

## APPENDIX E

# Sexuality in Joseph Smith's Plural Marriages

Evidence exists that Joseph Smith experienced conjugal relations with some of his plural wives. Importantly, convincing evidence is lacking regarding sexual relations between Joseph Smith and three subgroups of plural wives: (1) the two fourteen-year-olds, (2) non-wives—women to whom he was not married, and (3) all polyandrous wives who were experiencing conjugality with their legal husbands.

### **Probable Sexual Relations with Twelve Plural Wives**

Evidence supports *probable* sexual relations with twelve of Joseph Smith's plural wives: Fanny Alger, Louisa Beaman, Emily Dow Partridge, Eliza Maria Partridge, Almera Woodard Johnson, Lucy Walker, Sylvia Sessions, Maria Lawrence, Sarah Lawrence, Malissa Lott, Olive Frost, and Mary Heron. See Volumes 1 and 2 for discussions of each relationship.

#### *Fanny Alger*

Five documents indicate that Joseph Smith may have experienced conjugal relations with his first plural wife, Fanny Alger. The earliest is from Oliver Cowdery in a private letter written January 21, 1838:

I did not fail to affirm that what I had said was strictly true. A dirty, nasty, filthy ~~scrape~~ ["affair" overwritten] of his and Fanny Alger's was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deviated from the truth on the matter."<sup>1</sup>

The next reference is thirty-four years later from William McLellin:

One night she [Emma Smith] missed Joseph and Fanny Alger. She went to the barn and saw him and Fanny in the barn together alone. She looked through a crack and saw the transaction!! She told me this story too was verily true."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Oliver Cowdery, Letter to Warren A. Cowdery, January 21, 1838.

2. William E. McLellin, M.D., Letter to President Joseph Smith [III] Independence, Mo., July 1872.

McLellin reported on the event again three years afterward in 1875 to J. H. Beadle:

He [McLellin] was in the vicinity during all the Mormon troubles in Northern Missouri, and grieved heavily over the suffering of his former brethren. He also informed me of the spot where the first well authenticated case of polygamy took place in which Joseph Smith was "sealed" to the hired girl. The "sealing" took place in a barn on the hay mow, and was witnessed by Mrs. Smith through a crack in the door! The Doctor was so distressed about this case, (it created some scandal at the time among the Saints,) that long afterwards when he visited Mrs. Emma Smith at Nauvoo, he charged her as she hoped for salvation to tell him the truth about it. And she then and there declared on her honor that it was a fact—"saw it with her own eyes."<sup>3</sup>

Ten years later, Wilhelm Wyl reportedly quoted Chancy Webb, who said:

Joseph's dissolute life began already in the first times of the church, in Kirtland. He was sealed there secretly to Fanny Alger. Emma was furious, and drove the girl, who was unable to conceal the consequences of her celestial relation with the prophet, out of her house.<sup>4</sup>

The final document was written in 1903 by Benjamin F. Johnson:

"I was . . . told by Warren Parish That He himself & Oliver Cowdery did know that Joseph had Fanny Alger as a wife for They were Spied upon & found together."<sup>5</sup>

### *Louisa Beaman*

The earliest evidence of sexual relations between Joseph Smith and Louisa Beaman was reported by John C. Bennett. In his 1842 *History of the Saints*, he wrote: "He [Joseph Smith] then went off to see Miss Louisa Beaman, at the house of Mrs. Sherman, and remained with her about two hours."<sup>6</sup> Bennett's actual relationship with the Prophet is controversial. In light of Bennett's credibility problems, such statements must be evaluated with caution.

Joseph B. Noble, Louisa's brother-in-law, however, made a plain statement in 1892 in a deposition taken in the Temple Lot Case establishing that the couple had intimate relations:

Q. Do you know whether Joseph Smith ever lived any with Louisa Beaman as his wife?. . . .

3. William McLellin, quoted in J. H. Beadle, "Jackson County," 4.

4. Wilhelm Wyl quoting "Mr. W." [Chauncy Webb], *Mormon Portraits*, 57.

5. Dean R. Zimmerman, ed., *I Knew the Prophets: An Analysis of the Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Gibbs*, 38.

6. John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints: Or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, 229.

