‘An Atmosphere of Uncertainty’

The Struggle Over

Mormon Polygamy in 1850s Utah

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Abstract

Historians have typically interpreted Mormon polygamy in nineteenth-century America through the lens of religious doctrine. This study takes a cultural approach and examines polygamous practice during its formative period in the 1850s by looking closely at two families, the Hales and the Heywoods. Private diaries, letters, and other family papers were used to reconstruct their relationships and analysis sheds light on how they viewed the marriages. The lived experiences of these Mormon pioneers show that polygamy was experimental. Men and women drew on traditional marital values such as domesticity and romantic love when negotiating their atypical marriages.

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Cover Image – Aroet Hale (long, grey beard near center) and his family outside their home in Grantsville, Utah, c. 1909. *Courtesy of Utah Historical Department.*
Title Quote – Martha Heywood Journal, October 13 1850, MS 1887, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

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Author's Note

The people studied in this thesis belonged to the Church of Jesus-Christ of Latter-day Saints. Followers of this church were commonly referred to as 'Mormons' or 'Saints'. The terms were synonymous and I have used them both.

A variety of terms also denoted the practice of polygamy within the Mormon Church during the nineteenth century. 'Plural marriage', 'Celestial Marriage', and 'The Principle' were used interchangeably by Mormons in the 1850s. Following their lead, I have incorporated all these terms into my own study.

The manuscript sources used throughout the thesis are kept at the Church History Library and Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah, in the United States. In footnotes, these archives have been abbreviated to CHL.

Introduction

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints officially outlawed polygamy in 1890. That year, Miles Park Romney, great-grandfather of the 2012 Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, fled to Mexico with his five wives to avoid the crackdown. Many other Mormon men like Romney also continued to practice plural marriage 'on the underground' in Mexico, Canada and the United States.[1] The Church publicly denied what was privately practised until 1904 when Congress investigated whether the United States Senate should seat Mormon Apostle, Senator Reed Smoot. The hearings soon focused on polygamy, with those opposing Smoot charging he was unfit because the Church was 'secretly continuing to preach and permit plural marriages'.[2] When testimony from the hearings showed new plural marriages had been ordained since the 1890 Manifesto banning polygamy, the Mormons' duplicity forced the leadership to issue a Second Manifesto banning polygamy and threatening those who defied the decree with excommunication. This more emphatic pronouncement finally ended polygamy in the mainstream Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.[3] Some legends, though, die hard: Forty percent of Americans, according to a November 2011 Gallup poll, still believe Mormons practice polygamy.[4] The implications of this widespread misunderstanding run much deeper than Mitt Romney's presidential campaign. The current confusion about polygamy mirrors the historical obscurity surrounding this controversial practice. Public opinion, as Gallup shows, still formulates the

[1] Richard Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), p. 183.
[2] Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 61.
[3] This Second Manifesto relegated polygamy to covert practice among breakaway fundamentalist sects of the LDS Church that still practice polygamy. Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, p. 187.
[4] 'Is the US Ready for a Mormon President?', *Pasadena Sun*, January 20 2012, <http://articles.pasadenasun.com/2012-01-20/news/30648464_1_mormonism-republican-nomination-lds-church>, accessed September 5 2012.

issue as Mormons against non-Mormons and that was certainly the shape of the public debate in the early twentieth century. In the mid-nineteenth century, though, Mormon thinking was far from monolithic. The practice of polygamy was both controversial and in flux. This thesis examines the experience of Mormon families as they came to terms with the hierarchy's new edict commanding multiple wives in the formative period of the 1850s.

Before 1852, Mormon leaders pointedly denied 'spiritual wifery' existed at all even though many had taken multiple wives. That left rank and file Mormons unsure of the Church's teaching. Those members came overwhelmingly from New England and upstate New York where monogamy was the only marriage they had known or imagined. They were the kind of people who shaped the spiritual and moral values of Victorian America. Polygamy even ran counter to the theology that they had subscribed to when they converted to the Church. *The Book of Mormon* condemned polygamy repeatedly as an 'abomination' and 'wicked' practice.[5] At best, many first and second generation Mormons were ambivalent about plural marriage while others saw it as nothing but adultery.[6] Even in 1852 when Mormon leaders did officially declare that polygamy was an integral element of salvation, they did not prescribe precise details of how polygamy was to function in day-to-day life. For the Mormons who adopted polygamy in those early years the absence of fixed practice or custom made their marriages experimental, even within a Church as highly structured as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This study explores the experience of polygamous Mormon families as they struggled to shape new marriage practices according to their own ideals and circumstances.

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[5] Jacob 1:15 and 2:24 in *The Book of Mormon*, translated by Joseph Smith (Nauvoo, Illinois: Robinson and Smith, 1840).
[6] Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, p. 17.

Joseph Smith founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in upstate New York during the Second Great Awakening, one of many new congregations calling for a return to original biblical values.[7] In 1823 Smith claimed to have discovered golden plates onto which the Book of Mormon had been inscribed in 421 A.D. His neighbors soon drove him from the area as a confidence man. Similar conflicts erupted into pitched battles when Smith moved his followers first to Ohio and then to Missouri, before the Saints settled in 1840 in the city of Nauvoo, in Hancock County, Illinois. County residents welcomed the Saints and the state's lawmakers, hoping to earn the bloc vote of the Mormon people, granted Smith a charter to establish the city as an autonomous, theocratic city-state. Illinois Governor Thomas Ford criticised the plan for creating 'a government within a government, a legislature with the power to pass ordinances at war with the laws of the state, courts to execute them with but little dependence upon the constitutional judiciary, and a military force at their own command'.[8] Smith himself stood at the head of each branch of government. Soon the Mormons' growing power turned the non-Mormon population against those they had welcomed only five years earlier.[9] The Church's military arm, the Nauvoo Legion, had grown to nearly 4,000 men, which made county residents particularly uneasy. Tensions eventually boiled over with mob violence between the two groups, as it had previously in Ohio and Missouri.

Amid the turmoil of the Church's early development, Smith was forging a new policy of polygamous marriage. The first known plural marriage took place when Smith married a servant, Fanny Alger, in his home in 1833.[10] By the 1840s many men in Smith's inner circle

[7] Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950).
[8] Thomas Ford, *A History of Illinois: From Its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847* (Chicago: S.C. Griggs, 1854), p. 183.
[9] By 1844, the Mormon capital's had population reached nearly 12,000 people, and some claimed that it rivaled Chicago as a hub of human activity.
[10] Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy,* p. 4.

had joined him in marrying additional women and Smith told their wives that it was their duty to accept the principle of plural marriage.[11] Although elite Mormon men had covertly married plural wives throughout the 1840s, the church's leadership continued, for tactical reasons, to publicly reject the principle of plural wives. Smith himself emphatically denied that Mormons practised polygamy in an interview with *Elder's Journal* in 1838. When asked 'Do the Mormons believe in having more wives than one?', he quickly answered, 'No, not at the same time.'[12] While some less involved Mormons might have accepted that assertion, those connected in some way to the leadership were well aware that men had been marrying plural wives. That forced Smith to offer a second, more nuanced explanation as to why polygamy was righteous:

> That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another…whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire. Our Heavenly father is more liberal in his views, and boundless in his mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive.[13]

Such vague explanations acknowledged the immorality of plural marriage. Monogamy was God's standard but some exceptional times demanded polygamy. These ambiguous justifications, alongside Smith's reluctance to make public his controversial practice, confused those followers who knew about the practice. Many more followers knew nothing about polygamy in its early days and considered the reports of Smith's 'licentious conduct' mere rumours.[14] Smith's death in 1844 denied his followers a conclusive answer, and set the stage for polygamy's ambivalent reception in the years to come.

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[11] Smith addressed the women at a Relief Society Meeting. Jill Mulvay Derr, Janeth Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), p. 44.
[12] *Elder's Journal,* Vol. 1, no. 3, July 1838, published in Far West, Missouri. Hosted by Archive.org, <http://archive.org/details/EldersJournalOfTheChurchOfLatterDaySaintsVol.1No.1>, accessed August 2, 2012.
[13] Joseph Smith Letter to Nancy Rigdon, 27 August 1842, published in *The Sangamo Journal*, January 5 1852, Springfield, Illinois.
[14] Benjamin Winchester, 'Primitive Mormonism', interview published in the *Salt Lake City Tribune,* September 18 1889.

While incarcerated in Carthage, Illinois on treason charges, a mob stormed the jail, killing Smith and his brother, Hyrum. The Prophet's loyal follower and second-in-command, Brigham Young, was primed for the role of Mormon President. Described by Horace Greeley as a 'portly, frank, [and] good-natured man', Young was an early convert to the church. Like Smith, he was also a charismatic leader.[15] He sought to defend his followers from the mob violence in Hancock County, and requested that the Illinois governor send in 400 troops to restore peace. The violence subsided for a few years, and the Mormons were able to complete their grand Nauvoo Temple. By 1846, however, increasingly bitter conflict forced Young to lead the Saints west across the Rocky Mountains, beyond the territory of the United States to Utah.

Young cast the new Mormon Zion in the same mould as Smith's Nauvoo – a 'millennial metropolis' in which Young as Prophet headed all church and government institutions.[16] This provisional state named 'Deseret' covered a vast swathe of the American Southwest, including modern-day Utah, most of Nevada and Arizona, as well as parts of Colorado, Idaho, Wyoming, Oregon, and New Mexico. After Deseret's bid for statehood failed in 1850, a smaller area was incorporated as a territory of the United States. Even though the Saints had not achieved statehood, Young retained power and installed himself as governor of the new territory called Utah.[17] At the safe remove of 2,000 miles from much of the United States, Young implemented polygamy across the Church.

[15] Horace Greeley quoted in Leonard Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), p. 4. See also John G. Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).
[16] David Bigler, and Will Bagley, *The Mormon Rebellion: America's First Civil War 1857-1858* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), p. 28.
[17] For more on Mormon development of Utah and its surrounding areas see Richard H. Jackson, *The Mormon Role in the Settlement of the West* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1978).

On August 29, 1852, only five years after the first Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, Orson Pratt urged them to adopt 'The Principle'.[18] This sermon officially acknowledged for the first time that the Church endorsed marrying multiple wives. Maintaining that the Saints had not introduced the practice to 'gratify the carnal lusts and feelings of man', as many detractors suggested, Pratt outlined three defences of the practice: Firstly, the Constitution granted individuals the right to freely practice their religion so the government had no business outlawing polygamy. Secondly, plural marriage allowed Mormons to fulfill God's commandment to multiply and replenish the earth.[19] God had promised the Old Testament patriarch Abraham that his offspring would be as numerous as the sands upon the seashore. It 'would have been rather a slow process', Pratt lamented, 'if Abraham had been confined to one wife'.[20] Lastly, Pratt warned of 'whoredom, adultery, and fornication' that afflicted the 'narrow, contracted nations of modern Christianity' who practised monogamy.[21] Polygamy provided a practical solution to such ills: Man's 'fallen nature' could only be controlled 'by giving to His faithful servants a plurality of wives'.[22]

Only four years after the official pronouncement, rates of plural marriage in Utah reached an all-time high with fifty-six percent of married women in polygamous marriages. Plural marriage was even more prevalent in the families of the Church leadership.[23] This rapid increase in polygamous marriage is unsurprising given the religious spirit that had prevailed in the preceding years. In the remote Great Basin region, the doctrines of the Saints took on a

[18] Orson Pratt Sermon, August 29 1852, *Journal of Discourses,* vol. 9 (London: Latter-Day Saint's Book Depot, 1854), p. 14.
[19] Mormon theology encouraged large families because they wanted to bring forth efficiently and expediently so-called bodily 'tabernacles' for the pre-existing spirits to have earthly life and to continue their spiritual progression.
[20] *Journal of Discourses,* vol. 9, p. 60.
[21] *ibid.*, p. 62.
[22] *ibid.*, pp. 61-62.
[23] Marie Cornwall, Camela Courtright, and Laga van Beek, 'How Common the Principle? Women as Plural Wives in 1860', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought,* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1993), p. 147. Carol Nielson also found that eighty-four percent of the women who contributed to the 14th Ward's quilt in 1857 were in polygamous marriages. See Carol Nielsen, *The Salt Lake City 14th Ward Album Quilt, 1857: Stories of the Relief Society Women and Their Quilt* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2004).

more extreme edge. Complete with fiery sermons designed to 'wake up the Saints', as well as extensive proselytising efforts both in the U.S. and abroad, the Mormon Reformation of 1855-1857 revived the Church's fervent millennialism.[24] As church leader Wilford Woodruff described the Mormon Reformation:

> We have had a great reformation this winter; some of the fruits are: all have confessed their sins either great or small, restored their stolen property all have been baptized from the presidency down; all are trying to pay their tithing and nearly all are trying to get wives, until there is hardly a girl 14 years old in Utah, but what is married, or just going to be. President Young has hardly time to eat, drink or sleep, in consequence of marrying the people and attending the endowments.[25]

The Reformation saw a surge in religious fervor among the Mormons in Utah that resulted in sixty-five percent more plural marriages in the years 1856 and 1857 than in any two year period before or since.[26] Men were strongly encouraged to take additional wives because, as Brigham Young explained, 'The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter polygamy'.[27] Church leaders also reprimanded women who resisted the 'Celestial Law'. As Jedediah Grant declared to a crowd in the Salt Lake City Bowery in 1856:

> We have women here who like anything but the celestial law of God. If they could break asunder the cable of the church of Christ, there is scarcely a mother in Israel but would do it this day. They want to break up the church of God, and to break it from their husbands and from their family connections.[28]

Such comments demonstrate that skepticism surrounded the practice in its early years and, for many women, religious fervor was clearly not enough to convince them to share their husbands.

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[24] Millenialism is the belief that the end times are near and that with Christ's return the elect will be exalted and the rest cast out. It spurred early Mormons to activity because they expected history to take an apocalyptic turn very soon.
[25] Wilford Woodruff Letter to George A. Smith, April 21 1857, MS 3434, Item 14, CHL.
[26] Stanley S. Ivins, 'Notes on Mormon Polygamy', in D. Michael Quinn, *The New Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), p. 171.
[27] Brigham Young, August 19 1856 Sermon, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 11 (London: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1867), p. 269.
[28] Jedidiah M. Grant, 21 September 1856 Sermon, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 4 (London: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1857), p. 50.

