

"HAVING BEEN CONVINCED OF THE
TRUTH OF POLIGAMME I THEREFORE
ENTER'D INTO THE ORDER":
PRIMARY DOCUMENTS SINCE
IN SACRED LONELINESS

Todd M. Compton

It has been a little over twenty-five years since *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* was published, in late 1997.¹ After publishing my book, I hoped that additional primary documents would surface that would deepen our understanding of Nauvoo polygamy and the women involved in it. A number of significant and interesting sources have indeed emerged. While none of these documents has caused me to change my basic interpretations of the subject, several have added important detail, clarification, corroboration, or complexity to the historical record. In this essay, I highlight and briefly discuss those “new” primary documents that seem most important to me, with particular attention to what they contribute to our understanding beyond what was available in the mid-1990s.

1. Todd M. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Signature Books, 1997) (hereafter *ISL*). For a memoir of how the book was written, see Compton, “Plural Accidents: Writing *In Sacred Loneliness*,” in *Writing Mormon History: Historians and their Books*, edited by Joseph Geisner (Signature Books, 2020), 65–102. See also my *In Sacred Loneliness: The Documents* (Signature Books, 2022) (hereafter *ISL: The Documents*).

One often discovers new primary documents on a certain subject when new secondary works on the subject are published. I have learned about new primary documents from the research of authors such as Brian Hales, Don Bradley,² David Golding,³ and Cheryl Bruno.⁴ We are indebted in particular to Hales and Bradley for the extensive research underlying their three-volume *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*. They discovered and commented on new documents, while also examining older documents carefully. Many of the documents they examined have since been made available through Brian Hales's website, Mormon Polygamy Documents.⁵

In addition, libraries and archives have changed significantly since 1997. Some "new" documents have become available in the normal course of archival acquisition and processing. Sometimes they become available because access policies have changed. Perhaps most importantly, large-scale digitization projects have made many key sources far more accessible than they were when *In Sacred Loneliness* was written.

The LDS Church History Library (CHL) is a good example. The Joseph Smith Papers Project,⁶ along with the digitization of materials such as the Emmeline B. Wells diaries and the George Q. Cannon diaries, has made many key documents widely available. In addition, policy changes at the Church History Library have given access to important documents relating to polygamy that were not fully open to researchers in the 1970s. For example, the Joseph F. Smith polygamy

2. Brian Hales, with Don Bradley, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 3 vols. (Greg Kofford Books, 2013).

3. David Golding, "Rediscovering Fanny Alger Custer," *Juvenile Instructor* (blog), July 31, 2018, <https://juvenileinstructor.org/rediscovering-fanny-alger-custer/>.

4. Cheryl L. Bruno and Michelle B. Stone, "Crafting a Sacred Story: Joseph F. Smith and the William Clayton Affidavits," *Journal of Mormon Polygamy* 1, no. 1 (2025): 1–34.

5. Mormon Polygamy Documents, <http://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/>, accessed Aug. 9, 2025.

6. The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/>.

affidavits, which required special permission to examine in about 1995, are now digitized.⁷ Other important sources, such as the William Clayton diaries, are still restricted but are slated for publication.

The Joseph Smith Papers published its first and last volumes between 2008 and 2023; it continues to expand digitally. This is a magnificent accomplishment, freely available on the internet as well as in printed format. It includes all known contemporary documents belonging to or authored by Joseph Smith.⁸ In its biography section, it recognizes the wives of Joseph Smith—often with language such as “identified in some sources as a plural wife of JS”—and provides valuable information on them. The marriage of Joseph Smith and Sarah Ann Whitney (Smith Kimball), is now quite fully documented in the Joseph Smith Papers.

This paper is an overview of selected primary sources that have emerged or become accessible since 1997. It is not an in-depth analysis of them, nor does it attempt to revisit in detail the methodological and interpretive frameworks developed in *In Sacred Loneliness* and *In Sacred Loneliness: The Documents*. Rather, it is written in conversation with those works, with the goal of identifying significant new sources and briefly indicating what they add to our knowledge of Joseph Smith’s plural marriages and the lives of the women involved.

A few points on historical methodology are in order. First, no piece of evidence stands alone. All evidence must be understood in connection with other evidence. Historical meaning emerges from an interwoven web of sources.

Second, no one piece of evidence is absolutely true in itself. No matter how valuable a letter or diary is, it nevertheless reflects only one person’s perspective at a particular time. Supportive or contrasting evidence should therefore always be welcomed. At times, historical sources

7. “Affidavits about celestial marriage, 1869–1915,” MS 3423, Church History Library (hereafter CHL). See *ISL*, 1, 632; Bruno and Stone, “Crafting a Sacred Story”; Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy*, 1:7–8, 2:343–47.

8. “About the Project,” The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed August 9, 2025, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/articles/about-the-project>.

contradict each other. In family memories of shared events, two people will sometimes remember an event in strikingly different ways. This is part of the human condition—we are all limited in perspective.

Third, one person can tell the *same* story differently at different times—not necessarily in a contradictory way, but emphasizing different aspects of the event.

Fourth, retrospective evidence is an important part of the historical record. Some scholars of Nauvoo polygamy have rejected any evidence that is not strictly contemporary. It is true that all historical evidence, both contemporary and retrospective, should be regarded critically. In retrospective evidence, dates are often remembered incorrectly, and memories are idealized or simplified. However, retrospective sources often preserve important details and emotional weight that would otherwise be lost.

Contemporary evidence and retrospective evidence work best when considered together. Each can illuminate the other, helping us better understand both the events themselves and how those events were later remembered and interpreted.

Notable New Materials and Collections

The Thomas Bullock–Heber C. Kimball Document, 1854–1866

One exciting development is the emergence of a fairly early list of Joseph Smith's wives that was not previously known.⁹ In a recent article, Cheryl Bruno and Michelle Stone announced this list, which Bruno found at the Church History Library.¹⁰ As this list predates by decades Andrew Jenson's influential 1887 list (discussed below), it has great historical importance. I will not give an extended analysis here, as Bruno has

9. "Names of Female Relief Society, circa 1854," MS 3157, CHL.

10. Bruno and Stone, "Crafting a Sacred Story," 5. See also Cheryl L. Bruno, "Hidden in Plain Sight: A Rediscovered List of Joseph Smith's Wives," *Journal of Mormon Polygamy* 2, no. 1 (2026): 53–112.

The Forgotten Wives?..



Eliza R. Snow



Mary Elizabeth
Rollins Lightner



Melissa Leff



Sylvia Sessions



Patty Sessions



Prescilla Huntington Bell



Eliza Maria Petridge Lyman



Lucinda Morgan Harris



Fanny Alger



Louisa Beaman



Zina Huntington Jacobs
Young Smith



Emily Petridge



Nancy Wadsworth



Ruth Vase Sagers



Emma Hale Smith



Alva R. Snow



Elizabeth Davis Doolittle



Eliza Coules Holmes



Flora Ann Woodworth



Sarah Kingsley Cleveland



Delena Johnson Sherman



Fanny Young



Martha McBride Knight



Sarah Ann Whitney



Dardanene Woodworth Fillmer



Almira Johnson



Sarah Lawrence



Helen Marx Kimball



Lucy Wallace



Marianda Nancy
Johnson Hyle



Agnes Conlith



Olive Gray Ford



Hannah Ellis



Maria Lawrence

OF JOSEPH SMITH
ILLUSTRATED BY LESLIE OLPIN PETERSON

Leslie Olpin Peterson, *The Forgotten Wives of Joseph Smith*,
2015, watercolor, 11 x 17 in.

Figure 1. MS 3157.

The first part is mostly written in pen:

Female Relief Society 1844 [*in left margin*]

Loisa Beeman
 Eliza R. Snow
 Hannah Ells
 Eliza Partridge
 Emily Partridge
 Sara Whitney
 Elvira Cole [Cowles]
 Sara Lawrence
 Maria Lawrence

Lucy Walker
 Olive Frost

[H]Ellen Kimball [*H: from more elaborate-writer 2?*]

Melissa Lott
 Flora Woodworth
 Eveline Knight

Melisa ^Cordelia^ Morley [*Melisa crossed out in pencil and "Cordelia" added in pencil*]

Mrs. Emma Smith
 Sarah M. Cleveland
 Patty Sessions
 Durphy
 Sylvia Lyons
 Priscinda Buel Zina Huntington
 Ruth Sayers
 Mary Lightner [*writer 2?*]

[*in pencil:*]

Mrs. John Snyder
 Mrs. Wm Law
 Almera Johnson
 Marinda N. Johnson

Lucien R. Woodworth's wife
 [*Phebe Watrous*] [*in pen again, writer 2*]

[*below, in pencil*]

Widow Sherman [*Delcena Johnson Sherman Smith Babbitt*]

Widow Vinson Knight (maiden name) Martha McBride

Desdamona Fullmer

Emeline Hibbard (Mrs. White) 33

The names in pencil added by Pres. Kimball Sep 14, 1866 in presence of Geo A & Joseph F. Smith & R. L. Campbell. The other names in Thomas Bullocks hand writing were got up in the Historians office in early times (1854 till 1860)

[*end of MS 3157*]

written an article on the subject, but a short summary and discussion of its significance are appropriate.

The document is titled "Names of Female Relief Society 1844," although it consists almost entirely of women who were wives of Joseph Smith, with one or two possible exceptions. Some of these women were never Relief Society members.¹¹ I will follow Bruno and Stone in calling it the Bullock-Kimball document, 1854-1866, as Thomas Bullock and Heber C. Kimball were the two main authors.

