THE STRANGE MARRIAGES
OF
SARAH ANN WHITNEY
TO
JOSEPH SMITH THE MORNON PROPHET,
JOSEPH C. KINGSBURY
AND
HEBER C. KIMBALL

BY
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At Nauvoo, Illinois in July of 1842 the Joseph Smith Store was the headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Working at the store were Newel K. Whitney, Bishop of the Church, and his son-in-law, Joseph C. Kingsbury.

There was a close relationship between Joseph Smith, Prophet and President of the Church, and Bishop Newel K. Whitney. "This bond of affection was strengthened and intensified by the giving in marriage to the former of the Bishop's eldest daughter, Sarah, in obedience to a revelation from God. This girl was but seventeen years of age, but she had implicit faith in the doctrine of plural marriage, as revealed to and practiced by the Prophet, was of celestial origin. She was the first woman, in this dispensation, who was given in plural marriage by and with the consent of both parents. Her father himself officiated in the ceremony. The revelation commanding and consecrating this union, is in existence, though it has never been published. It bears the date of July 27, 1842, and was given through the Prophet to the writer's grandfather, Newel K. Whitney, whose daughter Sarah, on that day, became the wedded wife of Joseph Smith for time and all eternity." 2

Sarah Ann Whitney was the eldest daughter of Newel K. Whitney and Elizabeth Ann Whitney; she was born on March 22, 1825, and was married to the Prophet Joseph Smith when she was seventeen on July 27, 1842, by her father. She died in Salt Lake City, Utah, on September 4, 1873, thirty-one years after her marriage with Joseph Smith.

Joseph Smith had first seen Sarah Ann Whitney when he arrived in Kirtland, Ohio about the first of February 1831, she was then almost six years old. Eleven years later they were married by her father as husband and wife for time and for all eternity.

It seems that it took a special revelation to Joseph Smith to win the parents consent. "On July 27, 1842, Sarah Ann Whitney wrote that she was to be married to Joseph Smith and that her own father was going to perform the ceremony." It is most appropriate that "This note is found at the end of a revelation given Newel K. Whitney the words of the marriage ceremony, original in the L.D.S. Church Historian's Library." 3

Footnotes:
1 Richard P. Howard, Saints' Herald, Vol. 118, No. 10, October 1971, p. 34.
The following are some affidavits and testimonies concerning this marriage between Joseph Smith and Sarah Ann Whitney.

Affidavit of Sarah A. Kimball

Territory of Utah
County of Salt Lake

Be it remembered that on this nineteenth day of June, A.D. 1869, personally appeared before me Elias Smith, Probate Judge for said county, Sarah Ann Kimball, who was by me sworn in due form of law, and upon her oath saith that on the twenty-seventh day of July, A.D. 1842, 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 Newell K. Whitney, Presiding Bishop of said Church, according to the laws of the same regulating marriage, in the presence of Elizabeth Ann Whitney her mother.

Subscribed and sworn to by the said Sarah Ann (Whitney) Kimball, the day and year first above written.

E. Smith, Probate Judge.

Affidavit of Elizabeth A. Whitney

Territory of Utah
County of Salt Lake

Be it remembered that on this thirtieth day of August, A.D. 1869, personally appeared before me, James Jack, a notary public in and for said county, Elizabeth Ann Whitney, who was by me sworn in due form of law, and upon her oath saith that on the twenty-seventh day of July, A.D. 1842, at the city of Nauvoo, county of Hancock, state of Illinois, she was present and witnessed the marrying or sealing of her daughter Sarah Ann Whitney to the Prophet Joseph Smith, for time and all eternity, by her husband Newell K. Whitney then Presiding Bishop of the Church.

Subscribed and sworn to by the said Elizabeth Ann Whitney the day and year first above written.

James Jack, Notary Public.

