

The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith

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Mormonism's founder, Joseph Smith, was married to more than 30 women, meaning that Emma was not his one and only wife. Many who know about Smith's philanderous ways may assume that these women must have been widows or "old maids" and their prophet was doing a favor to them by marrying them. However, the idea that Joseph Smith somehow rescued his plural wives from being single is just not accurate. The fact of the matter is that Smith met the majority of his wives when they were just preteens or teenagers. In fact, about a quarter of Smith's eventual wives (nine of them) were 12 or younger when Smith met them, even as young as 5 (Sarah Ann Whitney) or 6 (Nancy Winchester). Over the years, Smith nurtured these relationships until he married them, with the vast majority of these marriages taking place between 1841 to 1843. At least a quarter of his wives were no older than teenagers when Smith (who was in his late 30s) married them; the majority of his wives were under 30. Only an eighth of Smith's wives were older than he was at marriage.¹

George D. Smith explains,

When the Smiths moved to Ohio in 1831, Joseph there met the majority of his future wives. Most of them were still adolescents—the children of close associates. . . In other words, for a decade prior to Smith's first plural marriages, he met and established relationships with those who would later become his wives. . . . By the time the Latter-day Saints settled in Illinois, the young women Joseph once met as pre-teenagers had become old enough for him to marry.²

In his book *Nauvoo Polygamy*, Smith provides a list of Joseph Smith's future wives and the interval between their first encounter with the Mormon founder and their Nauvoo marriage.

Here is Table 1.1 found on page 36 of his book.

¹ <https://www.mrm.org/list-joseph-smiths-wives>. Retrieved August 16, 2023.

² Smith, George A. (2008). *Nauvoo Polygamy* (Salt Lake City; Signature Books), 29, 30, 35, 51.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

| Future wife | Year met | Age at meeting | Age at marriage | Marriage Year |
|------------------------|----------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Louisa Beaman | 1827 | 12 | 26 | 1841 |
| Zina Huntington | 1836 | 15 | 20 | 1841 |
| Presendia Huntington | 1836 | 25 | 31 | 1841 |
| Agnes Coolbrith | 1832 | 21 | 30 | 1842 |
| Lucinda Pendleton | 1838 | 37 | 40 | 1842 |
| Mary Elizabeth Rollins | 1831 | 12 | 23 | 1842 |
| Sylvia Sessions | 1837 | 19 | 23 | 1842 |
| Patty Bartlett | 1837 | 42 | 47 | 1842 |
| Sarah Kingsley | 1835/39 | 47/51 | 53 | 1842 |
| Elizabeth Jane Davis | 1831 | 40 | 50 | 1842 |
| Marinda Johnson | 1831 | 16 | 26 | 1842 |
| Delcena Johnson | 1832 | 26 | 35 | 1842 |
| Eliza Snow | 1831-23 | 27 | 38 | 1842 |
| Sarah Rapson | – | 49 | – | 1842 |
| Sarah Ann Whitney | 1831 | 5 | 17 | 1842 |
| Martha McBride | 1833 | 28 | 37 | 1842 |
| Ruth Vose | 1832 | 24 | 35 | 1843 |
| Flora Ann Woodworth | by 1841 | 14 | 16 | 1843 |

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

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|-------------------|----------|----|----|------|
| Emily Partridge | 1831 | 7 | 19 | 1843 |
| Eliza Partridge | 1831 | 10 | 22 | 1843 |
| Almera Johnson | 1832 | 19 | 29 | 1843 |
| Lucy Walker | 1841 | 15 | 17 | 1843 |
| Sarah Lawrence | 1837 | 11 | 16 | 1843 |
| Maria Lawrence | 1837 | 13 | 19 | 1843 |
| Helen Mar Kimball | by 1836 | 8 | 14 | 1843 |
| Elvira Cowles | 1835 | 22 | 29 | 1843 |
| Rhoda Ricahrds | 1843 | 58 | 58 | 1843 |
| Hannah Ells | by 1840 | 27 | 30 | 1843 |
| Mary Ann Frost | by 1837 | 28 | 34 | 1843 |
| Olive Frost | 1843 | 26 | 27 | 1843 |
| Nancy Winchester | ca. 1834 | 6 | 14 | 1843 |
| Desdemona Fullmer | 1836 | 27 | 33 | 1843 |
| Melissa Lott | 1836 | 12 | 19 | 1843 |
| Sarah Scott | – | 25 | – | 1843 |
| Phebe Watrous | by 1841 | 36 | 38 | 1843 |
| Mary Huston | – | 25 | – | 1843 |
| Fanny Young | 1833 | 46 | 55 | 1843 |