11. Bruno and Stone argue that the document was given this name to preserve the secrecy of the real subject matter.

Thomas Bullock was a scribe of Joseph Smith in 1843, so his portion of the list has great authority, especially since it is dated to “circa 1854,” only ten years after the death of Smith.¹² This is almost half a century before the Andrew Jenson list. Unlike Jenson, Bullock was himself a Nauvoo insider. Bullock’s list includes twenty-two well-known wives of Joseph Smith and three women who were either lesser-known wives of Joseph or were not wives at all. The list is separated into two groups: sixteen women who were single when Joseph Smith married them (with Elvira Cowles as an exception) and nine women who were married to other men when Smith married them (polyandrous wives).

Heber C. Kimball, of course, was deeply involved in Nauvoo polygamy, as he helped arrange his daughter’s marriage to Joseph Smith, took plural wives under Smith’s directions, officiated in some of Joseph Smith’s marriages, and married some of Joseph Smith’s widows. He added to the document five well-known wives and three who were either lesser-known wives or were not wives. Some of the lesser-known wives appear in my “Possible Wives” category in *In Sacred Loneliness*, and some do not. Some are documented from other sources, while others remain unidentified elsewhere.

Notably, neither of Smith’s earliest plural wives, Fanny Alger Custer and Lucinda Pendleton Morgan Harris, are included in this document, though they are included (and emphasized) in the later Andrew Jenson list. Perhaps this is because Jenson used some of Joseph Smith’s and Brigham Young’s living plural wives as his sources.

The Bullock–Kimball document is valuable because it gives further support for some of the better-known wives and demonstrates that a fairly standard list of Smith’s wives was known in about 1854. Bruno and Stone suggest that Joseph F. Smith used this list to create his polygamy affidavits in the late 1860s. If so, the Bullock–Kimball document helps illuminate the documentary foundations underlying later, more formal efforts to record Nauvoo plural marriage.

12. For an introduction to his life, see Jerald F. Simon, “Thomas Bullock as an Early Mormon Historian,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1990): 71–88.

Andrew Jenson Research Notes

Another important development since 1997 has been the emergence of the Andrew Jenson research notes,¹³ the preparatory materials Jenson compiled while preparing his 1887 article on Joseph Smith's polygamy.¹⁴ In that published article, Jenson listed twenty-seven plural wives of Joseph Smith, provided brief biographical sketches of some of them, and included selected affidavits.

While preparing his article, Jenson conferred with living plural wives of Joseph Smith, such as Eliza R. Snow, Zina Huntington Young, Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Helen Mar Kimball Whitney,¹⁵ and Melissa Lott, as well as other Nauvoo veterans who were involved with Nauvoo polygamy (such as Harriet Cook Young, William Clayton, and Emmeline B. Wells). Therefore, this list is quite authoritative. I don't believe that Jenson included all of Joseph Smith's wives on his list (I included five more on my list), but I believe all that he included can be convincingly documented as women who married Joseph Smith during his lifetime.

The Andrew Jenson Research Notes collection was brought to the attention of historian Don Bradley by an archivist at the Church History Library who found the collection in a register used for internal work by archivists. It surfaced during preliminary work on the Joseph Smith Papers. This is just one reminder that archivists and librarians are doing important work as they sort through unprocessed collections to make them findable and usable for researchers.

13. Andrew Jenson Collection, MS 17956, box 49, folder 16, CHL (digitized; citations refer to PDF page numbers).

14. Andrew Jenson, "Plural Marriage," *The Historical Record* 6 (May 1887): 219–40.

15. For example, on June 27, 1887, Helen Mar wrote in her diary, "Bro. Gensen called to see me—wants me to write up incidents of my life as soon as I can. I gave him a few incidents of Flora Gove's life who was a wife of Joseph Smith." Charles M. Hatch and Todd M. Compton, eds., *A Widow's Tale: The 1884–1896 Diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney* (Utah State University Press, 2003), 246.

The research notes were first discussed publicly in Brian Hales's *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*. Jenson's notes include two lists of Joseph Smith's wives, with interesting but enigmatic inclusions and cross-outs. The second list seems to be a rough draft for the published list.

Across the two lists, three women—Elizabeth Davis Durfee, Patty Bartlett Sessions, and Martha McBride Knight—appear but were not included in the final published list. In the first list, four names are crossed out: Elvira Cowles Holmes, Elizabeth Davis Durfee, Sarah Kingsley Cleveland, and Patty Bartlett Sessions. (Elvira Cowles is added again toward the end of the list.) Two made it onto the final list and two didn't (Durfee and Sessions), but it is striking that they are all polyandrous wives.

There seem to have been at least two possible reasons for cross-outs or not being included in the published list—one is that Jenson might have finally concluded that the women named were not actually wives of Joseph Smith. Another possibility is that Jenson was reluctant to publicize polyandrous marriages. Finally, some women may have requested that they not be publicly included.¹⁶

The research notes also include biographical sketches of several wives, including a very short biography of one of the polyandrous wives, Ruth Vose Sayers, whom Jenson decided not to include in his published article.

According to Bradley and Hales, the first thirteen names in the first list were supplied by Melissa Lott, and the next thirteen names were supplied by Eliza R. Snow (in her own handwriting, reportedly).¹⁷ Jenson's notes include a letter by Lott, so we know he was in contact

16. Patty Sessions is an example of a woman who didn't want her marriage to Joseph Smith publicized. See Patty Sessions to Brigham Young, undated, originally from the Brigham Young collection, included in affidavits collected by Joseph F. Smith, "Affidavits about Celestial Marriage, 1869–1915," MS 3423, folders 1–6, folder 4 #1, CHL. In the bottom part of the letter, she gives the date of her marriage to Joseph Smith, March 9, 1842, but in a P.S. writes, "Please let no one see this bottom part of myself." Apparently, this means, "Let no one see this bottom part regarding myself."

17. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:263.

with her. If Snow and Lott are the sources for these lists, this is further evidence that Jenson's list has remarkable authority. If he had included a woman on the published list who wasn't accepted by his Nauvoo polygamy informants, they could have corrected him.

D. Michael Quinn Collection at Beinecke Library, Yale

The D. Michael Quinn Collection, now available at Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, contains many of Quinn's research notes from documents that sometimes are not currently available. Quinn, one of the most influential modern LDS historians, was part of a select group that had unusually broad access to documents in the archives of the Church History Library. Most of his notes are derived from that access.¹⁸

Among Quinn's research materials is a set of note cards labeled "Polygamy, Joseph Smith's" that include notes from important primary sources.¹⁹ For example, Quinn saw and took notes from an autobiography of Desdemona Fullmer that has subsequently been lost. Don Bradley took notes on Quinn's relevant research notes at the Beinecke, and many of Quinn's notes can be found at Brian Hales's Mormon Polygamy Documents website.

The Quinn Collection thus represents an important secondary conduit through which otherwise inaccessible primary evidence has been preserved, even when the original documents themselves are no longer available.

Increased Validity as Wives of Joseph Smith

When I started research on Eliza R. Snow Smith's overland diaries at the Huntington Library in 1992, I realized that it was necessary to identify

18. For Quinn's time doing research at the CHL, see his "On Writing Mormon History, 1972–1995: From the Diaries and Memoirs of D. Michael Quinn," edited by Joe Geisner, in Geisner, *Writing Mormon History*, 237–72.

19. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, WA MSS S-2692, box 64. For the Quinn papers, see <https://archives.yale.edu/repositories/11/resources/1312>.

the women to whom she referred in her entries. Therefore, I felt that I needed to have reliable, well-documented lists of the wives of Brigham Young and Joseph Smith, since they were sister wives of Snow.

At the time, the only footnoted list of Joseph Smith's wives was that of Fawn Brodie, but I felt that this list had serious problems, particularly because of its reliance on late, secondhand, antagonistic evidence.²⁰ In addition, it was out of date, as Brodie did not have access to documents now available in the "modern" LDS archives.

As a result, I began to make my own list, largely based on Andrew Jensen's 1887 list, the Joseph F. Smith polygamy affidavits, and records of early proxy marriages to Joseph Smith in the Nauvoo Temple. While unsympathetic sources shouldn't be discounted, I tried to base my list on sympathetic or insider sources. One reliable source is enough to accept a woman as the wife of Joseph Smith, but I wanted multiple sources for each plural wife if possible. This was not simply a pedantic, technical task. Identifying these women accurately is essential for understanding their lives, their family relationships, and the networks of intimacy that shaped Nauvoo and early Utah Mormonism. They called themselves sister wives, so it is important to know whom they included in that circle.

As an example, Eliza R. Snow Smith Young and Zina Huntington Jacobs Smith Young (both wives of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young) shared a close friendship throughout their lives. They ended up as leaders of the general Relief Society in Utah.²¹ Their Nauvoo past was part of their close bond. As they traveled through Utah speaking to women,

20. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 2nd ed. (Knopf, 1985), 457–88.

21. Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, and Matthew J. Grow, eds., *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-Day Saint Women's History* (Church Historian's Press, 2016). Martha Sonntag Bradley and Mary Brown Firmage Woodward, *4 Zinas: A Story of Mothers and Daughters on the Mormon Frontier* (Signature Books, 2000). Karen Lynn Davidson and Jill Mulvay Derr, *Eliza: The Life and Faith of Eliza R. Snow* (Deseret Book, 2014).

men, and children, they would often mention that they were plural wives of Joseph Smith.²²

More broadly, polygamous relationships are crucial for understanding elite nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints, female and male. They need to be documented and understood. A friend of mine told me how offended her mother was when an official biography of Heber J. Grant did not even mention his plural wives, which effectively erased their sacrifices and contributions. My friend and her mother were descendants of one of these plural wives.

