

Hidden in Plain Sight: A Rediscovered List of Joseph Smith's Wives

Cheryl L. Bruno

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In January 1854, during one of the coldest winters the Mormon settlers had experienced since moving to Utah, Patty Bartlett (Sessions) went about her daily duties as a midwife, immersed in the practical realities of early pioneer life. During the first two weeks of the month, Patty was involved in the births of multiple children, showing no sign of slowing down, despite lack of sleep and the bitter cold. On January 2, she helped Lorenzo Snow's wife deliver a son. The following day, she attended a dance at the schoolhouse, and by the end of the week, she had officiated in the birth of twins and the death of a local man, donating a shirt to lay him out in. Her month was filled with social, ecclesiastical, and civic events, routine demands, and crucial medical operations.¹ Unbeknownst to her, as she navigated her everyday activities that year, male Church historians in Salt Lake City were compiling a confidential list, with her name on it.

This list, here named as the *Bullock/Kimball 1854-1866 List of 33 Wives of Joseph Smith*, is the first of its kind known to be compiled in an effort by Latter-day Saint leaders to record and document the first Mormon prophet's wives. Created between 1854 and 1866 in the Church Historian's Office, the list began when clerk Thomas Bullock penned twenty-four women's names on a single, lined sheet of paper over the period of six years. In 1866, under the direction of Heber C. Kimball and in the presence of George A.

*Links in this paper are live at journalofmormonpolygamy.org.

¹Patty B. Sessions diary, Vol. 4, January 1853–January 1856, [26], MS 1462, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT, hereafter CHL, [LINK](#).

Smith and Joseph F. Smith, additional names and corrections were added in pencil by scribe Robert L. Campbell.²

This paper introduces and analyzes the Bullock/Kimball list. It argues that this record inaugurated a documentary tradition that influenced how both institutional and independent historians have defined and remembered these women. Through an examination of similar lists compiled across 170 years, the paper demonstrates how early modes of recordkeeping that originated in male ecclesiastical authority continued to shape later efforts to recover and interpret the lives of Mormon plural wives. Throughout this study, I strive to move beyond the confines of these lists by telling the women's stories in fuller and more personal ways.

Intent of the List

The purpose, authenticity, and intent of the Bullock/Kimball list remain subjects of intrigue. Thomas Bullock, Heber C. Kimball, George A. Smith, and Joseph F. Smith were all participants in the preservation and shaping of early Latter-day Saint history, and the list emerges from within that developing historical culture. Its structure suggests an internal effort to gather and stabilize information.

The document's physical and contextual features support this interpretation. It appears to have remained privately within the historian's office and was revisited when Heber C. Kimball arrived with relevant information.³ This pattern suggests that the list functioned as a working reference capable of amendment. Its inconsistent spelling, variable penmanship, and occasional uncertainty about women's first names are characteristic of nineteenth-century clerical practice, but in this context they also align with the habits of an evolving compilation rather than a finalized register. Its spare format, lack of explanation, and absence of any claim

²Names of Relief Society Members circa 1854, MS 3157, CHL, [LINK](#). The document states: "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)."

³Historical Department office journal, Volume 29, Jun. 1, 1866–Jun. 1, 1868, [71], CR 100 1, 64-65, CHL, [LINK](#). On September 14, the Church Historical Department office journal records, "Pres. Heber C. Kimball called at the office to-day and related his experience in connection with the establishment of polygamy."

to completeness or authority reinforce the impression that it was not intended as a finished historical statement. In this sense, it reflects the beginnings of an effort to assemble the names of women connected to emerging accounts of plural marriage at a time when no standardized narrative yet existed. This task was complicated by the secrecy surrounding plural marriage, incomplete records, and shifting theological priorities.

Questions about motive naturally attend a document of this kind. Some readers may interpret the list as an effort to link plural marriage more explicitly to Joseph Smith. Others may view it as the preservation of fragile recollections before they disappeared. The document itself does not announce its purpose. What it does disclose is a moment in which remembered relationships were first gathered into documentary form. Later generations would revisit, expand, defend, and systematize these claims. The Bullock/Kimball list stands at the threshold in the development of archival consolidation.

Mislabeled Hid the List in Plain Sight

The labeling of the Bullock/Kimball document as “Female Relief Society 1844” appears to have shaped how the list was understood for decades. This label, written along the side of the document by an unknown archivist, was common practice in the Church Historian’s Office in the 1850s and 1860s. Clerks often relied on quick side annotations, or notes on the reverse, to categorize loose documents for filing.

There is, however, a significant mismatch between the label and the content of the list. The names it contains do not align with the meticulously kept Relief Society roster of 1842-44.⁴ Ten of the thirty-three women on the Bullock/Kimball list were not members of the Nauvoo Relief Society at all.⁵ Moreover, some of the most influential women in the Relief Society are not included

⁴See “A Book of Records Containing the proceedings of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo,” images at The First Fifty Years of Relief Society website, [LINK](#); and Katherine Pollock, “Reference List: 1338 Members of the Nauvoo Relief Society Matched with Biographical Links,” [LINK](#).

⁵These were: Sarah and Maria Lawrence, Lucy Walker, Helen Mar Kimball, Melissa Lott, Flora Woodworth, Eveline Knight, Cordelia Morley, Almera Johnson, and Emeline Hibbard (White).

on the Bullock/Kimball list.⁶ Instead, as this paper will show, the list aligns strikingly with names both earlier and later identified as plural wives of Joseph Smith.

Given the contentious nature of plural marriage, especially in Nauvoo, associating Joseph Smith's wives with the Relief Society could have been a deliberate effort to link them with a more socially acceptable, non-controversial institution. The Relief Society, a women's organization that focused on charity, service, and spiritual development, was widely respected and less politically charged than was the practice of polygamy. Detaching the list from connection with Joseph Smith's plural marriages would have allowed the Historian's Office to protect these women's identities, shielding them from scrutiny and criticism should the list become public.⁷

Alternatively, if the Relief Society label was added later by someone unfamiliar with the context, it may reflect a common historical oversight in how women's roles in polygamy were understood. Without recognizing the complex relationship these women had with Joseph Smith as plural wives, someone might have mistakenly assumed the list was an innocuous, organizational roster of Relief Society members. This later misinterpretation highlights a persistent issue in Mormon historiography: the tendency to overlook or misunderstand the role of women, particularly in relation to the practice of polygamy.

The women included on the Bullock/Kimball list were not actively involved in decisions about their inclusion on this list. This tends to erase their agency in revealing or not revealing their level of participation in the controversial practice of polygamy. It keeps them from emerging as full participants in the foundational events of the early Church.

Whether applied mistakenly or as an intentional form of masking, the label provided a socially acceptable cover under which

⁶For example, Sarah Granger (Kimball), Phebe Wheeler and Agnes Coolbrith (Smith) are not on the Bullock/Kimball list.

⁷This concern was expressed by Wilford Woodruff and the Twelve later, in 1887, when Andrew Jenson was compiling his list of Joseph Smith's plural wives. Woodruff did "not think it a wise step to give these names to the world," because "advantage may be taken of their publication and, in some instances, to the injury, perhaps, of families or relatives of those whose names are mentioned. There are too many persons living who are interested in these matters, and who may have reasons for not wishing any exposure of this character." "Letter to Andrew Jenson, 6 August 1887," 1, The Wilford Woodruff Papers website, [LINK](#).

a sensitive document could be preserved. A list explicitly titled “Wives of Joseph Smith” might have drawn unwanted scrutiny; a list labeled “Relief Society” could quietly disappear into institutional storage. Thus, the mislabeling became part of the document’s history. Not only did it obscure the women’s identities in their own time, it continued to hide them from historiographical recognition for over a century. In a twist of irony, these women, already marginalized in history, are here quite literally written into the margins.

Designs, Designers, and Denizens of the List

Initiated by Thomas Bullock beginning in 1854, the document probably emerged as part of his efforts to support the compilation of Joseph Smith’s history. Bullock, a skilled clerk known for his meticulous handwriting and systematic organizational style, played a central role in the Church Historian’s Office during a period when the preservation of the Prophet’s legacy was of great importance. Working under George A. Smith, he was engaged in constructing official church history as a cohesive and faith-promoting narrative of the Restoration. Bullock’s work on Joseph Smith’s history involved compiling and organizing an array of sources, including journals, letters, and affidavits. He was also personally familiar with many of the events and personalities he wrote about. For example, Bullock traveled in the Brigham Young pioneer company with Louisa Beaman, Emily Partridge, and Zina Huntington, all women who became known as Joseph Smith’s plural wives.⁸ Within this context, the Bullock/Kimball list can be understood as a reference tool, cataloging key individuals connected to this sensitive aspect of Church history.

The later additions by Heber C. Kimball in 1866 seem to have been in response to anti-polygamy preaching in Utah by Joseph Smith’s son, Alexander, in late August of that year. On September 14, the day after Alexander and his company left the state, Heber C. Kimball went to the Church Historian’s Office “and related his experience in connection with the establishment of polygamy.”⁹

⁸This was the second Mormon pioneer company that departed in a wagon train from Winter Quarters, Nebraska, on June 5, 1848, and consisted of 1220 individuals. See the online Church History Biographical Database, [LINK](#).

⁹Historical Department Office Journal, Vol. 29, Sep. 14, 1866, 65, CHL, [LINK](#).

Kimball would have been familiar with information and individuals associated with plural marriage that Bullock, who became involved later, may not have known.¹⁰ He thus made one correction and added eight names to the Bullock/Kimball list. This experience reflects a shift in the document's use. The notes, added in the presence of George A. Smith, Joseph F. Smith, and scribe Robert L. Campbell, emphasize the collaborative and deliberate nature of this project.

Kimball's contributions to the Bullock/Kimball list reflect his role as defender of the Church's theological framework. As a member of the First Presidency and a devoted advocate of plural marriage, Kimball's involvement highlights the complex intersections of faith, loyalty, and opposition that defined this period in Church history. For him, the list seems to be an opportunity to declare and to legitimize his commitment to polygamy in the face of opposition.

George A. Smith, member of the Twelve since 1841, was a Nauvoo polygamist and had been sealed to eight women in the Nauvoo temple before moving West.¹¹ As Church historian and a cousin of Joseph Smith, George played a key role in shaping LDS institutional memory. His work on the Church's documentary history often focused on defending Joseph Smith's reputation and ensuring that his legacy aligned with the Church's evolving doctrinal emphasis. The Bullock/Kimball list provided George an opportunity to cement the historical foundation of polygamy as an essential aspect of Joseph Smith's prophetic mission. His collaboration on the project shows how the list supported the Church's theological and institutional priorities.

¹⁰Kimball took his first plural wife, Sarah Peake Noon, in 1842, and Bullock took his first plural wife, Lucy C. Clayton, on January 23, 1843. George D. Smith, "Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy, 1841-46, A Preliminary Demographic Report," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27, no. 1 (Spring, 1994): 136, [LINK](#).

¹¹Bathsheba W. Bigler, Lucy Meserve Smith, Nancy Clements, Zilpha Stark, Sarah Ann Libby, Hannah Mariah Libby, Agnes Coolbrith (Smith), Susanna Ogden Bigler. Lisle G. Brown, *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings: A Comprehensive Register of Persons Receiving LDS Temple Ordinances, 1841-1846* (The Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2006), 277, [LINK](#).



Residence of George A. Smith with Historian's Office at right, 1866. Photograph by Savage and Ottinger, Great Salt Lake City, Utah. Collection of Bathsheba W. Bigler Smith, PH 8004, CHL.

Joseph F. Smith, also present during the 1866 additions, brought his own motivations to the document's creation. A son of Hyrum Smith and a future president of the Church, Joseph F. viewed polygamy as a cornerstone of his family's spiritual legacy and the Church's theological foundation. He married his first plural wife, Julina Lambson, this same year, on May 5, 1866. His involvement in curating the historical record of plural marriage served both personal and institutional purposes. Personally, it allowed him to defend his father's role in the early church and to ensure that Hyrum was recognized as a key advocate of the practice.¹² The timing of the list, particularly its updates in 1866, suggests a defensive purpose as Joseph F. sought to respond to RLDS claims that Joseph Smith had not taught or practiced polygamy.¹³ By documenting connections to specific women, the list could serve as a tangible assertion of Joseph Smith's involvement and the acceptance of plural marriage by those closest to him.

¹²See Cheryl L. Bruno and Michelle Stone, "Crafting a Sacred Story: Joseph F. Smith and the William Clayton Affidavits," *Journal of Mormon Polygamy* 1, no. 1 (2025): 1-28, [LINK](#).

¹³See E. C. Briggs and R. M. Attwood, revised by Joseph Smith and William W. Blair, *Address to the Saints in Utah and California, Polygamy Proven an Abomination by Holy Writ* (Plano, Ill.: [Reorganized] Church of J. C. Of L. D. Saints, 1869), [LINK](#). The pamphlet was first circulated in 1864 and later revised and republished in 1869.

The interplay between Bullock's meticulous record-keeping, Kimball's theological motivations, George A. Smith's focus on institutional memory, and Joseph F. Smith's personal and institutional concerns, reflects the multifaceted purposes of the document. Yet despite its apparent utility, it was never brought forward publicly to defend the principle or to identify the women it sought to memorialize, leaving its silence puzzling.

Women Included on the Bullock/Kimball List

Compiled during the Utah period but referencing events in Nauvoo, the Bullock/Kimball list serves as a stark reminder of how little contemporary documentation of plural marriage during Joseph's ministry is extant and how much of the evidence for it was later pieced together through retrospective testimonies. The list itself, while sparse in details, guides us to the stories of the women it names and helps illuminate the scope of Nauvoo polygamy.

Among those listed, the wives' experiences vary widely, reflecting a diversity of circumstances that shaped their relationships with Joseph Smith. Some were young single women, others widows, and a few already married to other men. In the years following the 1852 public announcement of Mormon polygamy,¹⁴ some of the women's voices were captured in affidavits, journals, and interviews.¹⁵ These comprised an enduring narrative of Nauvoo polygamy. The stories became powerful tools in bolstering the historical claim of polygamy. Other women listed in the document left less detailed accounts, yet their inclusion broadens the scope of Joseph's polygamy. Their accounts collectively reinforce the idea that polygamy was practiced on a scale beyond a few isolated instances, even if the precise nature of their relationships with Joseph remains unclear. The document lists the following thirty-three women, plus Joseph's legal wife, Emma. (For searchability, I

¹⁴On August 29, 1852, the plural marriage revelation that became D&C 132 was publicly acknowledged by church leaders. Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," Reported by G. D. Watt, *Journal of Discourses* 1 (Aug. 29, 1852): 53-66, [LINK](#); and Brigham Young, Special Conference Address, Aug. 29, 1852, CR 100 317, CHL, [LINK](#).

¹⁵Among those listed, women who left records of their sealing to Joseph Smith were: Eliza R. Snow, Eliza Partridge, Emily Partridge, Sarah Whitney, Elvira Cowles, Lucy Walker, Helen Mar Kimball, Melissa Lott, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Presendia Huntington, Zina Huntington, Ruth Vose, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Almera Johnson, Marinda Johnson, Martha McBride, and Desdemona Fullmer.

have standardized the spellings of the women's names on lists. Last names of husbands are sometimes noted in parentheses. Authors' spelling conventions can be found at the links provided. Names with asterisks are those added or corrected by Kimball in 1866.)

First column (single women):

Louisa Beaman
Eliza R. Snow
Hannah Ells
Eliza Partridge
Emily Partridge
Sarah Whitney
Elvira Cowles
Sarah Lawrence
Maria Lawrence
Lucy Walker
Olive Frost
*Helen Mar Kimball
Melissa Lott
Flora Woodworth
Eveline Knight
*Cordelia Morley

Second column (married women):

Emma Hale (Smith) [Joseph Smith]
Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland) [John Cleveland]
Patty Bartlett (Sessions) [David Sessions]
Elizabeth Davis (Durfee) [Jabez Durfee]
Sylvia Sessions (Lyon) [Windsor Lyon]
Presendia Huntington (Buell) [Norman Buell]
Zina Huntington (Jacobs) [Henry Jacobs]
Ruth Vose (Sayers) [Edward Sayers]
Mary Elizabeth Rollins (Lightner) [Adam Lightner]
Phebe Watrous (Woodworth) [Lucien R. Woodworth]
*Mary Heron (Snyder) [John Snyder]
*Jane Silverthorn (Law) [William Law]
*Almera Johnson [single woman]¹⁶

¹⁶Almera is the one woman in this column who was not married.

