POST-1890 PLURAL MARRIAGE IN MEXICO

BETWEEN 1890 AND 1904

by

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12 April 1977

History 490
Senior Seminar Paper
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marriages were performed primarily among those that had received their endowments while still in Nauvoo.

After the official announcement of the principle of plural marriage in August of 1852 and after the endowment house was built, the plural marriages that occurred between 1855 and 1890 were performed either in the endowment house or one of the temples that were finished and dedicated by that year. There were some plural marriages performed in the latter 1880's that did not occur in either the endowment house or one of the temples because of the persecution of the federal marshalls, such as the marriage that Alexander F. McDonald performed in the latter 1880's, but these were few and far between. This persecution occurred because of the opposition of the people in the United States to the Mormon people practicing plural marriage, because of the opposition and resistance of the Mormons to the laws passed against the Mormons that practiced the principle on the basis that the Edmund Law and the Edmund-Tucker Law were both unconstitutional because they, as a people, felt that these laws infringed upon their rights pertaining to the freedom of religion as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. Some of the polygamists of Utah moved to Mexico prior to the time that the Manifesto was issued because of persecution.
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The principle of plural marriage was known of as early as 1831, and in 1835 Joseph Smith had a plural wife by the name of Fannie Alger; Jared Carter built another house with the intention of putting a plural wife in it, but Joseph Smith would not permit it. The subject was not spoken of in public during the Kirtland period or the Missouri period because of the people not being prepared for the teaching of the principle. During the Nauvoo Period, though, Joseph Smith began teaching the principle on an individual basis and taught it to Benjamin F. Johnson in the woods not far from his home to members of the 12 apostles in the same manner as they returned from their various missions. There were some plural marriages performed outside of a temple in Nauvoo, most being to the apostles, Joseph Smith and a few select others. The number of plural marriages increased after the Nauvoo Temple was completed and some were performed in the out of doors between the time of the exodus from Nauvoo and the time that the endowment house was built and dedicated on 5 May 1855, but these plural
The basic feeling of the members of the Quorum of the
Twelve in the early 1890's and into the latter 1890's is
portrayed in many of the journal entries of Abraham H.
Cannon:

Oct 1st, 1890, "John Henry Smith: I cannot feel to say
that the manifesto is quite right or wrong . . . I cannot
consent to cease living with my wives unless I am imprisoned."11

And on Sept. 26th, 1890 the following entry appears: "There is
considerable comment and fault-finding among some of the
Saints because of a manifesto which Pres. Woodruff issued on
the 24th inst., in reply to a statement made by the Utah
commission that plural marriages were still authorized and
celebrated, and that within the past year some 40 or more had
been performed. Pres. W. denied this allegation, and said
that such marriages were forbidden by the Church in this
Territory, and he called upon the Saints to submit to the laws
of the land in this particular. In his declaration, however,
there is no renunciation of principle or abandonment of
families recommended, as some fault finders make it to
appear."12

Though the Church, in word, had to say public that a
man had to choose one wife of all of his plural wives and
live with that one wife only and not have any contact with
During the years of persecution in the 1880's for "Unlawful Cohabitation," John Taylor said that plural marriages should be performed in the temples, but that they could also be performed either in another house or out of doors as long as a person having the proper authority was to perform the marriage. Those marriages that were performed out of the temples or endowment house in the latter 1800's and early 1900's were referred to as "sealings." John Taylor justified the performing of sealings in the out of doors or in a house on the premise that Joseph Smith performed plural marriages in Nauvoo outside of the Nauvoo Temple, which was never completed during his life time, and upon the premise that their "offerings" and marriages that would be performed out of a temple or the endowment house would be accepted by God because of the hindrance of their enemies.

After the death of Pres. John Taylor and prior to the 1890 Manifesto, the Endowment House was torn down and the teaching of plural marriage was discontinued from the pulpit at the direction of Wilford Woodruff and he stated in the manifesto that no plural marriages were performed in 1889 or 1890. This period of time is still somewhat controversial and will take more research to prove one way or the other and what the policy was during this period.
twelve millions of Lamanites to whom we can turn our
attention, and when they are converted they will form the
battle-axe of the Lord;”¹⁷ Mexico became the sanctuary for
many of the polygamists that would not give up their
plural wives.