William Clayton's Testimony

"The following statement was sworn to before John T. Caine, a notary public, in Salt Lake City, Feb. 16, 1874:"

"During this period the Prophet Joseph took several wives. Amongst the number I well remember Eliza Partridge, Emily Partridge, Sarah Ann Whitney, Helen Kimball and Flora Woodworth. These all, he acknowledged to me, were his lawful, wedded wives, according to the celestial order."

"Salt Lake City, February 16th, 1874." (Signed) William Clayton.

5 Ibid., p. 74.
6 Andrew Jensen, Historical Record, Vol. 6, May 1887, pp. 224-226.
JOSEPH C. KINGSBURY'S TESTIMONY.

"The following statement was given under oath before Charles W. Steyner, a notary public, in Salt Lake City, May 22, 1886:

'I will add that I also knew that the Prophet Joseph Smith had married other women besides his first wife - Emma; I was well aware of the fact of his having married Sarah Ann Whitney, the eldest daughter of Bishop Newel K. Whitney and Elizabeth Ann Whitney, his wife.'

(Signed) JOSEPH C. KINGSBURY."

In August of 1842 the activities of Joseph Smith are given as follows:

"Mon., 8. - Joseph Smith was arrested by a deputy sheriff at Nauvoo, by requisition from Gov. Thos. Reynolds, of Missouri, falsely accused of being accessory to the shooting of ex-Governor Boggs. O. Porter Rockwell was also arrested as principal. A writ of habeas corpus was issued by the municipal court of Nauvoo, by which the prisoners were released for the time being.

"Wed., 10. - The deputy sheriff returned to Nauvoo to re-arrest Joseph Smith and O. Porter Rockwell, but they could not be found. To escape imprisonment the Prophet had to keep concealed for some time." 8

While Joseph Smith concealed himself in the house of Edward Sayegh, he wrote a letter to his first wife Emma, to whom he had been married for more than fifteen years. At the close of this letter to Emma Smith, dated August 16, 1842, he wrote: "Yours in haste, your affectionate husband until death, through all eternity; for evermore." 9

It was reported that Joseph Smith then "went to Carlos Cranger's." 10

While he was hiding at the home of Carlos Cranger, who although not a Mormon was friendly to them, he wrote a very revealing letter to three of his closest friends. 11 They were Bishop Newel K. Whitney, his wife Elizabeth Ann Whitney, and a man named Gifford who had known Joseph Smith in the letter as "and /& G" - Sarah Ann Whitney whom he had been married to for twenty-two days. The letter refers to this event in his life in the words "Since what has passed lately between us", 12

From the reading of this letter one can gain an insight into the thought pattern of Joseph Smith, especially what he thought of his wife Emma Smith. In this letter written by Joseph Smith in his own hand, dated August 18th, 1842, he wrote the following remarks concerning Emma: "the only proper 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" also "I think Emma won't come tonight if she don't fail to come to night". The following is a line by line transcription of the letter by Joseph Smith to Newel K. Whitney, his wife and daughter, dated August 18th, 1842. They were to "burn this letter as soon as you read it", this instruction they did not keep.