Several generations of historians have focused on how devotion to Mormon theology shaped experiences in polygamy. Early historical treatments stressed that polygamy was a religious principle that tested the faith of followers. They downplayed the sexual aspects of polygamous relationships.[29] The implication was clear: Men did not take additional wives from sexual rapacity but rather from pious obedience. These historians, mainly Mormons themselves, echoed the Church's position that polygamy was based in theology, and not desire.[30] Recent historians have been more frank in their assessment that these unions were for procreation but maintain that the religious doctrine underpinning polygamy still defined the practice.[31] Jessie Embry asked why women engaged in polygamy and found religious devotion was the strongest motivator. Difficulties such as jealousy and loneliness were simply overcome as spiritual developments.[32] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich argues similarly that women in plural marriages looked forward to becoming 'queens and priestesses in heaven'. The political struggle over polygamy is, for Ulrich, comparable to the contemporary fight over same-sex marriage.[33] These historians take for granted that women wanted to be involved and view their role as passive acceptance of religious doctrine. Although the belief that polygamy led to higher levels of salvation played a significant role in how men and women understood it, the theological underpinnings were not clearly understood or accepted among ordinary pioneer Mormons. As such, historians' religious explanations of polygamy do not tell the whole story. Paying attention to the uncertainties of the practice and women's

[29] Most of these historians discussed polygamy by way of its founder, Joseph Smith. See John Widsoe, *Joseph Smith: Seeker after Truth, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1951); Hyrum Andrus, *Joseph Smith: The Man and the Seer* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976).
[30] Even after The Manifesto banned the practice, the Church offered a theological explanation for the change. The polygamy of the nineteenth century was such an exceptional period, and the doctrinal change of 1890 that returned to monogamy came in a revelation from God.
[31] Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-Day Saints 1830-1900* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1982); Leonard J. Arrington, 'The Economic Role of Pioneer Mormon Women, *Western Humanities Review*, 9 (1955), pp. 145-164.
[32]Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1987), pp. 5-7.
[33] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, AHA Presidential Address: 'An American Album, 1857', delivered at 124th meeting of American Historical Association in San Diego 2010, updated 18 February 2011, American Historical Association Website <http://www.historians.org/info/AHA_History/ulrich.cfm#bio>, viewed 20 June 2012.

very mixed opinions lets us see the lived experience of the men and women who lived in plural marriage in nineteenth-century America.

The historiography of polygamy has ignored the Mormon community during its formative stages in the 1850s. Many studies focus on the Nauvoo years when Smith first formulated the theology of polygamy and began taking young women as his wives.[34] Others, like Embry and Ulrich, examine polygamy from 1870 to the turn-of-the-century, decades after plural marriage was introduced. At that time multiple marriages had been a fixture of the Church for nearly half a century, and the practice was under intense scrutiny by federal authorities.[35] The national barrage against polygamy reinforced pro-polygamy rhetoric among women and rallied the Saints behind a practice that had come to symbolise their religious freedom.

The pioneer period was very different. During the 1850s, the federal government had not yet enacted any legislation banning polygamy. With little political motivation to unite behind the practice, women spoke more candidly about polygamy and even pushed back against the Church leadership of men like Young and Pratt. As the first generation to live in polygamy, pioneer Mormons also struggled to reconcile a radically different marital institution with the traditional culture they had inherited from New England or Great Britain in a way that subsequent generations of Mormons did not. The high rate of divorce in the 1850s shows how ambiguous the Mormon commitment to polygamy was in the early years of its practice. Tensions from plural marriages generated a high demand for divorces, which were regularly

[34] See Kenneth L. Cannon II, 'After the Manifesto: Mormon Polygamy, 1890-1906', in D. Michael Quinn, ed., *The New Mormon History*, pp. 201-220; Martha Soontag Bradley and Mary Firmage Woodward, 'Plurality, Patriarchy, and the Priestess: Zina D.H. Young's Nauvoo Marriage', *Journal of Mormon History,* Vol. 20 (Spring 1994); Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (1945; revised ed., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971). Richard Van Wagoner's *Mormon Polygamy* is a more comprehensive study, but his clear focus is also on the origins of polygamy in Nauvoo and how that affected its development in the Great Basin.

[35] Beginning in 1862, the federal government imposed increasingly harsh anti-polygamy legislation. The Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act officially declared polygamy illegal. In 1882 the Edmunds Anti-Polygamy Act made plural marriage a felony. This 1882 legislation was followed up in 1887 with the Edmunds-Tucker Act, which threatened to disincorporate the Mormon Church and disenfranchised Utah women, in an effort to stop the practice. See Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

granted by church officials in the ecclesiastical courts. Although Young occasionally denied such requests, more often than not he acquiesced. During his three decades as Church president, from 1847-1877, Young authorised 1,645 requests for divorce, and over two-thirds of these requests were granted in the years before 1866.[36] Polygamous marriages were particularly susceptible to divorce. Divorce rates in mid-nineteenth century Utah were three times higher for polygamous marriages than monogamous ones – a figure suggesting many men and women became disillusioned with the practice.[37] Historical treatments of polygamy, however, do not acknowledge that the first polygamists of the 1850s fluctuated widely in their devotion to the practice.

The leading histories of the Latter-day Saints emphasise the idiosyncrasy of their religious doctrines as evidence of Mormon 'exceptionalism' and its role as an 'ideological counterculture' to mainstream America.[38] Historians have not connected Mormons, as R. Laurence Moore argues, to broader trends in American culture.[39] The experiences of mid-nineteenth-century Mormon pioneer families, though, often mirrored those of other families settling the American West. The physical tasks of moving across the continent and establishing farms were precisely the same. Women of all religions on the frontier cared for the family and did domestic chores while also assisting their husbands with farm labor.[40] Some aspects of Mormon life on the frontier, though, were different. High rates of polygamy ensured that approximately one fifth of households shared the male head of household with

[36] For more on 'typical' American marriage patterns and divorce in the rest of the country see Hendrik Hartog, *Man and Wife in America: A History* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 2000).
[37] Eugene E. Campbell and Bruce L. Campbell, 'Divorce among Mormon Polygamists: Extent and Explanations', in D. Michael Quinn, ed., *The New Mormon History*, p. 183.
[38] Recent examples of this trend include: Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*; Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-Day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992) and Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830-1846* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).
[39] R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 27.
[40] Leonard Arrington, 'Rural Life among Nineteenth-Century Mormons: The Woman's Experience', *Agricultural History*, Vol. 58, no. 3 (July 1984), p. 240.

one or more other households when the family could afford to provide each wife with her own home.[41] And even in monogamous families, the Mormon Church's significant proselytising efforts, particularly relevant during the Mormon Reformation, ensured that male heads of household were frequently absent. These unique conditions often left women to run their own households, and in an agricultural society, women had a double burden of home and farm. But these idiosyncrasies do not necessarily mean that Mormon families should be *excluded* from larger cultural histories of nineteenth-century America.

Listening to the stories of first-generation Mormon polygamous families to reconnect them to the wider historiography of Victorian marriage will better explain the crooked history of Mormon polygamy. They, like other nineteenth-century Americans, came to attribute increasing importance to romantic relationships – particularly involving the open expression of the self. Some historians even argue that this emphasis on love and closeness with one's spouse supplanted religion and God 'as the central symbol of ultimate significance'.[42] Mormon leaders discouraged this faith in romantic love, particularly in polygamous marriages, because it ran counter to their communal values. Brigham Young reprimanded women for caring 'more about their Husband sleeping with them than they do about God or his kingdom', and reminded men that, 'if a man was to submit to such women he would not be worth shucks in building up the kingdom of God'. Indeed, the Mormon leader concluded, if women never received 'pillow council' from their husbands it was their duty to remain devoted mothers and 'go home & do right'.[43] Historians take these instructions from leaders for granted, and simply assume that Mormons focused on religion rather than romance in

[41] Marie Cornwall, Camela Courtright, and Laga van Beek, 'How Common the Principle? Women as Plural Wives in 1860' , p. 147.
[42] Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989),* p. 8; See also Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).
[43] Brigham Young counseling Agnes Hoagland, a disgruntled wife, in 1857. Quoted in quoted in Ulrich, AHA Address: 'An American Album, 1857'.

their marriages to avoid jealousy and conflict between the wives. The lived experience of pioneer Mormons shows, however, that they did value romantic unions.

The experiences of the first generation of women who lived in polygamy also sheds new light on scholarly debates on the paradigm of separate spheres and the extent to which women actually embraced ideals of domesticity in circumstances that did not really encourage them. In a seminal 1966 article, Barbara Welter described the 'Cult of True Womanhood'. Using prescriptive literature to describe the culture of middle-class women living in the urban North, Welter located these women in the home where they strove to achieve the ideals of piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity.[44] Though most historians now reject Welter's strict binary of the separate spheres as overly simplistic, historians might ask critically how the ideals she described were complicated by variables such as religion and location.[45] Historians have not queried the relevance of Victorian ideals to Mormon women. They disagree, however, on the significance of these cultural ideals for rural and western women. Elizabeth Jameson concludes that the culture of Victorian domesticity held no practical value for pioneer women (or men for that matter), for whom the demands of settlement were too great to maintain such rigidly domestic and leisurely lifestyles.[46] Conversely, Julie Roy Jeffrey concluded that pioneer women carried their domestic ideals with them across the nation, preserving the 'Cult of True Womanhood' as a central aspect of their character and a key element of 'civilising' the Western frontier.[47] Although prescriptive literature and women's magazines clearly espoused the values of True Womanhood, the extent to which

[44] Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1880', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Part 1 (Summer 1966), pp. 151-174. See also Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England 1780-1835* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977).
[45] Cathy Davidson, 'No More Separate Spheres!', *American Literature*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (September 1998), p. 443; Linda K. Kerber, 'Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (June 1988), p. 28.
[46] Elizabeth Jameson, 'Women as Workers, Women as Civilizers: True Womanhood in the American West', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol. 7, no. 3 (1984), p. 4.
[47] Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1880* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979).

these women lived their lives by these principles is an open question. Polygamous Mormon women whose religion and location set them apart from women who were traditionally subjects of studies in domesticity provide a good glimpse at the tenacity of the principles and their practical operation.

A careful look at the experiences of families in this uncertain period reveals that the discussion was shaped, although not circumscribed, by appeals to the ideals of Victorian womanhood. Some Mormon women, defending polygamy, agreed with Church leaders that it prevented prostitution and was 'the only reliable safeguard of female virtue and innocence'.[48] Though the public rhetoric of polygamous Mormons embraced the ideals of true womanhood, their lived experiences offer a far more complex picture. They daily crossed boundaries in terms of assuming 'masculine' roles when their husbands where away on missions or with other wives. Separate spheres were an ideal for Mormon women but only one ideal. Although their religious fervour and distinctive religious doctrines set Mormons apart, they were not immune from wider currents in American culture

Revolutions in personal behaviour are rare. When the Mormon hierarchy articulated The Principle, however, men like Young and Pratt were commanding a revolution in family structure. In time, they won many converts to their cause, but this study focuses on the 1850s, which was the formative moment for Mormon polygamy. In those early years Mormon men and women lacked a clear model for polygamy, but strove to adapt this unusual practice to their own lives and existing beliefs about sexuality and marriage. The edict to marry more wives did not come with a set of guiding principles and Mormon pioneers lacked any cultural background to model polygamous practice. To overcome the normlessness of the practice, Church leaders took examples from Old Testament patriarchs. As Pratt explained,

[48] This statement, made by a plural wife in the Salt Lake City Tabernacle in 1858, is quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Volume V* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), p. 233.

> How did Abraham manage to get a foundation laid for this mighty kingdom? Was he to accomplish it all through one wife? No. Sarah gave a certain woman to him whose name was Hagar, and by her a seed was to be raised up unto him. Is this all? No. We read of his wife Keturah, and also of a plurality of wives and concubines … Here, then, we perceive just from this one principle, reasoning from the blessings of Abraham alone, the necessity – if we would partake of the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – of doing their works, and he that will not walk in his footsteps, will be deprived of his blessings.[49]

But Mormons did not actually follow Levitical laws governing the practice. Ancient Jews, for instance, strictly forbade a man to marry two sisters because such marriages violated rules of kinship and affinity. In Mormon polygamy, though, men often married two or three sisters. Approximately ten percent of all Mormon polygamous men married one or more pairs of sisters.[50] Although Smith often compared the Saints to the Jews of the Old Testament, their detailed cultural paradigms had little relevance for the Mormon pioneers. Without any other cultural framework that included polygamy, they struggled to forge their own practice. No consistent rules governed courtship, the number of wives, or which women were eligible to become wives. When marital disputes arose, there were no systematic approaches to bring resolution. Brigham Young and local bishops decided marital disputes on a case-by-case basis with only their limited personal experience to inform the decisions. Without any firm cultural basis for regulating polygamy, the early years of its practice saw a diverse range of experiences across class and gender – itself a testament to the experimental nature of Mormon polygamy in the 1850s. Seeing how the first generation of Mormons implemented polygamy gives us a better understanding of the pioneer generation and undercuts the assumption that polygamy was simply a struggle between the dominant Protestant culture of nineteenth-century America and the Mormon outsiders.

To convey the subtle anxieties and private negotiations that made the first years of polygamy experimental, this thesis narrates the life stories of two families. Many historians see such a

[49] Orson Pratt Sermon, August 29 1852, *Journal of Discourses, vol. 9 (London: Latter-Day Saint's Book Depot, 1854),* p. 14.
[50] Ivins, 'Notes on Polygamy', p. 175.

biographical approach as an effective tool for explicating culture. As Alice Kessler-Harris writes of biographical history, 'An individual life might help us to see not only into particular events but into the larger cultural and social and even political processes of a moment in time'.[51] Such a narrative approach is also well-suited to explicating interpersonal relationships. Historian Karen Lystra, who focused her study of romantic love in the nineteenth century on the ways those ideas translated into actual relationships over time, provides a superior model.[52] Such holistic studies provide historians with a dynamic understanding of human relationships and culture.

This has not, however, been the common approach to Mormon history, or even Western women's history. Historians often use the sources in such a piecemeal fashion that the generalisations they have produced explain little of the complex, interpersonal relationships and ideals that shaped women's lives and values. Understanding how ideologies such as the cult of domesticity actually functioned throughout women's lives and relationships is difficult using random diary excerpts or evidence from only brief stages in a relationship. Lois Banner, for instance, suggests that Ellen K. Rothman's study of courtship behaviour of nineteenth-century middle-class couples is plagued with 'perplexities' because it attempts to draw conclusions about complex, psychological processes on the basis of small fragments of stories from a large group of couples. Rothman might have avoided such problems if she had placed the men and women's stories of courtship within the 'entire life cycle for complete comparative explanation'. Such a piecemeal analysis, Banner charges, ultimately 'leaves one with the sense that the final story remains to be told'.[53] Paula Petrik similarly suggests that Lillian Schlissel's seminal work on frontier women suffers from 'vagaries of psychological

[51] Alice Kessler-Harris, 'AHR Roundtable: Why Biography?', *American Historical Review,* Vol. 114, No. 3 (June 2009), p. 630.
[52] Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart*, pp. 10-11.
[53] Lois W. Banner, Review of Ellen K. Rothman's *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America*, *Journal of American History,* Vol. 72, No. 1 (June 1985), p. 117.

interpretation', the result of her fragmented format of 'explanation followed by diary excerpts'.[54]

The analysis that both Banner and Petrik criticise dominates the historiography of Mormon families. These historians dissected public writings, diaries and letters, and reconstituted them into the somewhat simplistic conclusion that the Mormons accepted polygamy because it promised them salvation and exaltation in the afterlife.[55] Many Saints probably did accept polygamy at some stage of their adult lives, but these views could easily change. A jealous wife might become resigned to polygamy after many years, or a husband might grow tired of the practice as he aged. Historians looking at only a snapshot of these individuals' lives would get a distorted sense of how they experienced polygamy. Longitudinal studies that explore changing family dynamics and show how marriage and relationships evolved are conspicuously absent. One very notable exception is Linda Newell and Valeen Avery's exhaustive biography of Joseph Smith's first wife, Emma Hale Smith. Her life becomes a lens for examining how families struggled with polygamy.[56] Her ultra-elite status was unique, however, and highlights the lack of similar studies for other Mormon families. By exploring the lives of Mormon families – not just moments taken in isolation that seem to exemplify polygamous life – we can reintegrate these pioneers into the wider historical study of nineteenth-century marriage and explore the interplay between normative American ideals and polygamous marriage.