It was "policy" in the 1890's and early 1900's while
"sealings" were being performed to authorize a person to
perform these "sealings" without having to tell the Presi-
dent of the Church or consulting him.¹⁸ In this way he
was able to say that he did not know of any plural
marriages that were being performed.¹⁹

Many of the "sealings" that were being performed
after the Manifesto were done out of the U.S. Prior to
statehood many sealings were done both in the U.S.²⁰ and
out of the U.S. It was upon the premise that the Mani-
festo was not a revelation but a document that was written
for political purposes by Charles W. Penrose²¹ that the
plural marriages/sealings were being performed after
13 October 1891 in both the U.S. and the countries of
Canada and Mexico. It appears that Alexander F. McDonald
was given the proper "authority of the Priesthood" by
any of his other wives as a family or on a family, the Church policy among themselves and all that had plural wives was that of non abandonment and that a man was a 'coward' if he did abandon his wives,\textsuperscript{13} while members of the Quorum of the Twelve apostles were expressing their feelings pertaining to the keeping of their wives and 'using the wisdom which God gives them to avoid being captured by the officers of the law.'\textsuperscript{14} Lorenzo Snow ratified all that was said at the Council meeting by saying that 'he was pleased at the unanimity of feelings and knew that the Lord would direct them aright.'\textsuperscript{15}

It appears that there were no plural marriages--sealings--performed between the time that the Mormon people of the territory accepted the 1890 manifesto and October 1891, but Apostle John Henry Smith performed approximately twelve sealings in Salt Lake City on the 13th of October, 1891. "Sealings" were performed on a regular basis after this, according to the records that are in the Mormon Church Historical Department.\textsuperscript{16}

During the Council meeting of 1 October 1890, Apostle Moses Thatcher said, "I think the brethren should so arrange their families that women bearing children shall not be in constant fear of capture. . . . The troubles will perhaps cause us to seek refuge in Mexico where there are
oppose her husband by not permitting him to take a plural wife, that her name would not be written in the book which she saw on the pulpit in front of him.24

O. P. Brown and Jane Galbraith had come to love one another some months prior to this. After returning to Juarez and learning from his wife of her manifestation and of her conversion to plural marriage, she gave him a letter to take to Miss Galbraith on his next trip to Diaz. When Galbraith opened the letter she read:

"My husband has spoken to me about you joining our family and I assure you that you'll be made perfectly welcome to be a member of our family."25

The manifestation that Brown's wife, Mattie had is an external evidence that the manifesto is not a revelation; it is a doctrine of the Mormon church that the Lord will not reveal a doctrine to a lay member of the Church that is contrary to the doctrine that He reveals to the Prophet and President of the Church. Brown and
President Joseph F. Smith\textsuperscript{22} in the early 1890's to perform plural marriages/sealings and that did perform many sealings in the Juarez Mexico Stake while he was the Stake President there. McDonald kept a record of all of the "sealings" that he performed\textsuperscript{23} while he was the Stake President in Juarez, Mexico and of those that he may have performed during the time that Anthony W. Ivins was president of the Juarez Stake.

Orson Pratt Brown was living in Juarez in the early 1890's and had the desire to take a plural wife at that time, but his wife "Mattie" would not permit it. Though the way for him to be married to a plural wife seemed to be circumscribed, Apostle Teasdale promised Pratt that he would yet have the opportunity. While he was in Diaz, he felt inspired to go and pray to the Lord, and he did so after going out into the sagebrush where he could be alone. At this time while Brown was asking the Lord to soften the heart of his wife "Mattie" to the principle of plural marriage, an angel appeared to her and told her that if she continued to
"sealings" in Mexico by the First Presidency and was given a copy of the sealing ordinance. This occurred in the fall of 1896, when Alexander F. McDonald was released from his position as stake presidency. The First Presidency would send a letter to Bro. Ivins which would be brought by the individual to receive a plural wife, and it would say:

Dec. 27, 1897

My Dear Brother Anthony,
I have a friend who starts on a pleasure tour in a few days. He is a business man, but 'proposes' to take this trip for relaxation. He may visit your region before he returns. Should he do so, I shall feel obliged if you will extend any courtesy to him that he may need. He will appreciate your kind offices, I am sure.

With kindest regards,
I am Your Brother, Geo. Q. Cannon.

Or something comparable to that phraseology.

At one time, while Heber J. Grant of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was down in Mexico with another apostle (possibly John Henry Smith) Miles A. Romney went to these men to get approval to take a plural wife; Anthony W. Ivins wouldn't perform the marriage previously because Miles was not carrying with him the proper letter from the office of the First Presidency that would give Ivins the approval he needed to perform the sealing. When he was instructed by the two apostles to perform the sealing, he would not do it; Miles A. Romney later took the woman home as his wife, but Ivins never knew as to whether it was A. F. McDonald that
Galbraith were probably married by A. F. McDonald, who was the Stake President at that time.

