church whom I have not been able to further identify, wrote a letter to the First Presidency containing a confusing reference to the relationship between Joseph, Jonathan, and Elvira in Nauvoo. This excerpt was transcribed by Michael Quinn in the 1980s and is found in his notes now housed at Yale University. The original letter apparently remains uncatalogued in the Church History Library. “I was well acquainted with two of Joseph’s wives, LaVina [Elvira] and Eliza [Snow or Partridge?]. I came to Utah in ‘69, and rented LaVina Holmes farm. Before Joseph was shot, he asked Jonathan Holmes if he would marry and take care of LaVina, but that if LaVina wanted him to take care of her he would take her. He would fill that mission to please his Father in Heaven.”¹⁰⁹

107. “A Short History of Jonathan Holmes and Elvira Cowles,” at <http://www.megstout.com/blog/2010/02/19/a-short-history-of-jonathan-holmes-and-elvira-cowles/> (accessed September 19, 2011).

108. Brown, *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings*, 284 note 305.

109. William Wright, Letter to unidentified addressee but stamped as received in the

This letter is very late, secondhand, and somewhat garbled. It does not say whether Wright heard this claim of a protective marriage directly from Elvira, although it is implied and there is no other obvious source of the information. However, Wright does not remember Elvira's name correctly, creating concerns regarding its accuracy. Elvira was fifty-six in 1869 and died just two years later on March 10, 1871. The described "pretend" marriage to protect the Prophet was not completely outlandish, since Joseph Smith, after his sealing on July 27, 1842, to Sarah Ann Whitney, asked Joseph C. Kingsbury, then unmarried, to enter what Kingsbury called "a pretend marriage" on April 23, 1843, to conceal Joseph and Sarah Ann's relationship. (See Chapter 16.) In Elvira's case, an apparently legitimate civil marriage preceded the sealing by almost a year. There seems to be no reason why Jonathan and Elvira's marriage would not have included sexual relations, but the lack of children during Joseph Smith's lifetime coupled with Elvira's obvious fecundity afterwards is puzzling.

On August 28, 1869, Elvira Cowles signed an affidavit stating that she had been sealed to the Prophet on June 1, 1843, nearly a year after her legal marriage.¹¹⁰ The year 1869—the same year William Wright says he learned about Joseph's assigning Jonathan Holmes to marry and take care of Elvira—may be significant in that the topic of establishing the validity of Joseph's plural marriages in Nauvoo was circulating in the community. Joseph's sons, Alexander Hale, and David Hyrum, came to Salt Lake City in 1869 with their anti-polygamy message fomenting new discussion of Nauvoo plural marriage. (See Chapter 13.) Nor can Wright's statement be explained as a copy-cat assertion of Kingsbury's "front" marriage. Kingsbury did not write his original account until May of 1870; it did not circulate at all. Kingsbury re-dictated his account May 22, 1886, and Andrew Jenson published it in his 1887 article, "Plural Marriage." (See Appendix C.)

One possibility is that Elvira misremembered the date of her sealing to Joseph Smith. If she had been sealed to him in 1842, then possibly Joseph Smith asked Jonathan Holmes to marry Elvira about a year later to serve, like Joseph Kingsbury, as a "front husband" to shield the Prophet from suspicion should a pregnancy result. In that case, the marriage to Jonathan would have been legal but without connubial relations. This scenario would be more consistent with William Wright's letter, but I stress that it is only conjecture and that the historical record fails to provide any further details about the sexual relations of Elvira with Joseph Smith.

First Presidency Office on June 2, 1931.

110. Elvira Ann Cowles Smith Holmes, Affidavit, August 28, 1869, in Joseph E. Smith, Affidavit Books 1:78. See Elvira Ann Cowles Holmes, Uncatalogued materials, in Andrew Jenson Collection, MS 17956, Box 49, fd. 16, docs. 6–7; see also Box 6, fd. 62.

Given the ambiguities in the historical record, I conclude that it is impossible to conclusively determine whether the elderly Phebe Louisa Holmes’s recollection that her mother “lived with” Joseph Smith as his “plural wife” included polyandrous sexual relations (with both men), monogamous relations (with Holmes only), or polygynous relations (with Joseph Smith only). If Phebe’s report accurately depicts conjugality between Joseph and Elvira during that period, proponents of the position that it also supports sexual polyandry must assume concomitant sexual relations with Jonathan because there is no evidence to support that they were also occurring at that time.¹¹¹ Importantly, the assumption that the legal marriage would have authorized connubial relations between Elvira and Jonathan after she had been sealed to Joseph for “time and eternity” may not be warranted in light of Joseph’s teachings forbidding sexual polyandry. (See Chapters 13 and 14.)

In addition, for reasons that will be discussed in the next three chapters, if Joseph Smith had experienced sexual polyandry with Elvira, it seems that more evidence might be available than a single attestation related by one daughter nearly a hundred years after the events allegedly occurred.