To see how families adapted to, and sometimes struggled with, polygamy this study focuses on two polygamous families. Using private letters, diaries and reminiscences it reconstructs

[54] Paula Petrik, Review of Lillian Schlissel's *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey* (New York: Shocken Books, 1982), *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (July 1984), p. 342.
[55] See, for example, Kenneth Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1830-1910* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1982); Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Anderson, *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1987).
[56] Linda Newell and Valeen Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith—Prophet's Wife, "Elect Lady," Polygamy's Foe* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1984).

their relationships and uses ethnographic analysis to explain how they understood them. The families were chosen because they offered contrasting perspectives based on class, yet overlap during the formative period of the 1850s.

Chapter One details the lives of Aroet Hale and his wives, especially his first wife, Olive. Their 1855-1857 letters provide a rare dialogue between a husband and wife negotiating the prospect of additional wives. Aroet's diaries and reminiscences trace out his continued attempts to gather plural wives. As a farming family of modest means, the Hales' story shows how the non-elite members of society experienced the edicts on polygamy.

Chapter Two presents the lives of Joseph Heywood and his wives, particularly his highly literate third wife, Martha Spence. Though family letters and Joseph's diary provide a more complete picture of the family, Martha's diary for the years 1850 to 1855 is the central focus. Her account provides the richest picture of how independent women shaped their experiences in polygamy. Joseph's other wives, particularly his first wife, Sarepta, and fourth wife, Mary Bell, provide fascinating comparisons to Martha's story.

The families at the heart of this study were pioneers in more ways than one. Among the earliest white migrants to journey across the Overland Trail, the Mormons established their own 'Kingdom of Israel' in the arid Great Basin of the Western United States. But they also pioneered a marriage institution antithetical to the monogamous tradition that remained a bedrock axiom in American culture. Without cultural norms to guide their practice, these pioneers in plural marriage drew upon familiar ideas in a unique context. Their experiences in polygamous marriages provide a new window onto the intersections between domesticity, romantic love, power and marriage in nineteenth-century America.

Chapter One

'I am a jelous kind of a thing'[1]*: Polygamous Courtship in a Rural Mormon Community*

On June 24, 1855, Olive Hale, 'feeling somewhat lonsome', picked up the pen to write a few lines to her husband, Aroet. It was the first letter she had ever written. 'I often think', she began, 'that I did not no how to prise your Company until I was deprived of it'.[2] Thus began Olive's first letter in a correspondence of more than two dozen letters kept up between Olive and her husband, Aroet Hale, from 1855 and 1857. The couple had been separated when President Young sent Aroet to serve a Church mission in Las Vegas in the summer of 1855. Aroet had not perfected the art of spelling. For the most part, he wrote phonetically and seems to have spent little time mastering Noah Webster's *American Spelling Book*. Olive was even less adept when she reluctantly took up the pen. After two of his letters went unanswered, Aroet urged his wife to write back to him, no matter what the end product looked like: 'Olive I want you to wright to me every chance you get I want a letter from your own hand Wright if it arnt but little I want you should wright dont be afraide that it wont look just rite'.[3] A desire to remain connected to her husband prompted Olive to write, although she frequently expressed doubts about her ability: 'Aroet excues this leter for you now that it is the first one that ever I rote but if you cant read it rite and let me no and I wont rite eney more'.[4] Olive was uncomfortable and unfamiliar with writing, but her husband's departure forced her to write to maintain their relationship. These letters offer a window into their lives – both the challenges of building a farm in the Mountain West and the strains polygamy put

[1] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, November 1857, MS 3212 Folder 2, Item 11, CHL.
[2] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, June 24 1855, MS 3212 Folder 1, Item 4, CHL.
[3] Aroet Hale to Olive Hale, June 12 1855, MS 3212 Folder 1, Item 2, CHL.
[4] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, June 24 1855, MS 3212 Folder 1, Item 4, CHL.

on their marriage. Their lives were uncertain on the Mormon frontier. Often, though, it was uncertainty that allowed women like Olive to direct her relationship even within a society like that of the Mormons that was trying to re-invent patriarchy. Her hesitant adventure into the unfamiliar and uncertain field of writing echoes larger themes in the couple's relationship as they negotiated the new challenges of polygamy.

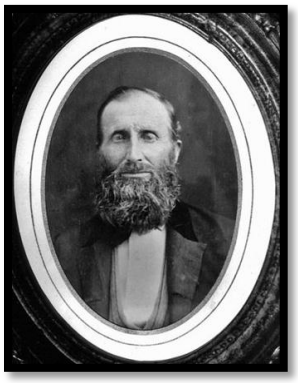
***

Olive Amelia Whittle Hale (b. 1833)
Courtesy of Utah State Historical Society.

Olive wrote her first letter in the small, one-room adobe brick house that her husband built. She was twenty-two years of age, and living with her three young children and her husband's thirteen year-old brother, Alma, on the family's homestead. Her husband had left for his mission in Las Vegas, and she had few friends in a sparsely settled town. The family had moved two years earlier to the small farming community of Grantsville in Tooele County, Utah.[5] Located forty miles west of Salt Lake City, the young town had been recently settled when the Mormons colonised a wide swathe around their capital. It was home to fewer than thirty families when the Hales arrived to settle their 160 acres in 1853.[6] Brigham Young had

[5] Alma A. Gardiner, *The Founding and Development of Grantsville, Utah, 1850-1950,* M. A. Thesis (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1959).
[6] Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1941), p. 300.

granted Aroet the land as reward for his promotion to Second Lieutenant in the Nauvoo Legion. He had first joined the church's military branch as a sixteen year-old drummer boy in 1844, a position that in 1848 gave him the opportunity to move west to the Utah Territory with the immigration company of Heber C. Kimball. Also traveling in Kimball's Company was fourteen year-old Olive Whittle and her family.



Aroet Lucius Little Hale (b. 1828)
Courtesy of Utah State Historical Society

How and when the drummer boy and the dark-haired, blue-eyed Canadian girl became involved romantically is not clear but when the company arrived in the Utah Territory, Kimball advised the Mormon President that Aroet's grant of land should sit adjacent to the Whittle family's allotment because Aroet had become acquainted with Olive crossing the plains. Having done his 'Sparking along the road', Aroet decided soon after he arrived in Salt Lake City that he would propose. Less than a year later, Aroet, now nineteen, wed fifteen year old Olive.[7] In early 1850, conflict with local Indians erupted and Aroet joined fifty minutemen in reforming the Nauvoo Legion to defend the settlement. This was the first of several calls to military duty that separated the couple early in their marriage. For his service, he earned the family's land in Grantsville, and moved there in 1853 with his wife and two young children. He would not spend much time, though, settling down. At the April 1855 Annual Church Conference, President Young called upon Aroet and thirty-three other young

[7]Aroet Hale, Reminiscences c. 1882, MS 1509 v. 1, CHL, pp. 16-17.

men to serve in the Las Vegas mission. Missions – whether to convert Indians in new settlements of the American West or to encourage European migrants to flock to Zion – helped to generate Mormonism's mid-century revival. The official purpose of the Las Vegas mission, though, was to teach the gospel to the valley's 'Lamanites' (as the Saints called the Indians) and develop a farming settlement.[8] Aroet served for a year, during which time his wife and younger brother struggled to maintain the homestead in Grantsville. During this mission, Aroet also began thinking about marrying additional wives.

Aroet and Olive's conversations on polygamy offer a candid snapshot of how the first generation of Mormon polygamists reconciled their traditional concepts of relationships with the new marriage system. More particularly, their letters provide a rare glimpse into the private and difficult conversations that took place when the question of additional wives was first raised. Brigham Young never instructed men on how to introduce the issue, other than his official pronouncements that urged men to take additional wives for heavenly exaltation. Men and women had to negotiate the new arrangement themselves. Olive noticed with disdain how one local man, 'Phippia', snuck around behind his first wife's back, pretending to be at church meetings when he was actually courting other women. Olive warned her husband against such shenanigans: 'Aroet Could not fool Olive that slick if he should try twice and I hope he will never try to decive her in that way and I do not think you will'.[9] Without any customary procedure to guide him, Aroet evidently felt some trepidation telling Olive of his plans to take another wife. At first, he thought a light-hearted approach would work best so in June 1855 he first broached the subject in jest. Frustrated by his new domestic responsibilities on the Las Vegas frontier, Aroet joked that he would join his brethren in seeking out a 'good looking young squaw to Wash my clothes & keep my Cabin clean'. He

[8] Aroet Hale, Reminiscences, vol. 2, p. 6.
[9] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, August 19 1855, MS 3212, Folder 1, Item 7, CHL.

promised to let Olive know by letter if he was successful.[10] Olive did not immediately acknowledge the joke so Aroet again raised the issue, asking Olive to tell the men in town 'not to merry of all the Pretty girls till I come back for I want to have a finger in the pie myself if I can't git a squaw'.[11] Again, Olive ignored his jokes and by July Aroet realised that humour was not working. He pursued his plans to marry again by asking Olive to help him gain the favor of her younger sister, Mary, by 'sparking' her if another man, Ozro, had not done so already. Aroet thought Olive would be more agreeable to another wife if it was her own sister. But if Mary was not available, Aroet told Olive 'to try and git some other good one Git a holesome woman for I will not have nother One I am bound to have one as soon as my mishon is ended'.[12] So Olive learned that Aroet would take a wife when his mission ended, and he expected her to play an active role in courting the next wife. She could not ignore this and wrote back as soon as she could. She told her husband that she was unsure that she could set up Mary as a second wife, considering that he had 'not left (her) in the rite fix to spark'. Olive told Aroet she would do her best, 'seeing that you are in a such a hurrey and want one as soon as you get home'. Still, she was disappointed that he had placed yet another difficult burden on her. 'I am sorry', she wrote, 'that you think the wife you have got will not answer you a little while after your mishion is out for I expected to take a little Comfert'.[13] Comfort, she had sought, in the joy of having the company of her husband. Olive was also likely looking forward to having her husband at home to hand back some responsibilities she had carried since he had gone to Las Vegas.

When men were called to missions, the challenges of farming and family added to the uncertainties of life. Back at home in Grantsville, Olive had been forced to manage the farm in addition to child-rearing and domestic chores. Childrearing fell primarily to Olive but

[10] Aroet Hale to Olive Hale, June 12 1855, MS 3212, Folder 1, Item 3, CHL.
[11] Aroet Hale to Olive Hale, June 12 1855, MS 3212, Folder 1, Item 3, CHL.
[12] Aroet Hale to Olive Hale, July 10 1855, MS 3212, Folder 1, Item 5, CHL.
[13] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, July 23 1855, MS 3212, Folder 1, Item 6, CHL.

Aroet did not hesitate to instruct her about educating their eldest son Lucius. He was disappointed in 1855 when Olive could not afford proper shoes, so Lucius could not enroll. Aroet closed off almost every letter by asking Olive to 'take good care of the children'. She took this advice graciously, although once she reminded him that her work was even greater in his absence: 'I see that you right very particulr about my taking good care of the children I do for I have double the care of them now then I had when you was here with me for it rests all on me now'.[14] At home Aroet did provide some help with the children, showing that child-rearing was not solely the women's responsibility. Aroet left his younger brother, Alma, at home to help Olive with farm labour, but she managed most of the operations herself. Aroet regularly instructed her on specific tasks. Early in his mission in June 1855, Aroet anticipated grain shortages and urged Olive to raise enough of her own wheat to last the winter. The crop would not amount to twenty bushels of wheat between Salt Lake and Iron counties, he predicted.[15] Aroet also instructed Olive on livestock management, telling her when to sell horses and what she should seek in exchange. Typically, it was 'breadstuff'. Though Aroet gave his advice liberally, his wife and brother ultimately had to sow and harvest, store and sell, all with very little help. Olive even tried to manage the family's modest economic affairs. While she was in Salt Lake City visiting her family, Alma sold her prized 'pink cow' to pay the taxes. Olive wrote to Aroet disgruntled with her brother-in-law. 'When I got home', she told Aroet, 'I found Alma had Sold the pink Cow to pay the taxes. I did not like it very well for that Cow you always cald mine and I set a good deal by her I do not now what was his notion for selling her'. On most family farms, dairy production fell to women and so Olive saw the cow as hers.[16] She consulted 'Br. Little' about the rules governing taxes, and learned that they 'need not Sell property to pay it nor put our Selves out of the way to pay it

[14] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, July 23 1855, MS 3212, Folder 1, Item 6, CHL.
[15] Aroet Hale to Olive Hale, June 12 1855, MS 3212, Folder 1, Item 3, CHL.
[16] Sally McMurry, 'American Rural Women and the Transformation of Dairy Processing, 1820–80', *Rural History,* Vol. 5, No. 2 (October 1998), p. 144.

to let it stand until the house was rented'. With such lenient tax policies, the family could have kept Olive's favorite cow. Her initiative in investigating these financial rules and her active role in managing the farm meant that women like Olive were not confined to domesticity but often improvised when circumstances required.

