

Emily Dow Partridge Smith Young on the Witness Stand:
Recollections of a Plural Wife

by H. Michael Marquardt

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Emily Dow Partridge's early life is connected with her father Edward Partridge who later became the first bishop in the early Mormon movement. Special emphasis in this paper will be on the sacred land purchased in 1831 by Partridge where the temple of the New Jerusalem would stand. Emily's association with the prophet Joseph Smith as a house maid and later as a plural wife was a brief and overpowering force in her life. After Smith's death she married Brigham Young and came west to what became Utah Territory. Her testimony in the Temple Lot Case can assist those studying the early Mormon experience. Plural marriage, celestial marriage, polygamy, or polygyny was an important factor in Emily Partridge's life. May we begin to explore this fragment of Mormon history.

Emily Dow Partridge was born 28 February 1824 in Painesville, Geauga County, Ohio. Her father was Edward a hat manufacturer and her mother Lydia was rearing two children before Emily's birth as the third daughter in a family of seven (five girls and two boys). About 1828 Edward and Lydia were baptized by Sidney Rigdon into the Disciples of Christ (Campbellite).¹

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As early as January 1828 Edward was advertizing for sale his house, hatter's shop, and barn in Painesville, and also a one hundred acre farm.²

Young Emily was six years old when Lydia became the first member of the family to be baptized into the Church of Christ established by Joseph Smith, Jr. She received the ordinance in November 1830 from Parley P. Pratt one of the four missionaries called on a mission to the Native Americans. Edward wanted to meet Joseph Smith before making his decision about joining the church. With elder Sidney Rigdon they left for New York arriving in December. After meeting with the young church leader Smith received a revelation for Edward³ and he was soon baptized on 11 December 1830 by Joseph Smith.

After Edward return to Ohio, Joseph Smith revealed that elder Partridge was to be ordained the first church bishop.⁴ At a conference held on 3 June 1831 John Corrill and Isaac

in Sandy, Utah, and are the parents of five children.

1 Manuscript History A-1:94, Family and Church History Department, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives). See Dean C. Jessee, ed., The Papers of Joseph Smith: Autobiographical and Historical Writings (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1989), 1:348.

2 Painesville Telegraph 6 (18 Jan. 1828):3, Painesville, Ohio. See also Painesville Telegraph. And Geauga Free Press 1 (1 Sept. 1829):3, where Partridge advertises that he is "wishing to quit the Hatting business, and leave Painesville," and was selling his hat shop and a 100 acre farm south of Harpersfield.

3 H. Michael Marquardt, The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 97; Doctrine and Covenants, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter cited as LDS D&C) and Doctrine and Covenants, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; name changed on 6 April 2001 to Community of Christ (hereafter cited as RLDS D&C); LDS D&C 36; RLDS D&C 35, [7-11] Dec. 1830. Partridge was ordained an elder by Sidney Rigdon on 15 December 1830.

4 Partridge received his ordination as bishop on 4 February 1831 by Sidney Rigdon.

Morley were chosen to be his assistants.⁵ A beautifully preserved bishop's license is housed in the LDS Church Archives. Besides being signed by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, additional church elders who stopped in Independence, Missouri added their names to Partridge's license between August 1831 and about January 1832.⁶ In the middle of June 1831 Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon along with Edward Partridge and others left to travel to Independence soon to be designated the gathering place of the saints.

As church members left New York in 1831 some of them traveled through Painesville going to Kirtland and stopped at the Partridge's home. Soon after Emily caught the measles. She finally recovered but her "ear was sore for years." She wrote fifty-three years later, "I can't tell you how I suffered with it both from pain and mortification of pride. When my ear did get well, it left me deaf and I have been deaf (in that ear) ever since."⁷

Bishop Partridge in Independence

The important event of the trip by Joseph Smith and other elders was to dedicate the spot for the latter-day New Jerusalem temple and make plans for the gathering of the saints to build up

5 Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983), 7. At this conference Partridge was ordained to the High Priesthood by Lyman Wight.

6 Original licence in LDS Church Archives. For a photograph see Church History in the Fulness of Times (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 121.

7 Emily D. P. Young, "What I Remember," (7 April 1884), 7, Emily Dow Partridge Smith Young Papers, MS 113, Manuscripts Division, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.