*Marinda Nancy Johnson [Orson Hyde]

Bottom of page (widowed, divorced, nonmember)

*Delcena Johnson (Sherman) [Widow Lyman Sherman]

*Martha McBride (Knight) [Widow Vinson Knight]

*Desdemona Fullmer [divorced Ezra T. Benson, 1852,
divorced Harrison McLane, 1864]

*Emeline Hibbard (White) [Hugh White]

The inclusion of Emma Smith's name on the list is significant, given her unique and complicated position within early Church history. As Joseph Smith's first and only legal wife, Emma occupied a central role in the Restoration and was a well-known figure to Church members. However, her relationship to plural marriage was combative and multifaceted. Her public support of "The Voice of Innocence" made her opposition to polygamy in Nauvoo clear.¹⁷ But at the time Bullock began compiling his list, Emma had not yet joined the rival Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), which would not be formally established until 1860.

Despite her estrangement from Brigham Young and the Utah Church following Joseph's death, Emma's name carried historic and symbolic weight. The very act of including her on a list alongside Joseph's possible plural wives situated her within the polygamy narrative, even if her relationship to the practice was ambivalent or adversarial. Brigham Young had already begun framing Emma as an opponent of polygamy, famously telling a story of her destroying the original 1843 revelation on plural marriage. His claim emphasized Emma's resistance to the practice while justifying its secrecy and subsequent preservation by male leaders.¹⁸

¹⁷"The Voice of Innocence," drafted by W. W. Phelps and amended by Emma Smith, was published in March 1844 as a response to accusations made by Orsamus Bostwick against Hyrum Smith. The document denounces polygamy and related practices as morally corrupt, calling them "a grand scheme of profligates to seduce women." Emma's leadership in promoting this declaration made her public stance against polygamy unmistakable. "The Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo," MS 15540, CHL, [LINK](#).

¹⁸Young, Special Conference Address, Aug. 29, 1852, [LINK](#). Another account places the destruction of the manuscript on Joseph's shoulders. See W.E. McClellan to Joseph Smith III, Jan. 10, 1861, 2, p13 f137, Community of Christ Library and Archives.

1844
 Female Relief Society

Louisa Beeman	M ^{rs} Emma Smith	Hays
Eliza H. Snow	Sarah M. Cleveland	
Hannah Ellis	Betsy Sessions	
Eliza Partridge	(Dunphy)	
Emily Partridge	Sylvia Lyons	
Sarah Whitney	Priscinda Buel	Julia Huntington
Levira Coe	Ruth Sayers	
Sarah Lawrence	Mary Lightner	
Maria Lawrence	Mrs. John Snyder	
Lucy Walker	Mrs. Mary Law	
Olive Frost	Almera Johnson	
Ellen Kimball	Marinda M. Johnson	
Melissa Lott		
Helen Woodworth	Suzier R. Woodworth's wife	
Eveline Knight		
Corellia		
Mary Moyley		

Widow Sherman
 Widow Vinson Knight (maiden name) Martha McBride
 Desdemona Fullmer
 Emeline Hubbard (Mrs. White) 33

The names in pencil added by Pres. Kimball Sept 14, 1846 in presence of Geo. A. & Joseph F. Smith & 12 L. Campbell. The other names in Thomas Fullmer's hand writing were got up in the Historian's office in early times (1844 to 1860)

Document labeled "Names of Female Relief Society 1844," MS 3157, CHL

Jane Law's presence on the list is particularly striking, given her and her husband William Law's roles in publicly opposing Joseph Smith and polygamy. The Laws' 1844 affidavits, published in the *Nauvoo Expositor*, testified that they had seen a polygamy revelation associated with Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Jane drew attention to the unsettling idea that "it authorized some to have the number of ten [wives], and set forth that those women who would not allow their husbands to have more wives than one should be under condemnation before God."¹⁹ The allegations in the *Expositor*, coupled with the Laws' dissent against Joseph's leadership, contributed to the events leading to his death. In 1866, both Jane and William Law were alive and living in Shullsburg, Lafayette County, Wisconsin. Despite Jane's firm opposition to polygamy and her husband's denunciation of the practice, Kimball's addition of her name to the list suggests an effort to reframe her narrative within a polygamous framework.

Jane's inclusion on the list reflects the theological logic that governed sealing practices. Late reminiscences suggest that she may have been sealed to Joseph Smith on the premise that her legal husband was spiritually inadequate to secure her exaltation.²⁰ Whether this sealing occurred with or without her knowledge cannot be determined with certainty. However, even if she gave consent after such public rejection, such consent would have been shaped by a doctrine that tied a woman's eternal future to the righteousness of a male priesthood holder. Within that context, spiritual aspiration and personal autonomy could not easily be separated.

The emphasis on women who were married to men considered less faithful, or widows like Martha McBride (Knight), reinforces the idea that polygamy was a means of securing blessings for women deemed in need of spiritual "protection." In fact, five of the eight women added by Kimball were named in terms of their

¹⁹Jane Law, "Affidavits," *Nauvoo Expositor* 1, no. 1 (June 7, 1844): 2, [TEXT](#).

²⁰John Hawley autobiography, Jan. 1, 1885, 97, CCLA. "[Wilford Woodruff] als[o] toald me [in 1867] that when Brigham Young got the records of the Church in his hands, after the death of Joseph, he found by examination that his wife had be[e]n seal[e]d to Joseph that Laws wife and Highbys wife L Wights wife and Fosters wife had all be[e]n seal[e]d to Joseph, as their Husbands could not save them." See also Bathsheba W. Smith, Temple Lot Testimony, United States Testimony 1892, Q566-79, MS 1160, CHL, [LINK](#), where Bathsheba names Jane Law as a plural wife of Joseph Smith, and connects her with the doctrinal idea that a woman must be sealed to a righteous man in order to be exalted.

husbands: i.e., “Widow Sherman,” “Widow Vinson Knight,” “Mrs. John Snyder,” “Mrs. Wm. Law,” and “Lucien R. Woodworth’s wife.” Kimball may simply not have recalled these women’s first names. Yet the fact that he remembered their husbands’ names indicates that in his memory, women’s identities and spiritual status were mediated through their male relationships. Such language helped normalize an emerging theological logic in which plural marriage linked the faithful in an eternal, male-centered hierarchy.

Comparative Analysis of Plural Wife Lists

By placing the Bullock/Kimball list in dialogue with other rosters of Joseph Smith’s plural wives, we can trace efforts to recover the identities of women who were hidden in plain sight. To assess and compare these lists, this study employs a documentary and historiographical methodology that does not treat each compilation as a record of historical fact but rather as a reflection of the motives, sources, and assumptions of its compiler. Each list is examined for its date of creation, intended audience, and use of primary evidence. The narrative or institutional context in which the lists appeared is considered. Particular attention is given to the ways later lists reproduce, expand upon, or correct earlier ones, revealing changing standards of evidentiary rigor and evolving conceptions of authority. By comparing patterns of inclusion and exclusion, as well as the treatment of women’s voices within these compilations, the analysis seeks to determine how definitions of reliability have shifted over time.

Early Exposés

Names of women alleged to be Joseph Smith’s plural wives appeared in four places during his lifetime. These are as follows:

1. John C. Bennett, 1842 (7 names)²¹

(On this and the following lists, names in italics will indicate those women who are not included on the Bullock/Kimball list.)

²¹John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints: Or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842), 256, [LINK](#).

Mrs. A**** S**** [*Agnes Coolbrith (Smith)*]
Miss L***** B***** [*Louisa Beaman*]
Mrs. B**** [*Presendia Huntington (Buell)*]
Mrs. D***** [*Elizabeth Davis (Durfee)*]
Mrs. S***** [*Patty Bartlett (Sessions)*]
Mrs. G***** [*Unknown*]²²
Miss B***** [*Sarah Bapson*]²³

Bennett's 1842 list represents the earliest known published attempt to associate specific women with Joseph Smith in the context of plural marriage. Bennett claimed to have personal knowledge from his brief period of intimacy with Joseph Smith's inner circle. However, the list was produced shortly after Bennett's excommunication and during his highly publicized campaign against Joseph Smith in *The Sangamo Journal* and his book *The History of the Saints*. Its timing situates it within a moment of personal vendetta and public controversy. The list therefore reflects polemical motives.

Bennett's audience was an anti-Mormon public eager for scandalous details. His use of disguised names with initials and asterisks allows him to appear both cautious and sensational, signaling insider knowledge while maintaining a veneer of moral restraint. By asserting that Brigham Young and Joseph Bates Noble performed the ceremonies, he invokes recognizable ecclesiastical figures to lend authority to his accusations.²⁴

Bennett's objective, it appears, was to expose what he portrayed as the corruption and hypocrisy of Smith's leadership. Its enduring influence lies not in the accuracy of its claims but in the framework it introduces for later efforts to name and interpret the women associated with early Mormon polygamy.

²²Identified as "Sally Ann Fuller Gulley" by Ivins, Brodie, and Compton. However, she was not married to Samuel Gully until 1847, so she would not have been "Mrs. G*****" in 1842. Stanley Ivins notes that Sally was sealed to Joseph Smith with Samuel Gully standing proxy on Jan. 29, 1847, but does not include a source. Stanley S. Ivins, "Women Sealed to Joseph Smith," Stanley Snow Ivins Papers, Utah State Historical Society, scan of typed list available here: [LINK](#).

²³Identified as Sarah Bapson by Stanley S. Ivins, "Wives of Joseph Smith," Stanley Snow Ivins Papers, box 12, folder 1, Utah State Historical Society, scan of typed list available here: [LINK](#).

²⁴Bennett, *The History of the Saints*, 256.

2. Oliver Olney, ca. 1843-45 (8 names)²⁵

Louisa Beaman
Agnes [Coolbrith] Smith
Eliza R. Snow
Emily Partridge
Eliza Partridge
Ms. Sylvia Lyons
Ms. Sessions
Mrs. Granger

Olney's list is written on the back of an 1843 application to the Nauvoo Female Relief Society by Susan Cuthbertson. Olney's access to the document may be explained by his marriage to Phebe Wheeler, a founding member and assistant secretary of the Relief Society, from whom he could have obtained leftover or discarded papers.

Unlike John C. Bennett's 1842 publication, Olney's list was private. Its fragmentary nature suggests a personal record of speculation or notes for a future exposé. His other marginal writings on the same sheet, including "Joseph did not trick that woman she went to see whether she should marry her husband for eternity" and "Hyrum art a wicked man because he has sin[ne]d in marrying women," as well as a shorter accompanying list that may have represented Hyrum's supposed wives, reveal a preoccupation with marriage theology and moral condemnation.²⁶ No evidence indicates that Olney had direct knowledge of plural marriages. His information likely derives from hearsay and rumor. Yet, several of the women he lists—Louisa Beaman, Eliza and Emily Partridge, Sylvia Sessions Lyon, and Eliza R. Snow—appear on the Bullock/Kimball list. Later testimony names them as plural wives of Joseph Smith. This overlap suggests that Olney's notes were not purely imaginative but reflected reports already circulating among Nauvoo insiders. His inclusion of a mysterious "Mrs. Granger," however, points to the ambiguity and fluidity of early reports.

²⁵Oliver Olney, Manuscript fragment, 1843, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, [LINK](#).

²⁶Olney, Manuscript fragment.

3. Joseph H. Jackson's three facilitators, 1844 (3 names)²⁷

Early Mormon critic Joseph Jackson's 1844 exposé belongs to the same dissident impulse as Bennett and Olney. In it, he names three women who Joseph Smith had "in his employ ... called 'Mothers in Israel,'"²⁸ who assisted him in proposing plural marriage to younger women. These have been considered by some writers on the subject to have themselves been his plural wives.²⁹

*Mrs. Taylor*³⁰

Madam [Elizabeth] Durfee

Madam [Patty] Sessions

Jackson's framing of female intermediaries complicates simplistic victim/perpetrator binaries. Taylor, Durfee, and Sessions were not just subjects of accusation; they were depicted as active enablers. This suggests that roles within early plural marriage were already being differentiated, extending beyond sexual relationships to include a coordinated network managed by trusted female insiders.

4. "Buckeye's Lamentation," 1844 (4 names)³¹

"Buckeye's Lamentation" appeared in February 1844 in the *Warsaw Message*, a paper known for its fierce opposition to the Saints. Its readership consisted of people already inclined to view Nauvoo with suspicion. The poem employs allegory, such as "Partridges, Snow-birds or Knight-ingales!" to gesture playfully but pointedly at specific women. The poem was written to mock rather than to document, yet effective satire depends on

²⁸Jackson, *A Narrative*, 13.

²⁹See, for example, Todd Compton, "A Trajectory of Plurality: An Overview of Joseph Smith's Thirty-three Plural Wives," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 2 (1996): 5, fn 6, [LINK](#).

³⁰Mrs. Taylor has not been positively identified by historical researchers. One possibility is Agnes Taylor, mother of later Church president John Taylor and his sister Elizabeth. Elizabeth was married to William Arrowsmith, who claimed that he slept at his mother-in-law's [Agnes Taylor] "when Joseph Smith slept with Orson Hyde's wife, under the same roof." John Bowes, *Mormonism Exposed* (London: E. Ward, [1850]), 63, [LINK](#).

³¹Anonymous, "Buckeye's Lamentation for Want of More Wives," *Warsaw Message* 1, no. 47 (Feb. 7, 1844): 1.

shared assumptions. The author expected readers to recognize his allusions.

[Emily] Partridge
[Eliza] Partridge
[Eliza R.] Snow
[?] Knight

Gary Bergera's identification of Francis Higbee as the author strengthens its significance.³² Higbee, suitor of Sidney Rigdon's daughter Nancy, was an Ohio native (thus, Buckeye). He had once belonged to Joseph Smith's inner circles before aligning himself with dissenters. His proximity to Nauvoo leadership could mean that his references drew upon insider information or firsthand observation.

Despite its mocking tone, the poem behaves like an early list. It reproduces names appearing in Olney, indicating cross-source stability, while expanding the tradition by adding "Knight." Bergera suggests Martha McBride (Knight), but Eveline Knight is also possible.

Even though the compilers of these Nauvoo-era lists wrote with different motives, whether scandal-seeking in Bennett, private notes in Olney, public accusation in Jackson, or satire in Buckeye, all four indicated that Joseph Smith engaged in polygamy during his lifetime. Although there is no indication of direct borrowing, the lists converge around Louisa Beaman, the Partridges, Eliza R. Snow, Patty Sessions, and Elizabeth Durfee, all women on the Bullock/Kimball list.

Yet the lists include several mysterious names. Bennett's "Mrs. G*****" and "Miss B*****" haven't been satisfactorily identified, while Olney's "Mrs. Granger" is unconnected to any known person. Jackson's "Mrs. Taylor" is ambiguous, and Buckeye's "Knightingale" could indicate Martha McBride (Knight), Eveline Knight, or even Lydia Goldthwaite (Knight). These stray inclusions show that even as some names were becoming fixed, others floated in and out of rumor networks without stabilization. This tension between

³²Gary James Bergera, "Buckeye's Laments: Two Early Insider Exposés of Mormon Polygamy and Their Authorship," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 95, no. 4 (Winter, 2002/2003): 357-58, fn 45, [LINK](#). Before Bergera's identification, the poem was traditionally attributed to Wilson Law.

a core consensus and a fluid periphery continued into later Utah-era lists, marking the beginnings of what would become perennial “possibles” in Mormon historiography.

Together, these four lists capture polygamy at a liminal stage; no longer quite secret, but not yet doctrinally justified. The foundation for the Utah polygamy narrative standardized by Brigham Young and Joseph F. Smith was already taking shape. These lists do not prove Joseph Smith had plural wives. They prove it was already being publicly talked about—which may be just as significant.

Nauvoo Temple Records

Following the death of Joseph Smith and before the Latter-day Saints’ move to Utah, thirty-two women were sealed to the deceased Prophet for eternity, with another man—usually a Church leader—standing as proxy for him. Then the woman was sealed to the proxy husband “for time,” with the understanding that he would deliver the woman up to Joseph Smith in the resurrection.³³ Twenty-seven of these sealings are recorded in *A Book of Proxey*,³⁴ which contains marriage sealings performed in the Nauvoo Temple in early 1846. Four additional women were recorded in *Book of Anointings*³⁵ as being anointed “to” Joseph Smith, presuming a previous temple marriage sealing. One additional woman was included in *Sealings and Adoptions*,³⁶ Joseph F. Smith’s index of proxy sealings.