Beyond the burden of running a farm, harsh frontier conditions made life difficult and unpredictable for rural women like Olive, who were continually adapting to unexpected events. Farming in the Mountain West required men to undertake the arduous process of digging irrigation ditches. Even with this infrastructure, severe drought and grasshoppers plagued the Saints and decimated crop yields through the summer of 1855. In Grantsville, uncertain water supplies created what Olive described as a 'perfect Hell'.[17] The frontier had no established rules governing water distribution. Local leaders arbitrarily decided to use an old land survey to allot water rights but many townsmen rightly felt the system did not address the needs of recent settlers. The district bishop eventually resolved the issue by agreeing to distribute water more equally.[18] This quarrel exemplifies the spontaneous decision-making and arbitrary governance that marked life in pioneer Utah. Water supplies were especially low in the summer of 1855, which meant limited yields. As early as June, Olive was expecting a small crop.[19] By September conditions had deteriorated further and Alma had been forced to travel North in an attempt to trade livestock for wheat. His efforts failed, and Olive wrote despondently: 'how we are to get our bread I now not'. Her cows had produced so little milk that she could not make butter to sell, and a neighbour – William Peck – was unwilling to share his corn. Olive apologised for writing such discouraging news but maintained that what she wrote was 'not half as bad as everything looks'.[20] The Hale family's struggles show the tenuous farm economy in Grantsville. Many families fled north from the

[17] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, June 24 1855, MS 3212 Folder 1, Item 4, CHL.
[18] *ibid.*
[19] *ibid.*
[20] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, September 23 1855, MS 3212, Folder 1, Item 10, CHL.

farming settlement for the more prosperous capital of Salt Lake City. Having lost faith in her own farm and the Grantsville economy, Olive was left hoping at the end of the summer that 'the way will be opened for us if we do rite and trust in our Redeemer'.[21]

After a brutal season and the stress of running the household alone, Olive was ready for Aroet to come home. Apart from daily practicalities, she wanted emotional support and had been looking forward to spending time with her husband. Olive embraced the idea of romantic love in her own relationship and expressed this freely and openly to her husband. She cried over each of his letters, and told him, 'I like to read our letters when I feel lonesome bad' because it helped to hear 'from one that I love and adore as I do you'. She even sent Aroet a lock of her hair as a 'token of love from your Wife'.[22] And when Aroet sent her a cherished likeness of himself, it triggered bittersweet emotions for Olive. She was 'glad to get it' but noted that 'it makes me feel bad every time I look at it for it looks so natural'.[23] A new wife clearly did not fit into Olive's idea of a romantic and intimate marriage, and she took measured steps to preserve what she saw as her ideal arrangement. Olive updated Aroet on the Mary situation again in July 1855. Ozro had begun courting Mary by buying her a ticket to the town's 'big ball', but urged her husband not to become disheartened.[24] Despite her apparent encouragement, Olive did not elaborate on Mary or other potential wives. That Olive effectively ignored his requests to find another woman for him to marry in Grantsville illustrates her distaste for polygamy. When she finally responded to Aroet's suggestion of marrying a squaw, Olive took the opportunity to give her opinion on the troublesome topic. 'I see in one of your letters that you had a strong notion of getting one [a squaw] to keep your Cabin clean', and, she continued, 'you can suit yourself'. Though she made light of the issue, and jokingly told him to go ahead and get an Indian wife, the possibility of Aroet taking a

[21] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, September 28 1855, MS 3212, Folder 1, Item 11, CHL.
[22] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, August 19 1855, MS 3212, Folder 1, Item 7, CHL.
[23] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, June 24 1855, MS 3212 Folder 1, Item 4, CHL.
[24] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, July 23 1855, MS 3212, Folder 1, Item 6, CHL.

second wife troubled Olive. She reminded Aroet that if he did not get a new wife immediately things would be more agreeable when he returned home: 'I often think that what Comfort we took last winter', she explained, and 'if you do not fetch a squaw I think there will be a chance to take a little more'.[25] In these moments of gentle protest, Olive betrayed her understanding that her husband would inevitably marry other wives, but she still hoped to delay the new marriage until after her husband came home.

The lack of consensus on the right way to practice polygamy and whether it was even right at all created some of Olive's troubles. When Aroet was on mission in 1855 and 1856, Mormons publically professed polygamy as church doctrine. Apostle Orson Pratt officially introduced the principle in an 1852 sermon, and church leaders such as President Young had preached on the topic. But such public endorsements failed to make polygamy popular. For years church leaders toured Utah settlements to personally convert Mormon women to the practice. In January 1856, Church elders visited Olive at her home in Grantsville. They stayed for two hours educating Olive on the principle of the 'plurality of wifes'. Even after this visit, however, she was not reconciled to the practice. Olive told Aroet she was not yet converted 'in that respect' because 'it is hard enough [to accept polygamy] when men are at home'. Courting new wives was even more difficult when they were away on missions.[26] Trying to be a good wife she told her husband she hoped to be 'prity well converted' by the time he came home. Religious devotion may have helped Olive tolerate polygamy, but like most women, other factors led her to accept the new arrangement. The most pressing reason for Olive to acquiesce was her husband constantly writing that he would return home with a wife. Aroet did not mention any theological justifications for polygamy. Instead, he wrote in almost every letter that he intended to acquire another wife upon his return, if he had not already married a woman during the mission. Olive felt this pressure. She told him that she

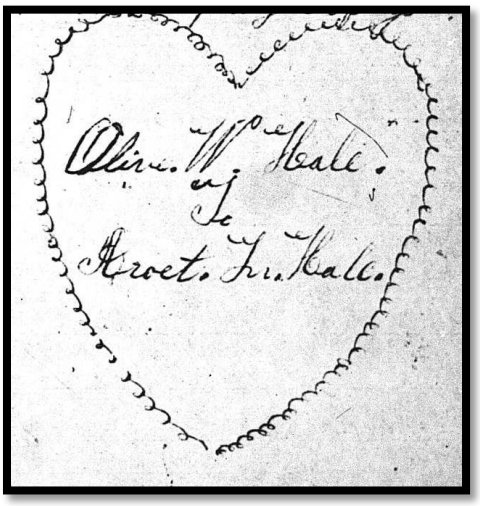
[25] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, July 23 1855, MS 3212, Folder 1, Item 6, CHL.
[26] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, January 24 1856, MS 3212, Folder 2, Item 6, CHL.

would be reconciled to the practice by the time he returned to Grantsville because she saw that she needed to fit in with what he had planned. Or, as she put it in one letter, 'I expect that I had better by the stuff you wright'.[27]

Taking Olive's eventual acquiescence as a positive endorsement of polygamy as a religious principle, however, ignores the complicated dynamics of power in her marriage. Although Olive felt resigned to her husband's marrying another woman, she clearly resisted polygamy. Her goals had shifted from resistance to delay: She hoped Aroet would not take a second wife until he had completed his two-year mission in Las Vegas. If he did not think he could come home on a visit to Grantsville without acquiring another wife, Olive told him, she would rather that he did not visit at all until his mission had ended. Despite her longing to see her husband, she preferred that he remain in Las Vegas until the end of his mission if it meant it would delay his marrying another woman. Although delaying the acquisition of another wife was surely part of her logic, it seemed that she particularly detested the possibility of him marrying another wife on a visit home, and taking the new wife *back* to the mission with him. She explained, 'I think you can wait until your mishion is out if you try. I had rather you would have a half a dozen [wives] then then to take one back with you'.[28] Olive was particularly bothered by the idea that she would be left at home and would have little control over the new arrangement. Despite these protests, Olive was certainly constrained in the opinions she expressed. She asked Aroet to 'excuse me for being so plane on this subject' and she fell back on the position that she had done well maintaining the home and family in his absence. Defending her own merit as a wife, she told her husband, 'I think that I have done pretty well for a mishion as your wife if you don't believe it just come home'.[29] And in a unique conclusion to her letter, Olive tried one final way to express her affection for her

[27] Olive Hale Letter to Aroet Hale from Grantsville, dated January 24 1856, MS 3212, Folder 2 Item 6.
[28] MS 3212 Folder 2, #6. Olive W. Hale Letter to Aroet Hale, Grantsville, January 24, 1856.
[29] *ibid.*

husband. She drew a decorative heart around both their names – something she had not done in any previous letters – as if to remind her husband that their special, romantic love was at stake.

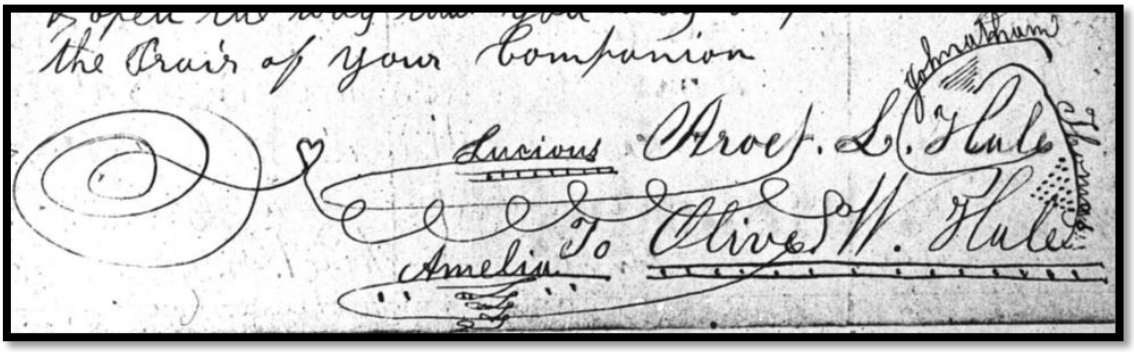


Olive signed this letter dated January 24, 1856, by encircling her and her husband's names with a heart. *Courtesy of the Church History Library, Salt Lake City.*

Olive's resistance had limits, however, in a harsh new country governed by Brigham Young's ecclesiastical patriarchy. In his final letter before his return home, Aroet reminded her that he did not expect or want her opinion on polygamy. He found her remarks in relation to his 'getting another woman' too 'blunt'. He also resented his wife trying to control his matrimonial options or as he wrote, 'setting stakes for me to go by'.[30] Despite his assertions of male authority, Aroet still wanted to reassure his wife. 'I am sorry' he wrote, 'that you let such little things distroy your peace & comfort'. He continued, 'I now that I have wrote home some nonsense & jokes But let your mind be at rest I shall not make a move without I know that I am moving rite'.[31]After clarifying that his comments on squaws were jokes, Aroet maintained that his acquisition of another wife at a later point would 'not turn out to be a

[30] Here Aroet is using a surveying or agricultural metaphor to describe how Olive had set boundaries for him to follow concerning when and probably whom he would marry. Aroet Hale to Olive Hale, February 27 1856, MS 3212, Folder 2, Item 9, CHL.
[31] *ibid.*

joke'. Although he would not tolerate her directives on polygamy, it was unlikely that he would come home with a wife, and Olive need not upset herself over the matter. Even if he was going to marry another woman anyway, Aroet did not wish to upset his wife. Indeed, he reminded her that 'I believe that you have done well & I want to see you all & will in the month of April if all moves off right'. Mirroring her previous, affectionate farewell, Aroet signed off his letter with all their children's names surrounding theirs. Nineteenth-century critics and later historians have assumed that polygamous marriages were directed by men but Aroet and Olive ultimately reached a compromise. Aroet was aware that he had to work within the companionate model of marriage – he could not simply demand that his wife accept what he wanted. In the years to come Olive would still continue to strive for her ideal, monogamous marriage.



Aroet adorned his farewell in this letter to Olive, dated February 27, 1856, with all their children's names, swirls and love hearts.
Courtesy of the Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

This was the final letter Aroet wrote from Las Vegas, and his sentimental symbol was his last written attempt to reconcile the dictates of his religion and Victorian marriage norms. He arrived home in Grantsville on April 30 1856 – now home to nearly 50 other families – expecting a one month leave.[32] Near the end of the month, Aroet and a few other men visited President Young to receive further orders, at which point he told the men to return to their

[32] Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, p. 300.

families because Las Vegas mission was 'spiralling downward'.[33] In another example of things going not quite as planned on the Mormon frontier, internal bickering and the blistering conditions in Las Vegas led President Young to shut down the mission after less than two years.[34] Aroet returned home to Olive and through 1856 they continued to develop their small farm and homestead. The grasshoppers that ruined crop yields the previous season had largely passed and the drought was also easing. Aroet eagerly planted his spring crops of corn, wheat and potatoes, and their growing brood of four children kept Olive busy. Aroet had acquiesced in Olive's request and waited until he arrived home before taking another wife. By 1857, though, he declared himself a 'strong beliver in the Order of Secelistial Merage [Celestial Marriage]', and the goal of acquiring another wife became a priority. That spring Aroet married 14 year-old Louisa Phippen.[35] Louisa had migrated to Utah five years earlier with her family, and settled in Salt Lake City. Aroet met young Louisa and her family on one of his regular visits to the Mormon capital. Louisa was young when she married Aroet, even by the standards of 1850s Utah, where the average age of first marriage was eighteen.[36] He brought Louisa back to his home in Grantsville. Though records do not elaborate, Olive was likely disturbed when her husband returned from one of his trips with a second wife eleven years her junior. Aroet did not, however, remain long at the Grantsville homestead to oversee the integration of the family. In July, Brigham Young had received word that U.S. troops had gathered in Kansas to march to Salt Lake City, and began calling men together to defend the Mormon enclave.[37] Once more Aroet enlisted.[38] His departure in

[33] Aroet Hale, Reminiscences, vol. 2, p. 24.
[34] Andrew Jenson, 'History of the Las Vegas Mission', *The Nevada State Historical Society Papers vol. V* (October 1926), pp. 117-284.
[35] Louisa Phippen was born in September, 1842, in Nauvoo, Illinois.
[36] Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System 1840-1910* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 96.
[37] In this confrontation between the Mormons and the federal government, called the Mormon Rebellion or the Utah War, both sides mounted and prepared troops for battle but no battles were ever fought. It was eventually resolved through diplomatic negotiations and ended in July 1858 with Brigham Young's resignation from his post as territorial governor of Utah. See David Bigler and Will Bagley, *The Mormon Rebellion: America's First Civil War 1857-1858*.

October 1857 again left Olive to oversee the family and household, but this time she had the additional company of Louisa.

The two women were left alone in Grantsville to work out the tensions in their untried relationship. Aroet had been gone nearly a month, and understood that things were going smoothly at home. He told Olive: 'It gave me joy & satisfaction to see the spiret you wright in and to here that you & Louisa was well and injoying your selves'. Yet in the same letter, he also felt inclined to offer his wife some advice on how best to live in polygamy: 'This is the spirit we should keep all the time be kind one to the other feel that you are of one famley love one another'.[39] Aroet's reminder to maintain seemingly obvious civilities shows there was some hostility between his two wives. Olive did not really hide her distaste for sharing her husband. Aroet had been writing one letter to both women, but Olive specifically asked him, 'Aroet when you wright wright my letters seperate now for you now that I am a Jelous kind of a thing and do not want every boddey reading my letter'.[40] Even after her husband had married Louisa, Olive sought to exclude her. Far from uniting as 'one famley', Olive wanted to preserve an exclusive, romantic marriage with Aroet.

Louisa Phippen, Aroet's second wife (b. 1842).
Courtesy of Utah State Historical Society.

[38] Aroet Hale, Reminiscences, vol. 2, p. 26.
[39] Aroet Hale to Olive and Louisa Hale, October 21 1857, MS 3212 Folder 2, Item 10, CHL.
[40] Olive Hale to Aroet Hale, November 1857, MS 3212 Folder 2, Item 11, CHL.

Louisa, though young and lacking family connections in Grantsville, could little tolerate Olive's hostility and seized the opportunity when it arose to escape. By the spring of 1858, the United States troops were closing in on the Mormon Militia and President Young gave the cue for the Saints to march away from their settlements. The signal came when he set his Salt Lake City home, the 'Lion House', on fire. Aroet returned home to Grantsville to help his wives evacuate. He prepared two wagons to move his family which, in addition to his two wives, now consisted of five children by Olive.[41] When the Mormon Rebellion died down in the spring of 1858, and Alfred Cummings replaced Brigham Young as territorial governor, the Grantsville Saints, including the Hales, returned to the farms and homes they had abandoned. Aroet, Olive, and their five children returned to Grantsville in June, with just enough time to harvest their wheat. But Louisa did not join them. She stopped in Salt Lake City, telling the family to go ahead without her because she needed to care for her aging mother. She seems, though, to have had other reasons to stay behind. Only in her mid-fifties, her mother was unlikely to need intensive nursing care. She lived for two more decades. Even if Louisa's mother was chronically ill, her husband and several other children living in Salt Lake City were available to care for her. Strife with Olive and disillusionment with the family's difficult pioneering life were much more likely the reasons that drove Louisa to abandon the Hales. Given the tensions hinted at in earlier letters, at best Olive was unwelcoming to Louisa. Aroet recorded only that his second wife had become 'very much dissatisfied with plural marriage'.[42] By the fall of 1858 Louisa – now just fifteen – sought a Bill of Divorce from President Young, who granted her request. Aroet never met their daughter, Esther Louisa Hale, who was born five months after Louisa had left the Hales' homestead. That a fifteen year-old girl from a modest background had the ability to divorce her husband speaks to an unusual power structure on the frontier where gender imbalance

[41] Aroet Hale, Reminiscences, vol. 2, p. 42.
[42] *ibid.* p. 44.

made it possible for women, even as young as Louisa, to decide their own marital fate.[43] It shows a side of Mormon polygamy rarely explained in historical accounts – that of utter dissatisfaction with polygamy and the church. Most Mormon women who divorced remarried, and in that way Louisa was also typical. She married Jeremiah Mahoney in 1863 and moved to California, forsaking the Utah Territory and the Mormon Church.