No. 10: Edwin Mace

On February 15, 1858, Edwin Mace was born in Fillmore, Utah, to Hiram Mace and Elizabeth Armstrong Mace. Hiram and Elizabeth had been sealed in the Nauvoo Temple thirteen years earlier; and Edwin grew up in the Church, being baptized in 1877 and endowed in the Logan Temple in 1888. Sometime in the 1920s, for reasons that are unclear, Edwin was asked by Anthony W. Ivins, a counselor in the First Presidency, to write down his family’s multi-generational tradition regarding the existence of a possible child of Joseph Smith.

In response, the seventy-year-old Mace produced a narrative describing his beliefs. Currently, a typed copy is available in the Stanley S. Ivins collection at the Utah State Historical Society. However, it is unknown whether Mace typed the copy, dictated it to a typist, or hand-wrote his account from which

111. D. Michael Quinn, “Evidence for the Sexual Side of Joseph Smith’s Polygamy,” Expanded version, 5–6, comments: “I find it difficult to believe that Elvira’s 37-year-old widower-husband Jonathan stopped having sex with her only six months after their civil wedding, simply to accommodate the Prophet’s sexual relations with her (which in June 1843 seemed likely to continue for many years).” As discussed in the text, there is no documentation to support sexual relations in the legal marriage between Elvira and Jonathan until approximately seven months after the martyrdom. The first child born to them was Lucy Elvira Holmes on October 11, 1845. According to available records, no children were conceived in the Holmes marriage during the Prophet’s lifetime. Drawing additional conclusions is impossible due to a lack of documentation.

The following letter written by Edwin Mace, born in Fillmore 1858 at the age of 70.

Dear Prest Ivens

According to request will say that my parents told me when rather a small boy that Josephine Henry as she was called, or Will King's mother was a daughter of Joseph Smith the prophet. That her mother Margrett (Creighton) had been married to The prophet and later married Andrew Henry who at that time was keeping the Postoffice in Fillmore and with whom I was well acquainted-both he and his wife. He also sold liquor or kept a kind of a saloon. I would think him to be partly Irish or a farmer. He was a large heavy set man, with deep red hair, a sandy rough beard, freckle face, and a coarse harsh voice; uncouth in his manners, and talk and unjentalmanly. His wife rather refined and lady like who looked more like an American. Her daughter Josephine was rather delicate in looks very refined and polite; as is Will King and his sister Lilly, who married I. N. Hinckley who now lives on 1st. West and near 2nd North. There was a sister Josie who all like Will King resembled their mother Josephine also Sam King a brother to Will.

Josephine in the yr 1844 the yr of the martyrdom. I also get this information from Lilly Hinckley. Josephine's birth may have been near enough a birth of a child of Andrew Henry's, (had he of had one) that he could partly lay claim to Josephine. You Prest Ivens can figure. Josephine grew up a playmate to one Arthur John Gab and adopted son to Andrew Henry. Now then is Andrew childless or not. I well remember one Brother William Felshaw a close neighbor to my father in Fillmore. They were so intimate that what one knew the other seemed to know also. I was also intimately acquainted with his daughter Julia all my life. When a widow she married Clarence Merrill. After having been married to Truscett and a man Rudd by name July made her home in Fillmore and later moved to Sugar house ward in S.L.C. I had lately moved to S.L.C. while she was living in Sugar house Ward. By this time I was getting to be near the age of 60 was married in S.L.C. to a Miss Clark who had lived here, and we used to visit July in Sugar hs Ward so I did not hesitate telling her privately what I had learned about Josephine Henry (as she was called). Julia ridiculed the thot of Josephine being a daughter of Andrew and so did I (as well as our parents) This being the first time I had ever told any body.

I think she was surprised at me knowing what she had also learned; but talked to me freely; but was very careful not to be overheard; also made me a confident while talking about other things which I had not heard of. I talked with Julia several times and the last time not long before her death; not long before the death of Seymour B. Young I related to him what had been told me. I had been very intimate with Seymour and told him there was a person who would perhaps almost give her little finger (if such was the custom) to learn what I had told him; but she would not hear it from me; but sorry she did. I later or near that time heard a middle aged man, telling a croud of about a half dozen persons while grouped in the tabernacle yard and while Sam King was approaching, do you know who that man is; He is a grandson of Jos. Smith the prophet, but said he, I don't suppose there is a half dozen persons who knows it. My father worked on the Nauvoo temple until finished. He and mother saw the Prophet and hid his broyrum in their blood stained clothes after they had been fetched home and later heard Prest Young's sermon at which time the mantle of Jos. came upon him. He was sent to Fillmore by Brigham Young after reaching S.L.C. where he worked on the Statehouse until finished. I again repeat that I knew as well as Julia seemed to know that Josephine was not a daughter of Andrew Henry; and by all appearance and inquiry not even a relative.

Photo of Edwin Mace typescript, 1928. Used by permission, Utah State Historical Society. All rights reserved.

the typescript was made. The resulting document is comprised of one full single-spaced typed page with six typed words on a second sheet.