³³See sealing of Elizabeth Davis to Cornelius Lott, with Lott “promising to deliver (E. Smith to her husband J. Smith in Eternity,” *A Book of Proxey*, Nauvoo Temple proxy sealings, Jan. 7 to Feb. 5, 1846, 19.

³⁴*A Book of Proxey*, Nauvoo Temple proxy sealings, Jan. 7 to Feb. 5, 1846, Special Collections, Family History Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, UT, reproduced in Todd Compton Polygamy sources.pdf, P129 f13, CCLA.

³⁵*Book of Anointings*, Jan. 8-Feb. 7, 1846, CR 342 3, Box 4, CHL.

³⁶*Sealings and Adoptions*, 1846-1857, compiled by Joseph F. Smith (ca. 1869-70), original in LDS Archives; microfilm 183373, Special Collections, Family History Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; and photocopy in Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah.

**5. Nauvoo Temple Sealings, Jan 7 – Feb 5, 1846
(32 names of women sealed posthumously to Joseph Smith
in the Nauvoo Temple)³⁷**

Sarah Whitney, Jan. 12, 1846,
sealed to Heber C. Kimball for time, by BY³⁸
Eliza Partridge, Jan. 13, 1846,
sealed to Amasa Lyman for time, by BY
Louisa Beaman, Jan. 14, 1846,
sealed to Brigham Young for time, by HCK
Emily Partridge, Jan. 14, 1846,
sealed to Brigham Young for time, by HCK
Olive Andrews, Jan. 15, 1846,
sealed to Brigham Young for time, by HCK
Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), Jan. 15, 1846,
sealed to John Smith for time
Lucy Walker, Jan. 15, 1846,
sealed to Heber C. Kimball for time
Jane Tibbets, Jan. 17, 1846,
sealed to Elam Luddington for time, by HCK
Phebe Watrous, Jan. 17, 1846,
sealed to Lucian Woodworth for time, by BY
Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Jan. 17, 1846,
sealed to Brigham Young for time, by HCK
Elizabeth Davis (Durfee), Jan. 22, 1846,
sealed to Cornelius P. Lott for time, by BY
Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), Jan. 22, 1846,
sealed to George Washington Harris for time by BY
Maria Lawrence, Jan. 24, 1846,
sealed to Almon W. Babbitt for time, by HCK
Desdemona Fullmer, Jan. 26, 1846,
sealed to Ezra T. Benson for time, by BY
Martha McBride, Jan. 26, 1846,
sealed to Heber C. Kimball for time, by AL
Sylvia Sessions, Jan. 26, 1846,
sealed to Heber C. Kimball for time, by AL
Sarah Lawrence, Jan. 26, 1846,
sealed to Heber C. Kimball for time, by AL

³⁷*A Book of Proxey* contains the first 27 names on this list. The next four are found in *Book of Anointings*. The last name, Melissa Lott, is found in *Sealings and Adoptions*.

³⁸In this list, men who performed the sealings are identified by their initials. BY=Brigham Young, HCK=Heber C. Kimball, AL=Amasa Lyman, JT=John Taylor.

- Apphia Sanburn, Jan. 27, 1846,*
 sealed to Gad Yale for time, by HCK
- Cordelia Morley, Jan. 27, 1846,*
 sealed to Frederick W. Cox for time, by AL
- Rhoda Richards, Jan. 31, 1846,*
 sealed to Brigham Young for time, by HCK
- Zina Huntington, Feb. 2, 1846,*
 sealed to Brigham Young for time, by HCK
- Nancy Maria Winchester, Feb. 3, 1846,*
 sealed to Heber C. Kimball for time, by BY
- Eliza R. Snow, Feb. 3, 1846,*
 sealed to Brigham Young for time, by HCK
- Mary Huston, Feb. 3, 1846,*
 sealed to Heber C. Kimball for time, by AL
- Elvira Cowles, Feb. 3, 1846,*
 sealed to Jonathan H. Holmes for time, by BY
- Helen Mar Kimball, Feb. 4, 1846,*
 sealed to Horace K. Whitney for time, by BY
- Presendia Huntington, Feb. 4, 1846,*
 sealed to Heber C. Kimball for time, by AL
- *Augusta Adams, Feb. 2, 1846,*
 *anointed to Brigham Young for time, by JT*³⁹
- *Amanda, Feb. 2, 1846,*
 *anointed to Brigham Young for time, by JT*⁴⁰
- *Flora Woodworth, no date or officiator*⁴¹
- *Mary Ann Frost, Feb. 6, 1846,*
 *sealed to Parley P. Pratt for time, by HCK*⁴²

³⁹*Book of Anointings*, 16-17, No 178. Augusta Adams's sealing to Joseph Smith is not in *A Book of Proxey*. However, she received her Second Anointing to Joseph Smith, with Brigham Young acting as proxy. "No 178: To By (for Time) and J Smith (for Eternity), Augusta, Zina Diantha, Amanda Young, 2F by Jt."

⁴⁰*Book of Anointings*, 16-17, No 178. Amanda's sealing to Joseph Smith is not in *A Book of Proxey*. However, she received her Second Anointing to Joseph Smith with Brigham Young acting as proxy (see previous footnote). She could be Amanda Barnes, who was sealed to Joseph Smith in January 1852 with Brigham Young acting as proxy.

⁴¹*Book of Anointings*, No 199. Flora Woodworth's sealing to Joseph Smith is not in *A Book of Proxey*. However, she received her Second Anointing to Joseph Smith. "No 199: To Joseph Smith (deceased), Flora Ann Woodworth: ["was anointed unto her husband (J Smith—deceased)"] was in the original record], no date and no officiator mentioned.

⁴²*Book of Anointings*, 19, No 215. Mary Ann Frost's sealing to Joseph Smith is not in *A Book of Proxey*. However, she received her Second Anointing to Joseph Smith. "No 215: To Joseph Smith, Mary Ann Pratt Smith, 7 F by Zebedee Coltrin."

*Melissa Lott, Feb. 8, 1846,
sealed to John M. Bernhisel for time, by BY⁴³

The reasoning behind the apparent resealing of women to Joseph Smith after his death, and the sealing to a proxy husband “for time” is not clear. The historical record provides evidence only that these ordinances were performed, not why they were carried out.⁴⁴ Women who entered these arrangements with prominent leaders were often provided with material support and social protection in the aftermath of Joseph Smith’s death.⁴⁵ They were integrated into the institutional memory of polygamy, their connections to Joseph Smith emphasized to reinforce the divine origins of the practice.⁴⁶

Zina Huntington (Jacobs)’ marriages serve as a microcosm of early Mormon polygamy, encapsulating several theological justifications present in the practice. Her sealing to Joseph Smith in October 1841⁴⁷ after she had been civilly married to Henry Jacobs reflects the disregard some Nauvoo Mormons had for marriages performed by the state and the idea that an eternal marriage could override such a union.⁴⁸ Zina’s subsequent sealing to Brigham

⁴³Melissa Lott’s sealing to Joseph Smith is not in *A Book of Proxey*. In *Sealings and Adoptions* she appears on p. 513 as sealed to Joseph Smith with John Milton Bernhisel as proxy on Feb. 8, 1846, by Brigham Young.

⁴⁴Many polygamous marriages that occurred in Nauvoo prior to 1846 were repeated in the completed temple, including sealings to living spouses as well as deceased spouses. The practice was not limited to Joseph Smith. Theodore Turley, for example, married two women plurally in April 1844. They were again sealed to him in January and February 1846 in the Nauvoo temple.

⁴⁵See, for example, Eliza M. P[artridge] Smith to Joseph F. Smith, May 23, 1883, MS 1325, CHL, [LINK](#), where Eliza thanks Joseph F. Smith and Presidents Taylor and Cannon, for an “offering” they have given her. She signs the letter “your Aunt in the new and everlasting Covenant.”

⁴⁶See, for example, one of many firesides given throughout the Utah area where Lucy Walker was introduced as a plural wife of Joseph Smith and asked to give her testimony. “In Honor of Joseph Smith,” *Deseret News* 50, no. 30 (Dec. 25, 1899): 2, [LINK](#).

⁴⁷40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, JFS-1, p. 5, [LINK](#).

⁴⁸See John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled; or the Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee; Written by Himself* (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand and Co., 1877), 146. In 1877, Lee recalled that around Winter 1842 the doctrine of eternal “sealing” was introduced, teaching that existing civil marriages were invalid because only priesthood authority could solemnize true unions. Couples were told they were merely bound by personal agreements and could separate and remarry if unhappy. This stood in tension with public Church teachings such as Doctrine and Covenants (1835), section 101 [1844 ed. section 109], “Of Marriage,” which affirms that legal contracts of marriage made before a person joined the Church “should be held sacred

Young in 1846, described as “for time only,” provided her with temporal protection and integrated her into the leadership hierarchy while maintaining her eternal connection to Joseph Smith. These teachings, still in their formative stages during the Nauvoo period, were later presented as essential to securing exaltation.⁴⁹ Zina was thoroughly committed to the principle of plural marriage, and a few years after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, she gave birth to Young’s daughter. “Her father named her \the babe/ Zina, there had been 3 other wives that he had named their first daughter for their Mothers, it is a pleasureble duty and is richly deserved.” Zina praised Young for being “thoughtful & kind” to all of his wives. For her part, she said, “This is loving our neighbor as our selves to say to a sister come enjoy my Husban[d] & home can there be a greater test of love to God and respect to his laws than this[?]”⁵⁰

As an icon of polygamous faithfulness, Zina’s later position in Relief Society leadership placed her prominently within the Church as both defender and symbol of the principle of plural marriage.⁵¹ Her leadership roles gave her a platform to articulate the theological and practical significance of polygamy, shaping its public perception within the Church. Zina’s life story demonstrates how polygamy was presented as both personal sacrifice and divine mandate.

Like Zina, Eliza R. Snow’s marriage to Brigham Young “for time only” ensured her centrality in Church leadership and legacy. Her literary and spiritual contributions made her a key figure in shaping Utah Mormonism, and she consistently emphasized her sealing to Joseph Smith in Nauvoo as part of her religious authority. The Bullock/Kimball list’s inclusion of Huntington

and fulfilled;” also Doctrine and Covenants 58:21, 98:4–7, 134:5, and the Twelfth Article of Faith (1842), all of which emphasize obedience to civil law. Despite these stated principles, Joseph Smith performed an illegal marriage on Nov. 24, 1835, between Newel Knight and Lydia G. Bailey, who was still legally married to a non-Mormon who had deserted her. Knight recorded Smith saying he acted by priesthood authority beyond the reach of “Gentile” law. Newel Knight, Autobiographical Sketch, MS 767, CHL, [LINK](#). For more details on this marriage, see William G. Hartley, “Newel and Lydia Bailey Knight’s Kirtland Love Story and Historic Wedding,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 4 (2000): 6-22, [LINK](#).

⁴⁹See, for example, Orson Pratt, “Celestial Marriage,” *Journal of Discourses* 1:54, [LINK](#). “we will show you that it [plurality of wives] is incorporated as a part of our religion, and necessary for our exaltation to the fullness of the Lord’s glory in the eternal world.”

⁵⁰Zina D. Young Autobiographical Sketch 2, undated, 14-15, MS 4780, CHL, [LINK](#).

⁵¹Zina became the third General Relief Society President from 1888 until her death. She also served as vice-president of the Utah chapter of the National Council of Women.

and Snow illustrates that plural marriages involving women who remained publicly engaged in Church life were more likely to be remembered and documented in later historical accounts.

One might expect that as Thomas Bullock, Heber C. Kimball, and the Church historians began to formulate a list of Joseph Smith's wives, they would have duplicated the record of Nauvoo temple sealings. But this does not seem to be the case. Although there are twenty-two matches between the two lists, the Bullock/Kimball document does not include Amanda [Barnes], Augusta Adams, Olive Andrews, Mary Ann Frost, Mary Huston, Jane Tibbets, Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), Rhoda Richards, Nancy Maria Winchester, and Aphia Sanburn. Conversely, the document does include women who were not sealed to Joseph Smith posthumously in the Nauvoo temple: Hannah Ells, Olive Frost, Mary Heron,⁵² Almera Johnson, Eveline Knight, Jane Silverthorn (Law), Ruth Vose (Sayers), Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Delcena Johnson, Emma Hale (Smith), and Emeline Hibbard.

Possibly the Church historians did not have easy access to the Nauvoo sealing records or did not think to consult them. But another explanation is that Bullock and Kimball did not consider that the group of women sealed to Joseph in the Nauvoo Temple were all his wives during his lifetime. The temple sealing record has been a disputed source over the years, with some researchers postulating that women sealed to the deceased Joseph in the temple were wives during his lifetime, and others disagreeing.⁵³ At least one

⁵²Hannah Ells, Olive Frost, and Mary Heron had all died before Nauvoo temple ordinances were available, so their exclusion is readily explainable.

⁵³Fawn Brodie wrote that thirty women were posthumously sealed to Joseph in the Nauvoo Temple, and that according to other sources twenty-two of these women had been married to him while he was alive. Thus, she concluded, "it can be assumed that the remaining eight had also been." Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 434. Gary Bergera wrote that sealing and anointing to Joseph Smith by proxy in the Nauvoo Temple was "a privilege suggesting a plural marriage during Smith's lifetime." Gary James Bergera, "Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists, 1841-44," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38, no. 3 (2005): 1-74, [LINK](#). Brian Hales disagreed, stating that twenty-two of the women sealed to Joseph by proxy in the Nauvoo Temple "had been sealed to Joseph during his lifetime; but the remaining seven had not." Brian C. Hales, "Identifying Joseph Smith's Plural Wives," *Journal of Mormon History* 40, no. 3 (Summer 2014): 157, [LINK](#); Todd Compton identified eight of the women as "early posthumous marriages to Joseph Smith" and remarked that "there is no evidence that they married Joseph Smith during his lifetime." Todd Compton, "A Trajectory of Plurality: An Overview of Joseph Smith's Thirty-three Plural Wives," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3, [LINK](#).

woman sealed to Joseph posthumously, Cordelia Morley, later wrote that she had refused Joseph Smith's request through her parents to be his plural wife. After his death, she was visited by friends, who urged her "to except [accept] his wishes for now he was gone & could \do/ no more for himself." Movingly, Cordelia told her children that on January 27, 1846, "I was married to your father [Frederick Cox] in the Nauvoo Temple. While still kneeling upon the alter (sic)my hand clasped in his, and now his wife, he gave his consent and I was sealed to Joseph Smith for eternity."⁵⁴ Cordelia's account was written at least thirty years after her inclusion on the Bullock/Kimball list, and the originators of the list did not seem to be aware of her personal story.

In some instances, women who were sealed "for time" in the Nauvoo Temple to less prominent men, or whose later lives distanced them from the Utah Church, are absent from the Bullock/Kimball list. For example, Lucinda Pendleton was sealed "for time" to her husband, George W. Harris. She did not move to Utah but separated from George and went to live in the home of her daughter in Tennessee, where she died in 1856. She does not appear on the Bullock/Kimball list.

On the other hand, Mary Houston, sealed to Heber C. Kimball for time, is absent despite her clear connection to prominent leadership and her integration into Salt Lake City society. The same is true for Nancy Maria Winchester. Rhoda Richards, sister of Willard Richards, was sealed to Brigham Young for time and relocated to Utah where she died in 1879. Despite her close proximity to Church leadership—not to mention her 1869 affidavit affirming her sealing to Joseph Smith during his lifetime, she is not included on the Bullock/Kimball list.

The similarities and differences between Nauvoo temple sealings and the Bullock/Kimball list simply do not cohere under any consistent rule. Whatever logic governed each list remains opaque.

Institutional Histories and Related Sources

From the mid-nineteenth century to the dawn of the twentieth, Church historians and leaders grappled with the delicate task of

⁵⁴Cordelia M. Cox journal entry, 1890 September 12, MS 21091, CHL, [LINK](#). Compare: *A Book of Proxey*, No. 98, p. 29.

documenting Joseph Smith's plural marriages. Each new list or affidavit added to this evolving record was a piece of a much larger puzzle, part of the Church's effort to defend its origins. The process began quietly, with the Bullock/Kimball list in 1854, and grew into a complex tapestry of testimonies and recollections, some contested, others incomplete. As the years passed, what started as a simple effort to preserve the past became a carefully curated story, reflecting not only Joseph Smith's legacy but also the Church's changing needs in a rapidly modernizing world.