7 Ibid., p. 226.
9 Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City, 1950), Vol. 5, p. 105. (Cited hereafter as DHC.)
12 Photographs of both sides of the original letter written in the hand-writing of Joseph Smith are in the George Albert Smith Family Papers, Manuscript 36, Box 1, Early Smith Documents, 1731-1849, Folder 15, in the Special Collections, Western American. Marjorie (Thayer) Littmann...
Dear, and Beloved, Brother and
Sister, Whitney, and & c. -
I take this opportunity to communicate,
Some of my feelings, privately at
this time, which I went you three
Eternally to keep in your own
bosoms; for my feelings are so
Strong for you Since what has
past lately between us, that the
time of my absence from you
Seems so long, and dreary, that
it Seems, as if I could not live
if you
long in this way; and Three would
come and See me in this my lonely
retreat, it would afford me great
relief, of mind, if those with whom
I am allied, do love me, now is the
time to afford me succour; in the
days of exile, for you know I
foretold you of these things, I am
now at Carlos Grainger's, Just back
of Brother Hyrum's Farm, it is only one
mile from town, the nights are
very pleasant, indeed, all three of
can
you come and See me in the
fore part of the night, let Brother
Whitney come a little a head, and
nook at the south East corner of
the
house at A window; it is next to
the cornfield; I have a room inti-
- rely by myself, the whole matter
can be attended to with most perfect
know
Safty, I A it is the will of God that you
me
should comfort A now in this time
of affliction, or not at all, now is the
time or never, but I hav no kneed of saying
any such thing, to you, for I know the
goodness of your hearts, and that you
will do the will of the Lord, when it is
made known to you; 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; only be
careful to escape observation, as
much as possible, I know it is a
heroick undertaking; but so much
the greater friendship, and the more
will
Joy, when I see you I tell you all
my plans, I cannot write them on
paper, burn this letter as soon as you
read it; keep all locked up in
your breasts, my life depends up-
on it. one thing I want to see you
to
for is a git the fulness of my blessing
Sealed upon our heads, & c. you
will pardon me for my ernest-
this subject
-mess on, when you consider how
lonesome I must be, your good
make
feelings know how to give every allow-
-ance for me, I close my letter.
I think Emma went home tonight
if she dont dont fail to come to
night, I subscribe myself your
and
most obedient, affectionate,
Companion, and friend.
Joseph Smith

The letter and signature is in the handwriting of Joseph Smith.
Two months after the marriage of Sarah Ann Whitney to Joseph Smith the following certificates were published:

"We the undersigned members of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and residents of the city of Nauvoo, persons of families do hereby certify and declare that we know of no other rule or system of marriage than the one published from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and we give this certificate to show that Dr. J.C. Bennett's 'secret wife system' is a creature of his own make as we know of no such society in this place nor never did.

S. Bennett,  
George Miller,  
Alpheus Cutler,  
Reynolds Canoon,  
Wilson Law,  
W. Woodruff,  

N. K. Whitney,  
Albert Pettay,  
Elias Highbee,  
E. Robinson,  
John Tayler,  
Aaron Johnson.

"We the undersigned members of the ladies' relief society, and married females do certify and declare that we know of no system of marriage being practiced in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints save the one contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and we give this certificate to the public to show that J.C. Bennett's 'secret wife system' is a disclosure of his own make.

Emma Smith, President,  
Elizabeth Ann Whitney, Counsellor,  
Sarah M. Cleveland, Counsellor,  
Eliza R. Snow, Secretary,  
Mary C. Miller,  
Lois Cutler,  
Thirza Cahoon,  
Ann Hunter,  
Jane Law,  
Sophia R. Marks,  
Polly Z. Johnson,  
Abigail Works." 13

Ebenzer Robinson, one of the men whose name appears on one of the first certificates, wrote concerning the statement that he signed as follows: "In October, 1842, a statement was written out, and signed by a large number of the brethren and sisters, including myself and wife, setting forth the fact that we knew of no other form of marriage ceremony in the church except the one published in the book of Doctrine and Covenants, which statement was true at that time, as we had no knowledge of such a ceremony, or that 'spiritual wifery,' or 'polygamy,' was taught by the head of the church, as they had not up to that time taught it to us.

"We knew it was talked of in secret, and had been for more than a year, . . .

"These secret rumors could not constitute a knowledge that certain persons taught such things when they had not taught them to us," 14

Among the other names of persons which appeared upon the certificates were Bishop Newel K. Whitney, the father of Sarah Ann Whitney and the one who performed the marriage ceremony between Sarah Ann and Joseph Smith. Sarah's mother, Elizabeth Ann, who was a counselor in the Relief Society, and a witness to the marriage of her daughter, had her name on the certificate of the ladies who belonged to the Relief Society.