*Elizabeth Durfee, Delcena Johnson Sherman,
and Lucinda Morgan Harris*

Some of the women on my list in *In Sacred Loneliness* have been disputed, so it is very helpful to find corroborating evidence for them. The Bullock–Kimball list provides such corroboration in several cases. Elizabeth Davis Goldsmith Brackenbury Durfee Smith Lott was included in my list, but some historians have expressed doubt that she was a wife of Joseph Smith. She does not appear on the published Jenson list, but she does appear on the first list in the Jenson research notes—however, her name is crossed out. As discussed above, this might mean that Jenson did not consider her an authentic wife of Joseph, but it could also mean that Jenson was trying to avoid a problematic issue, polyandry, when he crossed out the names of four polyandrous wives in his first list.

Because Elizabeth moved to California with her Brackenbury sons and became RLDS, she does not have an affidavit in the Joseph F. Smith collection. In *In Sacred Loneliness*, I collected other evidence supporting her status as an older plural wife of Joseph Smith.²³ Her appearance on the 1854 Bullock list is therefore important. It represents an early, sympathetic source dated decades before the published Jenson list.

I included Delcena Johnson Sherman Smith Babbitt in my book mostly on the basis of two statements by her brother Benjamin Johnson,

22. *ISL*, 337.

23. *ISL*, 260.

whom I regard as a Nauvoo polygamy insider. In the Kimball part of the Bullock–Kimball list, we find a “Widow Sherman,” which provides important corroboration for her inclusion as Smith’s plural wife.

Lucinda Pendleton Morgan Harris has likewise been disputed as a Smith plural wife, as has my suggested marriage date of approximately 1838. Richard Lloyd Anderson and Scott Faulring, in their long FARMS review of my book, rejected Jenson’s identification of Lucinda as a wife.²⁴ Richard Bushman in *Rough Stone Rolling* followed this judgment.²⁵ Brian Hales includes her in his count of Joseph Smith wives but expresses reservations about her status.²⁶

Nevertheless, when I published *In Sacred Loneliness*, I could cite Lucinda’s inclusion on Andrew Jenson’s list of Smith’s plural wives; she is listed third, after Louisa Beaman and Fanny Alger. Jenson describes her as “one of the first women sealed to the Prophet Joseph.” After Joseph Smith’s death, Lucinda had an early proxy marriage to him in Nauvoo, which is important corroborative evidence. In addition, Sarah Pratt, the disaffected ex-wife of apostle Orson Pratt, describes Lucinda as saying that her relationship with Joseph Smith started in 1838. Based on all of this and other evidence, I tentatively dated Lucinda’s marriage to Joseph to 1838.

In the Andrew Jenson research notes, we find confirmation both for Lucinda as a wife of Joseph Smith, and for the circa 1838 wedding date. Jenson wrote, “Harriet Cook Young is positive that sh[e] [Lucinda] was married to Joseph in Missouri.”²⁷ Harriet Cook Young was married to Brigham Young in 1843, so she was fully in the Nauvoo plural marriage

24. Richard Lloyd Anderson and Scott H. Faulring, “The Prophet Joseph Smith and His Plural Wives,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1989–2011 10, no. 2 (1998): 75.

25. Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 644n1.

26. *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy*, 2:286.

27. Jenson Research Notes, PDF p. 3.

network. Harriet even witnessed the marriage of Fanny Young Murray to Joseph Smith on November 2, 1843.²⁸

Jenson started a biography of Lucinda in his notes, the first part of which is crossed out, commenting, “better leave her out perhaps.”²⁹ Hales suggests that Jenson wanted to leave Lucinda out because he didn’t think the evidence was sufficient. However, once again, Lucinda was a polyandrous wife, and it is possible that Jenson didn’t want to emphasize this aspect of Joseph’s polygamy. Notably, despite hesitations, Jenson finally included her in his published list.

As was mentioned above, several of the living plural widows of Joseph Smith helped Jenson in his research. If he had included Lucinda by mistake, these women could have quickly corrected him. Jenson’s description of Lucinda as “one of the first women sealed to the Prophet Joseph” aligns well with a pre-Nauvoo marriage date. And Harriet Young’s testimony that the marriage occurred in Missouri further supports an early date.

Later Lives

As I was starting to create my list of Joseph Smith’s wives, I found that to reproduce the woman’s full name—including multiple married names—I needed to understand the full lives of these women. Many of these women married more than once, and errors could easily result without careful attention to chronology. Fawn Brodie, in fact, listed Elizabeth Durfee as two different women, using two different married names. To avoid such mistakes, I felt I needed to not only learn about these marriages but also document them carefully.

What began as a list of names soon expanded into a series of long paragraphs, then multi-page chronologies and biographies. This led me

28. See two affidavits by Harriet Cook Young in “Affidavits about Celestial Marriage, 1869–1915,” book 2 (folder 5, volume 2), pp. 12, 14.

29. Jenson Research Notes, PDF p. 3.

to reading memoirs and diaries, when available. As a result, I became interested in these women's lives before and after Nauvoo, which were filled with challenges, tragedies, and adventures, set within a larger context of Mormon migration and settlement of the American West. I became emotionally attached to these women when I started reading their wonderful letters, diaries, and memoirs.

Their later lives also shed light on their polygamous experiences in Nauvoo. Sometimes their first-person writings recounted their Nauvoo experiences or referred back to them.³⁰ As a result, a major part of *In Sacred Loneliness* was biography. While some readers were interested mostly in the Nauvoo period, I found these women's later lives—crossing the plains and building lives in Utah or California or other locations, living openly as polygamists—to be deeply revealing. New documents that illuminate aspects of their later lives are valuable, both for understanding their trajectories and for interpreting their earlier experiences that were shrouded in secrecy.

Fanny Alger Smith Custer

When *In Sacred Loneliness* was published, we did not have a death date for Fanny Alger. Richard Van Wagoner had generously shared his Fanny Alger material with me, and he mentioned that he had been unable to find a death date for Fanny. Within a year of my book's publication, a descendant of Fanny contacted me and provided both a death date and her obituary.

The obituary was found in the Adolphus Barnes Family Bible (also known as the Stephen Barnes Family Bible). It states that Fanny W. Custer died on November 29, 1889, in Indianapolis at the age of seventy-two. It offers a detailed account of her life in Dublin, Indiana,

30. Helen Mar Kimball Whitney repeatedly acknowledged her Nauvoo sealing to Joseph Smith in her later diaries. See entries from 1886 to 1894 in Hatch and Compton, *A Widow's Tale*, esp. 157, 169, 205, 236, 246, 383, 605; see also Emmeline B. Wells's diary for November 27, 1889.

where she was an early settler and a well-known community figure. The obituary emphasizes her generosity, stating, “She was generally beloved by all who knew her, and was noted for her benevolence of spirit and generous-heartedness; being known as one who would share her last crust with whosoever should need it.”

Several aspects of the obituary are particularly noteworthy. It reports that in 1874 Fanny joined the Universalist Church—a church with ties to spiritualism in the nineteenth century—and remained committed to that faith until her death. It also notes that she bore nine children, only two of whom survived her, a stark reminder of the high rates of infant and child mortality in the nineteenth century.

Historian and archivist David Golding later located an additional obituary notice that adds further complexity to Fanny’s religious life.³¹ This notice describes her as a “strong and prominent spirit medium.”³² Golding also cites an earlier newspaper notice which reads, “Solomon Custer and wife [Fanny Alger] are diving into matters concerning the spirit land. They claim to be receiving daily intelligence under spiritual control.”³³ Golding writes that these notices show that Fanny was “a historical figure who apparently lived a fascinating religious hybrid between earliest Mormonism, frontier Universalism, and early feminist spiritualism.” This evidence undercuts claims made by some early Latter-day Saints that Fanny remained a committed, faithful Mormon to the end of her life.³⁴

31. Golding, “Rediscovering Fanny Alger Custer.”

32. *Cambridge City Tribune* (Cambridge City, Indiana) 25, no. 34, Dec. 5, 1889, Thursday, p. 2. Available online at newspapers.com.

33. “Local Matters,” *Hagerstown Exponent* 7, no. 9, Aug. 2, 1882, p. 3, as cited in Golding, “Rediscovering Fanny Alger Custer.”

34. Benjamin Johnson, the brother of two of Joseph Smith’s plural wives, wrote that Fanny, “did ^not^ turn from the Church nor from her friendship for the Prophet while She lived.” Letter to George Gibbs, 1903, in Dean R. Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets* (Horizon Publishers, 1976), 39.

Some researchers have found additional information on aspects of Fanny's economic life. The LDS Church's gospel topic essay on Fanny recounts: "The Custers maintained a grocery store in Dublin and invested in a sawmill in nearby Lewisville. The family moved to Lewisville during a time of financial difficulty, and Solomon attempted to sell the sawmill, but ultimately declared bankruptcy. Fanny and Solomon then moved back to Dublin, where they remained until Solomon's death in 1885."³⁵ After her husband's death, Fanny lived with her son in Indianapolis. These details help situate her life within the economic uncertainties faced by many nineteenth-century families.