Without the stress of another wife, Olive easily settled back into life in Grantsville with Aroet and their children. She enjoyed what was for her, a rare opportunity to share her home and life alone with her husband. His brother Alma was now married and settled on his own land. In March 1859 the Hales welcomed their sixth child, Solomon Eliphled Hale. In his reminiscences, Aroet recalled this as among the happiest times in his life. By September 1860, though, Olive became sick and after a brief illness of nine days, she died at only twenty-five years of age. Aroet mourned the loss of his wife. He recalled, 'I thought I had passed through a great many trials but no man knows without he has passed through the same experience. Olive was kind and good mother and a loving and obedient wife it seemed as though I had lost all the friends I had on Earth'.[44] Whatever quarrels the couple had endured over polygamy, their marriage had been happy and Aroet was genuinely stricken by his wife's death. But he had little time to grieve as more pressing concerns mounted. Olive's death left him as the sole parent of six children, the youngest of whom was only seventeen months old. Aroet was again thrown unexpectedly into the major role of managing a large family and his struggling farm. Although he had expected Olive to effectively manage these same responsibilities with only the limited assistance of his brother while he served at the Las Vegas mission, Aroet now felt overwhelmed. He immediately took his youngest child, Solomon, to Salt Lake City to live with an aunt, and hired two girls to attend to his home and

[43] Daynes, *More Wives Than One*, p. 97.
[44] Aroet Hale, Reminiscences, vol. 2, p. 47.

children. Aroet found, however, that even this assistance 'could not fill the place of the mother'.[45]

Many Victorian men found themselves in Aroet's position. Just when he might have been expecting to settle into a comfortable middle age, he found himself widowed. His religious ideals told him to re-marry and father more children but Aroet had few prospects. High rates of plural marriage dominated during the Mormon Reformation of the 1850s, leaving few marriageable women – especially for ordinary men like Aroet.[46] As church leader George Q. Cannon acknowledged, because in Utah 'the males outnumber the females' polygamy 'cannot be a practice without limit among us'.[47] After nearly a year and a half, Aroet had made a few unsuccessful proposals of marriage but they proved fruitless. Given the surplus of men looking for wives, it is unsurprising that several women felt that they could turn down offers from a twice married man with several young children. Exasperated, Aroet sought the advice of a fortune teller who told him his new wife would come from 'the other side of the sea or big water'.[48] Despite the dubious origin of the information, demographics made it highly likely any new wife would come from Europe. The Great Emigration of the early 1860s brought a large influx of single women into Mormon settlements. Spikes in the number of marriages directly followed the arrival of new immigrants. Most female newcomers were married within a year, showing the high demand for immigrant women among Mormon men and a high expectation of migrant women that they would marry in the new community.[49] The prophecy given to Aroet was 'fulfilled' in September 1861, with the arrival of Captain Homer Duncan's Company. The mostly British immigrants included twenty-four year-old Lucy Cooke, 'the only woman' from more than two hundred in that company 'that had made

[45] Aroet Hale, Reminiscences, vol. 2, p. 48.
[46] Daynes, *More Wives Than One*, p. 97.
[47] George Q. Cannon, June 25, 1882, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 24 (London: Latter-day Saint Book Depot, 1884), p. 26.
[48] Aroet Hale, Reminiscences vol. 2, p. 48.
[49] Daynes, *More Wives Than One*, p. 105.

any impression' on Aroet. After some disagreement over which Grantsville man would be able to take her home (further evidence of a marital economy that favored women's choice), a 'Mr Sabin' won her hand. Luckily for Aroet, though, when Sabin brought Lucy home, his first wife slammed the door in her face. After several days of such hostility from Mrs. Sabin, Lucy was so unhappy in the household that she 'redely excepted (sic)' a proposal of marriage from Aroet.[50]

Church authorities declared that men might only achieve full exaltation in heaven when they adopted the principle of plural marriage but that left the mundane details for men and women to work out themselves. Engaged already, he was soon looking for another fiancée. Although Lucy accepted polygamy, she asked Aroet to marry any additional wives at the same time as he married her. The wives would enter the marriage on an 'equal footing', which would preclude jealousy and give neither woman pre-eminent status as the first wife.[51] Aroet arranged to marry another local woman, Susan Page. He traveled from Grantsville to Salt Lake City to consult President Young on the two marriages. Young eagerly consented to Aroet's marrying both Lucy and Susan but he was shocked to learn Aroet had remained unmarried so long, a situation he derided as 'a gentile tradition'.[52] Before the trio could wed, however, Susan broke off the engagement. She had made a 'rash promis' in agreeing to enter polygamy and 'asked to be released' from the marriage agreement. Aroet tried but failed to persuade her to reconsider. He then released Susan from her promise and felt that their relationship had ended 'on the best of terms'. The loss of Susan made Aroet appreciate Lucy all the more because she stood by Aroet 'firm as the rocks' despite Susan's departure.[53] Lucy was probably glad she did not have to deal with the difficulties of polygamous life. On Christmas Eve 1861, Aroet and Lucy became man and wife.

[50] Aroet Hale, Reminiscences vol. 2, p. 49.
[51] *ibid.*, p. 51.
[52] *ibid.*, p. 52. 'Gentile' is the Mormon term for Non-Mormons.
[53] *ibid.*, p. 54.

Lucy Cooke Hale, Aroet's third wife, c. 1890.
Courtesy of Utah State Historical Society

Despite the earlier disappointments, Aroet was undeterred in his search for additional wives. A gender ratio in which men slightly outnumbered women worked against him and now he could no longer fulfill Lucy's request for a simultaneous marriage of wives. He eventually did marry a second woman when Lucy's younger sister, Charlotte, migrated to Utah in 1865. In marrying his sister-in-law, perhaps Aroet really did believe it would be easier for women to accept their sisters as plural wives – a view he had held as far back as the Las Vegas mission when he asked Olive about marrying her sister. Aroet had children with all four of his wives, fathering twenty-five children before his death in 1911 at eighty-three years of age. His ex-wife Louisa had died at age seventy-five, only eight months earlier. And Charlotte, his last and youngest wife, died in 1920 at age seventy-four.

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The story of the Hale family illustrates the uncertainties of polygamy and the large role women played in devising their own marriages. Aroet himself acknowledged that his wives might not take kindly to the practice when he tried various methods – including inviting Olive to court wives for him and marrying the sisters of his wives – to make polygamy more palatable. The variety of individual experiences in polygamy, even among members of the same family, shows how people adapted polygamy according to their own thinking and circumstances. Although this illuminates the experience of a farm family with limited

financial resources, even church leaders had to improvise. Positions of prestige in pioneer Utah did not make domestic life much easier; these families also struggled to define this novel marital structure.

Chapter Two

'Tis rather trying to a woman's feelings'[1]*: Four Different Marriages in the Joseph Heywood Family*

Daguerreotypes of Victorian women followed a common formula: high collared, long-sleeved dresses and suitably modest hair. In the case of Martha Heywood, however, those looks can be deceiving. She was anything but a typical Victorian woman and she even stood out among those who entered polygamous marriages in the early decades of 'The Principle'. In fact, the relationship between Martha and her future husband, Joseph Heywood, was always businesslike. Martha supposed Joseph would secure her passage to Utah only because 'he felt interested in having me go there for the purpose of making caps'.[2] Martha was skilled in millinery and needed Joseph's sponsorship to get to Utah but Martha was uneasy about the marriage. She was 37 when she first met Joseph in 1850 – much older than unmarried women in Utah – and on the journey to Utah she had plenty of time to reflect. 'What have I not enjoyed', Martha wrote, 'except a wedded life. And that is now the most dreaded thought'.[3] Martha was leery of being tied down to a husband but she was particularly concerned because Joseph already had two other wives. In any case, her desire to get to Utah prompted her to accept Joseph's financial help and offer of marriage. Martha was an independent woman who contradicted Victorian stereotypes. Her experience of plural marriage together with Joseph's other wives shows how the first generation of polygamists struggled to create polygamy as a functioning social institution.

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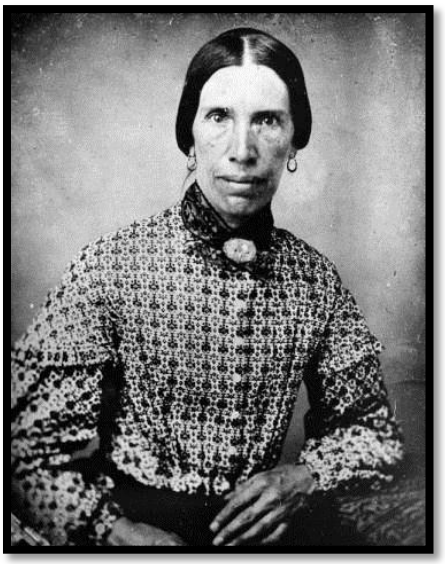
[1] Martha Heywood Journal, January 26 1851, MS 1887, CHL.
[2] Martha Heywood Journal, July 2 1850.
[3] Martha Heywood Journal, September 10 1850.



Martha Spence Heywood, Joseph's third wife.
Courtesy of Utah Historical Society

Martha had enjoyed a rich religious life before turning to Mormonism. Born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1812, she migrated to the United States at twenty-one years of age with her father and siblings. They settled in New York, but Martha soon converted to Millerism, much, she noted, 'to the annoyance of my relatives'. She travelled through western Canada preaching on the Saviour's imminent coming.[4] After the Millerites' 'Great Disappointment' in 1844, Martha became disillusioned with the faith and after several years of religious uncertainty converted to Mormonism in 1849. She supported herself throughout the 1840s by teaching school, making hats, and sewing – skills that allowed her to continue to live independently as the plural wife of Joseph Heywood. Shortly after her baptism, Martha felt a strong need to live 'where the Church was', and decided to move to Utah. In May, 1849 Martha traveled via steamship to Kanesville (now Council Bluffs), Iowa – the launching point for the Mormon exodus west. She had to wait until the following spring before she could safely join a Mormon company heading for Utah. She had hoped to raise the money for the journey by selling her caps in Iowa but that proved difficult because of limited supplies of materials.

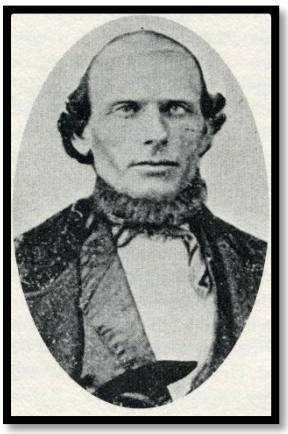
[4] Martha Heywood Journal, January 5 1851. William Miller was a Baptist lay preacher in upstate New York who predicted the Second Coming would happen between March 1843 and March 1844. When his prediction was publicized it drew in many followers but the sect collapsed after 1844. See George R. Knight, *Millenial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993).

Despite her unusual streak of independence, Martha realised that her best chances for getting to Utah lay with agreeing to marry a Mormon man. Indeed, she hoped primarily that one man, Joseph Heywood, 'would make a way for me to go'.[5] By 1850 Joseph had already settled in Utah, but his business brought him back to the East Coast to purchase carpets and furniture to sell in Salt Lake City. The pair met when Joseph passed through Kanesville in December 1849, providing a 'very great relief' to Martha when he sent word he would bring her to Utah. But when Joseph again passed through Kanesville in May 1850, he questioned his decision to bring Martha to Utah, and 'called for the last time' to tell her 'he could not see his way clear enough' to say she could go.[6] Exasperated, Martha felt that 'every chance failed' and she began making arrangements to spend another year in Kanesville. Just one week later, though, Joseph called yet again to tell her that he had secured her passage to Utah and she departed on July 29, 1850, with 261 others in 67 wagons travelling in the Edward Hunter Company.[7]

Yet Martha felt 'a remarkable depression' at the prospect of marrying into a household with two previous wives. Joseph had told her of his first wife, Sarepta, but mentioned nothing of his second. En route to Utah, Martha learned that Joseph already had a second wife, who would make her his third. She 'put no credence' in that report.[8] In addition to concerns about polygamy, Martha also noted potential problems with the match: 'How much Mr. Haywood reminds me of my brother whose peculiarities I never could endure'.[9] This indifference towards Joseph only increased when she neared Salt Lake City. When Joseph Johnston, her friend from Kanesville, and Joseph Heywood both rode up to meet her wagon train as they entered the Salt Lake Valley, Martha barely concealed her feelings: 'How different I felt to

[5] Martha Heywood Journal, July 10 1850.
[6] *ibid.*
[7] 'Edward Hunter Company (1850)', Mormon Pioneer Overland Trail Database, <http://www.lds.org/churchhistory/library/pioneercompany/1,15797,4017-1-164,00.html>, accessed August 29, 2012.
[8] Martha Heywood Journal, October 1 1850.
[9] *ibid*.

meet him [Joseph] to what I did to see Brother Johnston. My feelings are so chilled when I think of going to Brother Haywood's house'.[10] Her trepidation suggests the coming marriage was little more than a ticket to Utah.



Joseph Leland Heywood
Courtesy of Utah State Historical Society

Whatever Martha Spence's misgivings, her soon-to-be husband was a formidable presence in the early days of Mormon Settlement. Born in 1815 on a family farm in Grafton, Massachusetts, Joseph Heywood was by his mid-twenties jointly managing a store in Quincy, Illinois with his brother-in-law, Oliver Kimball. Stocking this store, Joseph frequently found himself traveling by boat along the river, and on one such occasion in 1840 he met Miss Sarepta Blodgett. Sarepta was born in 1823 in Monroe, Ohio and her family settled in Beloit, Wisconsin. Impressed with her looks, Joseph began courting Sarepta at once even though they lived nearly 300 miles apart. This meant their relationship unfolded mainly through letters. In November 1840 Joseph's sister Mary urged Sarepta to join the family and become her brother's 'loved companion'.[11] Sarepta responded somewhat reluctantly, saying Joseph's proposal was something she 'least anticipated' and begged for their 'endulgence while I make a decided answer'. Young and inexperienced, she begged for more time. Sarepta wanted Joseph to come visit her because she needed to get to know him better.Courtship offered

[10] Martha Heywood Journal, October 2 1850.
[11] Mary R. Heywood, letter to Sarepta Blodgett, November 10 1840, MS 7812, CHL.