Elizabeth Ann Whitney said the following concerning the time when her husband, Bishop Newel K. Whitney, kept store for Joseph Smith:

"Our hearts were comforted, and our faith made so perfect that we were willing to give our eldest daughter, then seventeen years of age, to Joseph, in the order of plural marriage. Laying aside all our traditions and former notions in regard to marriage, we gave her with our mutual consent. She was the first woman given in plural marriage with the consent of both parents. Of course these things had to be kept an inviolate secret; . . ." 15

THE MARRIAGE OF SARAH ANN WHITNEY
TO JOSEPH C. KINGSBURY

Nine months after his marriage to Bishop Whitney's daughter, Joseph Smith's plural wife Sarah Ann was married to Joseph C. Kingsbury, son-in-law of Bishop Whitney. A "pretended marriage was performed for the glory of Joseph Smith and Sarah Ann and to shield the fact that they were husband and wife.

The following is taken from "The History of Joseph C. Kingsbury": 16

The History of Joseph C. Kingsbury written by his own hands 1846-
1847-1848-1849-1850-

A Record of Joseph Corrodon Kingsbury giving a sketch of his life, or in the first place his descent & cronology as far back & he has any knowledge or information And I Joseph C Kingsbury write this Record with my own hands. - 17

* * *

and on the 10th day of Oct, My Wife Died after a Severe Sickness of three months & being delivered of A Son the same day of her death which lived Thirteen Hours (his Name is Newel) 18

* * *

16 Joseph C. Kingsbury, "The History of Joseph C. Kingsbury," manuscript written between 1846 and 1848. The following is from the "History" and gives evidence that the material quoted concerning Joseph Smith was written by June 25, 1848: "We are now in a fort, comfortable & are doing all we can to Raise our living in tilling the Earth June 25th 1848,".
16 (Cont.) The excerpts which appear here were copied from the original by H. Michael Marquardt on January 17, 1973, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ronald L. Kingsbury. They donated the "History" to the Western Americana at the University of Utah on March 8, 1973. While the excerpts herein quoted may not be exact in every way an effort was made to make every possible effort that the complete meaning and spelling remain the same. Typed copies made in 1944 are at the Utah State Historical Society, file A 149, and also at the Brigham Young University Library, file M. 1262. I have checked the typed copies and find that they were not in complete agreement with the original. The original now at the Western Americana is under the heading "Diary of Joseph C. Kingsbury; with this is a typed transcription with footnotes.

17 For biographical sketch of Joseph C. Kingsbury see History of Utah, Vol. 4 (Salt Lake City, Utah; October 1904) pp. 114-115 by Orson F. Whitney.

18 Joseph C. Kingsbury's wife Caroline was the sister of Bishop Newel K. Whitney and they were married on February 3, 1836, at Kirtland, Ohio. See "Oliver Cowdery's Sketch Book," under above date in BYU Studies, Vol. 12, No. 4, (Summer 1972) p. 421. Documentation for her death can be found in The Wasp Vol. 1, No. 27, October 22, 1842 and Vol. 1, No. 28, October 29, 1842. She died at the age of 28 years and 7 months.
and on 29th of April 1843 I according to President Joseph Smith Council & others 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 as Spoken by the mouth of the Prophets Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel and also Joseph Smith, & Sarah Ann Should Read a Great Glory Honor, & eternal lives and I Also Should Read a Great Glory, Honor & eternal lives to the full desire of my heart in having my Companion Caroline in the first Resurrection to claim her & no one have power to take her from me & we both shall be Crowned & enthroned together in the Celestial Kingdom of God Enjoying Each other's Society in all of the fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ & our little ones with us as is Received in this blessing that President Joseph Smith Sealed upon my head on the Twenty third day of March 1843 as follows - 19