Finally, we now have additional sources that simply affirm that she was a wife of Joseph Smith. For example, RLDS member John Hawley wrote in 1885, "What I heard [from] John Olger [Alger] one of the first (or among the first) members of the Church he toald me his Sister was Seald to Joseph in Curtlin [Kirtland], this he Said to me in 1868."³⁶

Lucinda Pendleton Morgan Harris Smith

Lucinda's life after Nauvoo is obscure. When I was researching *In Sacred Loneliness*, I found a fairly early Masonic source (Rob Morris in 1883) that stated that Lucinda moved to Tennessee and served as a member of the Catholic Sisters of Charity during the Civil War.³⁷ More recently, Brian Hales has found new evidence that challenges Morris's account and sheds additional light on Lucinda's life after Nauvoo.

In his *Bibliography of Anti-Masonry* (1934), William Cummings directly disagreed with Morris on the possibility of Lucinda being a

35. "Fanny Alger," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed July 10, 2023, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/topics/fanny-alger?lang=eng>.

36. John Hawley, Autobiography, Jan. 1885, p. 97, Community of Christ Archives. For Hawley, see Melvin C. Johnson, *Life and Times of John Pierce Hawley: A Mormon Ulysses of the American West* (Greg Kofford Books, 2019).

37. Rob Morris, *William Morgan; or Political Anti-Masonry* (Robert Macoy, 1883), 279.

Catholic sister during the Civil War. Then he wrote, “Recently discovered evidence proves that she [Lucinda] died at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Lucinda Wesley Smith, in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1856.”³⁸ This, of course, is several years before the Civil War. While Cummings is a later source, other documentation supports his conclusion.

In a newspaper article, Cummings discusses that “recently discovered evidence,” a letter from Lucinda’s son-in-law, David B. Smith (no relation to Joseph Smith).³⁹ Referring to his wife and brother-in-law, he wrote in that 1882 letter that “their mother, Lucinda Morgan Harris, died at Memphis, Tenn., in 1856.”⁴⁰

Although a later newspaper notice from 1860 states that Lucinda had died “recently,” the weight of the evidence now favors the 1856 date.⁴¹ Near to the David Smith letter published in *Christian Cynosure* was an excerpt from an actual letter by Lucinda herself on January 8, 1836, to a friend, Sarah Stevens. She writes:

How is dear Mrs. Betts and family? Tell her to live near the Lord and obey His commandments, and she will receive a crown of righteousness, which the Righteous Judge will give her at that day when he cometh to reward every one according to the deeds done in the body. * * * How are you all? And where is Colonel Miller and family? (The one who was associated with her husband in the publication of the Morgan Expose.—Ed.) Do write particulars respecting them.

38. William Leon Cummings, *Bibliography of Anti-Masonry* (pub. by author, 1934), 28. See also Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy*, 2:310. The entire passage is quoted at “Cummings’ notes on Morgan,” Freemasons of British Columbia and Yukon, accessed Aug. 9, 2025, <http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/anti-masonry/cummings.html>.

39. “What Became of Lucinda Morgan: Famous William Morgan’s Wife,” *Batavia Times* 116, no. 37, Sept. 13, 1934, transcript available at <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/ny/miscNYS4.htm>.

40. Captain David Smith to Charles Betts, Esq., Dec. 10, 1882, as printed in “William Morgan’s Daughter,” *Christian Cynosure* 32 (Sept. 1899): 132.

41. *Prairie Du Chien Courier* (Wisconsin), Apr. 12, 1860, vol. VIII, no. 20, at <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/IA/miscwis2.htm>.

Please give our love to all inquiring friends, Sarah, I enclose five dollars for your mother. May the blessing of our Heavenly Father attend you and yours. Your affectionate friend,

Lucinda Morgan Harris⁴²

This letter is very valuable because it brings Lucinda to life. It indicates that she was devoutly religious, generous, and affectionate with an old friend.

In summary, these documents revise our understanding of Lucinda's later life, providing believable evidence that she died in 1856. Additionally, Harriet Cook's witness in the Andrew Jenson papers gives added support for Lucinda as a plural wife of Joseph Smith and for her pre-Nauvoo marriage to him around 1838.

Agnes Coolbrith Smith Smith Smith Pickett

On June 10, 1860, Agnes Moulton Coolbrith Smith Smith Smith Pickett and her daughter Josephine Smith Carsley, known later as Ina Coolbrith, wrote letters from Los Angeles, California, to "Edwin and Mary-Ann," whom Bryan Buchanan and Amanda Hendrix-Komoto have tentatively identified as Edwin Rushton and Mary Ann Fowell Rushton.⁴³ These letters, now at Brigham Young University, are remarkable because both Agnes and Ina express strong interest in the Reorganized LDS Church, and in the leadership of Agnes's nephew, Joseph Smith III, who had accepted the presidency of the RLDS Church on April 6, 1860. Agnes and Ina also express a decided antagonism to Utah Mormonism, including polygamy. Agnes wrote:

Edwin I do not believe in oppression in tyranny in bloodshed and murder and neither in the plurality I must say that I have tried hard to believe that it was right to have more wives than one but I never could get a witness but always to the contrary

42. *Christian Cynosure* 32 (Sept. 1899): 132–33.

43. Smith family correspondence; Vault MSS 803; John Smith papers, series 3, box 2, folder 11, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

I have been looking for many years for a change in the church that God in his own due time would cause the true one to step forth and lead his people which is now the case Joseph [Smith III] has come forth to set the people free and deliver them from bondage and tyranny how I long to see them as I have once seen them it would almost be a heaven on earth whether it will be my lot to join them once more I know not but I pray that God in his great wisdom will order it so that all of mine may be gathered back to our old home to rest and there lay our weary bones

These statements are especially striking given Agnes's own well-documented plural marriages to Joseph Smith and George Albert Smith. Her letter suggests a desire to leave that part of her life behind her and to align herself with a religion that explicitly rejected plural marriage.

Agnes's daughter, Ina Coolbrith, eventually the poet laureate of California, also expressed opposition to polygamy, a position which we can also see in her earlier letters to Joseph F. Smith.⁴⁴ She wrote:

I am a mormon—in all but Salt Lake Mormonism—and woe be unto you if you do not leave it. Polygamy—Murder—are abroad in your lands—and in your households. The Bible—the book of Mormon—and the covenants—are all against it. What is there that justifies it? Noth-ing—in heaven, nor on earth. If Joseph Smith brought forth this system of polygamy—he sinned—and he paid the penalty.

Despite Agnes and Ina's opposition to Utah Mormonism, and despite the fact that Ina did not publicize her LDS background in California, Ina wrote, "I am a Mormon" with an underline, thus indicating a sharp distinction between her identity as a Mormon and the tradition's practice of plural marriage. Despite these feelings, Agnes and Ina loved to visit their LDS friends in San Bernardino. There is no known documentation that Agnes or Ina ever affiliated with the RLDS Church

44. See *ISL: The Documents*, 121–29.

in California, though they sometimes socialized with RLDS visitors.⁴⁵ According to Lucy Walker Kimball, quoting Ina Coolbrith, Agnes once told two of her RLDS nephews, David and Alexander Smith, that Joseph Smith indeed practiced polygamy.⁴⁶

*Elizabeth Davis Goldsmith Brackenbury Durfee
Smith Lott [Brackenbury]*

As was mentioned above, Elizabeth Davis Brackenbury was one of Joseph Smith's older wives in Nauvoo. She was a fascinating, challenging woman to research because of her many marriages and name changes. She eventually was baptized into the RLDS Church. The following newspaper article contains an interview with Elizabeth's grandson Arthur Brackenbury.⁴⁷ It provides added background on Elizabeth's expulsion from Independence, Missouri, in 1833, and, much later, her return to the Missouri area. Arthur wrote:

"She lived on a 10-acre tract on the Blue, where Centropolis now is," Mr. Brackenbury said. "It was in November when she was driven from her home, and she and a son spent their first night with only a cornshock as shelter."

With several other families, they went out the old river road north of Independence and crossed the river at the Wayne City landing. On the Clay County side, shelters were prepared by propping willows against a sycamore log, and the exiles remained there the rest of the winter.

45. For the early RLDS Church in California, see Ron Romig, "The RLDS Church on the Pacific Slope," *Journal of Mormon History* 35, no. 2 (2009): 43–125. For Ina and Agnes, pp. 64, 102.

46. Lucy Walker Kimball to Joseph F. Smith, Feb. 24, 1884, in *ISL: The Documents*, 538.

47. Excerpts from "STONE CHURCH BIG DAY: INDEPENDENCE EDIFICE IS 50 YEARS OLD," *Kansas City Sunday Star*, Nov. 20, 1938, p. 10 A, col. 1, as cited and reprinted in "Buried Early Missouri Mormon History," *Missouri Mormon Frontier Foundation Newsletter* 14 (Summer 1997): 5–6.

Elizabeth came to California with her son John Brackenbury, where he became RLDS. She apparently accompanied him back to the Kansas/Missouri area, and the family settled at first in White Cloud, Kansas, where Elizabeth also became an RLDS member. This gives further insight as to why Elizabeth died (in a train accident) in Kansas, not in Missouri, on November 10, 1876.⁴⁸ The details of the train accident are now available. The train became detached into two parts at a turn, and the engineer was not aware of it. When the first part stopped, the second part crashed violently into the first part, and Elizabeth was severely injured. She died in her son's home in White Cloud.⁴⁹

This material adds useful context to Elizabeth's later life and movements. While the grandson's recollections are necessarily secondhand and must be used cautiously, they provide a plausible narrative that helps situate Elizabeth within the broader patterns of displacement, migration, and return to the Midwest experienced by some early Latter-day Saint families.