Sarepta the opportunity to 'test' her future husband. She wanted to be sure he was both financially responsible and emotionally compatible. After nearly a year of courtship, Sarepta decided that Joseph was suitable, and on June 25, 1841, twenty-six year-old Joseph married nineteen year-old Sarepta in her hometown.

Neither Joseph nor Sarepta knew anything of Joseph Smith or Mormonism when they married but in the autumn of 1842, Joseph visited Nauvoo on business and heard the Prophet speak. Impressed with Smith and his rapidly developing city, Joseph was soon baptised by Apostle Orson Hyde.[12] By 1843, Joseph and Sarepta had joined the Saints in Illinois and Sarepta was baptised. Joseph soon began moving up in the Church's ranks. By 1844 he was ordained as a bishop and managed Joseph Smith's Nauvoo store just prior to the Prophet's assassination in Carthage, Missouri on June 27, 1844. Heywood's loyalty to the Church and his relentless defence of its leaders made him one of Smith's most trusted followers. When Brigham Young led the Mormon retreat out of Nauvoo to Winter Quarters in 1847, Heywood was appointed one of three trustees who sold the church's remaining property in Nauvoo. The men used what they raised to buy supplies for their journey west and joined the final wagon departing for the Utah Territory in 1848.[13]

Joseph was reunited with Sarepta for the journey and the family now included their eight month-old daughter, Alice Grafton, and Mary Bell, a ten year-old orphan the family adopted.[14] Before moving to Utah, Joseph had married Sarah Symonds Verry – a Mormon woman nearly thirty years his senior – and she travelled as a family member. Their marriage was undocumented because it took place before plural marriage was officially proclaimed in 1852. As a church leader, he would have been expected to take additional wives but with no

[12] Frank Esshom, *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, Inc., 1966), p. 121.
[13] 'Heber C. Kimball Company', Mormon Pioneer Overland Travels, 1847-1868 Database, <http://www.lds.org/churchhistory/library/pioneercompanysearch/>, accessed March-September 2012.

[14] Joseph's daughter's name recalled the name of his hometown of Grafton, Massachusetts.

romantic entanglement, Sarah did not threaten Sarepta's relationship with Joseph. In Utah, Sarah lived as Joseph's wife in the family home just north of Salt Lake City's Temple Square.[15]

When Martha Spence joined the family in 1850 it was a different story. While travelling, Joseph had written several letters home to Sarepta. He detailed his time in Kanesville but mentioned nothing of Martha or her expected arrival in Utah. Joseph arrived in Utah on September 15, more than two weeks before Martha. That gave him ample time to tell his other wives the news. He apparently thought it wisest to tell them in person, or perhaps Joseph remained unsure of his own intentions towards Martha so he remained silent until he was sure he would proceed with the third marriage. Whatever Joseph said to his other wives, he had not settled the issue. Martha's feelings upon arriving in Salt Lake City in October 1850 summarised the dilemma of many new plural families: 'I breathe in an atmosphere of uncertainty as it were'.[16]

Without any etiquette guide on how to introduce current wives to a future wife, Heywood simply left Martha at his house with the other women while he attended to business. Martha had been placed in uncomfortable circumstances but lost no time evaluating the other wives, particularly Sarepta. She told her diary: 'Mrs. Haywood is much reserved in her manner towards me but I admire her very much. She is the personification of a good wife and in such matters I feel very small beside her'.[17] Though some aspects of this initial appraisal would need revision, Martha had one thing right: Sarepta always strove to embody the ideal housewife and that was one sphere where Martha knew her own limitations. In fact, Martha felt sorry for Sarepta in her traditional role. 'It pains me', she noted, 'to see a woman in the

[15] 'Joseph L. Heywood Homesite', Hosted by Brigham Young University, Created April 2010, <http://www.byujourneys.org/blog/joseph-l-heywood-homesite-2/>, accessed August 29, 2012.
[16] Martha Heywood Journal, October 13 1850.
[17] Martha Heywood Journal, October 13 1850.

prime of her youth tied down to the responsibility of a large family.[18] Martha found little joy in the Victorian ideal for women. Homemaking, Martha decided, was 'calculated to give me low spirits', and she made no attempts to emulate the lady of the house.[19] Indeed, Martha's activities in the city suggest she enjoyed intellectual activities that Sarepta ignored, presumably because she was preoccupied with domestic labors. In addition to her regular attendance at sermons and religious meetings, Martha actively participated in the formation of the Elocution Society and the Polysophical Society. Of the latter, one member described a typical meeting as 'a magnificent moral, intellectual, and spiritual picnic'.[20] In addition to participating in cultural pursuits, Martha regularly attended lectures and classes, considering them 'a higher order of amusement than balls'.[21] Despite their dramatically different interpretations of their roles as wife, after a few weeks in the Heywood household, Sarepta rose in Martha's favorable estimation. Martha cheerfully noted that as Sarah and Sarepta's 'reserve' towards her began to wear off, their 'society is pleasanter'.[22] The women grew more comfortable with one another as they spent their time entertaining the wives of prominent church leaders, including several of Heber C. Kimball's wives, and Eliza R. Snow, a notable wife of Brigham Young widely known as 'Zion's poetess'.[23] This routine of making and receiving neighbourly calls was the primary entertainment for affluent women in the early settlement period. Tuesday through Friday the women had to be well-dressed with food ready to serve in a clean house.[24] This 'endless trooping of women to one another's homes for social purposes' was common among most mid-nineteenth century middle-class women, and

[18] Martha Heywood Journal, November 11 1850.
[19] Martha Heywood Journal, December 22 1850.
[20]Emmeline Wells quoted in Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-Day Saints*, p. 225.
[21]Martha Heywood Journal, December 8 1850.
[22] Martha Heywood Journal, November 10 1850.
[23] Eliza R. Snow, like the wives of many elite Mormon men, enjoyed considerable independence afforded them by their husband's wealth. Snow also served as the first president of the Relief Society in Utah from 1866 until her death in 1887. See Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, ed., *The Personal Writings of Eliza R. Snow* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000).
[24] No calls were to be made or expected on Monday because that was wash day.

Mormon women simply brought the custom with them across the plains.[25] For Martha, Sarepta and Sarah, this familiar female ritual also eased the social tensions of their marital arrangement.

Despite the community, Martha felt 'loneliness' on account of her rocky relationship with Joseph. They had few shared interests and Martha gathered little comfort from Joseph's company. Martha even assumed an air of intellectual superiority when describing her prospective husband. 'He is a good man', she decided, 'but not interesting'.[26] After five months of living in the Heywood residence, Martha had not yet married Joseph. She still felt uneasy at the prospect of become Joseph's third wife. She told her diary: 'My mind has been somewhat more calm this last week on the all absorbing subject that has engrossed it for the last five months, yet it is far from being tranquil or happy'.[27] Mormons departed from nineteenth-century American conventions of courtship and marriage when a woman lived in a man's household without actually marrying him.[28] When women like Martha joined the households as the prospective plural wives of previously married men, they frequently lived with the men for months before the unions were made official. This practice allowed for what was essentially a trial period to see if the household could function harmoniously with existing wives accepting another. Many times, the women could not live together and the prospective wife went elsewhere.[29] Polygamy certainly created unique tensions between new wives, and this compromise of Victorian codes allowed the families to simply eject an incompatible woman.

[25] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America', *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn 1975), p. 10.
[26] Martha Heywood Journal, November 10 1850.
[27] Martha Heywood Journal, December 1 1850.
[28] See Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).
[29] An example of this took place in 1861 when Aroet's third wife, Lucy Cooke, migrated to the United States from England. She went to live with Mr. Sabin, who had funded her migration, but his first wife was so hostile towards Lucy that she left Sabin's house and went to live with Aroet instead.

Plural marriage was an experiment but each woman faced different problems. While first wives struggled with the loss of an exclusive relationship, subsequent wives had to blend into an existing household or build their own separate family with the man often absent. They frequently had to fend off the first wife's jealousy. Compounding these problems was the ambiguous status of polygamy in Mormon doctrine in the 1850s. When Joseph proposed to Martha, polygamy had not been officially announced as church doctrine. Leaders like Brigham Young were known to have multiple wives but officially the practice was denied until 1852. In the Saints' Utah communities, the inconsistency between private practice and public doctrine fueled debate about the meaning of polygamy. In 1851 Martha and other Mormon women discussed the validity of polygamy as a divine principle. Martha had gone to the home of her friend Sarah Lawrence, where she 'had another battle with a Mrs. Butterfield' on the subject of polygamy. Butterfield had announced 'she would not consider a man her husband who had another wife'. Martha found it 'a strange thing to believe Mormonism and not believe or receive the doctrine of plurality of wives'. She could not understand why women like Mrs. Butterfield saw polygamy and the other principles of Mormonism as not 'coming from the one source of authority'. It made no sense to accept some doctrines and reject others. As she noted in her diary, 'when the subjects of this principle [polygamy] are not respected', then the entire 'religion is not either'.[30] Martha had heard Brigham Young explain the 'righteousness' of polygamy while living with Joseph, because as a Church Bishop he was considered among the trusted elite. An ordinary woman like Mrs. Butterfield, though, relied on what she had heard in sermons and read in the *Deseret News.* Indeed, Butterfield's position matched the church's official position in 1850 that polygamy was a moral outrage.

[30] Martha Heywood Journal, April 27 1851.

Many Mormon women followed their emotions in thinking about polygamy and when it first became known, the reaction was very mixed. Martha doggedly defended polygamy, though, as a divine principle. She, more than most, followed the letter of Mormon theology. Still, she did not always find polygamy easy. A few days after her conversation with Mrs. Butterfield, Martha heard complaints from Mrs. Joseph Young, a sister-in-law to the Mormon leader. Young told Martha 'how much more the first wife had [to] endure than those who took the men afterwards', but Martha rejected the whole idea. 'My doctrine is that both have their trials, not alike but one exists as much as the other', she wrote in her diary.[31] Martha reminded Mrs. Young that all women in plural marriages – not just the first wives – endured struggles. Such debates show how fluid the practices still were. Individual men and women were still in the throes of understanding and acting out this new doctrine. Martha was zealous in her religious beliefs and wanted to support plural marriage. With the variety of opinions on polygamy, though, Martha still found her 'thoughts and purposes (were) vacilating continually' when she was considering Joseph's proposal.[32]

First wives who had not anticipated the possibility of polygamy when they married their husbands inevitably felt jealous of new wives. Sarepta Heywood particularly struggled with the idea of adding a woman young enough to compete for her husband's affections. In November the family built an additional room on to the front of their house, into which Sarah, Joseph's third wife, moved. This left Sarah's wagon available for Martha to use as her 'sleeping apartment'.[33] But less than a week after Martha finished preparing the wagon, Sarepta convinced her she would be better living further away from the Heywoods' city home. 'I shall think of changing my home', Martha told her diary, 'as Sarepta thinks we will be mutually benefitted by it'. Domestic chores were apparently a source of friction. Sarepta

[31] Martha Heywood Journal, April 27 1851.
[32] Martha Heywood Journal, January 12 1851.
[33] Martha Heywood Journal, January 5 1851.

complained about Martha's laziness in housekeeping, so Joseph urged her to 'assist Mrs Heywood [Sarepta]'. The next week Martha 'took a more active part in house matters' which alleviated some of the tension.[34] That week Martha also manufactured ten caps to help cover family expenses, which might have also ameliorated Sarepta's anger, but tension was inevitable. In the early months of a blended family, Sarepta felt threatened by the woman her husband intended to marry. These unanticipated troubles meant housing arrangements had to be fluid to accommodate the wives.

The prospect of Joseph's undertaking a mission in the South Sea Islands further complicated the drama unfolding in the Heywood household. On New Year's Eve 1850, Joseph 'hinted' that Martha might go on the mission with him. Though Joseph merely suggested the possibility, Martha was excited for the adventure.[35] But when Joseph told Sarepta, she became upset. Martha noted Sarepta 'had some intelligence to make her more than usually excited', so she waited until Joseph's older wife, Sarah, went out 'avisiting'. Martha then 'took the opportunity' to talk with Sarepta. She found 'the cause of her [Sarepta's] uncontrollable grief on this morning was Mr. Heywood's communicating to her the probability of taking me south, which she could not bear in addition to her other troubles'. Sarepta 'expressed her feelings that in the event of my coming into the family she thought it but reasonable that I should remain with her to be a help in Brother Heywood's absence'.[36] Sarepta particularly disliked the burden of caring for all the children and Joseph's elderly second wife while Martha went off for months with her husband. This conversation, which excluded Sarah, also shows how the older woman was a wife of a different kind. She did not compete for Joseph's affections. Indeed, she seemed to go about her own business, visiting friends in the city and attending to her sewing. Martha and Sarepta, both of childbearing age,

[34] Martha Heywood Journal, December 15 1850.
[35] Martha Heywood Journal, January 1 1851.
[36]Martha Heywood Journal, January 12 1851.

had more conventional relationships with Joseph, which explains the discord at Martha's arrival. The question of her going on the mission with Joseph was a ripe opportunity for such tensions to surface.

Mormon leaders thought of themselves as Old Testament patriarchs and their critics denounced them as a throwback to a less enlightened age. The reality of marital discord, though, was far from the stereotype of domineering and powerful men. Martha's arrival had put Joseph in the awkward situation of having to side with one wife against the other. He decided to avoid taking sides and turned to President Young for a solution. Local bishops typically resolved such marital problems, but because this dispute involved a mission, a new plural marriage, and a leader within the church (Joseph), it was determined that Young himself would settle the issue. But before Young had to opportunity to do so, Martha 'perceived that his [Joseph's] mind had been directed by her [Sarepta] in the same channel not leaving it as was previously determined to Brigham's decision'. The newcomer felt the first wife had persuaded their husband to her way of thinking, and now Joseph was avoiding taking Martha on the mission. Sarepta's will prevailed when Young met with the family. He decided that Edgar Blodgett, Sarepta's brother, would accompany Joseph on the mission, for 'the family had best stay together in this place'.[37] Martha particularly resented that Sarepta had influenced the decision. She considered it 'an interference with my affairs' and would have accepted the same decision with 'good grace' if it had been made by Brigham Young.[38] Martha had expressed progressive views on female autonomy when judging Sarepta's homemaking but on this issue she would have preferred the patriarchal religious authority.[39]

[37] Martha Heywood Journal, January 17 1851.
[38] *ibid*.
[39] Martha's behaviour also reflected the extreme deference that pioneer Saints – both men and women – had for their president and prophet. This strict adherence to Brigham Young's directions also led Americans outside the church to view it as a cult. See, for instance, Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses*.

In the same meeting, Young also announced that Martha should marry Joseph, and on Thursday January 16, 1851, she was 'sealed' in marriage for 'time and eternity' to Joseph. For reasons of efficiency, Sarah was sealed to Joseph at the same time, even though she had been married to him for nearly three years. Martha's diary provides a rare account of the ceremony typically shrouded in secrecy:

> The ceremony appeared solemn and interesting and different from anything the world knows of. Brother Haywood stood on the floor, his wife taking hold of his left arm with her right and taking first Sister Vary by the right hand and placing it in that of Bro. Haywood's right hand and in that way she was sealed to him for time and eternity by a form of words most sublime. When done she fell back by taking Sister Haywood's arm. I then went forward going through the same ceremony. After this, Brother Young proposed to Brother Kimball giving me a blessing I felt truly grateful for.[40]

Despite the family discord that had preceded the ceremony, after her marriage and blessing Martha felt a sense of calm and peace that she had not felt since her arrival in Utah. The uncertainty of her marriage now removed, Martha was 'satisfied' with her marriage to Joseph and, in reference to the dispute over the mission, felt relieved that 'the warfare is over'.[41] Her 'sealing' to Joseph for eternity gave her a timeline beyond the worldly in which she could expect the highest exaltation. The anxieties over possibly marrying Joseph had been erased, at least temporarily.