About five years later Brown married Bessie McDonald with her father, A. F. McDonald, performing the marriage. This was done at the encouragement of his first wife Mattie and while Ivins was the president of the Juarez Stake.

In the Spring of 1896, John Henry Smith of the First Presidency and Heber J. Grant were in Juarez, Mexico. While visiting with one another while in the presence of Orson Pratt Brown, President Smith said, "Heber, the people of these colonies are the salt of the church, the salt of the world. The fact that they have left their comfortable homes of the north and have come down to these desert wastes to be able to live the higher law of the gospel of plural marriage makes them as I have said before 'the salt of the earth.'" And Apostle Grant replied saying, "Brother John, I believe you are correct. I have the same impression with regard to the people living in these colonies. . . . My constant prayer is that I will be able to live in such a manner; that I will be worthy of any calling the Lord sees fit to call me to."

In the fall of 1896 when Anthony W. Ivins was called to the office of the 1st Presidency to be set apart by them as the Juarez Stake, he was given special "authority" to perform
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performed the sealing or if it was one of the apostles that did it. 33

Sometime after the Miles Romney marriage, Anthony W. Ivins performed more than one plural marriage for those that were already living in Mexico, but which of the marriages on the marriage list that Ivins kept was the first of that nature is unknown. The record does show, though, that he married Miles Archibald Romney to Lilly Burrell on 23 Oct. 1898, 34 which is probably one of the first that he performed without a letter from the office of the First Presidency.

Though Ivins did perform many plural marriages among those that were living in Mexico and those that were sent to him from America under authorization, he did it out of duty and not because he felt that it was right. While Stanley Ivins was with his father in a buckboard traveling toward Casas Grandes, they saw some polygamists that had taken plural wives after the 1890 manifesto was written. After greeting the polygamists and getting back into the buckboard, he said to his son, "I would like to give each of those men a good kick in the pants and send him back to Utah. I have no
Plural marriage was introduced and lived in the Mormon Church in secrecy for ten years until 1852, when it was officially accepted as a doctrine and lived as an open doctrine for the thirty-eight years until the 1890 manifesto, and then had to go back into secrecy for the next fourteen years at which time the 1904 manifesto was issued by President Joseph F. Smith. Thus ended the fourteen years of living the official position of the church authorities, though unofficial as far as the United States was concerned during those fourteen years because of the public utterances of the Church authorities—who desired to keep the principle of plural marriage alive in the church.
FOOTNOTES

1DHC 5:xxxii, Introduction.
2The Benjamin F. Johnson letter, p. 11.
3Ibid.
5History Journal by Andrew Jensen.
7CHO, Sealing Lists.
8J.D. 25:355, 19 October 1884.
9Ibid.
10Ibid.
11A. H. C. Journal, October 1, 1890, at BYU Special Collections.
12Ibid., 26 September 1890.
13Ibid., 7 October 1890.
14Ibid., 1 October 1890, p. 119.
15Ibid., 1 October 1890, p. 120.
16Box of Sealings, etc., the C.H.O.
17Abraham H. Cannon Journal, 1 October 1890, p. 120. See also Abraham H. Cannon Journal, 30 September 1890, and the Moses Thatcher Statement therein.
18JD 23:355.

20 Box of Sealings at the C.H.O.

21 Minutes of the Matthias Cowley Trial, p. 2.


23 Ibid.


25 Ibid., BYU Special Collections, pp. 33-34.

26 Orson Pratt Brown Manuscript, BYU Special Collections, p. 34.

27 Ibid., Utah State Historical Society, p. 47.

28 Ibid., BYU Special Collections, p. 34.

29 Ibid., BYU Special Collections, pp. 32-33.


31 Letter at the Utah State Historical Society; collection unknown.

32 John Henry was the Mission President in Juarez at one time and visited Juarez periodically.

33 Letter from Ivins, etc.

34 From the typescript of the Anthony W. Ivins marriage record (in writer's possession).

35 Stanley Ivins manuscript, Polygamy in Mexico, p. 12 (xerox in writer's possession).

36 From the xerox copy of the marriage list that is in the writer's possession.

37 Stanley Ivins manuscript, Polygamy in Mexico, p. 12.

38 Ibid.