Sarah Kingsley Howe Cleveland Smith

While I was researching *In Sacred Loneliness: The Documents*, an archivist at BYU generously told me about a collection of letters by Sarah Cleveland, who had been a prominent woman in Nauvoo, serving as a counselor in the first Relief Society presidency. These letters were dated from June 1852 to November 12, 1855, a half year before her death on April 21, 1856.⁵⁰ They give a moving record of Sarah's separation from her daughter, Augusta Bowen Cleveland Smith, the wife of John Lyman Smith. Augusta, John, and their children had left Nauvoo for Utah in

48. *ISL*, 268.

49. "Fatal Result of an Accident," *St. Joseph Gazette* (Missouri), Dec. 22, 1876, p. 3.

50. *ISL: The Documents*, 277–87; Augusta Bowen Cleveland Smith Collection, box 1, folder 1, MSS 1833, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

1846. This separation shows a tragic side of western migration: separation of families.

Sarah sent her last letter to Augusta on November 12, 1855. She concluded her letter saying, “I do hope there will be a way prepared for you & your ^Dear^ little ones to come safely over the plains, and visit us before we die—Your Father sends his best love to your dear children kiss them for us / he wishes to be remembered to Cousin Smith / God bless you and your family prays the heart of your affectionate Mother Sarah M Cleveland.”

These newly available letters add an important dimension to Sarah Kingsley Cleveland Smith’s life. They give us insight into the emotional world of an important historical figure and illuminate the personal consequences of family dispersion.

Secrecy in Nauvoo Polygamy

One of the defining features of Nauvoo polygamy was that it was secret, partially for religious reasons and partially because it was illegal in Illinois.⁵¹ If the subject was brought up publicly, Joseph Smith had to deny that he taught or practiced it. Those who deny that Joseph Smith was a polygamist often have not taken into consideration how Nauvoo plurality was profoundly secret. Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs Smith Young, one of Joseph Smith’s polyandrous wives, said in 1898, “It [her marriage to Smith] was something too sacred to be talked about; it was more to me than life or death. I never breathed it for years.”⁵² Elizabeth Ann Whitney, one of the great charismatic woman leaders in Nauvoo and the mother of a plural wife of Joseph Smith, wrote:

[Joseph Smith] had been strictly charged by the angel who committed these precious things into his keeping that he should only reveal them

51. John S. Dinger, “Nauvoo Polygamy and the Law: Statutory and Common Law Prohibitions,” in Bruno, *Secret Covenants*, 269–94.

52. John W. Wight, “Evidence from Zina D. Huntington-Young,” October 1, 1898, *The Saints Herald* 52:2 (Jan. 11, 1905), 28–30. *ISL The Documents*, 60.

to such persons as were pure, full of integrity to the truth and worthy to be entrusted with divine messages; that to spread them abroad would only be like casting pearls before swine, and that the most profound secrecy must be maintained, until the Lord saw fit to make it known publicly through His servants.⁵³

Secrecy, even carried out for idealized religious motives, nevertheless inevitably led to ethical issues.⁵⁴ Two “new” documents touch on this aspect of Nauvoo plurality.

Desdemona Fullmer Smith Benson

One of these documents is a previously unknown autobiographical account by Desdemona Fullmer, parts of which were transcribed by D. Michael Quinn. This manuscript has since been lost. A crucial part reads:

having been convinced of the truth of poligamie I therefore enter'd into the Order butt I dared not make it known not even to my parents for I was forbidden by the Prophet for it would endanger the life of Joseph and also many of the Saints. . . . [she has a night vision in which an angel tells her that the polygamy doctrine is true].⁵⁵

This autobiography thus attests to the profound secrecy of Joseph Smith's polygamy in Nauvoo, as he does not allow Desdemona to mention her marriage to him even to her parents.

53. “A Leaf from an Autobiography,” *Woman's Exponent* 7 (Dec. 15, 1878), 105.

54. B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (University of Illinois Press, 1992), 363–88.

55. Desdemona Fullmer, Second Autobiography, transcription by D. Michael Quinn, in Quinn papers. Cards in the “Polygamy, Joseph Smith's” and “Hyrum Smith, RE: Polygamy” groups, pp. 8–9, 72–73 of 166 in my pdf. Partially available at Hales, *Mormon Polygamy Documents*, JS0535. I included some quotes from the document (via Quinn's transcription) in the introduction to the Desdemona Fullmer section of *In Sacred Loneliness: The Documents*. This source also discusses Hyrum Smith's conversion to polygamy and states that Desdemona married Joseph in 1842.

In this document, Desdemona once again accuses Emma of trying to poison her. Whether or not this is true, such a belief indicates the distrust, uncertainty, and fear that characterized the lives of some of Smith's secret plural wives.

Eliza R. Snow Smith

The Quinn papers also contain a document stating that Eliza R. Snow "said she did not know much about it when she was married to Joseph Smith said she did not know if ever she would be owned as a wife."⁵⁶ I think this statement is significant as it shows that Joseph Smith's marriages to plural wives were secret and sometimes rushed, so the plural wife at times did not understand fully what the marriage entailed. In addition, Smith's statements led Snow to believe that her marriage might always be secret.

Taken together, these two documents demonstrate how secrecy about polygamy functioned as an isolating burden, a test of religious obedience, and an anxiety-inducing practice.

Polyandry

When I began to construct marriage histories of the women whom I had identified as plural wives of Joseph Smith, I found that Joseph Smith married some women who were already married to other men. In these cases, the women continued to live with their first husbands, resulting in two marriages existing simultaneously. This by definition is polyandry, a woman being married to two men simultaneously. Of course, the marriages were different: the first was legally a civil marriage for time, while the marriage to Smith was a religious marriage for time

56. Glenwood Ward, Relief Society Minutes, September 28, 1880, in Quinn Papers, in my pdf, p. 94 of 166. Also in Hales, *Mormon Polygamy Documents*, JS 0596.

and eternity.⁵⁷ Like all of Smith's plural marriages, they were secret and were not legal civil marriages.

The Bullock portion of the Bullock–Kimball document reflects this reality. There are in effect two lists: on the left side are sixteen names of women who were unmarried at the time of their marriage to Joseph Smith (with the exception of Elvira Cowles); on the right are nine names of polyandrous wives (as well as Emma Smith). This shows that Smith's polyandry was fully recognized by LDS leaders and historians as early as 1854. By the time *In Sacred Loneliness* was published, other historians, such as Richard Van Wagoner, Daniel Bachman, and Lawrence Foster, had already dealt with this issue to a certain extent.⁵⁸ Obviously, I could not simply ignore this phenomenon—of Joseph Smith's first twelve wives, nine were polyandrous. I worked to understand it.

One of the few documents giving a forthright explanation of it was an autobiography of Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner. In June 1834, Joseph Smith stayed at the home of Sydney Gilbert, where Mary was living. She was sixteen at the time. She married Adam Lightner, a non-Mormon, a year later, on August 11, 1835 in Missouri. (They had ten children between 1836 and 1847.) They moved to Nauvoo, and there Joseph Smith proposed to her. According to Mary Elizabeth's memoir,

When Joseph made known to me that God had Commanded him in July 1834 to take me for a Wife, but he had not dared to make it known to me, for when he received the Revelation; I was in Missouri and when he did see me, I was Married. But he was again commanded, to fulfil

57. I have found no evidence that I find convincing that such marriages were ceremonial, for "eternity only." See Todd Compton, "Were There 'Eternity-Only' Plural Marriages in Nauvoo?" in *Secret Covenants: New Insights on Early Mormon Polygamy*, edited by Cheryl L. Bruno (Signature Books, 2024), 295–334.

58. Richard S. Van Wagoner, "Mormon Polyandry in Nauvoo," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 3 (Fall 1985): 67–83.

the first revelation; or Suffer condemnation—for I was created for him before the foundation of the Earth was laid.

She married Joseph Smith in February 1842, while continuing to live with her first husband.⁵⁹ Smith's arguments that God would condemn him if he didn't marry her and that her spirit had been linked with his in the premortal existence were convincing to her. These religious imperatives required a marriage for time and eternity, and a previous civil marriage to another man would not stand in the way.

Marinda Johnson Hyde Smith

We can see similar patterns in a newly accessible document by Marinda Johnson Hyde Smith. Joseph Smith had lived in the same house as Marinda, the home of John Johnson and Alice Jacobs Johnson, in Hiram, Ohio, from September 12, 1831 to April 2, 1832.⁶⁰ Marinda was sixteen at this time. She married Orson Hyde on September 4, 1834 (and together they had ten children, born between 1835 and 1858). Orson Hyde was called as an apostle in 1835. Joseph Smith proposed to Marinda in fall 1841, and she married Smith in April 1842, or in 1843.⁶¹

A statement by Marinda, now available at the LDS Church History Library, discusses her polyandrous marriage to Smith. It is titled there

59. See *ISL*, 205–27; the full memoir can be read in *ISL: the Documents*, 141–83.

60. JS History, vol. A-1, Joseph Smith Papers, Sept. 12, 1831; April 2, 1832.

61. See *ISL*, 228–53, for Marinda's life. A list of Nauvoo sealings written by Thomas Bullock in the JS Journal, December 1842–June 1844, Joseph Smith Papers, after July 14, 1843, book 2, p. 310, includes the Joseph Smith-Marinda Hyde marriage, with the date April 1842. An affidavit signed by Marinda on May 1, 1869 gives the date of her marriage to Smith in May 1843. Joseph F. Smith polygamy affidavits (see above), book 1, p. 15. I follow the date in the Joseph Smith journal, as it was written much earlier, but regard the 1843 date as possible.