Brother Joseph - I lay my hands upon thy head in the name of Jesus Christ to bestow upon thee a Patriarchal Blessing according to the Power & authority of the Holy Priesthood vested in me I say unto thee thou Shalt be Blessed with the good things of this world abundantly in thy Life time and I Seal thee up to Come forth in the first Resurrection unto eternal life - And thy Companion Caroline who is now dead thou shalt have in the first Resurrection For I seal thee up for and in her behalf to come forth in the first Resurrection unto eternal lives (and it shall be as though She was present herself) and thou Shalt hail her and She Shall be thine and no one Shall have power to take her from thee, And you both Shall be crowned and enthroned to dwell together in a Kingdom in the Celestial Glory in the presents of God And you Shall enjoy each other Society & embraces in all the fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ wouds without End And I Seal these blessings upon thee and thy Companion in the name of Jesus Christ for thou shalt receive the holy anointing & Endowment in this Life to prepare you for all these blessings even So Amen [Witnesses to above Blessing Newel K Whitney Elizabeth Ann Whitney and Sarah Ann Whitney] 20

19 Chronologically the paragraph which follows precedes the one above.
20 The age of Joseph Smith in July 1842: 36.
The age of Sarah Ann Whitney in July 1842: 17.
The age of Joseph C. Kingsbury in April 1843: 30.
The age of Sarah Ann Whitney in April 1843: 18.
JOSEPH SMITH PERFORMS THE MARRIAGE BETWEEN HIS PLURAL WIFE SARAH ANN WHITNEY AND JOSEPH C. KINGSBURY

On April 29th, 1843, Joseph Smith gave his plural wife Sarah Ann Whitney to another man - Joseph C. Kingsbury, as his wife had died on October 10th, 1842, six months before his second marriage.

That Joseph Smith performed the ceremony that joined Joseph C. Kingsbury and Sarah Ann Whitney together in marriage is known from a record of marriages performed in Nauvoo. The following is from a slip of paper signed by Joseph Smith stating that he performed this marriage:

"I hereby certify, that I have upon this the 29th day of April 1843, joined together in marriage Joseph C. Kingsbury and Sarah Ann Whitney, in the City of Nauvoo, Illinois. rec'd 27th May 1843 Joseph Smith Elder & pay'd $21"

The marriage was then recorded in "A Record of Marriages, in the City of Nauvoo, Illinois" from which the following comes from:

"Joseph C. Kingsbury and Sarah Ann Whitney were joined together in marriage, in the City of Nauvoo, Ills, upon the 29th day of April 1843, by Joseph Smith, Elder." 22

21 The Genealogical Society (Salt Lake City, Utah), Microfilm No. 418,110; "Civil Marriages Performed, Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, 1842-1843", Also Call No. Q 977,343/NI V 25c.

THE MARRIAGE OF SARAH ANN WHITNEY
TO HEBER C. KIMBALL

On January 12, 1846, in a ceremony in the Nauvoo Temple Sarah Ann Whitney was sealed to Joseph Smith for eternity. 23 The proxy for Joseph Smith (who died on June 27, 1844) was HEBER C. KIMBALL, one of the Apostles of the Church. Sarah Ann was then married to HEBER C. KIMBALL for time.

Since her marriage to Joseph C. Kingsbury on April 29, 1843, and until she went to live with HEBER C. KIMBALL in May of 1846, Sarah Ann Whitney still lived together with Joseph C. Kingsbury. While Sarah Ann and Joseph C. Kingsbury lived together, HEBER C. KIMBALL was courting her. Sarah Ann, while they were courting they got themselves into trouble which led them to get married for time in the Nauvoo Temple. Sarah Ann was about seven months pregnant.

Two months after their marriage in the Nauvoo Temple a baby boy was born to HEBER C. KIMBALL and Sarah Ann Whitney while she was traveling with Joseph C. Kingsbury. This boy was born on March 8, 1846, and was given the name of David Kimball Smith by his father.