The Mace document discusses the possibility that a daughter of Margaret Creighton Henry named “Josephine” was fathered by Joseph Smith. The crucial sentence is: “My parents told me when rather a small boy that Josephine Henry as she was called or Will King’s mother was a daughter of Joseph Smith the prophet.”¹¹² Both families, the Maces and the Henrys, settled in Fillmore, Utah, in the early 1850s, so Edwin’s parents would have been familiar with Josephine from the time she was about six through her teen years. Mace added his personal conviction that “Josephine was not a daughter of Andrew Henry; and by all appearances and inquiry not even a relative,” although he did not claim to see a resemblance to the dead Prophet either.

A review of Mace’s complete statement identifies three observations supporting that Joseph Smith fathered a daughter with Margaret Creighton. First is hearsay evidence from the author, Edwin Mace, that his “parents told” him. We have no way of knowing why they might have been privy to such a secretive relationship, especially in light of the absence of any other source to substantiate the claim. Second is the child’s name: Josephine. Third, Edwin asserts that Josephine did not look like her father, Andrew Henry.

Records indicate that Andrew Henry, a twenty-seven-year-old carpenter from Drum, County Sligo, Ireland, who had joined the Church in 1837, was serving a mission to Great Britain in 1843, where he met and married Margaret Creighton, a twenty-six-year-old convert from Saintsfield, County Down, Ireland. On May 26, 1843, Andrew Henry recorded in his journal: “I went to Belfast and there got married to Sister Margaret Creighton of Hillsborough, and returned the same day.”¹¹³ Their first child, Josephine, was born July 8, 1844, with conception occurring approximately October 15, 1843, five months after their wedding. For Joseph Smith to be Josephine’s biological father, Margaret must have been in Nauvoo near that date. However, according to the transcript of his diary, Andrew was still in the Liverpool area on August 23, 1843.¹¹⁴ Parnell Hinckley, who wrote the history of Andrew and Margaret, recorded, “After Andrew’s marriage as recorded in his diary, he spent six fruitless weeks as a missionary with his uncles and cousins and friends

112. Edwin Mace, Letter to [President Anthony] Ivens [sic], [no day or month] 1928.

113. Andrew Henry, quoted in Parnell Hinckley, *The Henrys and the Kings: Incidents Taken from the Lives of Andrew Henry, Margaret Creighton Henry, Josephine King Thornley, Samuel A. King, William Henry King, Lillian King Hinckley, William King, Thomas Rice King, Matilda Robison King*, 50. The author does not identify the location of the journal nor have I been able to locate it.

114. *Ibid.*, 55.

in and around Sligo, Ireland. . . . The couple left England for America early in the year of 1844. . . . A baby girl was born to her in Nauvoo June 8, 1844.”¹¹⁵

Accordingly, the timeline makes it impossible for Joseph Smith to have been Josephine’s biological father. Even if Parnell Hinckley’s additional history was inaccurate, Henry’s journal places him in England on August 23, 1843, giving them insufficient time to have immigrated to Nauvoo and for Joseph Smith to be Josephine’s father. The average length of a sea voyage from Liverpool to New Orleans, the most common port of entry for emigrating Saints in 1843, varied depending upon weather delays. However, at least two months was generally required. For example, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and John Taylor left Liverpool England on April 20, 1841, but did not arrive in Nauvoo until July 1.¹¹⁶ In addition, there is no record of a sealing or any special relationship between Joseph and Margaret; in fact, available records fail to document that she was ever personally introduced to the Prophet.

Historian Larry R. King has researched the evidence in writing his family history and finds even more ambiguity:

There is no information available on when Andrew and Margaret left England or when they arrived in Nauvoo. Based on Church records, three ships left England between August 23, 1843, and early 1844 with Mormon emigrants. The third carrying a group of Irish Saints.

From these dates, it would appear to have been improbable for Josephine to have been conceived in Nauvoo and born there July 1844. For this to have occurred, Andrew and Margaret would have had to have reached Nauvoo by September or perhaps October 1843, but the earliest possible ship arriving in Nauvoo after Andrew’s latest journal entry in Ireland, is November 11, 1843. The ship first landed in New Orleans on October 27, 1843 and the dating difference is the time the passengers spent traveling on board, but there are only 188 people accounted for. This leaves nearly a hundred people whose names have not been discovered by historians.

A second thought that might be considered is the changing of the actual birthday of Josephine to create an illusion. This may sound farfetched, but stranger things happened in Nauvoo to maintain the confidentiality of Joseph’s plural marriages. Along with this idea is the possibility [that] some diary entries may have been changed. The diary we have to work from is not the original, but a transcription. Furthermore, there are no known ship passenger records for the Henrys, there are no records confirming their marriage in Ireland in May 1843, and there are no known records in the LDS Church Archives identifying Andrew as a missionary in Ireland.¹¹⁷

115. Ibid., 55, 65.

116. Elden Jay Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801–1844*, April 20, 1841; *History of the Church* 4:381.

117. Larry R. King, *The Kings of the Kingdom: The Life of Thomas Rice King and His*