6. Bullock/Kimball 1854-1866 List (33 names)⁵⁵

This list begins here in the chronology, but has already been addressed fully above.

Names in the lists described below are given in the notes, continuing to standardize spelling and to italicize those not present on the Bullock/Kimball list.

7. Wilford Woodruff, 1866 (4 names)⁵⁶

In a thirty-page record titled, "Historian's Private Journal. 1858," following an entry dated July 1, 1866, Wilford Woodruff, as Assistant Church Historian, penned the names of four women, their sealing dates to Joseph Smith and officiators of the marriages.⁵⁷ This is the first of the lists that attempt to date Joseph Smith's plural marriages, though the dates in 1840 that Woodruff assigns the first three marriages are a year earlier than the now-accepted dates for these marriages.⁵⁸ Intended for internal use, the list omits women's perspectives.

⁵⁵Names of Relief Society Members circa 1854.

⁵⁶Wilford Woodruff, "Historian's Private Journal," 1858, CHL. For the history and dating of this entry, see 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 (October 2015): 95-131, [LINK](#).

⁵⁷These were: Louisa Beaman, May 1840, by Joseph B. Noble; Zina Huntington, Oct. 27, 1840, by Dimick B. Huntington; Presendia Huntington, Dec. 11, 1840, by Dimick B. Huntington; *Rhoda Richards, June 12, 1843, by Willard Richards.*

⁵⁸Bergera, "Memory as Evidence," 95, 130.

8. Joseph F. Smith Affidavits, 1869-74 (18 names)⁵⁹

The 1869-74 affidavits collected by Joseph F. Smith were a deliberate effort to create an institutional memory of Joseph Smith's involvement in plural marriage. The affidavits followed a standardized template, with each woman affirming her marriage or sealing to Joseph Smith, often including the date and location. Their uniformity in tone and detail suggests a highly curated process aimed at presenting a cohesive and authoritative narrative. However, this uniformity also obscures the individuality and lived experiences of the women who participated in plural marriage. The affidavits offer little insight into the emotional, spiritual, or social dimensions of their experiences, reducing their statements to mere affirmations that they were "married or sealed" to the Prophet.

Fifteen of the eighteen women mentioned in the affidavits also appear on the Bullock/Kimball list, making it possible that the latter was used as a source. The selection process excluded certain women, including those who denied their involvement, such as Sarah Lawrence and Jane Law; non-member Emeline Hibbard (White); or those who had passed away, like Hannah Ells, Maria Lawrence, Olive Frost, Flora Woodworth, Sarah Kingsley, Mary Heron, and Delcena Johnson. Eight women on the Bullock/Kimball list are missing affidavits for no discernible reason.⁶⁰ These omissions prevent this body of documents from presenting a complete historical account.

Three women who do not appear on the Bullock/Kimball list are mentioned in the affidavits. An affidavit is drawn up for Vienna Jacques, but it is unfinished, unsigned, and crossed out.⁶¹ Rhoda Richards, sister of Apostle Willard Richards, participated in a proxy marriage to Joseph Smith in the Nauvoo Temple and provided a

⁵⁹ Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Internet Archive, [LINK](#). Presendia Huntington, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Emily Partridge, Marinda Nancy Johnson, *Rhoda Richards*, Zina Huntington, Melissa Lott, Eliza R. Snow, Desdemona Fullmer, Sarah Whitney, Lucy Walker, Elvira Cowles, Eliza Partridge, Martha McBride. I include in this list the two women named by Joseph F. but who did not sign their affidavit: Sylvia Sessions (unsigned), and *Vienna Jacques* (unfinished and unsigned). I also include *Fanny Young* (attested in the affidavit of Harriet Cook) and Louisa Beaman (attested in the affidavit of Joseph B. Noble).

⁶⁰ These are: Helen Mar Kimball, Eveline Knight, Cordelia Morley, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Elizabeth Davis (Durfee), Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Phebe Watrous (Woodworth), and Almera Johnson.

⁶¹ Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, 56, [LINK](#).

signed affidavit.⁶² Later in life, she told the story of a “first and only love,” who died when she was a young woman, causing her to pass “companionless through life,” until she was sealed to Joseph “according to the celestial law, by his own request.”⁶³

Brigham Young’s sister, Fanny, was named in both Harriet Cook and Augusta Adams’s affidavits as being “married or sealed” to Joseph on November 2, 1843, in a ceremony performed by Brigham and witnessed by three of his plural wives.⁶⁴ In 1872, Brigham recalled Fanny’s sentiments on plural marriage as follows:

[W]hen I get into the celestial kingdom, if I ever do get there, I shall request the privilege of being a ministering angel; that is the labor that I wish to perform. I don’t want any companion in that world; and if the Lord will make me a ministering angel, it is all I want.

Brigham quoted Joseph’s reply: “Sister, you talk very foolishly, you do not know what you will want,” directing Brigham to seal her to him then and there.⁶⁵ Modern readers familiar with debates about women’s autonomy may find this account disquieting. It certainly raises questions about women’s capacity for consent and agency within early Mormon conceptions of plural marriage.

Notably, the affidavits were not widely cited in later legal disputes, such as the Temple Lot Case⁶⁶ or the Smoot hearings,⁶⁷

⁶²Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, 17, [LINK](#).

⁶³Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: n.p., 1877), 422.

⁶⁴These were Augusta Adams, Harriet Cook, and Mary Ann Angell. Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, 14, 52, [LINK](#); and [LINK](#).

⁶⁵Brigham Young, “Discourse by President Brigham Young,” *Journal of Discourses*, 16 (August 31, 1873): 166-67, [LINK](#). Brigham specifies that this woman was his sister, but does not name Fanny in particular.

⁶⁶The Temple Lot Case (1891–1896) was a legal battle over ownership of the sacred Temple Lot in Independence, Missouri, involving the RLDS Church and the Church of Christ (Temple Lot). It became pivotal in the polygamy debate as RLDS leaders sought to disprove their church’s ties to polygamy, presenting affidavits and testimonies claiming Joseph Smith opposed the practice. In response, Utah-based LDS leaders submitted evidence asserting Smith’s involvement in polygamy. The case highlighted the deep divisions in Mormonism over Joseph Smith’s teachings and the struggle to define his legacy.

⁶⁷The Smoot Hearings (1904–1907) were U.S. Senate investigations into whether Reed Smoot, an apostle of the LDS Church and elected senator from Utah, should be allowed to take his seat. Central to the hearings was the LDS Church’s continued practice of polygamy after having officially renounced it with the 1890 Manifesto. Witnesses testified about post-Manifesto plural marriages and the Church’s influence on politics, raising questions about loyalty to U.S. laws. The hearings underscored

despite their combined value as a documentary record. This lack of use suggests that although they were produced in part as a public response to persistent RLDS accusations that Joseph Smith never practiced polygamy, they also served to codify a particular historical narrative for internal consumption, one that sought to reinforce the legitimacy of plural marriage.⁶⁸ This focus may explain the simplicity of the affidavits, which avoided delving into the complexities of the women's experiences in favor of a clear and repeatable institutional memory.

The exclusion of personal experiences from the affidavits contrasts sharply with later recollections and writings from some of these women. For instance, Zina Huntington⁶⁹ and Lucy Walker spoke elsewhere about the challenges and sacrifices associated with plural marriage, revealing the profound emotional and spiritual negotiations required of them. Lucy wrote, "I felt at this moment [when Joseph proposed plural marriage to her] that I was called to place myself upon the altar a liveing [sic] sacrifice, perhaps to brook the world in disgrace and incur the displeasure and contempt of my youthful companions; all my dreams of happiness blown to the four winds." But after praying, "I received a powerful and irr[es]istable testimony of the truth of the mar[r]iage covenant called 'celestial or plural mar[r]iage.' Which has been like \an/ anchor to the soul through all the temptations and trials of life."⁷⁰ Like the Bullock/Kimball list, the affidavits recorded the marriages but left the struggles, sacrifices, and humanity of the women themselves unwritten.

9. George A. Smith letter, Oct. 9, 1869 (9 names)⁷¹

national concerns about polygamy and the separation of church and state, pressuring the Church to abandon new plural marriages entirely.

⁶⁸See Bruno and Stone, "Crafting a Sacred Story." Selected affidavits were published in 1879. See Joseph F. Smith, "Joseph the Seer's Plural Marriages," *Deseret News* 28, no. 38 (Oct. 22, 1879): 12, [LINK](#). See also "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," *Saint's Herald* 26, no. 19 (Oct. 1, 1879): 289, [LINK](#).

⁶⁹"A brief sketch of Zina D. H. Young Smith's life," April 17, 1881, in Zina D. H. Young jubilee box contributions, CR 11 325, CHL, [LINK](#).

⁷⁰Lucy W. Kimball Statement, undated, MS 741, CHL, [LINK](#); see typescript at [LINK](#).

⁷¹George A. Smith letter to Joseph Smith III, 9 Oct 1869, [LINK](#). Louisa Beaman, Eliza R. Snow, Melissa Lott, Lucy Walker, Emily Partridge, Eliza Partridge, *Rhoda Richards*, Desdemona Fullmer, *Fanny Young*.

In an 1869 letter to Joseph Smith III, George A. Smith, eighth official Church Historian and General Church Recorder from 1854 to 1871, named nine women as Joseph's plural wives, relying heavily on the affidavits gathered by Joseph F. Smith. Importantly, George also drew on personal experience. As a young man in Nauvoo, George was old enough to have been taught about polygamy by Joseph Smith himself, a claim he made in the same letter to his cousin, Joseph III.

The nine women George listed correspond directly to those who are referenced within Joseph F.'s affidavit collection. George relied on the dates and language from the affidavits, occasionally quoting directly from witnesses such as William Clayton and Lorenzo Snow. His alignment with the affidavits underscores their importance as a foundational source in constructing the narrative of Joseph Smith's plural marriages.

However, notable omissions complicate George's account. Some can be explained by timing, as affidavits for Elvira Cowles, Martha McBride, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Sylvia Sessions, and Vienna Jacques, had not yet been prepared by the time George wrote his letter on October 9, 1869. The absence of five others invites further scrutiny. Presendia Huntington, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Marinda Johnson, Zina Huntington, and Sarah Whitney all played significant roles in the history of plural marriage, making their exclusion difficult to dismiss as an oversight. These women were all publicly the wives of someone else in Nauvoo. George may have prioritized women whose marriages to Joseph were less controversial, reflecting his intent to craft a concise and persuasive response to Joseph Smith III.

10. William Clayton affidavit, Feb 16, 1874 (10 names)⁷²

William Clayton's affidavit of February 16, 1874, is a final addition to the group of affidavits collected by Joseph F. Smith.

⁷²William Clayton, Revelation on Celestial Marriage, 1874 February 16, MS 2673, CHL, [LINK](#); (handwriting of Joseph F. Smith, pencil corrections by William Clayton). See also William Clayton, 1874 Affidavit, Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#) (handwriting of William Clayton, signed and sealed by John T. Caine, notary public). Eliza R. Snow, Louisa Beaman, Sylvia Sessions, Desdemona Fullmer, Lucy Walker, Eliza Partridge, Emily Partridge, Sarah Whitney, Helen Mar Kimball, Flora Woodworth.

Although it was drafted by Joseph F., Clayton's involvement by his light editing, signature, and copy in his own handwriting, make it a particularly valuable document.⁷³ It details his firsthand involvement in Nauvoo during the period when Joseph Smith was introducing and practicing plural marriage. As a close associate of Joseph Smith and as his personal scribe, Clayton was directly privy to many of the private discussions and actions related to the implementation of this practice. His list of ten specific plural wives is informed by his proximity to Joseph Smith and his role in recording sensitive information, including the July 12, 1843, revelation on celestial marriage.

Clayton's position meant he would have been a witness to the unfolding of polygamy in Nauvoo as well as a participant in its documentation and administration, including his own plural marriages which he claimed were under Joseph's direction. This close involvement adds weight to his naming of individuals, as it suggests that his knowledge was not based on hearsay but on direct observation and interaction. Because of this, Clayton's list of wives does not seem to depend on the Bullock/Kimball list, but all of his names do appear on that document.

11. Edward W. Tullidge, 1877 (4 names)⁷⁴

Written with the assistance of Eliza R. Snow, Edward Tullidge's *The Women of Mormondom* is framed as an epic celebration of women's spiritual authority rather than as a defense or exposition of marital systems. He explicitly disengages from questions of polygamy, urging readers to encounter Mormon women first as religious actors.⁷⁵ However, Tullidge does spend a few pages responding to those who denied that Joseph Smith was the revelator of plural marriage and ascribed its origin to Brigham Young. To do this, he cites Eliza Snow's testimony of "her marriage to the prophet Joseph, not by proxy, but personally, during his lifetime,"

⁷³For further details on this affidavit, see Bruno and Stone, "Crafting a Sacred Story."

⁷⁴Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: n.p., 1877), 367-69. [LINK](#).

⁷⁵Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom*, 2. "Let us forget, then, thus early in their story, all reference to polygamy or monogamy. Rather let us think of them as apostolic mediums of a new revelation."

Sarah Whitney, “the first woman given in plural marriage with the consent of both parents,” Eliza and Emily Partridge, “and others,” who “were also sealed to him in person, in the order of celestial marriage.”⁷⁶ All four appear on the Bullock/Kimball list.

Tullidge’s selection is narrow but strategic. He names women whose sealings functioned as evidentiary anchors in affidavit culture. The names serve as a legitimizing core, while preserving his aim of centering women’s prophetic roles.

12. Helen Mar Kimball [Whitney], 1882 (4 names)⁷⁷

A response to Joseph Smith III, Helen Mar Whitney’s pamphlet, *Plural Marriage as Taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith* mentions four women who she says Emma Smith gave to her husband as wives: Sarah and Maria Lawrence, and Eliza and Emily Partridge. Helen also mentions that there are “a dozen or more of his [Joseph Smith’s] wives still living and dwelling in Utah, who were sealed to him in Nauvoo.”⁷⁸ Here, Helen’s list is precise rather than exhaustive. She specifies women whose marriages were said to have occurred with Emma Smith’s knowledge or participation, countering RLDS denials at their most vulnerable point. In other writings, Helen does name additional women, such as Sarah Whitney, Lucy Walker, and Flora Woodworth (Gove) as wives of Joseph Smith.⁷⁹

13. Augusta Crocheron, 1884 (3 names)⁸⁰

In 1884, Augusta Crocheron published a book of biographical sketches of twenty-one women who played important roles in the development of Utah. Like Tullidge’s book, Crocheron’s is not intended to be a comprehensive list of plural wives of Joseph Smith,

⁷⁶Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom*, 367-69.

⁷⁷Helen Mar Whitney, *Plural Marriage as Taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), 14, [LINK](#).

⁷⁸Helen Mar Whitney, *Plural Marriage*, 15.

⁷⁹See Helen Mar Whitney, “Scenes and Incidents at Winter Quarters,” *Woman’s Exponent* 14, no. 2 (Jun. 15, 1885): 11, [LINK](#), for Sarah and Lucy; and Charles M. Hatch and Todd M. Compton, *A Widow’s Tale* (Utah State University Press, 2003), 246, [LINK](#), for Flora.

⁸⁰Augusta Joyce Crocheron, *Representative Women of Deseret: A Book of Biographical Sketches* (Salt Lake City: J.C. Graham and Co., 1884), 2, 12, 30, [LINK](#).

but does name three women as wives of the Prophet in Nauvoo: Eliza R. Snow, and Zina and Presendia Huntington. Additionally, Crocheron includes Sarah Granger Kimball's description of Joseph Smith's proposition of marriage and her refusal. She also includes a sketch of Helen Mar Kimball in which Joseph Smith teaches the principle of celestial marriage to both her father and to herself, but a marriage or sealing of Helen to the Prophet is not mentioned.⁸¹

In Crocheron's book, polygamy is treated as a formative but not defining feature of women's lives. Her list of wives is embedded within stories of agency, conscience, and religious development rather than marshaled as proof.