“Marinda N. Johnson Hyde statement, circa 1880.”⁶² In this short document she states:

The peculiarity of my condition in life seems to call for an explanation at my hand

The Lord gave me to Joseph Smith before I married Orson Hyde. This I did not know until ten years after, when Joseph taught me the doctrine of celestial marriage. This was in the fall of 1841 and the following Dec, the following revelation was brought to me by Apostle Wilford Woodruff, —

Nauvoo Dec 1, 1841

“Verily thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have called upon me to know my will concerning my handmaid Nancy Marinda Hyde; behold it is my will that she should have a better place prepared for her, than that in which she now lives, in order that her life may be spared unto her; . . . Let my handmaid Nancy Marinda Hyde hearken to the council of my servant Joseph in all things whatsoever he shall teach unto her, and it shall be a blessing upon her and upon her children after her, unto her justification saith the Lord. . . .”⁶³

A few years before Mr. Hyde departed this life he told me that Joseph Smith before our marriage, requested him not to marry me, but gave no reason for the request

This pattern seems to mirror that of Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, in that Joseph Smith said he had a spiritual witness years earlier that Marinda belonged to him in some sense and then explained this connection to Marinda when he proposed to her and later married her polyandrously in Nauvoo. It is also interesting that he had asked Orson Hyde not to marry Marinda (presumably because of this earlier spiritual witness) but that Hyde married her anyway.

62. MS 23157, CHL. In 2010, documents from the First Presidency’s papers were transferred to the Church History Library and Joseph Smith Papers. See Joseph Smith Papers, “Discourse, 27 June 1839, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff–A,” Source Note, n. 6.

63. *ISL*, 236.

Marinda's case is unlike Mary Elizabeth's in that Mary Elizabeth was married to a nonmember, while Marinda was married to a Church member not just in good standing but in the leading quorums of the LDS Church.

Ruth Vose Sayers Smith

In the Andrew Jenson research notes is a short, unpublished biography of Ruth Vose Sayers, which adds a different twist to polyandrous marriage:

[*Ruth and her non-Mormon husband Edward moved to Nauvoo.*] While there the strongest affection sprang up between the Prophet Joseph and Mr. Sayers. The latter not attaching much importance to ^the^ theory of a future life insisted that his wife ^Ruth^ should be sealed to the Prophet for eternity, as he himself should only claim her in this life. She the[n] [was] sealed to the Prophet in Emma Smith's presence and thus were ^became^ numbered among the Prophets plural wives. She however ^though she^ remained with her husband ^continued to live with Mr. Sayers^ until his death.⁶⁴

This is a remarkable story. It seems odd, even hard to believe, that a nonmember husband accepted that his wife should marry another man, even if it was a marriage apparently for eternity. But in this story, Edward Sayer does not just accept this; he "insisted" that Ruth should marry Joseph Smith. This seems to be putting all the motivation for the marriage on the first husband. If this story has some truth and Edward agreed to the polyandrous marriage, the idea of it probably wouldn't have originated with him. Joseph or Ruth would have suggested it.

Brian Hales uses this story to argue that the Smith-Vose marriage was for eternity only and did not have a time element. (He also argues that all of Joseph Smith's polyandrous marriages were for eternity

64. Jenson papers, pp. 9 and 11 of PDF downloaded from CHL website. MS 17956, box 49, folder 16.

only.⁶⁵) I agree that the story seems to include that concept. However, as this is secondhand evidence written by a non-Nauvoo insider long after Nauvoo, we would like to find some solid corroboration on this point. We do not know who Jenson's source was, and we do not know why he decided not to publish the little biography.

Sacred Loneliness

The women I wrote about in *In Sacred Loneliness* entered plural marriages in Nauvoo under conditions of secrecy that limited many of the normal experiences of marriage. But in their later lives, they lived openly in plural marriages in Utah. As I documented their experiences in post-Nauvoo plural marriages, I was struck by how distanced—emotionally, economically, and even physically—they were from their husbands, who were often high Church leaders. Plural wives had less time with their husband, and less financial support. Sometimes a plural husband had a favorite wife or wives, which left the other wives to struggle. This situation was exacerbated when the husband had many plural wives instead of just one or two. And yet, Church leaders taught that plural marriage was necessary for complete exaltation and that the more wives a man had, the greater would be his exaltation. This led leaders such as Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball to marry fifty-five and forty-three wives, respectively.⁶⁶

The title of *In Sacred Loneliness* points to this enigmatic contradiction in polygamy. The promise of exaltation through this marriage

65. I disagree. See Compton, "Were There 'Eternity-Only' Plural Marriages in Nauvoo?" 295–334.

66. I count a marriage if there was a marriage ceremony. For the Young wives, I follow the numbering of Jeffery Ogden Johnson, "Determining and Defining 'Wife': The Brigham Young Households," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 3 (Fall 1987): 57–70. For Kimball wives, I follow Andrew Kimball, *The Blood in Their Veins: The Kimballs, Polygamy, and the Shaping of Mormonism* (Signature Books, 2025).

practice sharply contrasts with the loneliness and struggle that these women endured.

Eliza Maria Partridge Smith Lyman

Eliza Partridge Lyman is well documented by her wonderful diary, but after my book's publication, I found some of her letters in the Church History Library and published transcriptions of two of them in *In Sacred Loneliness: The Documents*.⁶⁷

One of these letters offers a vivid account of Eliza's circumstances in Salt Lake City in the wake of her husband's departure with two of his other wives to serve a mission in San Bernardino, California. In an August 29, 1853 letter to her husband Amasa Lyman, Eliza described how difficult her life was with him so far away. She pointedly reproved Lyman for not writing often enough. Then she shared many details of her life and the lives of her sister wives in Salt Lake City, which included deaths and sicknesses survived. The Utes were threatening, and the Saints were directed to "fort up." Eliza, who had two continuously ill young children, detailed the financial troubles she was enduring:

I do not feel at all discouraged, but I certainly see no way to get bread or vegetables to live on this winter, but I make no doubt but we shall live a good while yet if we do not die till we are starved to death, for I think I have proved that, that was ^is^ not easy to do. I have lived without bread when some of the family had bread to throw to the pigs, and can do it again if necessary.

This letter illustrates how plural marriage shaped Eliza's experience. In a monogamous marriage, Eliza would have accompanied Amasa Lyman to San Bernardino. Instead, she lived separately from him for long periods, managing scarcity and danger largely on her own.

67. *ISL: The Documents*, 496–502. Letter to Amasa Lyman, Aug. 29, 1853, Amasa Lyman Papers, Letters from Wives and Children, 1853–1876, box 6, folder 9, MS 829, CHL; Letter to Paulina Eliza Phelps Lyman, July 26, 1881, Paulina Lyman Papers, 1839–1884, box 1, folder 11, MS 22808, CHL.

Some Date Changes—Certain or Proposed

Sometimes getting a date more precisely correct can seem like just tidy housekeeping. However, in some cases determining the correct date can change a story in significant ways, as is the case with the marriage of Flora Woodworth and Carlos Gove.

Flora Woodworth Smith Gove

When *In Sacred Loneliness* was published, some sources indicated that Flora married Joseph Smith in spring 1843 and then married Gove after Joseph Smith's June 1844 death.⁶⁸ More recently, however, a civil marriage record for Flora Woodworth and Carlos Gove was discovered in Illinois state records, giving us the date of the legal marriage to Gove as August 23, 1843; the marriage took place at Warsaw, about fifteen miles south of Nauvoo.⁶⁹ So now we know that Flora married Carlos Gove while Joseph Smith was alive. Notably, this marriage took place the day after Joseph Smith's blowup with Emma regarding Flora, as recorded in William Clayton's diary. However, after August 23, Joseph Smith continued to visit Flora, on August 26, 28, and 29.⁷⁰ All this raises new questions about the nature of her marriages to Joseph and Carlos, as well as the role of Emma Smith in these events.

In addition, Melissa Lott wrote, in a letter included in Andrew Jenson's research notes, that Flora "Married Carlos Gove at Navoo with the

68. Jenson, "Plural Marriage," 225. *ISL*, 389–90. Flora starts to appear in William Clayton's journal on May 2, 1843. George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Signature Books/Smith Research Associates, 1995), 100; Helen Mar Whitney, "Travels Beyond the Mississippi," *Woman's Exponent*, Nov. 1, 1884, 87; Jeni Broberg Holzapfel and Richard Holzapfel, eds., *A Woman's View: Helen Mar Whitney's Reminiscences of Early Church History* (BYU Religious Studies Center, 1997), 407.

69. August 23, 1843, License 750, Hancock County. Illinois Statewide Marriage Index Illinois State Archives, at <https://www.ilsos.gov/isavital/marriageSearch.do>; Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:105–7.

70. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 118–19.

Consent of the Prophet.”⁷¹ While Lott may be right about the consent of Joseph, she was wrong about the place of marriage. Jenson’s research notes indicate that Flora quickly regretted her marriage to Gove, given that he was an unbeliever, “and intended to cling to the Prophet.”⁷² It is not known if Flora was formally divorced from Gove or if they were separated temporarily.