A. I know it for I saw him in bed with her...

Q. What made you say the other day that Joseph Smith and that woman you sealed to him slept together that night?

A. Because they did sleep together.

Q. If you were not there that night, how do you know they slept together?

A. Well, they slept together I know. If it was not that night it was two or three nights after that.

Q. Where did they sleep together?

A. Right straight across the river at my house they slept together. . . .

Q. Did he sleep with her the first night after the ceremony was performed?

A. He did.

Q. Now you say that he did sleep with her?

A. I do.

Q. How do you know he did?

A. Well I was there.

Q. And you saw them go to bed together?

A. I gave him counsel. . . .

Q. What counsel did you give him?

A. I said "blow out the light and get into bed, and you will be safer there," and he took my advice or counsel. . . .

Q. Well did you stay there until the lights were blown out?

A. No sir I did not stay until they blowed out the lights then.

Q. Well you did not see him get into bed with her that time?

A. No sir.

Q. And so you don't know whether he followed your advice from your own knowledge?

A. No sir, I did not see him, but he told me he did.

Q. Well, you know from your own knowledge that he did?

A. Well, I am confident he did.

Q. But you don't know it of your own knowledge from seeing him do it?

A. No sir, for I was not there.<sup>7</sup>

Benjamin Winchester, who had a stormy relationship with the Prophet and other Church leaders and was excommunicated in September 1844, also corroborates conjugality in a 1900 statement:

7. Joseph B. Noble, Deposition, Temple Lot Case, Part 3, pp. 396, 426–27, questions, 52–53, 681–704. The complete transcript of the Temple Lot Case is more than 1,750 pages long (copies at the Community of Christ Archives and microfilm at LDS Church History Library). A shortened version has been available from the RLDS Church (now Community of Christ) with much of the testimony regarding plural marriage in Nauvoo omitted (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Publishing House, 1893); Price Publishing (Independence, Mo., 2003) reprints the RLDS version. See also Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community*, 310 note 104.

Q. Were you personally acquainted with any of Smith's wives?

A. Yes, but especially with Louisa Beaman from a girl. About the year 43 Joseph Smith took rooms for her in my father's house, and Smith came to see her about once a week.

Q. Did they sleep together?

A. Yes they did.

Q. Was there only one bed in the room?

A. Yes just one bed.

Q. Are you sure it was in 1843?

A. No, but it was about that time, or from 42 to 44.<sup>8</sup>

### *Emily Dow Partridge*

Emily Dow Partridge was also questioned in the Temple Lot Case. In all her previous writings, she had been reticent to address the issue of conjugality in her plural marriage with Joseph Smith.<sup>9</sup> However, when asked point-blank by the RLDS attorney, she answered frankly:

Q. Had you roomed with him prior to . . . the night after you were married the last time?

A. No sir, not roomed with him.

Q. Well had you slept with him?

A. Yes sir.

Q. [Had you] slept with him . . . before the fourth of March 1843 [their marriage date]?

A. No sir. . . .

Q. Did you ever live with Joseph Smith after you were married to him after that first night that you roomed together?

A. No sir. Emma knew that we were married to him, but she never allowed us to live with him. . . .

Q. Do you make the declaration now that you ever roomed with him at any time?

A. Yes sir.

Q. Do you make the declaration that you ever slept with him in the same bed?

8. Benjamin Winchester, Testimony to Joseph Smith III, Council Bluffs, Iowa, November 27, 1900.

9. See Emily D. Partridge Young, "Incidents of the Early Life of Emily Dow Partridge," written between December 1876 and January 7, 1877; "Written Especially for My Children, January 7, 1877"; Autobiographical Sketch: "Written for Family January 7, 1877"; Diary, 1880-93; "Pioneer Day," 37; "Testimony That Cannot Be Refuted," 164-65; Autobiography, typescript, April 7, 1884; "A Living Testimony," 570-71; "Incidents in the Life of a Mormon Girl," n.d..