14. Edmund Cameron Brand, 1884 (20 names)⁸²

In 1883, Joseph Smith III, who did not believe his father had married plural wives, commissioned Edmund C. Brand to go to Utah and look for any of his (tongue-in-cheek) "respective stepmothers, and possible half brothers & sisters by the same."⁸³ Brand sent Joseph III a list of twenty names, including thirteen that were on the Bullock/Kimball list. Internal clues in Joseph III's letter of reply make it clear that Brand relied on some of the 1869 affidavits, perhaps those that were published in the Oct. 22, 1879, *Deseret News*.⁸⁴

Joseph III's spicy recollections are notable because of the richness they add to our knowledge of the women. He writes of Emily Partridge: "I remember her well. She was a lusty wench and bore children to Brigham Young (so I am informed)[;] why not to father?" He says that her sister Eliza was "less likely to bear

⁸¹Crocheron, *Representative Women*, 26, 110

⁸²Joseph Smith III to Bro E. C. Brand, Joseph Smith III Letter Press Book, P6, JSLB4, 63, Community of Christ Library and Archives. This letter responds to the list that Brother Brand has compiled, asking further questions about the women. They are: Eliza R. Snow, Emily Partridge, Eliza Partridge, Almira Johnson, Louisa Beaman, Maria Lawrence, Sarah Lawrence, Zina Huntington, Sylvia Sessions (Lyon), *Mary Ann Angell*, Jane Law, *Hannah Dubois (Dibble)*, *Fanny Young*, *Esther Reese*, [?] *Bust*, *Adeline Hamblin (Littlefield)*, *Lucy Havers*, Melissa Lott, Phoebe Woodworth, and Flora Woodworth.

⁸³Joseph Smith III to Bro. E. C. Brand.

⁸⁴Joseph III observed that Emily Partridge "was married, or sealed" to Joseph Smith (a convention characteristic of the affidavits). He also followed the dates that Louisa Beaman and Almira Johnson were sealed to the Prophet that were in the affidavits. All of this information was available in "Joseph the Seer's Plural Marriages," *Deseret News* 28, no. 38 (Oct. 22, 1879): 12, [LINK](#).

children.” He writes that there was a scandal in Nauvoo about Sylvia Sessions (Lyon) that was “either fruitless of results; or was hushed up, whitewashed.” She was childless in Nauvoo, he (incorrectly) remembers— “mountain air and some vigorous proxy may have done for Joseph what he did not for himself—less the enjoyment of course.” Jane Law was “petite, handsome, full of snap, energy, and dash.” Mrs. Philo Dibble (Hannah Dubois) “was a large vigorous looking woman, and I guess wore the pants in family government.” Finally, “I knew Melissa [Lott] well, a bright, good girl. Am glad that she was only sealed for eternity, or adopted into the family. But she was plenty large and only one of the entire outfit named by you whom I would be inclined to believe if she should tell me herself that father did cohabit with her.”⁸⁵

Brand’s list is interesting because it is more evenly split than other lists between those who appear on the Bullock/Kimball list and those who do not. He also includes names of five women who do not appear on any of the other lists we have thus far considered: Mary Ann Angell, Esther Reese, a woman with the last name of “Bust,” Adeline Hamblin (Littlefield), and Lucy Havers. It is hard to know whether Brand is at a disadvantage in identifying plural wives of Joseph because he is an outsider, or whether his investigative skills were much better than any of the other list creators.

15. Wilhelm Wyl, 1886 (18 names)⁸⁶

Wilhelm von Wymetal (writing as W. Wyl) was a German journalist who spent extended periods in Utah between 1884 and 1886 collecting interviews and depositions for his book *Mormon Portraits*. Treated with caution by Latter-day Saint historians because of his openly anti-Mormon stance and his readiness to include hearsay, Wyl is often situated within the nineteenth-century

⁸⁵Joseph Smith III to Bro E. C. Brand.

⁸⁶Wilhelm Wyl, *Mormon Portraits, Vol. 1, Joseph Smith the Prophet, his Family and his Friends* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Co., 1886), 54-58, 60, 62, 65, 67, 70, 72, 82, 85, 89, 90, 96, 154, 250, 300, 301, [LINK](#). Eliza Partridge, Emily Partridge, Elizabeth Davis Durfee, Emeline Hibbard (White), Mrs. Ford, Fanny Alger, Mrs Granger, Eliza R. Snow, Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), Louisa Beaman, Mrs. Edward Blossom (Desdemona Fullmer), Zina Huntington (Jacobs), Helen Mar Kimball, Elizabeth Whitney, Sarah Whitney, Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), Lucy Walker, Flora Woodworth.

exposé tradition. Nevertheless, his polygamy list appears to be the product of sustained investigative labor, drawing on repeated interviews with dozens of contemporary witnesses, many of whom had long experience within Mormon communities. As a core documentary scaffold, Wyl reproduces in full William Clayton's February 16, 1874 affidavit, which names ten of Joseph Smith's wives. Oddly, and unaccountably, however, Wyl omits the name of Sylvia Sessions.⁸⁷

The women Wyl includes overlap substantially with those appearing on the Bullock/Kimball list, especially its most frequently attested Nauvoo-era figures, including the Partridge sisters, Louisa Beaman, Eliza R. Snow, Zina Huntington Jacobs, Helen Mar Kimball, Lucy Walker, Flora Woodworth, Sarah Whitney, and Sarah Cleveland. At the same time, he retains names drawn from personal recollection and rumor, such as Fanny Alger, Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), Mrs. Ford, and non-Mormon Emeline Hibbard (White). The appearance of "Mrs. Granger" aligns Wyl's list with earlier strands of memory, echoing the similarly unidentified "Mrs. Granger" mentioned by Oliver Olney.

Wyl is the first to include "Mrs. Edward Blossom" in his list of polygamous wives. The claim comes from an informant who states that while Emma Smith was away purchasing supplies, Joseph spent nights with the young wife of Elder Edward Blossom, a "high councilor of Zion, (afterwards exalted to the apostleship by Brigham Young)."⁸⁸ This alleged wife was repeated on Stanley Ivins's and Fawn Brodie's lists, but no researcher has been able to discover an Edward Blossom who was a high councilor and a later apostle.⁸⁹ I believe we can identify this man as Ezra Benson, who fits this description, and who stood proxy for Joseph Smith in the Nauvoo Temple in an eternal marriage to Desdemona Fullmer, who he then married for time.⁹⁰

⁸⁷Wyl, *Mormon Portraits*, 94-96.

⁸⁸Wyl, *Mormon Portraits*, 64-66. Because Wyl is a late source, he mistakenly names Ezra Benson as Desdemona's husband, when she was not sealed to Benson until after Joseph's death.

⁸⁹Gary Bergera names two possibilities for Edward Blossom—Edward Sayers, who was a florist and the husband of Ruth Vose; and Lucinda Pendleton's husband George Harris, who was a high councillor but never an Apostle. However, Bergera notes that neither of these men fits the description exactly. Bergera, "Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists," 33.

⁹⁰*A Book of Proxey*, 40

Wyl's list is best read as evidence of how word of Joseph Smith's polygamy circulated among critics and former insiders in the mid-1880s, preserving claims that should not be dismissed, but carefully corroborated.

16. Andrew Jenson List, 1887 (29 names)⁹¹

Andrew Jenson's effort to compile a comprehensive list of Joseph Smith's plural wives in 1887 was both ambitious and groundbreaking. Though built upon prior lists, such as the 1869-70 affidavits,⁹² it independently expanded and refined the scope of research into Joseph Smith's polygamy.⁹³ Jenson's work sought to document these marriages and to provide the Latter-day Saints a sense of appreciation for their polygamous heritage. By compiling names based on interviews, affidavits, and biographical sketches, Jenson produced a vital historical record that stood apart from earlier efforts.

Jenson's research on Joseph Smith's plural wives began in November 1886 with a visit to Melissa Lott when she gave him biographical information on herself and a list of twelve of Joseph's wives. He also spoke with Eliza R. Snow, Zina Huntington, and Helen Mar Kimball; and he wrote letters to family members of Joseph's widows as part of his investigation. His collection relied on

⁹¹Andrew Jenson, "Plural Marriage," *The Historical Record* 6, nos. 3-5 (May 1887): 233-34, [LINK](#). Louisa Beaman, *Fanny Alger, Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), Zina Huntington, Presendia Huntington, Eliza R. Snow, Sarah Whitney, Desdemona Fullmer, Helen Mar Kimball, Eliza Partridge, Emily Partridge, Lucy Walker, Almira Johnson, Malissa Lott, Maria Lawrence, Sarah Lawrence, Hannah Ells, Flora Woodworth, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Olive Frost, Sylvia Sessions, Nancy Maria Winchester, Elvira Cowles, Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland)*. Four more appear in his notes but were not published: Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Marinda Nancy Johnson, *Fanny Young, Rhoda Richards*.

⁹²Jenson had access to some of the Joseph F. Smith affidavits that had been published in the October 22, 1879 issue of the *Deseret News*.

⁹³Both Don Bradley and Brian Hales believe that Jenson likely gathered information on Joseph Smith's plural marriages independently of Joseph F. Smith's 1869-70 collection of affidavits, other than those that were already published. Hales points out that a letter from Zina Huntington dated June 22, 1887, confirms Jenson interviewed her directly. He was not appointed Assistant Church Historian until 1892 and had limited access to Church records beforehand. Most documents he included in his *Historical Record* had already been published, and he excluded key affidavits like that of Martha McBride, possibly due to lack of access or incomplete knowledge. His journal shows no indication he consulted the affidavit books or met with Joseph F. Smith to review them. Brian Hales, "Dating Joseph Smith's First Nauvoo Sealings," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 20 (2016): 6, [LINK](#).

his own research and conversations with participants.⁹⁴ Differences in handwriting and writing implements on Jenson's drafts of his wives' list show that others contributed to his compilation over a period of time.⁹⁵ Furthermore, discrepancies in naming, spelling, ordering, and inclusion of women compared to the Bullock/Kimball list demonstrates that he did not rely on that earlier compilation.

However, it is notable that Jenson's final list is so similar to the Bullock/Kimball list, with twenty-two names matching directly. This convergence is significant, as it implies a strong underlying consistency in the historical memory of Joseph Smith's polygamy, despite the independent methodologies and sources used. The similarities between the lists bolster the credibility of these accounts and suggest a broad acknowledgment among contemporaries and later researchers of the scope and of the participants in Joseph Smith's plural marriages.

While the Bullock/Kimball list includes several unique entries, such as Eveline Knight and Emeline Hibbard, Andrew Jenson's research adds depth and breadth, incorporating additional names Fanny Alger, Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), Rhoda Richards, Nancy Maria Winchester, and Fanny Young. Jenson also provides context for these marriages, drawing on direct interviews with surviving participants and archival resources. Rather than keeping a list only, Jenson gives context of the women's lives and often uses their own words, as in the case of Emily Partridge: "I left Nauvoo, crossing the Mississippi River, and was again a wanderer without home or shelter, with a wildernes[s] full of Indians and wild beasts before me, and cruel and heartless beings behind me. The day after crossing the river I might have been seen sitting on a log in a blinding snow-storm, with a three-months-old babe in my arms."⁹⁶

Historian Don Bradley has pointed out that following Jenson's publication in his *Historical Record* of the biographies of several of Joseph Smith's wives, he was asked to desist by President Wilford Woodruff. Church leaders were concerned about legal repercussions

⁹⁴Don Bradley, *Interviews with Joseph Smith's Plural Wives: Analyzing Andrew Jenson's 1887 Research Notes*, forthcoming.

⁹⁵Andrew Jenson, Names and notes about women who have been identified as probable wives of Joseph Smith, Andrew Jenson collection, circa 1841-1942, MS 17956, CHL, [LINK](#).

⁹⁶Andrew Jenson, "Plural Marriage," *The Historical Record* 6, nos. 3-5 (May 1887): 240, [LINK](#). The babe was Brigham Young's son, Edward Partridge Young, who died in 1852 at age seven.

or embarrassment of those polygamists or their families who were still living at the time. This reticence may even have caused the exclusion of some of the women in his research notes.⁹⁷

Together, the Bullock/Kimball list, the Joseph F. Smith affidavits, and the Andrew Jenson lists represent complementary steps in the preservation of a complex and often controversial aspect of Latter-day Saint history. By adding meticulous and independent research, Jenson helped ensure that the identities and experiences of Joseph Smith's plural wives were not lost to time.

17. Lorenzo Snow, 1899 (11 names)⁹⁸

In 1899, LDS President Lorenzo Snow directed Salt Lake Temple workers to address gaps in the recorded posthumous sealings of Joseph Smith, resulting in proxy sealings for eleven women. The temple record states: "The sealings of those named below were performed during the life of the Prophet Joseph but there is no record thereof. President Lorenzo Snow decided that they be repeated in order that a record might exist."⁹⁹

Ten of these women were by this point already publicly documented as plural wives by Joseph F. Smith or Andrew Jenson, but Sarah Bapson had not been mentioned since John C. Bennett's "Miss B*****." The addition reflects the evolving nature of these historical records. Joseph F. Smith's plural wife, temple worker Edna Lambson Smith, stood proxy for these women as their sealings were completed.

President Snow's effort to formalize and expand the list of Joseph Smith's wives through proxy ordinances must be understood within the context of the 1890 Manifesto, which formally announced a shift away from the public practice of plural marriage in the

⁹⁷For example, Jenson strikes Patty Sessions from his draft list and omits her from other lists and from the published version. His notes also mention Marinda Johnson, another name not in his published version. Bradley, "Interviews with Joseph Smith's Plural Wives," forthcoming; see Wilford Woodruff, Letter to Andrew Jenson, 6 August 1887, Wilford Woodruff papers, [LINK](#).

⁹⁸*Fanny Alger, Lucinda Pendleton (Harris)*, Almera Johnson, Sarah Bapson, Flora Woodworth, *Fanny Young*, Hannah Ells, Olive Frost, Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), Sylvia Sessions, Ruth Vose (Sayers).

⁹⁹Salt Lake Temple Sealing Records, Book D, 243, April 4, 1899, in Thomas Milton Tinney, *The Royal Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Junior: The First President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Tinney-Greene Family Organization, 1973), 41, see reproduction here: [LINK](#).

Church. While the Manifesto represented a significant public change, Church leaders continued to affirm polygamy's theological importance and its place within Joseph Smith's prophetic mission. These proxy sealings in 1899 symbolized a doctrinal continuity even as the Church moved away from active polygamous practice. By preserving the legacy of plural marriage through these ordinances, Church leaders underscored the enduring spiritual significance of polygamy as a foundational principle, ensuring its place in the Church's evolving understanding of its history and theology.

18. Benjamin F. Johnson, before 1905 (12 names)¹⁰⁰

Benjamin F. Johnson's memoir, *My Life's Review*, was written before his death in 1905, then published in 1947. The manuscript provides a deeply personal account of Joseph Smith's practice of plural marriage, along with the names of twelve wives, two of whom do not appear on the Bullock/Kimball list. In another source, a letter to assistant Church historian George Gibbs, Johnson also names Fanny Alger as a plural wife of Joseph Smith.¹⁰¹

Johnson's recollection of his sister Almera's marriage to Joseph Smith is especially valuable. In an affidavit written March 4, 1870, he recounts how, after initial discussions at their home in Macedonia, she was sealed to Joseph by William Clayton in Nauvoo, with another sister and Louisa Beaman present. He also describes Joseph's request that Almera stay in Room No. 10 at the Mansion House during her time in the city; and how Joseph later visited the Johnson home in Ramus, where he "occupied the same room and bed" with Almera. This narrative, while uncomfortably intimate, provides a rare view of the familial involvement in facilitating plural marriages and includes the lived experiences of participants.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1947), 93, [LINK](#); see copy at [LINK](#). Louisa Beaman, Eliza R. Snow, Maria Lawrence, Sarah Lawrence, Sylvia Sessions (Lyon), *Hannah Dubois (Dibble)*, [Eliza] Partridge, [Emily] Partridge, C. P. Lott's daughters [Melissa Lott], [Mary E. Lott], Almera Johnson, Delcina Johnson.

¹⁰¹Benjamin F. Johnson to George S. Gibbs, April 1903-October 1911, CHL, [LINK](#). This letter was "written between April 1903 and the following October." George S. Gibbs, an assistant in the Church Historian's Office, asked Johnson "for a written statement of his personal knowledge of incidents and facts that came under his observation, from the almost earliest history of the Church."

¹⁰²Testimony of Benjamin F. Johnson, Affidavit Book 2, p. 3, [LINK](#); see also Benjamin F. Johnson to George S. Gibbs.

Almera's own testimony corroborates her brother's account while offering critical insights into her experience. She recalls how Joseph taught her the principle of celestial marriage over a series of conversations and asked her to become his wife. Initially hesitant, Almera notes that Hyrum Smith personally reassured her, sharing his own journey from doubt to belief in the principle. She also describes moments of closeness with Joseph during her time in Nauvoo and later in Macedonia, where he visited her as his wife.¹⁰³ Her voice is essential in understanding this history. While Benjamin's account focuses on his role as a facilitator and observer, Almera's testimony reflects the internal struggles and decisions faced by women entering plural marriage. Her acknowledgment of doubt and her eventual acceptance offer a rare, candid perspective on the deeply personal process of embracing this controversial principle.