This is all very odd, if Lott is correct about Joseph Smith’s consent. Why would Joseph encourage Flora (one of his favorites wives, judging from Clayton’s journal) to marry a nonmember, Carlos Gove? Why was the marriage immediately after the fight with Emma on August 22? Did Joseph encourage the civil marriage to appease Emma? Did Joseph encourage Flora to enter a legal marriage and then continue his plural marriage with her? That would make this a polyandrous marriage, which is D. Michael Quinn’s interpretation. Hales thinks it is more likely that Emma might have encouraged the marriage to Gove because of her jealousy.

Quinn puts the Gove marriage in the pattern of a “front husband” marriage, such as the “pretend” marriage of Sarah Ann Whitney to Joseph Kingsbury after her marriage to Joseph Smith.⁷³ However, this pattern is very different from the Whitney-Kingsbury marriage, in that the proposed “front husband” was a non-Mormon.

71. Melissa Lott to Andrew Jenson, June 27, 1887, in Jenson Research Notes, PDF p. 31.

72. Jenson Research Notes, PDF p. 29. Helen Mar Whitney might have been the source for this sentence.

73. D. Michael Quinn, “Evidence for the Sexual Side of Joseph Smith’s Polygamy,” response to Brian Hales in Mormon History Association meeting, June 29, 2012, expanded and privately circulated on Dec. 31, 2012. This is available at Brian Hales’s website, *Mormon Polygamy Documents*, <https://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Quinns-FINAL-RESPONSE.pdf>. Brian Hales’s side of the argument can also be found here. See <https://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/master-index/>, under 82.060.

In summary, the correct date of the Carlos Gove-Flora Woodworth (Smith) civil marriage in 1843 makes Flora's story even more enigmatic.

Louisa Beaman, Zina Huntington, and Presendia Huntington

Gary Bergera and D. Michael Quinn have presented and discussed alternate dates for the marriages of Louisa Beaman, Zina Huntington, and Presendia Huntington, based on a source called "Historian's Private Journal. 1858," by Wilford Woodruff.⁷⁴ Following a journal entry for July 1, 1866, Woodruff wrote four Joseph Smith plural marriage dates:

Nauvoo Illinois

Joseph Smith & Louisa Beeman were
sealed May [blank] 1840 by Joseph B Noble

Joseph Smith and Zina Huntington was sealed
Oct 27, 1840 By Dimick B Huntington in Nauvoo

Joseph Smith & Presinda Huntington were sealed
Dec 11, 1840 By Dimick B. Huntington in Nauvoo

Joseph Smith & Rhoda Richards were Sealed
June 12 1843, By Willard Richards in Joseph Store Nauvoo.

These dates (except that of Richards) conflict with many other attestations, notably the Joseph F. Smith affidavits in 1869, which have the first three dates in 1841, not 1840.

If Joseph Smith's marriage to Zina took place on October 27, 1840, then we would have to tell her story very differently. Her marriage to Henry Jacobs on March 7, 1841 would then follow the pattern of marriage to Joseph, followed by civil marriage to another husband. Some

74. Gary James Bergera, "Memory as Evidence: Dating Joseph Smith's Plural Marriages to Louisa Beaman, Zina Jacobs, and Presendia Buell," *Journal of Mormon History* 41, no. 4 (Oct. 2015): 95–131. Quinn, "Evidence," 14. Brian Hales has defended the traditional dates, "Dating Joseph Smith's First Nauvoo Sealings," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 20 (2016): 1–16.

evidence would support this (including Zina's 1898 interview in which she said that "Brigham Young repeated the ceremony after his return from England"⁷⁵). However, family traditions of Jacobs's marriage to Zina don't seem to portray him as a "pretend" husband. Zina also had well-documented children with Henry Jacobs.

An 1840 marriage date for Presendia Huntington would not change her story much, as she had married her first husband, Norman Buell, in 1827.

I believe that the preponderance of evidence supports the 1841 dates. However, I regard the 1840 dates as possible, and there is evidence that can be marshalled to support them—for example, while Joseph Bates Noble usually gave the year 1841 for the Louisa Beaman marriage, on two occasions, including in an affidavit, he gave the year 1840.⁷⁶

Bergera does bring up a point we should always keep in mind. All human beings have human fallibilities. All have biases, and their writings reflect limited personal perspectives. Time certainly causes our memories to lose sharpness. Dates, in particular, are sometimes not remembered correctly unless written down. This is why contemporary legal and religious records are so valuable, and why secret polygamy in Nauvoo has left many plural marriage dates uncertain.⁷⁷

75. Bergera, 121.

76. "Affidavits about Celestial Marriage," MS 3423, book 1:38 (also 4:38). Curiously, Noble gave another affidavit on the same day, June 26, 1869, with the 1841 date, 1:3 (=4:1).

77. Wilford Woodruff in his diary in 1862 mentioned a secret book of sealings, but we don't know if it dealt with Nauvoo sealings. Wilford Woodruff diary, Feb. 26, 1862. Scott Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898* (Signature Books, 1983–85), 6:21–22.

Sylvia Sessions Lyon

Hales and Bradley have given us an alternate date for the polyandrous Sylvia Sessions marriage to Joseph Smith, based on a careful reading of the Joseph F. Smith polygamy affidavits.⁷⁸ Book 1 states that Sessions married Smith on February 8, 1842 (and this has been the date I and other people have used), while Book 4 (which gives basically the same affidavits as Book 1) has February 8, 1843, a year later. This is an alternate date, and it is entirely possible to consider it and see how it leads us to retell the complex story of Sylvia Sessions and her first husband, Windsor Lyon, and her marriage to Joseph Smith.

It seems reasonable to expect that Book 1 was the original, preferred book, and Book 4 was a copy. Therefore, the 1842/1843 variation might be a simple scribal error, and the 1842 date is correct. But Brian Hales argues that Book 4 is the more primary, reliable, and complete document, given that it contains two incomplete entries that are not in Book 1. This position—and the later 1843 marriage date—allows him to maintain his argument that all polyandrous marriages were marriages for eternity only and did not include sexual relations. Sylvia Sessions Lyon, however, presents a problem for Hales, as she told her daughter Josephine that she, Josephine, was a daughter of Joseph Smith.⁷⁹ To address this issue, Hales works out a chronology in which Sylvia Sessions and Windsor Lyon were divorced after he was excommunicated, and Sylvia Sessions Lyon and Joseph Smith cohabited after the divorce. This fits with an 1843 marriage date, not with an 1842 date.

78. "Affidavits about Celestial Marriage," CHL, MS 3423, folders 1–6. Folders 1–4 are loose affidavits. Folder 5 contains two affidavit volumes, which have come to be known as Books 1 and 2 (and are labeled as such). Folder 6 contains another two Smith affidavit volumes, which have come to be known as Books 3 and 4.

79. Affidavit of Mrs. Josephine Rosetta Fisher, Feb. 24, 1915, "Affidavits about Celestial Marriage," folder 1, last item. For DNA evidence relating to Josephine's parentage, see Compton, "Were There 'Eternity-Only' Plural Marriages in Nauvoo?," 311–15.

However, later developments point to Book 1 being the primary, authoritative book, as seems logical, and thus that Book 4 is the copy, which suggests that the 1843 date is a copyist's mistake.⁸⁰

"Possible Wives"

In my introduction to *In Sacred Loneliness*, I included a category of "Possible Wives," wives who may have had only one attestation or whose evidence was not strong, so I did not include them in my list of thirty-three plural wives. In effect, they were marked for further research. As we have seen, some of these women were included in the Bullock–Kimball list. In two cases, we have further "new" documents that support "possible" wives.

Esther Dutcher Smith [Smith?]

On October 10, 1851, Esther Dutcher Smith,⁸¹ married to Albert Smith (no relation to Joseph Smith) since 1826, was sealed to Joseph Smith in a proxy marriage. Albert stood as proxy for Joseph in the sealing. An early proxy marriage to Joseph Smith is evidence that a woman might have married Smith in Nauvoo, but it is not certain evidence. Recently, documentation that Esther was married to Joseph Smith in Nauvoo has emerged. Daniel H. Wells, who had been a counselor in the First Presidency under Brigham Young, wrote to Apostle Joseph F. Smith, in a letter dated June 25, 1888,

He [*Albert Smith*] is also much afflicted with the loss of his first wife. [*Esther Dutcher*] It seems that she was sealed to Joseph the Prophet in the days of Nauvoo, though she still remained his [*Albert's*] wife, and afterwards nearly broke his heart by telling him of it, and expressing her intention of adhering to that relationship. He however got to feeling

80. See Johnny Stephenson's website, *Mormonite Musings*, at <https://mormonitemusings.wordpress.com/2015/09/17/brian-hales-polygamy-sylvia-lyon-the-1869-utah-affidavits/#refn19/>.

81. For Esther (1811–1856), see *Find a Grave*, 10963712.

better over it, and acting for Joseph, had her sealed to him [*Joseph Smith*], and to himself for time, [*a large section of the page redacted*] . . .⁸²

This letter provides the clearest evidence yet that Esther Dutcher was a plural wife of Joseph Smith. As D. Michael Quinn notes, Esther bore a son named “Joseph” on September 21, 1844,⁸³ so this might be another candidate for a child of Joseph Smith.

Mary Heron Snider [Smith?]