The following is from Joseph C. Kingsbury's History:

"(I being prepared took my Journey on 28th Feb 1846 with Sarah my Supposed wife & Loezza my wife & Mary Huston Sarah Hand Made & Emeline Sarah Assisted in Company with Bishop W.L. Whitney, my Gospel Father and his family We Traveled very Slow being in a grate Compy bad wether, & muddy roads) and on 8th March Sarah was delivered of a Son in the Valley of David and after going thru a very fatiguing Journey thru cold & wet I was taken Sick & suffered much) but through the mercis of the Lord I recovered and the On the forpart of my Sarah Went to live With President Kimball her husband & I was left with my Real wife Loezza to journey by ourselves (& we reached Council Bluffs in June (about the middle)) 24

Willard Richards recorded in his journal the following:

"8 minutes before 7 A.M., Sarah, Daughter of Bishop Whitney, was delivered of a fine son, named by his Father, David Kimball Smith, after the name of the place where Bishop Whitney was encamped, which he called the Valley of David." 25

David Kimball Smith didn't live long for he "died in infancy". 26

23 Andrew Jenson, Historical Record Vol. 6, pp. 233-234 (May 1887); Vol. 8, p. 1007 (December 1889); Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine, Vol. 28 (1937), pp. 67-68.

24 The History of Joseph C. Kingsbury, see note 16.

25 Willard Richards Journal, typed copy, p. 79. See also under the date of March 8, 1846; Manuscript History of Brigham Young and Journal of John D. Lee.

EXPERIMENT BEFORE MARRIAGE

It might not have been too uncommon in the City of Nauvoo for men and women to live together before they were married. From the diary of Hosea Stout, who was the chief of police in Nauvoo, comes the following entry of Friday, February 14th, 1845:

"14th F. At home in the afternoon writing my history, and at 4 o'clock went to Fencing school thence to the police & Lodge home at 9 o'clock today Lucretia Fisher came to live with me." Juanita Brooks, who edited the Diary of Hosea Stout, explains this entry: "Lucretia Fisher lived in the home two months before she was married to Stout. This plan was sometimes followed to see if the two wives would be compatible, and also to determine whether or not the second was attracted to the husband sufficiently to become his wife. The Stout family Bible gives the wedding date as April 20, 1845." 27 Amasa M. Lyman, an Apostle of the Church, performed the marriage ceremony.

SUMMARY

Sarah Ann Whitney was married to Joseph Smith on July 27, 1842. Nine months later on April 29, 1843, she was married to Joseph C. Kingsbury with the Prophet Joseph Smith officiating. She was then eighteen years old. Since her first child David was born on March 8, 1846, she was about seven months pregnant with Heber C. Kimball's child at the time of her marriage to him in the Nauvoo Temple on January 12, 1846. It seems that Joseph Smith married Sarah Ann Whitney for time and for all eternity and then relinquished her for time, in a pretended marriage ceremony, to Joseph C. Kingsbury who then let her become pregnant with child by Heber C. Kimball. Sarah Ann Whitney was the first woman who had her marriage to Joseph Smith sealed for eternity in the Nauvoo Temple on January 12, 1846. From the foregoing marriages of Sarah Ann Whitney, her secret marriage to Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, being commanded to marry him at the age of seventeen by a special revelation, the 1842 letter written by Joseph Smith to her parents and herself to come to visit him, her living with Joseph C. Kingsbury and her relationship with Heber C. Kimball it must be said: What a strange marriage system!

APPENDIX

REVELATION FOR SARAH ANN WHITNEY
TO BE THE WIFE OF JOSEPH SMITH

The following is from a typed copy, the original is in the Church Historian’s Office, of the revelation given through Joseph Smith concerning his marrying Sarah Ann Whitney and gives her father, Newel K. Whitney, the words of the marriage ceremony:

"Verily, thus saith the Lord unto my servant N.K. Whitney, the thing that my servant Joseph Smith

forever and ever"