Individuals like Benjamin Johnson viewed themselves as active participants in shaping and sustaining these sacred practices. His list of plural wives corroborates institutional records and provides granular details often absent from official documentation.

19. Joseph Fielding Smith, 1905 (12 names)¹⁰⁴

The 1904 Second Manifesto, issued by Church President Joseph F. Smith, marked a turning point in the institutional approach to polygamy within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This declaration, delivered under intense federal scrutiny and pressure, unequivocally condemned plural marriage, enforcing a policy of excommunication for those who continued the practice. By this time, the Church faced existential threats due to its polygamous past, including the potential loss of property and legal status, and sought to demonstrate compliance with U.S. law. While the Second Manifesto represented the Church's most serious attempt to bring an end to new polygamous unions, the

¹⁰³Almera W. Johnson Affidavit, Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#).

¹⁰⁴Joseph F. Smith, Jr. and Richard C. Evans, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage, A Discussion* (Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1905). Lucy Walker, Emily Partridge, Eliza Partridge, Almira Johnson, Martha McBride, Melissa Lott, Sarah Whitney, *Rhoda Richards*, Louisa Beaman, Maria Lawrence, Sarah Lawrence, Eliza R. Snow.

theological underpinnings of plural marriage, understood to be rooted in Joseph Smith's teachings and practices, remained integral to Mormon identity and doctrine.

This tension is evident in a pamphlet written by Joseph F. Smith's son, Joseph Fielding Smith, in 1905. Titled "Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage," it was written in the immediate aftermath of the Second Manifesto. It names twelve of Joseph Smith's wives, declaring that polygamy was a historical reality and a doctrinal cornerstone of early Mormonism. This acknowledgment reflects the delicate balance Church leaders sought to maintain: publicly distancing themselves from contemporary polygamy while defending the foundational role of plural marriage in the Restoration.

The 1905 pamphlet relies heavily on the 1869 plural marriage affidavits of Martha McBride, Melissa Lott, Sarah Whitney, Rhoda Richards and others; it also mentions women named in the men's affidavits.¹⁰⁵

Modern Historians' Lists

After the Second Manifesto, the LDS Church apparently stopped creating lists of plural wives to be used institutionally. About forty years passed before independent historians began to work on this area of study again. Beginning in the 1940s, fifteen Mormon historians' lists are notable and largely agree with the early information given in the 1854-66 Bullock/Kimball list, Joseph F. Smith's 1869-70 affidavits, and Andrew Jenson's list in *The Historical Record*. From these historians' lists, each more fully covered below, I have compiled a core set of thirty-two women whom the twentieth- and twenty-first-century historians generally agree were Joseph Smith's wives. These are as follows. (Once again, the italicized names are those that are not found on the Bullock/Kimball list of 1854-66.)¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵Several of the women mentioned in the pamphlet are named in the affidavits of others such as William Clayton, Benjamin F. Johnson, Lorenzo Snow, etc.

¹⁰⁶Those on the Bullock/Kimball list that are not on the more modern core list are Eveline Knight, Cordelia Morley, Phebe Watrous, Mary Heron, Jane Law, and Emeline Hibbard.

Core Historians' List:

Fanny Alger
Patty Bartlett (Sessions)
Louisa Beaman
Elvira Cowles
Elizabeth Davis (Durfee)
Hannah Ells
Olive Frost
Desdemona Fullmer
Presendia Huntington
Zina Huntington
Almera Johnson
Delcena Johnson
Marinda Nancy Johnson
Helen Mar Kimball
Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland)
Maria Lawrence
Sarah Lawrence
Melissa Lott
Martha McBride
Eliza Partridge
Emily Partridge
Lucinda Pendleton (Harris)
Rhoda Richards
Mary Elizabeth Rollins
Sylvia Sessions
Eliza R. Snow
Ruth Vose (Sayers)
Lucy Walker
Sarah Whitney
Nancy Maria Winchester
Flora Woodworth
Fanny Young

The following fifteen lists, created by independent historians across eight decades, represent a monumental effort to uncover and preserve the historical record of early Mormon polygamy. Some of their lists of Joseph Smith's plural wives aim to include as many wives as possible, and some are more discriminating,

including only those for whom the historical record is strong. By investigating these lists, we can trace shifts in historiographical approaches, from reliance on oral histories and affidavits to the integration of more extensive archival research. They also reflect differing interpretations of what constitutes evidence strong enough to confirm a marital relationship. Examining these lists together not only highlights points of consensus but also reveals areas of continued debate and ambiguity, offering a valuable lens into how historical methodology and priorities have evolved in the study of Mormon polygamy. Below, I explore patterns, differences, and implications within these historians' efforts, as well as what these lists contribute to our understanding of Joseph Smith's relationships and their broader historical context.

20. Vesta Pierce Crawford, 1940s (36 names)¹⁰⁷

Vesta Crawford's historical work grew out of her research for an unpublished biography, *Emma Hale Smith, The Elect Lady*, co-authored with Fay Ollerton. This project, driven by a childhood fascination with Emma's life and her decision not to follow the Latter-day Saints to Utah, involved an extensive collection of historical documents, interviews, and correspondence. Crawford formulated a list of Joseph's plural wives, naming twenty-five of the thirty-three women on the Bullock/Kimball list, and twenty-nine of the thirty-two women on the core list. She also included two unconventional names absent from the lists of any of the other modern historians: Rachel Ivins and Martha Scott.

Rachel Ivins, who married Jedediah Grant and became the mother of Heber J. Grant, adds an unusual layer to the narrative of Joseph Smith's plural marriages. Though there is no direct evidence of a marital relationship between Ivins and Joseph Smith during

¹⁰⁷Vesta Pierce Crawford Papers, Box 1, Folder 10-11, Marriott Library Special Collections, Lists available online at Mormon Polygamy Documents website, [LINK](#). *Fanny Alger*, Patty Bartlett [Sessions], Louisa Beaman, Elvira Cowles, Hannah Ells, Olive Frost, Desdemona Fullmer, *Mary Houston*, Presendia Huntington, Zina Huntington, *Rachel Ivins*, *Vienna Jacques*, Almera Johnson, Delcena Johnson, Helen Mar Kimball, Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), Sarah Lawrence, Maria Lawrence, Melissa Lott, Martha McBride, Eliza Partridge, Emily Partridge, *Lucinda Pendleton (Harris)*, *Rhoda Richards*, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, *Martha Scott*, *Sarah Scott*, Sylvia Sessions, *Nancy Maria Smith*, Eliza R. Snow, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Lucy Walker, Sarah Whitney, *Nancy Maria Winchester*, Flora Woodworth, *Fanny Young*.

his lifetime, Brigham Young arranged for her to be sealed to the deceased Smith “for eternity” before her marriage to Grant “for time.” This decision was based on Young’s belief that Smith had claimed Ivins during his lifetime.¹⁰⁸

Far more enigmatic is Crawford’s inclusion of Martha Scott. No known documentary evidence links her to Joseph Smith and her name is not included in the historical record as a potential plural wife. Her appearance solely on Crawford’s list illustrates the difficulty of reconstructing Nauvoo polygamy from fragmentary and sometimes contradictory sources, and it shows that caution is needed when investigating contested historical claims.

21. Stanley S. Ivins (46 names with others sealed to Joseph Smith later, total 93)¹⁰⁹

An independent researcher on Mormon subjects, Ivins conducted research prolifically in the mid-1900s. Ivins names all thirty-two of the women on the core list, adding Olive Andrews, Miss B*****, Mrs. Edward Blossom, Mary Ann Frost, Sally Ann Fuller, Clarissa Reed Hancock, Mary Houston, Vienna Jacques, Cordelia Morley, Mrs. A**** S****, Sophia [Aphia] Sanburn, Sarah Scott, Sarah Shuler, Jane Tibbets, and Phebe Watrous. He names Elizabeth Durfee twice, once as Mrs. Durfee and once as Elizabeth Davis Lott. He also names Desdemona Fullmer twice, once as

¹⁰⁸Heber J. Grant, “The Testimony of President Heber J. Grant,” *Deseret News Weekly Church Section* (Oct. 10, 1942): 1, [LINK](#). “I had always understood and know that my mother was sealed to the Prophet, and that Brigham Youn[g] had told my father that he could not marry my mother to him for eternity, because he had instructions from the Prophet that if anything happened to him before he was married to Rachel Ivins she must be sealed to him for eternity, that she belonged to him.” See also Susa Young Gates, “A Tribute to Rachel Ivins Grant,” *Young Women’s Journal* 21, no. 1 (Jan. 1910): 28-30, [LINK](#).

¹⁰⁹Stanley S. Ivins, “Wives of Joseph Smith,” handwritten holograph and two typewritten lists, Stanley Snow Ivins Papers, box 12, folder 1, Utah State Historical Society, scan of typed list available here: [LINK](#). *Fanny Alger, Olive Andrews, Miss B*****, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Louisa Beaman, Mrs. Edward Blossom (also named as Desdemona Fullmer), Mrs. A**** S****, Elvira Cowles, Elizabeth Davis (also named as Mrs. Durfee), Hannah Ells, Olive Frost, Mary Ann Frost, Sally Ann Fuller, Mary Houston, Presendia Huntington, Zina Huntington, Vienna Jacques, Almera Johnson, Delcena Johnson, Marinda Johnson, Helen Mar Kimball, Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), Sarah Lawrence, Maria Lawrence, Melissa Lott, Martha McBride, Cordelia Morley, Eliza Partridge, Emily Partridge, Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), Clarissa Reed (Hancock), Rhoda Richards, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Sophia [Aphia] Woodman, Sarah Scott, Sylvia Sessions, Sarah Shuler, Eliza R. Snow, Jane Tibbets, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Lucy Walker, Phebe Watrous, Sarah Whitney, Nancy Maria Winchester, Flora Woodworth, Fanny Young.*

Mrs. Edward Blossom. It appears that Ivins made a concerted effort to include all the women who were sealed to Joseph Smith posthumously in the Nauvoo Temple, as well as those on John C. Bennett's list, even if he wasn't quite sure how to interpret the coded names.

In Ivins' work, he also notes women who were sealed to Joseph later after the Saints moved to the Valley, whether or not they were even acquainted with Joseph in life. This brings his count up to ninety-three names.¹¹⁰

22. Fawn Brodie, 1945 (46/48 names)¹¹¹

Fawn Brodie's biography of Joseph Smith, *No Man Knows My History*, was controversial and widely circulated; and her list of forty-eight names of women identified as his wives was a bold and controversial centerpiece of her work. Brodie approached her subject with the determination of a detective, piecing together a mosaic of sources that ranged from official church records, like the Nauvoo Temple Records, to outsider exposés, including John C. Bennett's sensational writings. She drew from Andrew Jenson's carefully compiled notes in his publication, *The Historical Record*,

¹¹⁰Ivins' handwritten list is numbered and goes to number eighty-four. However, his typewritten lists include additional possible wives. These add up to ninety-three; the above listed forty-six, plus the following: *Mary Vose, Lucia Foote, Amelia Brown, Lydia Partridge, Caroline Partridge, Charlotte Richmond, Sarah Granger (Kimball), Esther Jones, Magdalena Zundel, Esther Dutcher, Harriet Partridge, Amanda Barnes Smith, Sarah Hoby, Diantha Farr, Lydia Dibble, Ruth Giles, Mary Lott, Almira Lott, Jane Lott, Alzina Lott, Amanda Lott, Agnes Taylor, Betsy Jane Tenny, Mrs. Ford, Augusta Adams, Lucy Adams Cobb, Olive Adams Smith, Sarah Baldwin Smith, Elsa Johnson, Emily Johnson, Phebe Johnson, Elizabeth Mesurvey, Esther Seamon, Harriett Jacques, Louisiana Fullmer, Olivia Coburn Bartlett, Lovina Duston Bartlett, Nancy Johnson, Susan Johnson, Susan Sowers/Ivins/Ivers Smith, Melissa Scott Smith, Polly Miller Smith, Sarah Baldwin Smith, Anna Laubs, Louisa Sanger Smith, Elizabeth Ann Smith, Betsy Jane Tenney.*

¹¹¹Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, [LINK](#). *Fanny Alger, Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), Presendia Huntington, Nancy Marinda Johnson, Clarissa Reed (Hancock), Louisa Beaman, Zina Huntington, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Delcena Johnson, Sally Ann Fuller (Gulley), Mrs. A**** S****, Miss B***** (possibly Sarah Bapson), Eliza R. Snow, Sarah Whitney, Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), Elvira Cowles, Martha McBride, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Desdemona Fullmer (also named as Mrs. Edward Blossom), Emily Partridge, Eliza Partridge, Nancy Maria Smith, Almera Johnson, Lucy Walker, Helen Mar Kimball, Maria Lawrence, Sarah Lawrence, Flora Woodworth, Rhoda Richards, Hannah Ells, Melissa Lott, Fanny Young, Olive Frost, Mary Ann Frost, Olive Andrews, Elizabeth Davis (also named as Mrs. Durfee), Mary Huston, Vienna Jacques, Cordelia Morley, Sarah Scott, Sylvia Sessions, Jane Tibbets, Phebe Watrous, Nancy Maria Winchester, Sophia [Aphia] Woodman.*

Orson F. Whitney's biography of Heber C. Kimball,¹¹² and the testimonies from the Temple Lot case, along with less traditional sources like *Women of Mormondom*, Joseph Fielding Smith's *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage*, and even Wilhelm Wyl's polemical *Mormon Portraits*. Brodie's synthesis of these disparate voices reflects her skill in weaving a narrative where others saw only fragments. Her list includes a short biography of each woman. Though her interpretations have been debated, her work challenged historians to confront the complexity of Smith's marital relationships and laid the groundwork for future investigations.

Brodie includes all thirty-two names on the core list and adds the same fourteen that Ivins did, plus Nancy Maria Smith. She repeats Elizabeth Davis, who is the same as Mrs. Durfee, and Desdemona Fullmer, who is probably Mrs. Edward Blossom, bringing her list of 48 names to 46.

It is interesting that both Ivins and Brodie included John C. Bennett's "A**** S****," without identifying her as Agnes Smith. Until 1994, Agnes was only mentioned by name on Oliver Olney's list, which had not been circulated.

23. Jerald Tanner, 1966 (84 names)¹¹³

Jerald Tanner's 1966 list of eighty-four women connected to Joseph Smith marks a significant, if dissonant, effort to expand public understanding of Smith's plural marriages. Tanner, known for his critical stance on Mormonism, follows Ivins's approach of including women sealed to Smith both during his lifetime and posthumously in the Nauvoo Temple, as well as the Salt Lake Endowment House and early Utah temples. As with Ivins, this broader scope introduces complexities by conflating different categories of marital and sealing relationships. Tanner uses the names from Ivins's handwritten list of eighty-four women, providing a short, five-to-ten-sentence biographical sketch of each. While less nuanced and driven by a deconstructive agenda, Tanner's approach contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding Joseph Smith's

¹¹²Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball, An Apostle* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1888).

¹¹³Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Joseph Smith and Polygamy: An Exposé of Modern Polygamy* (Modern Microfilm Co., 1966), [LINK](#).

polygamy. His expansive compilation reflects both the growing availability of archival sources in the mid-twentieth century and the tensions between polemical and scholarly treatments of Mormon history.

24. Thomas Milton Tinney, 1973 (313 names)¹¹⁴

Thomas Milton Tinney's 1973 list of 313 women sealed to Joseph Smith is one of the most ambitious and unusual compilations in the history of Mormon polygamy research. Drawing from Andrew Jenson's *The Historical Record*, Nauvoo Temple records, Salt Lake Endowment House records, and the sealing records of the Salt Lake Endowment House and St. George Temples, Tinney pieces together an expansive roster of women, including figures as surprising as Madam Victor Hugo and Sainte Thérèse. His work reflects not only a dedication to tracing the complex web of sealings but also a theological agenda, as he argues that the children of these women and their other husbands will ultimately become the "eternal possession" of Joseph Smith. Tinney's compilation serves as a unique example of how theological perspectives have shaped attempts to document Joseph Smith's marital and sealing relationships. Tinney's effort underscores how lists like his can blur historical and doctrinal boundaries, expanding the scope of inquiry beyond earthly marriages to envision a celestial legacy that is as imaginative as it is provocative.