A. Yes sir.

Q. How many nights?

A. One.

Q. Only one night.

A. Yes sir.

Q. Then you only slept with him in the same bed one night?

A. No sir.

Q. Did you ever have carnal intercourse with Joseph Smith?

A. Yes sir.

Q. How many nights?

A. I could not tell you.

Q. Do you make the declaration that you ever slept with him but one night?

A. Yes sir.

Q. And that was the only time and place that you ever were in bed with him?

A. No sir.

Q. Were you in bed with him at any time before . . . you were married?

A. No sir, not before I was married to him. I never was.<sup>10</sup>

In 1903 Benjamin F. Johnson affirmed that either Emily, or her sister, Eliza had “occupied the Same Room & Bed” as Joseph Smith: “Later the Prophet again Came and at my house occupied the Same Room & Bed with my Sister that the month previous he had occupied with the Daughter of the Late Bishop Partridge as his wife.”<sup>11</sup>

### *Eliza Maria Partridge*

Two other references from Benjamin F. Johnson specifically acknowledge that plural wife Eliza Partridge occupied the same room as Joseph Smith. In 1903 he wrote: “The first plural wife brought to my house with whom the Prophet stayed, was Eliza Partridge.”<sup>12</sup> A year later Benjamin penned a letter to the *Deseret News*: “I saw one of my sisters married to him [Joseph Smith] and know that with her he occupied my house on May 16 and 17, 1843, which he had occupied with Eliza Partridge, another plural wife, on the 2nd of the previous month.”<sup>13</sup>

10. Emily Dow Partridge Young, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Part 3, pp. 371, 384, questions 480–84, 747, 751–62.

11. Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets*, 44.

12. Benjamin F. Johnson, Letter to Anthon H. Lund, May 12, 1903.

13. Benjamin F. Johnson, “More Testimony,” March 9, 1904.

*Almera Woodard Johnson*

In an 1883 affidavit, Almera W. Johnson admitted that she had “lived with Joseph Smith as his wife”: “On a certain occasion in the spring of the year 1843 . . . I was sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . . After this time I lived with the Prophet Joseph as his wife, and he visited me at the home of my brother Benjamin F. at Macedonia.”<sup>14</sup>

Almera’s brother, Benjamin F. Johnson, left five records confirming that she had sexual relations with the Prophet: “He [Joseph Smith] remained two days, lodging at my house with my sister as man and wife (and to my certain knowledge he occupied the same bed with her). This visit was on the 16th and 17th of May, 1843, returning to Nauvoo on the 18th.”<sup>15</sup> “He [Joseph Smith] was at my house . . . where he occupied my sister Almira’s room and bed.”<sup>16</sup> “[As] for my younger sister the Prophet made me the medium of his courtship; and I saw her married to him in the summer of 1843, and I further know that they roomed together as husband and wife at various times in my home at Macedonia, where he associated with other of his plural wives and various times as he had occasion.”<sup>17</sup> “The Prophet again Came and at my house occupied the Same Room & Bed with my Sister.”<sup>18</sup> “The Prophet stayed . . . there [at my house] with my sister Almira as his wife.”<sup>19</sup>

*Lucy Walker*

In the Temple Lot suit, Lucy Walker also admitted to conjugal relations with Joseph Smith:

Q. Can you state the circumstances under which he [Joseph Smith] first taught you that principle [of plural marriage]?

A. Well, the circumstances were these,—it was a command from God to me to receive it, and I would rather have laid down my life than disobeyed it, but it was a grand and glorious principle that was to be established, and when I was called upon I stepped forward and gave myself up as a sacrifice to establish that principle, and I did that in the face of prejudice, of course. In this day and age [1892] we are considered fanatics of course, more or less. I gave myself up as a sacrifice, for it was not a love matter, so to speak,

14. Almera W. Johnson, Affidavit, August 1, 1883; published in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage*, 71.

15. Benjamin F. Johnson, Affidavit, March 4, 1870, Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Books, 2:6–7; Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” 222.

16. Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life’s Review*, 96

17. Benjamin F. Johnson, Letter to Frank Feely, December 10, 1897.

18. Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets*, 44.

19. Johnson to Lund, May 12, 1903.

in our affairs, at least on my part it was not,—but simply the giving up of myself as a sacrifice to establish that grand and glorious principle that God had revealed to the world.

Q. Did you live with Joseph Smith as his wife?

A. He was my husband sir. . . .

Q. How many children did you have by virtue of your marriage with Joseph Smith?

A. I decline to answer that question sir.

Q. Did you have any?

A. I decline to answer the question.

Q. Have you any children by Joseph Smith?

A. I decline to answer the question

Q. Why do you decline to answer it?

A. Well I think that is my business and none of yours. The principle by which we were married is an eternal principle, and will endure forever. . . .