Mary Heron Snider represents another instance where newly accessible material has shifted the evidentiary balance. Testimony from Joseph Johnson, preserved in Quinn’s notes and later cited by Brian Hales, indicates that his mother-in-law, Mary Heron, had sexual relations with Joseph Smith in Nauvoo.⁸⁴ Mary Heron is included in my list of possible wives in *In Sacred Loneliness*, and I knew about this document in 1996, but it is now more fully transcribed and widely accessible. Joseph Johnson (brother of two of Joseph Smith’s plural wives, as well as Benjamin Johnson) testified in a Church council as follows:

I never heard any conversation to say it was right to go to bed to a woman if not found out—I was aware the thing was wrong.—had been with—he sd. He was familiar with the first frigging —that was done in his house with his mother in law—by Joseph.⁸⁵

As Quinn notes, if Johnson can be believed, Joseph Smith was certainly having sexual relations with Heron as a polyandrous wife. In the Bullock–Kimball list of Joseph Smith’s plural wives, Heber C. Kimball lists Mary Heron, “Mrs. John Snyder,” which gives added support for accepting her as a wife of Joseph Smith.

82. Daniel H. Wells to Joseph F. Smith, June 25, 1888, in Joseph F. Smith Incoming Correspondence, 1855–1918, MS 1325, box 16, folder 9, CHL.

83. Quinn, “Evidence,” 3.

84. Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy*, 1:463–69; Quinn, “Evidence,” 21.

85. Council meeting and trial of Joseph E. Johnson, Sept. 2, 1850, Miscellaneous Minutes, Brigham Young Papers, CHL; Quinn, “Evidence,” 21–22.

Also on the Kimball list (in pencil) are two names that often appear in antagonistic sources: Emeline Hibbard (White) and Jane Silverthorn (Law), wife of William Law. I won't discuss them at length, but it is surprising to find their names on a "sympathetic" list. William Law flatly stated that Joseph Smith proposed to Jane and she turned him down.⁸⁶ White, a non-Mormon, is portrayed in one source as a prostitute.⁸⁷ Despite the contradictory evidence, their appearance on the Bullock–Kimball list requires the historian to consider them seriously as possible wives of Joseph Smith.

Phebe Watrous (Woodworth), the mother of Flora Ann Woodworth and the wife of Lucien Woodworth, is also on the Bullock–Kimball list. She had an early proxy marriage to Joseph Smith, which is evidence for a possible marriage to Smith during his life.⁸⁸ On this basis, Gary Bergera and George A. Smith had already accepted her as a full wife of Joseph Smith.⁸⁹ Her inclusion on the Bullock–Kimball list makes it even more likely that she was a wife of Joseph Smith. I would now move her to my "possible wives" category.

Life Writings

From the beginning of my work on *In Sacred Loneliness*, I was always interested in telling the women's full life stories, so "life writings" of

86. For an introduction to the contradictory evidence on Jane Law, see Lyndon W. Cook, *William Law: Biographical Essays, Nauvoo Diary, Correspondence, Interview* (Grandin Book, 1994), 53.

87. Wilhelm Wyl, *Mormon Portraits: or the Truth About the Mormon Leaders from 1830 to 1886* (Tribune Printing and Publishing Co., 1886), 55, 60.

88. However, this is not certain evidence, as we have one case, Cordelia Morley, in which she did not marry Joseph during his life but still had an early proxy marriage to him.

89. Gary James Bergera, "Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists, 1841–44," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 30; George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: "... But We Called It Celestial Marriage"* (Signature Books, 2008), 623.

these women published after my book are welcome additions to the *In Sacred Loneliness* focus.

The following have appeared since 1997:

Among the most significant is the 2003 publication of Eliza Maria Partridge Smith Lyman's journal, which features excellent notes by editor Scott Partridge.⁹⁰

Helen Mar Whitney's 1884 to 1896 diaries, edited by Charles Hatch and myself (2003), are a magnificent window into her later life; they extend from the death of her second husband, Horace Whitney, until the weeks before her death. These diaries are part of the Life Writings of Frontier Women series from Utah State University Press.⁹¹ They show what life was like for a widow, fairly elite, but not well-to-do, in urban Salt Lake City toward the end of the nineteenth century. They include harrowing moments of tragedy and loss, as well as plodding documentation of daily struggles and experiences. It's a fascinating record of the Kimball and Whitney families, as well as a sociological artifact of a dramatic period of transition in Utah history.⁹²

The First Fifty Years of Relief Society (2016), edited by Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, and Matthew J. Grow, is a wonderful collection of primary documents offering a wealth of information on women in my book, such as Eliza R. Snow Smith Young, Zina Huntington Jacobs Smith Young, Marinda Hyde, and Sarah Kingsley Cleveland Smith.⁹³ It's also very helpful to have the complete minutes of the Nauvoo Relief Society to refer to. The annotation and commentary in this book are superb.

90. Scott Partridge, ed., *Eliza Maria Partridge: Journal* (Grandin Book Company, 2003).

91. Hatch and Compton, *A Widow's Tale*.

92. For further on Helen, see Kimball, *The Blood in Their Veins*, 133–72.

93. Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*. The online version includes many valuable short biographies of women. <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society/>.

The Diaries of Emmeline B. Wells (2017), edited by Cherry Bushman Silver and Sheree Maxwell Bench, is a digital publication of Wells's extensive and endlessly interesting and important diaries.⁹⁴ She was a close friend of many plural wives of Joseph Smith, so the publication of her diaries has great relevance to the women of *In Sacred Loneliness*. Following are two examples relating to Presendia Huntington Buell Smith Kimball, sister of Zina Huntington Jacobs Smith Young.

As a witness to Presendia's healing charisma, Emmeline wrote, on January 16, 1881, "I went down to Presendia [Huntington] Kimball's and brought her to administer to Lucile for her face to be healed. Lucile has implicit faith in the ordinance she [Presendia] came washed and anointed it in the name of Jesus it will be healed I am sure."⁹⁵

On May 15, 1890, Emmeline wrote about four important Mormon women: "I felt lonely and thought I would begin to write, when a messenger came from Big-Cotton-wood to say Aunt Presendia and Aunt Bathsheba [Smith] had been thrown out of the carriage and injured, and I must send Dr. [Romania] Pratt and Aunt Zina out immediately. They started off about 6 p.m. I felt very sorrowful over the affair and could not sleep."

My own *In Sacred Loneliness: The Documents* (2022) mostly publishes writings available when I wrote the first *In Sacred Loneliness*, but in this book I often was able to include complete documents (letters, autobiographies, interviews), whereas in the earlier book I only quoted excerpts from these documents. There is a great value in reading the whole document. I also added notes and background, which I hope are helpful. As was mentioned above, I included some letters that I did not

94. Church Historian's Press, *The Diaries of Emmeline B. Wells* (Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), <https://churchhistorianspress.org/emmeline-b-wells/>.

95. For background on women healers in the LDS tradition, see Jonathan Stapley and Kristine Wright, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 1–85.

know about when I wrote the first *In Sacred Loneliness*: letters by Sarah Kingsley Cleveland Smith, counselor in the first Relief Society Presidency, after she and her family left Nauvoo and resettled in Plymouth, Illinois; and two letters by Eliza Partridge Smith Lyman.

Conclusion

Since *In Sacred Loneliness* was published in late 1997, newly discovered and newly accessible documents have refined, strengthened, and complicated our understanding of the lives of Joseph Smith's plural wives. None have caused any major shifts in interpretation for me. Instead, some new documents simply give a bit more solidity to important events in these women's lives. Reliable death dates for Fanny Alger and Lucinda Pendleton Morgan Harris, for instance, allow their lives to be situated more accurately within historical timelines.

Other documents strengthened positions that I had taken earlier. For example, evidence from the Andrew Jenson research notes supported Lucinda Pendleton Morgan Smith Harris's place on my list, as well as the 1838 dating of her marriage to Joseph Smith. (At the same time, admittedly, these new documents weakened the position that Lucinda had been a nurse in the Civil War.)

In other instances, new evidence has complicated existing narratives. A solid date for Flora Woodworth's marriage to Carlos Gove—now occurring before, not after, Joseph Smith's death—made the story of her marriages to Smith and Gove more enigmatic.

Similarly, Andrew Jenson's unpublished short biography of Ruth Vose Sayers is also puzzling, as it traces an odd triangle with non-Mormon Edward Sayers giving his wife to Joseph Smith to marry. We wonder who Jenson's source was and why he didn't publish the biography.

Other new evidence—or at least, evidence that was new to me—such as the letters from Lucinda Pendleton Harris, Sarah Cleveland, and Eliza Partridge Lyman, bring these women more fully to life. I find

Sarah Cleveland's letters expressing her longing for her daughter and grandchildren in Utah especially moving, as they convey the emotional cost of migration and separation. Eliza Partridge's letters are similarly poignant and highlight the ongoing hardships of plural marriage.

In my "Possible Wives" category, new documents have fortified the cases of some women as wives. Esther Dutcher, we now know, was almost certainly married to Joseph Smith, and Mary Heron Snider's case as a plural wife of Smith is strengthened, though I would still keep her in my "possible" category. Other lesser-known wives appear in the Bullock–Kimball list, which might cause us to list them as "possible" wives now.

Finally, Marinda Johnson Hyde's short "Statement" gives more insight into the dynamics of her marriages to Orson Hyde and Joseph Smith. It presents a striking parallel to Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner Smith Young's account of being convinced to engage in a polyandrous marriage. The Lightner and Hyde accounts support each other but leave us with many questions.

Taken together, these materials demonstrate both the progress that has been made and the work that remains. They confirm that the history of Nauvoo plural marriage is neither static nor closed. As archivists continue to process collections and as historians revisit neglected sources, our understanding of the thirty-three women at the center of *In Sacred Loneliness*—and of others on the margins—will continue to deepen.

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