Tinney reproduces the names of twenty-eight of the women on the Bullock/Kimball list. He does not include Eveline Knight, Mary Heron (Snyder), Jane Silverthorn (Law), Delcena Johnson (Sherman), and Emeline Hibbard (White).

¹¹⁴Tinney, *The Royal Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Junior*.

25. Danel Bachman, 1975 (31 names)¹¹⁵

In his master's thesis, Bachman criticizes Ivins, Brodie, Tanner, and Tinney for mistakenly assuming that any woman sealed to Joseph Smith in an 1846 temple ceremony must have been his wife during his lifetime. To correct this, he introduces more rigorous criteria for determining Smith's plural marriages. His thesis identifies fifteen women who left affidavits affirming their marriages or sealings to Smith, three who made personal statements to the same effect, and two whose marriages were witnessed by others. He also includes eleven women whose relationships with Smith were attested by "well-informed and reliable persons."¹¹⁶ Bachman's approach emphasizes firsthand and strong secondhand testimony over assumptions based on later temple ordinances, setting a higher standard for compiling such lists. Still, he verifies twenty-five of the Bullock/Kimball names. Compared to the core list, Bachman does not include Elizabeth Davis (Durfee) or Olive Frost, but he does include Vienna Jacques.

Bachman's treatment of Helen Mar Kimball is a case study for how he brought higher, more professional historical standards of evidence to bear on identifying Joseph Smith's plural wives. Bachman requires substantial documentation to affirm that Helen was a wife of Joseph Smith. Her marriage to Joseph is supported by William Clayton's 1871 affidavit¹¹⁷ and her 1881 handwritten testimony, which Bachman is the first to use. In this letter, Helen affirms that she was sealed to Joseph Smith when she "had scarcely seen her fifteenth summer," emphasizing that the marriage was arranged at her father Heber C. Kimball's request. Poignantly, she writes how her father "taught me the principle of celestial marriage,

¹¹⁵Danel W. Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith." M.A. thesis, Purdue University, 1975, [LINK](#). *Fanny Alger, Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), Prescinda Huntington, Nancy Marinda Johnson, Louisa Beaman, Zina Huntington, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Delcena Johnson, Eliza R. Snow, Sarah Whitney, Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), Elvira Cowles, Martha McBride, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Desdemona Fullmer, Emily Partridge, Eliza Partridge, Almera Johnson, Lucy Walker, Helen Mar Kimball, Maria Lawrence, Sarah Lawrence, Flora Woodworth, Rhoda Richards, Hannah Ells, Melissa Lott, Fanny Young, Vienna Jacques, Sylvia Sessions, Nancy Maria Winchester.*

¹¹⁶Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," 112.

¹¹⁷William Clayton, 1874 Affidavit, Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#) (handwriting of William Clayton, signed and sealed by John T. Caine, notary public).

& having a great desire to be connected with the Prophet Joseph, he offered me to him.” Her father asked her if she would be sealed to Joseph “who came next morning & with my parents I heard him teach & explain the principle of celestial marriage – after which he said to me, If you will take this step, it will ensure your eternal salvation & exaltation and that of your father’s household & all of your kindred.”¹¹⁸ Her accounts are particularly valuable because she directly addressed the secrecy surrounding plural marriage, the pressures she was under, and the personal challenges she faced in accepting it.¹¹⁹ Unlike cases based on retrospective ordinances, Helen Mar Kimball’s testimony aligns with Bachman’s rigorous criteria by providing firsthand confirmation of the marriage.

26. George D. Smith, 1994 (42 names)¹²⁰

George D. Smith’s 1994 article, “Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy,” offers a demographic study of plural marriage in Nauvoo, tracing its origins, scope, and controversies. The article stands out for its focus on the voices and experiences of many of the women, moving beyond mere lists of names or brief biographical sketches such as Brodie and Tanner provide.

While not as rigorous as Bachman in verifying each wife, Smith’s strength lies in his detailed exploration of their lives, relationships, and personal accounts. Smith posited that between 1841 and 1843, Joseph Smith married as many as forty-two women, many of whom later testified to their marriages. Twenty-eight of these are present on the Bullock/Kimball list. His differs from the

¹¹⁸Helen Mar Kimball Whitney Letter, March 30, 1881, MS 744, CHL, [LINK](#).

¹¹⁹Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, “Scenes in Nauvoo,” *Woman’s Exponent* 11, no. 5 (August 1, 1882): 39, [LINK](#).

¹²⁰George D. Smith, “Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy,” 1–72, [LINK](#). Louisa Beaman, Zina Huntington, Presendia Huntington, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Nancy Marinda Johnson, Delcena Johnson, Eliza R. Snow, Sarah Whitney, Martha McBride, *Sarah Bapson*, *Agnes Coolbrith (Smith)*, Elizabeth Davis (Durfee), *Sally Fuller*, Desdemona Fullmer, Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), *Lucinda Pendleton (Harris)*, Elvira Cowles, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Eliza Partridge, Almera Johnson, Lucy Walker, Emily Partridge, Sarah Lawrence, Maria Lawrence, Helen Mar Kimball, *Rhoda Richards*, Flora Woodworth, Melissa Lott, Olive Frost, Hannah Ells, *Mary Ann Frost*, *Fanny Young*, Sylvia Sessions, *Mary Houston*, *Nancy Maria Winchester*, *Sarah Scott*, *Olive Andrews*, *Jane Tibbets*, *Sophia/Aphia Sanburn*, Phoebe Watrous, *Vienna Jacques*.

core list by leaving out Fanny Alger, and adding eleven others.¹²¹ Smith examines how Nauvoo polygamist wives, including those attributed to Joseph Smith, were approached, and the promises of eternal marriage that persuaded them to accept polygamy. He also highlights difficulties they faced, secrecy surrounding their unions, how older wives instructed younger ones in the practice, and how many of Emma Smith's closest associates became her husband's wives.

Smith's article marks a pivotal shift in how Nauvoo polygamy was understood, adding depth to the historical narrative by focusing on emotional and social complexities.

27. D. Michael Quinn, 1994, (46 names)¹²²

The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, D. Michael Quinn's 1994 volume on the development of ecclesiastical authority in Mormonism, presents an extensive list of Joseph Smith's plural wives, featuring forty-six names compiled for Smith's biographical sketch. Quinn mentioned some of the specific criteria he used for inclusion: evidence of a sealing ceremony, sexual cohabitation, or a formal divorce. However, Quinn did not supply the underlying evidence for each name, leaving his methodology open to scrutiny.

One of the more controversial aspects of Quinn's list is his claim to exclude "nominal marriages," which he defines as proxy sealings to deceased individuals. Despite this assertion, many names on his list—such as Jane Tibbets, Olive Andrews, Phebe Watrous, Cordelia Morley, Aphia Sanburn, Nancy Maria Winchester, Mary Huston, and Lydia Kenyon—appear to fall into this category.

¹²¹These are: *Olive Andrews, Sarah Bapson, Agnes Coolbrith (Smith), Sally Fuller, Mary Ann Frost, Mary Houston, Vienna Jacques, Sarah Scott, Sophia [Aphia] Sanburn, Jane Tibbets, and Phoebe Watrous.*

¹²²D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Signature Books, in association with Smith Research Associates, 1994), 587-588. *Fanny Alger, Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), Louisa Beaman, Zina Huntington, Presendia Huntington, Elizabeth Davis (Durfee), Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), Sarah Bapson, Agnes Coolbrith (Smith), Sylvia Sessions, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Marinda Nancy Johnson, Delcena Johnson, Eliza R. Snow, Sarah Whitney, Martha McBride, Desdemona Fullmer, Mary Heron, Sarah Scott, Hannah Dubois (Dibble), Emily Partridge, Eliza Partridge, Lucy Walker, Helen Mar Kimball, Elvira Cowles, Flora Woodworth, Rhoda Richards, Olive Frost, Hannah Ells, Melissa Lott, Almera Johnson, Maria Lawrence, Sarah Lawrence, Fanny Young, Nancy Maria Winchester, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Sally Fuller, Mary Houston, Sarah Schuyler, Olive Andrews, Jane Tibbets, Aphia Sanburn, Phebe Watrous, Vienna Jacques, Lydia Kenyon.*

This discrepancy raises questions about Quinn's consistency in distinguishing between historical plural marriages and posthumous sealings, which complicates his contribution to the debate over the nature and extent of Joseph Smith's plural unions.

Quinn's additions to the core list of Joseph Smith's wives, fourteen in total,¹²³ further highlight the evolving nature of research on Smith's polygamy. By expanding beyond previously recognized names, Quinn challenges the cautious historiographical framework that Bachman was attempting to establish, pushing scholars to consider broader and sometimes more speculative sources. However, the lack of direct citations or supporting documentation for each entry in his list means that his findings must be engaged with cautiously. This omission illustrates a recurring challenge in polygamy studies: the reliance on fragmentary, secondhand, or retrospective sources to reconstruct plural marriage practices that were deliberately kept secret.

28. Todd Compton, 1997 (33 names)¹²⁴

The significance of Todd Compton's work lies not only in his meticulous documentation but in his transformative approach to understanding Nauvoo polygamy. In his groundbreaking book, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*, Compton shifts the focus from viewing polygamy solely as an institutional practice to exploring it as a deeply personal experience. While George D. Smith contributed to this shift, Compton went even further, making these women and their stories well-known to a

¹²³These additions to the core list are: *Sarah Bapson, Agnes Coolbrith (Smith), Mary Heron, Sarah Scott, Hannah Dubois (Dibble), Sally Fuller, Mary Houston, Sarah Schuyler, Olive Andrews, Jane Tibbetts, Aphia Sanburn, Phebe Watrous, Vienna Jacques, Lydia Kenyon.*

¹²⁴Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Signature Books, 1997), [LINK](#). *Fanny Alger, Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), Louisa Beaman, Zina Huntington, Presendia Huntington, Agnes Coolbrith (Smith), Sylvia Sessions, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Marinda Nancy Johnson, Elizabeth Davis (Durfee), Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), Delcena Johnson, Eliza R. Snow, Sarah Whitney, Martha McBride, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Flora Woodworth, Emily Partridge, Eliza Partridge, Almera Johnson, Lucy Walker, Sarah Lawrence, Maria Lawrence, Helen Mar Kimball, Hannah Ells, Elvira Cowles, Rhoda Richards, Desdemona Fullmer, Olive Frost, Melissa Lott, Nancy Maria Winchester, Fanny Young.*

broader audience. By centering the voices of the wives, he reveals the emotional, social, and religious complexities they faced.¹²⁵

Compton's list, like many of the others, confirms twenty-seven of the Bullock/Kimball wives. It aligns well with the core group identified by other scholars, though deleting Lucinda Pendleton (Harris) and including Agnes Coolbrith (Smith), the widow of Joseph Smith's deceased brother Don Carlos. Historically, Agnes's status as a wife of Joseph Smith was considered unlikely. The earliest lists, compiled by John C. Bennett and Oliver Olney did include her,¹²⁶ but she was not considered as one of Joseph's plural wives again until the mid-1990s. George D. Smith reevaluated her role, leading to her consistent appearance in polygamy lists since that time. Compton's work solidified her inclusion, based in part on a coded entry in Brigham Young's journal.¹²⁷

The inclusion of Agnes Coolbrith in these lists has meaningful implications for the study of Mormon polygamy. Some researchers have suggested that if Joseph married Agnes, it may have reflected elements of Levirate marriage: a biblical tradition in which a man marries his deceased brother's widow to provide for her and preserve the family line.¹²⁸ Since Agnes never wrote about a sealing to Joseph, and contemporary evidence is limited, her

¹²⁵In their review of Compton's book, Anderson and Faulring argue that evidence is not adequate for the following four marriages to the Prophet: Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), Elizabeth Davis (Durfee), Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), and Nancy Maria Winchester. 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): 73, [LINK](#). Richard Bushman accepts Compton's list with the exception of Lucinda, giving Anderson and Faulring's exclusion of her as his reason. He does not say why he includes the other three. (Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (Vintage Books, 2005), 644, note 1.

¹²⁶Bennett's list named the coded "Mrs. A**** S****."

¹²⁷On May 21, 1991, Arturo DeHoyos deciphered a Masonic code in Brigham Young's journal under the date of January 6, 1842. The deciphered code reads "I WAS TAKEN INTO T[H]E LODGE J SMITH WAS AGNE[SS]." The most recent and thorough treatment of this document is found at "Brigham's Masonic Cipher," 132 Problems: Revisiting Mormon Polygamy podcast, [LINK](#).

¹²⁸There are some important differences and similarities between biblical Levirate marriage and nineteenth-century Mormon understanding of the practice. See Franklin D. Richards, "Scriptural Items" Notebook, CHL, Aug. 12, 1843; Mercy Thompson affidavit, Jan 31, 1886, in "An Important Testimony," *Deseret News* 35, no. 5 (Feb 17, 1886): 79, [LINK](#); Grant, "The Testimony of President Heber J. Grant," [LINK](#). Heber J. Grant quoted Joseph F. Smith as saying: " 'If a man die his brother shall marry his widow and raise up seed to the dead man, and I need to take only two steps from where I am standing now to place my hand on the shoulder of a man who is one of the Twelve Apostles of the Church, who is a son of the Prophet Joseph,' and he pointed directly at me." See also Samuel Morris Brown, "Joseph Smith, Polygamy, and

case demonstrates the ambiguous nature of early plural marriage. Still, the possibility suggests that familial duty and traditional biblical customs may have influenced Joseph's actions alongside his evolving theological framework.

29. Lyndon W. Cook, 2004 (37/7/28 names)¹²⁹

Within Lyndon Cook's *Nauvoo Marriages Proxy Sealings, 1843-1846*, he includes a list of women sealed to Joseph Smith in three categories: those married to him during his lifetime,¹³⁰ those sealed to him posthumously in the Nauvoo Temple,¹³¹ and those sealed to him later in Winter Quarters, the Endowment House, and the St. George Temple.¹³² The result is an impressive but methodologically opaque collection of seventy-two women that blends direct Nauvoo relationships with retrospective extensions of Joseph's sealing network.

Unlike earlier compilers who lacked access to restricted sources, Cook drew from Nauvoo Temple sealing registers, private diaries, and other archival material; however, he takes certain liberties with the records. For example, he reframes marriages or sealings mentioned in many records "with language identical to that employed in the Nauvoo Temple Proxy Record." As a result, his list, though grounded in documentary evidence, is difficult to evaluate.

the Levirate Widow," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 49, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 49-51, [LINK](#).

¹²⁹Lyndon W. Cook, *Nauvoo Marriages Proxy Sealings 1843-1846* (Grandin Book Company, 2004), 12-15.

¹³⁰Louisa Beaman, Zina Huntington, Presendia Huntington, *Lucinda Pendleton (Harris)*, *Lydia Kenyon*, *Sarah Bapson*, *Agnes Coolbrith (Smith)*, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Sylvia Sessions, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Elizabeth Davis (Durfee), Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), Marinda Nancy Johnson, Eliza R. Snow, Delcena Johnson, Desdemona Fullmer, Sarah Whitney, Martha McBride, *Sarah Scott*, *Nancy Maria Winchester*, *Hannah Dubois (Dibble)*, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Flora Woodworth, Hannah Ells, Emily Partridge, Eliza Partridge, Almera Johnson, Lucy Walker, Maria Lawrence, Sarah Lawrence, Helen Mar Whitney, Elvira Cowles, *Rhoda Richards*, Olive Frost, *Mary Ann Frost*, Melissa Lott, *Fanny Young*.

¹³¹Additional wives sealed in the Nauvoo Temple: *Olive Andrews*, *Jane Tibbets*, Phebe Watrous, *Elvira Teeple (Wheeler)*, Cordelia Morley, *Aphia Sanburn*, *Mary Huston*.

¹³²Additional wives sealed after 1846: *Sally Ann Fuller*, *Esther Dutcher*, *Lydia Dibble*, *Amanda Barnes*, *Rachel Ivins*, *Mary Vose*, *Vienna Jaques*, *Lucia Foote*, *Amelia Brown*, *Lydia Partridge*, *Sarah Hoby*, *Miriam Clark*, *Caroline Partridge*, *Charlotte Brockmand*, *Ane Madsen*, *Esther Jones*, *Magdalena Zundel*, *Sarah Granger*, *Dionitia Walker*, *Margaret Vance*, *Catherine Goddard*, *Elizabeth Tyler*, *Anne Nielsen*, *Agnes Taylor*, *Betsy Tenny*, *Elizabeth Stout*, *Martha Cragun*, *Henrietta Cox*.