Polygamy created unanticipated problems for the Saints' relationships but so too did the pressures of earthly business. Joseph Heywood was a government official and church leader, which meant he was often an absent husband and father traveling the fledgling Mormon empire to do the work of its public sphere. After Utah's failed bid for statehood in 1849, President Millard Fillmore appointed Joseph as U.S. Marshal for the Utah Territory. This news cheered Martha and the other wives because it kept him closer to home than the planned

[40] Martha Heywood Journal, January 17 1851. Sister Vary refers to Sarah, Joseph's second wife, and Sister Haywood refers to Sarepta, his first wife.
[41] Martha Heywood Journal, January 17 1851.

mission in the South Sea Islands. But the joy was short-lived. As U.S. Marshal, Joseph spent months in Washington, D.C., and was frequently called to Fillmore, Utah – the state's capital until 1856.[42] At best, he became a visiting husband, and his wives learned to live rather more independently. The spiritual advantages of polygamy did little to alleviate the jealousies of earthly affection and Martha soon became jaded in her day-to-day life because she experienced loneliness and distance in her marriage. 'Tis rather trying to a woman's feelings', Martha wrote, 'not to be acknowledged by the man she has given herself to and desires to love with all her heart'.[43] Though Martha desired a close marriage, this pattern of Joseph neglecting Martha would define their relationship for the next two decades.

By the summer of 1851 Martha and Sarepta were both pregnant but only Sarepta was obviously so. Joseph instructed Martha to help with the housework during Sarepta's confinement. Martha had not mentioned to Joseph her own possible pregnancy but was frustrated by his request: 'I felt as if he did not know how willingly I would enter into the spirit of doing so if I had health and strength to do it'.[44] Living with Sarepta was continuing to frustrate Martha and her opportunity to leave the communal home finally came in September 1851, when Brigham Young called Joseph to oversee the development of Nephi, a new town eighty miles south of Salt Lake City.[45] Martha came with Joseph presumably to diffuse the tension in the Salt Lake City home. Sarepta had first suggested Martha move away but the third Mrs. Heywood set off for the new settlement with 'buoyant spirits and hopes in full exercise'. Martha and Joseph travelled four days in a wagon full of necessities, with a cow, horses, a dog and a 'little kitty to bring up the rear'.[46] Once they had arrived in Nephi, they explored the area and selected Martha's lot in a richly wooded area near the creek. The

[42] Joseph L. Heywood, Diary May 1855-January 1857, MS 4454, CHL.
[43] Martha Heywood Journal, January 26 1851.
[44] Martha Heywood Journal, June 15 1851.
[45] Located in the Southern Utah Desert along the route to Southern California, Nephi served as a stopping point for Mormons travelling towards California.
[46] Martha Heywood Journal, September 21 1851.

rest of the town was laid out on a grid pattern with farms 26 rods square.[47] The meticulous planning of Nephi did not, however, match the uncertain and difficult lives of its residents.

Joseph returned to Salt Lake City after just one month, leaving Martha 'to try the friendship of this little city in his absence'.[48] In the new settlement Martha was required to cook for several men and as a new housekeeper living in a frontier camp she was initially overwhelmed. Chores such as cooking had to be done outdoors because the men had not yet built homes. The responsibilities of establishing a new settlement meant Martha had little time for the neighbourly visits that had occupied much of her time in Salt Lake City. When she did visit with other women, it was usually to help them with washing or sewing. During this time, Joseph rarely wrote. When the mail carrier arrived bearing not 'a single word from Mr. H' Martha sank into 'a sort of melancholy'.[49] After a few weeks, Martha stopped longing for her husband. Visits from a friend, Martha noted, especially her good friend Benjamin Johnston, were 'about as good as Mr. Haywood's coming himself'.[50] After Martha set up her own household in Nephi her marriage became increasingly impersonal. She continued sewing, hoping to 'trade as many caps as I can make for the things that I will want'.[51] After only a few months in Nephi, Martha had learned to support herself in her husband's long absences and she adjusted her expectations of marriage. Joseph and Martha had separated amicably but rarely saw each other. Despite her independent lifestyle, Martha's disappointment with her husband's neglect shows that she still aspired to the Victorian ideal of companionate marriage.

Martha herself endured the marital difficulties but she knew several women who sought divorces. In January 1851, Martha counseled Sarah Lawrence Kimball who was dissatisfied

[47] Martha Heywood Journal, October 6 1851. A rod measured 5.03 meters.
[48] Martha Heywood Journal, October 10 1851.
[49] Martha Heywood Journal, October 22 1851.
[50] Martha Heywood Journal, January 1, 1852.
[51] Martha Heywood Journal, January 1, 1852.

with her marriage to a member of the First Presidency, Heber C. Kimball: 'I advised her as well as I could to walk right up to the mark and behave to Brother K. as a wife and then she would realize a very different feeling'.[52] Despite Martha's best efforts the marriage failed when Sarah divorced her husband six months later on June 18, 1851. This obviously had no impact on Kimball's prestige; he remained a leading member of the church, eventually marrying forty-three women and fathering sixty-five children.

In Nephi, Martha encountered a similar situation with two wives of Zimri H. Baxter. He had organised the Nephi settlement and brought with him his three wives. In mid-October Martha reported that 'We all enjoy ourselves first rate with the exception of Brother Baxter's two wives who are determined to leave him'. The women, Margaret and Liddy, were dissatisfied with their marriages and felt they had 'not been properly treated either by him or Sister Baxter'. Some disaffected first wives, like Sister Baxter, sought quiet revenge without directly challenging their husbands by venting their jealousy and anger at the new wives. Some local women had tried to diffuse the situation, but Martha soon learned what had happened: 'Our prayer meeting last night was a kind of confession meeting, more particularly on the part of Brother Baxter who feels pretty bad about the girls going away'.[53] The two women and their two children joined a Mormon wagon company travelling through Nephi, leaving the new settlement for California less than a month after their arrival. None of these women married back into the Church, which suggests that polygamy caused their marital problems. The strains of polygamy overwhelmed some women but far from a binding agreement, the fluid boundaries of marriage on the Mormon frontier enabled these women to abandon failed unions.

[52] Martha Heywood Journal, January 19 1851. The First Presidency is the small committee that presides over the LDS Church, led by the President. Kimball was thus in Brigham's Young's inner circle.
[53] Martha Heywood Journal, October 17, 1852.

The move to Nephi ended Martha's clashes with Sarepta but it also left her a single mother. A local midwife, Anna Gifford, assisted with the birth of her boy, Joseph Neal, in November 1851, but afterwards Martha was now 'left pretty much to myself'.[54] The birth of the first child reminded her of her difficult marriage. Her husband did not come to see his son until December, and periodically she noted Joseph's absence. She had 'hoped to have seen Mr. Heywood amongst us' by March 1852 and 'to have had our contemplated party this evening'.[55] It was her fortieth birthday. He arrived nearly ten days late, but when he did arrive, the party went off as planned. Sarepta even sent down a large birthday cake, mince pies and custard tarts to celebrate the occasion, though she did not come herself. Joseph departed after only a week. Over the next few months Martha occasionally hosted family members from Salt Lake but for the most part led an independent life in Nephi. Church leaders understood polygamy would inevitably leave wives feeling neglected, and to overcome this dilemma emphasised the ideal of motherhood rather than romantic marriage. 'Are you tormenting yourselves by thinking that your husbands do not love you?' President Young asked a group of plural wives. 'I would not care whether they loved you a particle or not; but I would cry out, like one of the old, in the joy of my heart, "I have got a man from the Lord!" "Halleluya! I am a mother—I have borne an image of God!"'.[56] For Martha, her children were certainly among her greatest joys in life but she never fully accepted Young's admonition. Her lonely marriage still disappointed her and Joseph's lack of support left her a working mother. Her son often kept her busy which prevented her from making caps. In early January 1852 she had 25 unfilled orders, which worried her. By August she was making around thirty caps a fortnight. At Joseph's urging Martha also taught a small group of seventeen students, which she found relatively uninteresting given the 'great deficiency of the

[54] Martha Heywood Journal, entry on January 1, 1852 but her son was born in the previous November.
[55] Martha Heywood Journal, March 8 1852.
[56] Young, *Journal of Discourses* vol. 9, p. 39.

children'.[57] Because her husband did not support her in a traditional way, Martha turned to caps and teaching to support herself and her son. Nevertheless, Martha was 'willing to bear such difficulties' of single motherhood because she found that 'in possessing him [her son] my cup is full, such as it has not been before'.[58]

Despite the distance in their marriage, by early 1853 Martha again suspected she was pregnant. This time, though, she would not have to deliver her baby in a wagon. Her small adobe home had finally been finished before she gave birth to her second child, a daughter, on August 8, 1853. The new baby was named Sarepta Maria, after Joseph's first wife. Sarepta's oldest daughter had recently passed away and so perhaps Martha meant it as a token of esteem for Sarepta, as well as an expression of sympathy. With the birth of her daughter, Martha was glad to have the temporary company of her husband. But when Joseph left, Martha 'could not bear to be alone' with the three-week old baby.[59] Political unrest over her husband's leadership soon ensured he was absent even more often. In early 1854, President Young asked him to resign as Bishop of Nephi.[60]After his removal from office, Martha frankly observed that the townspeople's 'feelings were below par towards him'. She did not see her husband again for eight months.[61] Martha kept busy during these absences. She attended 'dancing, school, weekly calls, feasting, and visiting' and, of course, cared for her two young children. With her husband absent, social activity and motherhood replaced personal intimacy in Martha's life. She even had a daguerreotype of herself and her two children taken – an image that would have special meaning for Martha given the events of the following years.

[57] Martha Heywood Journal, August 16 1852.
[58] Martha Heywood Journal, January 11 1852.
[59] Martha Heywood Journal, January 1 1854.
[60] Brigham Young, letter to Joseph Heywood, August 14 1854, MS 7812, CHL. Brigham Young's official reasons for requesting Joseph's resignation was his residency outside of Nephi and his 'feeble' health. Martha's diary, however, alludes to unspecified tensions between Joseph and other townsmen that precipitated his removal.
[61] Martha Heywood Journal, July 5 1855.

The constant but random threat of infant death shaped popular religious practice in nineteenth-century America, even among the most optimistic religious denominations such as the Latter-day Saints. In February 1856, Martha's children came down with flu-like symptoms. She concentrated on her son Joseph Neal because he appeared to be the more dangerously ill. Only when young Sarepta was still sick a week later did Martha 'realize her real state which was dangerous to say the least'.[62] For two weeks Martha tended her dying daughter, trying everything nineteenth-century medicine and folk remedies could offer.[63] Joseph arrived on February 18 to see his daughter, but she died the next morning. Martha only recorded that she followed Mormon ritual for burying the dead – washing the body and dressing it in new white clothes. Martha's grief shone through in her diary entry, which she closed by saying, 'the last sewing I did for her was to make her a pair of shoes of white cloth'.[64]

[62] Martha Heywood Journal, February 22 1856. Sarepta Maria likely had measles, scarlet fever, or smallpox.
[63] She administered 'blue vitriol' (poisonous copper sulfate) to 'get the rash out', gave her saffron tea to drink, and bathed her in 'saleratus' (sodium or potassium bicarbonate) water. She liberally fed her daughter castor oil, rhubarbs, and Lobelia. She even placed onions under her armpits and dipped her feet in water, all to no avail.
[64] Martha Heywood Journal, February 22 1856.

Martha and her children Sarepta Marie (left) and Joseph Neal (right) in February 1854. After her daughter's death, Martha wrote that this image is 'very precious to me and as a special providence'. Note that the cap Martha is wearing is an example of the type she manufactured and sold for women around her community. *Courtesy of LDS Church History Archives.*

The devastating death of Martha's daughter precipitated yet another shift in the family dynamics as Martha became more dependent on her husband. Martha could little bear to remain alone in Nephi without her daughter, and asked her husband if she could return with him to Salt Lake City. Earlier tensions had driven Sarepta to request that Martha live away from the main family home in Salt Lake City but Joseph probably understood that in her time of grief Martha needed support and agreed that she should return. Sarepta would simply have to fit in. Martha quickly packed a few things and travelled with Joseph to Salt Lake City the next day. They brought with them their 'dear little girl's remains' so they could 'bury her out of sight'. This, Martha noted, 'was the first time (she) had ever been to the burial ground of Nephi'.[65] When Martha arrived at home, Sarah, Sarepta and her two children, Sarah Ida (b. 1851) and Benjamin (b. 1854) appeared to be 'enjoying good health'.[66] Though Martha's heart was heavy, the loss of a child (something all three of Joseph's wives had experienced)

[65] Martha Heywood Journal, February 26 1856.
[66] Martha Heywood Journal, February 26 1856.

might have helped the women to bond.[67] Martha did not mention how Sarepta received her back into the home, although she did note that she 'felt a chord of sympathy vibrate in the bosom of Sister Vary [Sarah] that was a testimony of better feelings towards me'.[68] Martha's relationship with Sarah had not always been amicable but the women nevertheless came together to offer support in hard times. Joseph was pleased with the new arrangement. Though he had aided Martha in moving to her own home in Nephi, five years later he had changed his mind. 'It is a great consideration', he told Martha, 'that my children should grow up with a united family aided by their Ma's to carry out the missions of their Father'.[69] The death of the infant perhaps altered his thinking on his family. Joseph preferred that the new model for his family should be a single center of productivity from which all his wives could raise their children under his supervision. Just when it seemed that Joseph was bringing the branches of his family together, though, he married again. And that reshaped everyone's lives.

Joseph's marriage to his fourth wife presented fresh challenges for Martha. Unlike Sarah and Sarepta, she had never had to adapt to a 'new' wife – she had entered the family as the last wife, and things had remained that way for nearly six years. Yet in March 1856, Martha casually noted for the first time that Joseph had acquired another wife: 'Mr. H. started this morning on a preaching excursion as also to try to get some bread stuff as far north as Ogden taking his wife Mary and Archy her brother'.[70] Mary Bell, born in 1839 in Scotland, was the youngest of Joseph's wives by sixteen years. She had originally joined the family as a child. Joseph and Sarepta adopted the young girl after her parents' deaths in 1846, and she travelled with the family to Utah in 1848. For years Mary lived as any other child in the Heywood's Salt Lake City household, but by 1854 Joseph began treating her differently. In July Joseph

[67] Sarepta, for instance, had lost three children by the time Martha's daughter died in 1856.
[68] Martha Heywood Journal, February 26 1856.
[69] Joseph Heywood, letter to Martha Heywood, May 19 1855, MS 3354, Folder 4, CHL.
[70] Martha Heywood Journal, March 30 1856.

brought Mary with him when he traveled around the settlements, even though he had not previously brought children.[71] And in October, Joseph told Martha in a cryptic letter that he had 'good reason for thinking more of her [Mary Bell] than ever before'.[72] Joseph apparently meant that his interest had gone from paternal to sexual, and less than a week later, forty year-old Joseph married sixteen year-old Mary Bell in Salt Lake City. Marriages of such young women were not uncommon in the early settlement period in Utah. The demand for brides in the 1850s drove down the median age of marriage for women in Utah to eighteen years of age – three to five years below the national average.[73] By sixteen years of age, twenty-seven percent of Mormon girls in the frontier period were married. And by the time they turned eighteen, that figure jumped to eighty-three percent.[74] Perhaps Joseph was aware of these trends and decided to marry Mary himself before another man did. Both Martha and Joseph were silent on the subject in their diaries and family letters also avoided any mention of the marriage. Perhaps it remained a secret marriage for the first few months. Although the marriage was probably disconcerting to Martha, who was twenty-seven years older than Mary, she had limited her emotional investment in Joseph since she moved to Nephi. Moreover, grief over the recent death of her daughter probably overshadowed the anxieties she felt about the new wife.

In April 1856, the entire family went to the recently completed Endowment House to be re-sealed in marriage. The event was Mary's first official sealing to Joseph, but for Martha it would be her third: 'On Friday we three wives went through the ordinance of being sealed to our head or husband in the house of the Lord'. Martha's repeated experiences of the same ceremony allowed her to compare them, and this time she was surprised at Sarepta's role: 'During the ceremony of the sealing I was struck with the fact that the first wife was not

[71] Martha Heywood Journal, July 14 1855.
[72] Joseph Heywood, letter to Martha Heywood, October 15 1855, MS 3354, Folder 4, CHL.
[73] Daynes, *More Wives Than One*, p. 97.
[74] *ibid.*

called upon to give away the other wives to her husband'.[75] This ritual signaled evolving customs. In the first ceremony Martha described in 1851, Sarepta played a role in welcoming the other wives, but five years later the ritual appeared more patriarchal with the husband at the center and all the wives orbiting around him. In the early years even the religious ceremonies associated with polygamy were in flux.

Mary Bell Heywood, Joseph's fourth wife, c. 1900.
Courtesy of Utah State Historical Society.

The Heywood women certainly had mixed opinions on polygamy, but so too did their husband. Several times Joseph Heywood refigured his ideas about polygamy, and his decisions show an ambivalence many men initially felt for 'The Principle'. He had decided to enter polygamy in the 1840s, but the by the late 1850s, Joseph was nearing retirement and finally ready to settle down with just one wife. He had briefly tried to unite his wives and children under a single roof but his marriage to Mary Bell changed his mind. In 1862, Joseph took Martha and Mary with him to oversee the settlement of New Harmony, a new Mormon colony in Southern Utah.[76] He left Sarepta and Sarah in Salt Lake City. He might have separated the wives to alleviate tensions created by a new and much younger wife. Or he might simply have been working to extricate himself from polygamy. Martha left the city with Mary and Joseph bound for the southern settlements, but stopped along the way and settled alone in Washington, Utah. She moved into a vacant adobe home featuring such luxuries as glass windows, a shale roof and wooden floor. Family papers offer no clue as to

[75] Martha Heywood Journal, April 20 1856.
[76] 'Biographical Note', Joseph Heywood Collection, MS 7812, CHL.

who initiated Martha's move to Washington. Given the exclusive relationship that Joseph carried on with Mary Bell for the remainder of his life, though, Martha had little choice. Despite being married in 1855, Mary and Joseph did not have their first child until 1858.[77] The couple would eventually have twelve children – the most children Joseph had with any wife. Unlike the long periods Joseph spent away from Sarepta and Martha, however, he actually lived with Mary Bell. Joseph rarely visited Martha in these years and she supported herself by selling caps and hats, and teaching. She did not always enjoy teaching but the 'responsibility prevented lonesomeness that otherwise would have been disagreeable'.[78]

Martha's economic self-sufficiency allowed her to live more independently than wives such as Sarepta and Sarah, who relied on Joseph for financial support.[79] By 1862, Sarepta and Sarah were still living together in the family's original home and taking in boarders in an effort to support themselves. Sarepta kept up a warm correspondence with Martha for many years. The earlier animosity between the two women clearly dissipated when Joseph abandoned them both for Mary Bell. Sarepta frequently reminded Martha that she had a 'standing invitation to come to the homestead', and their eldest sons, Joseph Neal and Benjamin, became close friends.[80] In June 1867, Martha even proposed that the two 'hitch horses' in a business venture of making caps and selling them in order to generate enough money to fix up the 'big house' in Salt Lake City. Presumably, Martha wanted to renovate the house for the two of them to live in but Sarepta refused. 'Please leave me out of the program entirely', she told Martha, 'for it is much more congenial to my taste to fill to the best of my ability the position of wife mother and house-keeper than undertake what I consider does not

[77] Mattie Delong Heywood, Sketch of the Life of Mary Bell Heywood, MS 15897, CHL.
[78] Martha Heywood Journal, October 1854.
[79] Although Martha clearly preferred having her own home, even when it was a mere wagon, many polygamous women shared homes. Brigham Young, for instance, famously built his Lion House so that more than a dozen of his wives could live under the same roof. Historians estimate that by 1860 less than seven percent of plural wives lived alone as heads of their own households.
[80] Sarepta Heywood, letter to Martha Heywood, November 18 1866, MS 3354, CHL.

come within my province even if I could do it'.[81] True to her understanding of women's domestic role, Sarepta rejected any thought of operating a business without her husband's support or supervision. Martha's plan to move back to the city was dashed and she continued living in Washington with her son until her death in 1873.

Joseph's second wife, Sarah, lived in Salt Lake City with Sarepta until her death in 1881 at the age of 97. Sarepta died only months after her housemate, and perhaps offers the saddest story of all. As Joseph's devoted first wife, Sarepta watched her husband quickly transfer his affection and attention to the much younger Mary. Sarepta was devastated by her husband's departure. In 1863– one year after Joseph's departure – she told Martha, 'I have just come in from ward meeting and thought to write a few lines but was not intending to mention anything to show my feelings although my heart aches and I live over every day the same as though it was a year ago. Perhaps sometime I shall over come'.[82] After his permanent move to the southern settlements in 1862, Sarepta and Joseph rarely communicated. In 1878, Sarepta wrote to Joseph: 'I certainly did not realize you had such a family of young children there is certainly "work" for somebody'.[83] Joseph only heard of Sarepta's death when a concerned friend wrote to tell him but he was too busy in New Harmony with Mary Bell and their twelve children to attend his first wife's funeral. Joseph remained in New Harmony until his death in 1910. Mary died five years later.

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The Heywood family illustrates the complexities of polygamous family life in early Utah. Each family member defied the generalisations historians have made about polygamy on the frontier. Each wife worked within the power constraints of her society to shape her marriage,

[81] Sarepta Heywood, letter to Martha Heywood, June 6 1867, MS 3354, Folder 5, CHL.
[82] Sarepta Heywood, letter to Martha Heywood, November 20 1863, MS 3354, Folder 4, CHL.
[83] Sarepta Heywood, letter to Joseph Heywood, July 7, 1878, MS 7812, CHL.

and their husband, despite being a devoted Church leader, demonstrated a wavering commitment to the practice. Their diverse experiences testify to the experimental nature of early polygamous practice among the Mormons. Even a literate and devoted woman, like Martha Heywood, struggled to reconcile the new practice with the values she learned in Victorian America.

Conclusion

The Republican Party platform in 1856 denounced polygamy and slavery as 'twin relics of barbarism'.[1] For the antislavery party, plural marriage conjured up an Orientalist fantasy of degraded harems exploited by despots. Yet the stories of the Aroet Hale family and the more elite Joseph Heywood clan directly contradict this image. Despite the emphasis laid on patriarchy by the Church's leadership, men did not, indeed could not, simply hold women against their will in the Church or in polygamous marriages. Far from commanding patriarchs, the men themselves felt insecure about the experiment in matrimony. Less affluent men like Aroet sometimes struggled to find women who wanted to marry them. He was challenged by the gender imbalance in Utah that was common on the Western frontier and exaggerated by polygamy. That imbalance inevitably favoured women's choice and Aroet was often frustrated with the practice. Even well-to-do men, who enjoyed superior political and religious status, such as Joseph Heywood, were unsure of their feelings about polygamy. Heywood's ambivalence is evident in his shifting thinking on where to house his wives and their children: Sometimes in one big house in Salt Lake City, at other times he moved them to towns two or three days' ride apart and finally, he left his older wives for a monogamous marriage with a considerably younger woman in the ironically named town of New Harmony. Many of those decisions were thrust upon Heywood by his wives' refusal to acquiesce in his plans. In the case of Martha Spence Heywood her long-standing preference for an independent life away from the rest of the family provided another alternative even though she remained a devout Mormon. Husbands knew their wives would not take kindly to additional wives and worked to accommodate the new women and to minimise family

[1] *Republican Platform of 1856*, Created July 4 1995, USHistory.Org Hosted by the Independence Hall Association in Philadelphia < http://www.ushistory.org/gop/convention_1856republicanplatform.htm>, viewed 25 August 2012.

tensions. The society was patriarchal in theory and theology but the untested nature of the practice left women and men with wide latitude to set their own marriage arrangements according to their own thinking and personal circumstances. Without a code of practice they simply had to improvise.

Despite the heavenly exaltation promised by plural marriage, religious doctrine was not clearly understood and thus was rarely the explicit focus of women's thinking on marriage in the early years. Cultural currents did more to shape women's experiences in this system of unconventional marriage, and the Victorian ideal of True Womanhood was one relevant set of beliefs. But this differed among women. Olive Hale found little time to pursue domesticity with the demands of managing a farm in her husband's absence. Yet she still appealed to her enduring qualities as a mother and wife in order to persuade her husband not to marry another wife. The ideal shaped her hopes and aspirations as she resisted the imposition of plural marriage. Sarepta Heywood, another first wife, devotedly pursued the Victorian ideal and shaped her marriage around her domesticity. Her relative affluence allowed her to do so. Even after she became estranged from her husband, Sarepta resisted Martha's proposed business venture because it fell outside her 'province' as 'wife, mother and house-keeper'. As the romantic relationship Sarepta sought with her husband crumbled, these ideals still gave meaning and structure to her life. Indeed, the epitaph that adorns her tombstone in the Salt Lake City Cemetery, 'A Most Perfect Woman', seems very appropriate for this dedicated mother and wife.[2] Even as Joseph married other women, Sarepta never reconciled to polygamy. Martha, on the other hand, rejected the constraints of domesticity but was in some ways the most faithful Mormon. Certainly, she took doctrine more seriously and knew more about it than any of Joseph's other wives. Still she was tough-minded about the challenges of

[2] 'Sarepta Maria Blodgett Heywood', Find a Grave Database, created October 26 2008, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgiin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=heywood&GSfn=sarepta&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=30886023&df=all&>, accessed September 5, 2012.

building a polygamous family. She was in two minds when she married Joseph and strove to achieve her own independence. For most of her life Martha remained self-sufficient, at times even supplementing the income of the entire family with her earnings. Despite the ideas and values that defined each woman's experience in polygamy, there were instances for each in which they crossed boundaries. Martha, for instance, was progressive in most of her views on women's roles, but was nevertheless disappointed when her husband failed to provide the type of marriage Victorian ideology celebrated. The relationships of these women to ideas about domesticity are nuanced. Throughout the course of their lives, ordinary and elite women crossed prescribed boundaries, and yet maintained essential ideas of gender difference. The adaptation of domestic ideology in the Mormon context highlights the fluid nature of these ideals.

The families of this study had a similarly dynamic relationship with Victorian ideals of romantic love. Despite Mormon leaders calling for dispassionate polygamous marriages – unions that valued motherhood over companionship, romance and even desire – for many Mormon men and women religion and romance were not opposites. These people largely ignored the hierarchy's admonitions. First wives like Sarepta and Olive, who married their husbands before they knew anything about polygamy, very explicitly based their marriages around romantic love. Sarepta saw her marriage as a huge emotional investment, and she married Joseph only after a careful courtship in which she determined that her 'earthly protector' shared with her a 'similarity of taste and disposition requisite in order to make life pass agreeably'.[3] Olive had a very loving marriage with Aroet, and sought to maintain her traditional Victorian marriage to whatever extent she could. She resisted polygamy when Aroet first broached the subject, and when he did finally marry a second wife, she soon drove the young woman away. For these women the layering of polygamy on top of the inherited

[3] Sarepta Blodgett letter to Mrs. H. L. Case, November 30, 1840, MS 7812, CHL.

values such as Christian monogamy and Victorian romantic love led directly to marital tensions. Among the Hale and Heywood families there was one instance of divorce when fifteen year-old Louisa divorced Aroet shortly after they married in 1858. Plural marriage drove divorce rates up markedly in the 1850s because it required a radical shift away from marital values suited to monogamy. But men and women did not immediately abandon their traditional ideals to make polygamy work. In fact, these stories suggest that historians have put too much faith in religious doctrine calling for dispassionate marriages, and neglected the cultural values Mormons brought to the Great Basin. The pervasiveness of the romantic ideal for marriage, even in the context of polygamy, which was obviously not conducive to it, demonstrates the strength of normative American values even for these religious outsiders.

Mormon history has often been cast as separate from wider American history. Historians have argued that the religious minority has been locked in a political and ideological battle with the United States – the inevitable clashing of republican government with a minor, yet belligerent, theocracy – from the time Joseph Smith was chased from Palmyra, New York, as a fraud.[4] Yet this micro-study of two families living in the Great Basin highlights continuities between the two apparently conflicting societies and suggests the need for re-interpretation. Their stories present a more complex image, in which all classes of Mormons, men and women, stepped into foreign territory. Polygamy was a new practice with no set rules, and so they drew upon familiar nineteenth-century ideals. In fact, many Mormons were conflicted about a practice that contravened these traditional moral values, and questioned whether the practice was truly of divine origin. In time, polygamy did become much more widely accepted in Mormon society. That came, though, later in the nineteenth century when increasingly harsh anti-polygamy laws galvanised the Saints' in support of the practice they now saw as emblematic of their right to freely practice their religion and their position in

[4] David Bigler and Will Bagley, *The Mormon Rebellion: America's First Civil War 1857-1858*, p. 17.

American society as a persecuted minority. But in the 1850s, the story was different. Even when Mormon men and women did accept polygamy, the practice was integrated with such cultural tumult that the Saints had more in common with their American neighbours than many have admitted. We should not simplify the history of polygamy as a moment of theocratic triumph.

Even the demands of God and eternity were not enough to persuade Mormon men and women to wholeheartedly accept 'The Principle'. This story might seem like an isolated, lost moment but the experience of Mormon polygamists in the 1850s offers a larger insight into the history of sexuality. Church leaders did try to reconcile polygamy with nineteenth-century morality. They could not, however, override personal values like romantic love. Any radical shift in sexual mores probably requires a long period of sustained cultural change. Little wonder then that the fiat of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young was not enough to win over many men and women, whose values were firmly rooted in Victorian America.

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