His conflation of distinct sealing contexts creates duplication and obscures the boundaries between relationships Joseph personally contracted and those retroactively assigned to him.

Cook confirms all but three of the women on the Bullock/Kimball list: Eveline Knight, Jane Law, and Emeline Hibbard.

30. Gary Bergera, 2005 (36 names)¹³³

In his 2005 article, “Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists,” Bergera undertakes to document Nauvoo-era polygamists, using “diaries, letters, autobiographies, reminiscences, affidavits, statements, and family histories.” He concedes, however, that these must be “coupled with reasonable inferences and educated guesses” in order to produce a compelling identification. While Bergera largely follows Todd Compton’s earlier list of Joseph Smith’s wives, he expands it by including several women who were sealed to Smith posthumously in the Nauvoo Temple. He argues that such posthumous sealings and anointings to Joseph Smith suggest the possibility of plural marriage during his lifetime, though he does not assume this was always the case. Notably, Bergera only includes three of the seven women who fit this category—Mary Houston, Mary Ann Frost, and Phebe Watrous—demonstrating his cautious approach to inference. His 2005 article marks the last instance, as of this writing, in which historians have included women on the basis of posthumous Nauvoo Temple sealings alone, signaling a shift in scholarly methodology toward requiring more direct evidence of plural unions during Smith’s life.

One intriguing addition to Bergera’s list is Sarah Scott. Although she appears on some of the lists compiled by the fifteen historians I examine, she is not included by all of them and

¹³³Bergera, “Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists,” [LINK](#). *Fanny Alger, Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), Louisa Beaman, Zina Huntington, Presendia Huntington, Agnes Coolbrith (Smith), Sylvia Sessions, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Marinda Nancy Johnson, Elizabeth Davis (Durfee), Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), Delcena Johnson, Eliza R. Snow, Sarah Whitney, Martha McBride, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Flora Woodworth, Emily Partridge, Eliza Partridge, Almera Johnson, Lucy Walker, Sarah Lawrence, Maria Lawrence, Helen Mar Kimball, Hannah Ells, Elvira Cowles, Rhoda Richards, Desdemona Fullmer, Olive Frost, Melissa Lott, Nancy Maria Winchester, Fanny Young, Mary Houston, Sarah Scott, Mary Ann Frost, Phebe Watrous.*

therefore does not appear on my core list. The evidence for her marriage to Joseph Smith is scant, resting primarily on a Nauvoo Temple sealing record that suggests, but does not prove, a marital relationship during his lifetime. Sarah Scott is the only woman said to have married Joseph Smith “for time” and another man for eternity. She married James Mulholland civilly on February 8, 1838, and they had at least one child before Mulholland’s death on November 3, 1839. In the early 1840s, she was sealed for eternity to the deceased Mulholland, with proxy Joseph Smith, who then married her “for time.”¹³⁴ On October 25, 1843, she entered into a civil marriage with Alexander Mullinder, which some researchers have interpreted as a possible cover for her plural marriage to Joseph.¹³⁵ On February 3, 1846, in the Nauvoo Temple, Sarah was sealed for time and eternity to James Mulholland (via proxy by Heber C. Kimball), reaffirming her connection to her first husband; in the same ceremony, she was also sealed for time to Heber C. Kimball, though she later divorced him.¹³⁶ The key detail fueling speculation is that her name appears as “Sarah Smith” when she was sealed to Mulholland, suggesting to some that she had been Joseph’s plural wife.¹³⁷ Later, Orson Whitney, in his biography of Kimball, identified Sarah as among Joseph Smith’s plural wives who subsequently married Kimball “for time,” likely drawing on the same Nauvoo Temple record.¹³⁸ The inclusion of Sarah Scott reiterates the complexities of identifying Joseph Smith’s plural wives, as temple records can imply relationships without conclusively establishing them during his lifetime.

31. H. Michael Marquardt, 2005, (26 names)¹³⁹

¹³⁴Cook, *Nauvoo Marriages Proxy Sealings*, 191 fn 4, 5.

¹³⁵George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: "...but we called it celestial marriage"* (Signature Books, 2008), 218.

¹³⁶*A Book of Proxy*, 68

¹³⁷Cook, *Nauvoo Marriages Proxy Sealings*, 15, 190-191.

¹³⁸Orson Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 431.

¹³⁹H. Michael Marquardt, *The Rise of Mormonism, 1816-1844*, Web Version (n.p.: H. Michael Marquardt, 2020), 382-84, [LINK](#). Louisa Beaman, Eliza R. Snow, Sarah Whitney, Desdemona Fullmer, Emily Partridge, Eliza Partridge, Flora Woodworth, Lucy Walker, Maria Lawrence, Sarah Lawrence, *Rhoda Richards*, Helen Mar Kimball, Almera Johnson, Melissa Lott, Hannah Ells, Zina Huntington, Presendia Huntington, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Sylvia Sessions, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Marinda Johnson, Elvira Cowles, Ruth Vose (Sayers), *Agnes Coolbrith (Smith)*, Martha McBride, *Fanny Young*.

In his 2005 book, *The Rise of Mormonism* (updated in 2020), H. Michael Marquardt takes a cautious approach in identifying Joseph Smith's plural wives, ultimately listing just twenty-six women. Twenty-three of these are on the Bullock/Kimball list. Marquardt omits Fanny Alger, Elizabeth Davis (Durfee), Olive Frost, Delcena Johnson, Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), Lucinda Pendleton (Harris), and Nancy Maria Winchester from the core group. While Marquardt acknowledges the longstanding debate over Fanny Alger's relationship with Smith, he ultimately concludes that she was involved in a sexual encounter with him but does not categorize her as a plural wife.¹⁴⁰ His approach reflects a careful parsing of historical evidence, distinguishing between marriage and other forms of relationships, and sets his work apart from studies that more readily include Alger and others in their lists of Smith's wives.

32. Newell Bringhurst and Craig Foster, 2010 (33 names)¹⁴¹

In *The Persistence of Polygamy*, Newell Bringhurst and Craig Foster list thirty-three women as Joseph Smith's plural wives, matching Todd Compton's earlier identifications.¹⁴² Their contribution stands out by categorizing the motivations for these marriages into four distinct themes: assistance, dynastic, friendship, and proximity. Some wives were widows or unmarried, seeking spiritual support through sealing to a priesthood holder, while others, married to non-members, may have pursued spiritual reinforcement. Dynastic marriages aimed to forge alliances with families closely connected to Smith through friendship, ecclesiastical roles, or community prominence. Long-standing personal relationships between the Smiths and the women's families influenced some marriages. Additionally, physical closeness played a role, with several wives living in Smith's home as maids or residing in places he visited.

A prime example of this framework is Marinda Nancy Johnson, who fits several of its classifications. Marinda was married to Orson Hyde, an early Church leader, but their marriage faced significant strain due to Orson's extended missions abroad. During these times, Marinda was left to manage on her own, and a

¹⁴⁰Marquardt, 312.

¹⁴²Bringhurst and Foster, *The Persistence of Polygamy*, 290, fn 4.

sealing to Joseph Smith may have provided both spiritual support and communal stability in her husband's absence. Additionally, Marinda had known Joseph Smith since 1831, and their families maintained a close relationship, illustrating the "friendship" component of Bringhurst and Foster's framework. Her marriage to Joseph also fits the "dynastic" category, as Orson Hyde held a prominent ecclesiastical position within the Church. Marinda's situation includes a complex interplay of marital dynamics, spiritual considerations, and familial connections, displaying the multifaceted reasons behind plural marriage that Bringhurst and Foster highlight in their analysis.

33. Lisle G. Brown, 2006 (44 names) ¹⁴³

Brown's compilation, *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings*, is an extensive alphabetized collection of all Nauvoo Temple ritual data. In his treatment of women sealed to Joseph Smith (pp. 281–86), Brown identifies thirty-two sealings reflected in Nauvoo Temple records and includes Nancy Marinda Johnson as a probable sealing, inferred from a later notation in the Book of Anointings.¹⁴⁴ He further appends eleven additional names of women said to have been sealed to Smith before his death and outside the temple, drawing on the work of Lyndon W. Cook and Gary Bergera. Rather than presenting new archival discoveries, Brown's contribution lies in the scope and organization of his compilation—bringing together dispersed temple records and historiographical claims into a single reference framework. As such, his work functions less as an interpretive intervention and more as

¹⁴³Lisle G. Brown, *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings* (Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2006), 281-86, [LINK](#). Sarah Whitney, Eliza Partridge, Louisa Beaman, Emily Partridge, *Olive Andrews*, Lucy Walker, Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland), *Jane Tibbetts*, Phebe Watrous (Woodworth), Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Elizabeth Davis (Durfee), *Lucinda Pendleton*, Maria Lawrence, Desdemona Fullmer, Martha McBride, Sylvia Sessions, Sarah Lawrence, *Apia Woodman (Sanburn)*, Cordelia Morley, *Rhoda Richards*, *Augusta Adams*, Zina Huntington, *Nancy Maria Winchester*, Eliza R. Snow, *Mary Huston*, Elvira Cowles, Helen Mar Kimball, Presendia Huntington, *Mary Ann Frost*, Melissa Lott, *Agnes Coolbrith (Smith)*, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Marinda Nancy Johnson, Delcena Johnson, *Hannah Dubois*, Flora Woodworth, *Fanny Young*, *Sarah Bapson*, *Lydia Kenyon*, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Almera Johnson, Hannah Ells, Olive Frost, *Sarah Scott*. Lisle Brown's list represents 31 of the core historians' list, omitting only Fanny Alger.

¹⁴⁴See Brown, *Nauvoo Sealings*, 285 fn 323.

a comprehensive consolidation of existing scholarship, valuable for its breadth and accessibility while still reflecting the strengths and limitations of the earlier sources on which it depends.

34. Brian Hales, 2013 (35 names)¹⁴⁵

Brian Hales, known for his extensive work on early Mormon polygamy, prioritizes documentary evidence and firsthand testimony, often favoring affidavits collected in the late nineteenth century as key sources. His approach reflects an effort to establish a definitive and defensible narrative of Joseph Smith's polygamy, carefully vetting each claim based on available historical records. Hales' work has become a reference point in ongoing discussions about Joseph Smith's polygamy, as it strives to balance historical documentation with an apologetic perspective that often defends the legitimacy of Smith's practice.

Hales adds Agnes Coolbrith (Smith), Mary Heron, and a new name—Esther Dutcher—to the core list. His decision to include Esther on his list of Joseph Smith's plural wives is somewhat unusual, given his general caution about only including women where the evidence is strong. The sole basis for listing Esther is an 1888 letter from Daniel H. Wells, written more than forty years after Nauvoo, stating that she had been “sealed to Joseph the Prophet in the days of Nauvoo, though she still remained his [Albert Smith's] wife.”¹⁴⁶ The only author to list Esther as a plural wife of Joseph Smith before Hales was polygamy researcher Stanley Ivins, who references a later temple sealing on October 10, 1851, her husband standing as proxy for the Prophet.¹⁴⁷ Other historians have been more cautious, excluding Esther due to the lack of corroborating evidence. Typically, Hales requires multiple sources or firsthand

¹⁴⁵Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology* (3 vols.) (Greg Kofford Books, 2013). *Fanny Alger*, Louisa Beaman, Zina Huntington, Presendia Huntington, *Agnes Coolbrith (Smith)*, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Patty Bartlett (Sessions), Marinda Nancy Johnson, Elvira Cowles, Eliza R. Snow, Delcena Johnson, Sarah Whitney, Martha McBride, Ruth Vose (Sayers), Eliza Partridge, Emily Partridge, Sylvia Johnson, Helen Mar Kimball, Maria Lawrence, Sarah Lawrence, Lucy Walker, Sylvia Sessions, *Rhoda Richards*, Desdemona Fullmer, Flora Woodworth, Malissa Lott, Hannah Ells, Olive Frost, *Fanny Young*, Elizabeth Davis (Durfee), *Esther Dutcher*, *Lucinda Pendleton (Harris)*, Mary Heron, *Nancy Maria Winchester*, Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland).

¹⁴⁶Daniel H. Wells, Letter to Joseph F. Smith, June 25, 1888, MS 1325, CHL, [LINK](#).

¹⁴⁷Ivins, “Wives of Joseph Smith.”

testimony before adding a name to his list, making his acceptance of Esther's case notable. It may suggest that he was influenced by the way the account aligns with patterns of eternity-only sealings.

Hales does not include five women who appear on Bullock and Kimball's list: Eveline Knight, Cordelia Morley, Phebe Woodworth, Jane Law, and Emeline Hibbard. Some of these women, such as Eveline Knight and Emeline Hibbard White, are relatively obscure in the historical record, with little surviving documentation of their very existence beyond their inclusion on the Bullock/Kimball list. Others, like Jane Law, are problematic due to the controversy surrounding her and husband William's public opposition to Smith and the ambiguous nature of the allegations regarding her involvement. The fading of figures like Cordelia Morley and Phebe Woodworth may have to do with the difficulty of verifying the limited documentation available about their marriages. These omissions highlight the challenges of reconstructing Joseph Smith's plural marriages and demonstrate how institutional memory has been shaped by gaps in the historical record as well as by active selection.

Conclusion

The Bullock/Kimball compilation was not necessarily the most extensive organizational attempt to catalogue Joseph Smith's wives, but it does appear to be the first. That raises a basic historical question. Why did no one try to assemble such a list in the decade after Smith's death? Secrecy, legal risk, and uncertainty among participants all could have come into play. Early plural relationships were conducted under conditions that discouraged public disclosure. Bennett's exposé offered a sensational narrative but no verifiable details. Olney's notes were private jottings. Even those who approved of the practice did not seem to view it as something that should be codified. The impulse to make lists required not only retrospective distance but also a shift from participation to preservation.

The Bullock/Kimball list represented a new phase in polygamy's afterlife. It transformed plural marriage from lived experience into administrative record. Even though the list never entered public circulation, its existence marks an emerging belief

that Joseph Smith's marriages were to be remembered and also to be managed. The list functioned as groundwork, preparing the way for later doctrinal defenses.

Bullock and Kimball were followed by a succession of internal efforts meant to stabilize the documentation of Joseph Smith's marriages. Wilford Woodruff's fragmentary notes first explored chronology. Joseph F. Smith's affidavit program brought memory into sworn testimony. Andrew Jenson's archival compilation aspired for comprehensiveness but was quietly curtailed before it was fully realized. Each effort brought a vague, shadowy practice more fully into public knowledge. The act of listing shifted authority away from lived memory and toward clerical control. These compilations functioned as tools for defining orthodoxy, defending the faith, and determining which women would be acknowledged as wives of the prophet.

After the Second Manifesto the institutional effort to enumerate Joseph Smith's wives vanished. For nearly four decades, the Church ceased attempts to create an accounting, and Joseph F. Smith's affidavit books were tucked away. When plural marriage was outlawed, then abandoned, Joseph Smith's plural marriages, the theological foundation for sealing doctrine, became a political liability. Silence became strategy. It was not until the 1940s, when legal danger had passed and archival records began to open to private curiosity, that independent historians cautiously began assembling lists again.

Once the work resumed, the results were wide-ranging. Across fifteen lists from 1940 to 2013, compilers pursued different definitions of what counted as a "wife": legal, ceremonial, spiritual, levirate, proxy, rumored, posthumous, dynastic, or implied. Some, like Bachman, imposed strict evidentiary thresholds. Others, like Tinney, widened the category to include any woman ever linked to Joseph Smith in sealing records, however distantly. What emerges is not a single stable roster but a set of overlapping taxonomies that reveal how definitions of marriage, evidence, and even relationship itself have shifted across generations.

Rather than clarifying Joseph Smith's marital system, the lists collectively expose its fluidity. The question, "Was she his wife?" turns out to be less revealing than, "Why did a given historian decide she was or wasn't his wife?"

By tracing which names persisted, which were discarded, and which resurfaced, we gain a clearer view of how polygamy has been remembered. These lists reflect the compilers' concerns rather than Joseph Smith's intentions. Whether designed to defend, expose, systematize, or simply comprehend, each list makes a theological argument disguised as a roster.

Studying them side by side does not resolve Joseph Smith's marital history. It instead demonstrates why it cannot be reduced to a static list at all. What it offers is something more instructive: a genealogy of interpretation, showing how every generation has rebuilt Joseph Smith's plural marriages according to its own anxieties, evidentiary standards, and ideas of what the past should mean.