Q. Well did you raise a child by him?

A. I decline to answer the question.

Q. Did you ever occupy the same bed with him?

A. I decline to answer the question.

Q. You say you will not answer any of these questions.

A. I do, not on that subject.

Q. Did you ever see a child that you knew was Joseph Smith's outside of David, Alexander, Frederick and Joseph?

A. I decline to answer that question. . . .

Q. You know you did not have any children by him [Joseph Smith]?

A. Well now that is something that I did not tell you anything about at all. It is none of your business if we had twenty sons or children, and it is none of your business if we did not have any.<sup>20</sup>

In 1888, Lucy also reported: "They [Joseph Smith's sons] seem surprised that there was no issue from asserted plural marriages with their father. Could they but realize the hazardous life he lived, after that revelation was given, they would comprehend the reason. He was harassed and hounded and lived in constant fear of being betrayed by those who ought to have been true to him."<sup>21</sup>

Several other sources corroborate that Lucy had conjugal relations with Joseph. Theodocia Frances Walker Davis (niece of Lucy Walker) asserted in 1876: "Mrs. Davis daughter of Wm Walker [Lucy's brother] at Salt Lake. She

20. Lucy Walker, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's Testimony, Part 3, pp. 450–51, 468, 473, questions 29–30, 463–74, 586.

21. Lucy Walker, quoted in Lyman Omer Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints: Giving an Account of Much Individual Suffering Endured for Religious Conscience*, 50. See also Rodney W. Walker and Noel W. Stevenson, *Ancestry and Descendants of John Walker (1794–1869) of Vermont and Utah, Descendants of Robert Walker, an Emigrant of 1632 from England to Boston, Mass.*, 35.

says that Lucy Walker told her that she lived with Joseph Smith as a wife."<sup>22</sup> Angus Cannon stated that, concerning the lack of offspring born to the Prophet's plural wives, "All I knew was that which Lucy Walker herself contends. They were so nervous and lived in such constant fear that they could not conceive."<sup>23</sup> An acquaintance of Lucy, D. H. Morris, quoted her saying: "I . . . married Joseph Smith as a plural wife and lived and cohabited with him as such."<sup>24</sup>

### *Sylvia Sessions*

Sylvia Sessions Lyon is one of two (of the twelve) wives who was legally married at the time of her conjugal relations with Joseph Smith.<sup>25</sup> As discussed in Volume 1, Chapter 13, she separated from her legal husband when he was excommunicated on November 19, 1842. In 1915, Josephine Lyon signed an affidavit relating a conversation with her mother, Sylvia, that had occurred in 1882 during her mother's final illness:

Just prior to my mother's death in 1882 she called me to her bedside and told me that her days on earth were about numbered and before she passed away from mortality she desired to tell me something which she had kept as an entire secret from me and from all others but which she now desired to communicate to me. She then told me that I was the daughter of the Prophet Joseph Smith, she having been sealed to the Prophet at the time that her husband Mr. Lyon had was out of fellowship with the Church.<sup>26</sup>

### *Maria and Sarah Lawrence*

Three statements indicate that Sarah and Maria Lawrence had sexual relations with Joseph Smith. Lucy Walker acknowledged in 1887: "I am also able to testify that Emma Smith, the Prophet's first wife, gave her consent to the marriage of at least four other girls [Emily and Eliza Partridge, Maria and Sarah Lawrence] to her husband, and that she was well aware that he associated with them as wives within the meaning of all the word implies."<sup>27</sup> Emily Partridge similarly affirmed: "She [Emma Smith] afterwards gave Sarah and Maria Lawrence to him, and they lived in the house as his wives. I knew this."<sup>28</sup>

22. Joseph Smith III, Journal, November 12 [or 18?], 1876.

23. Angus Cannon, Statement reporting an interview with Joseph Smith III, 1905.

24. D. H. Morris, Untitled typed statement, June 12, 1930.

25. See discussion in Brian C. Hales, "The Joseph Smith—Sylvia Sessions Plural Sealing: Polyandry or Polygyny?" 41–57.

26. Josephine R. Fisher, Statement, February 24, 1915.

27. Jenson, "Plural Marriage," 230.

28. Emily Dow Partridge Young, "Incidents in the Life of a Mormon Girl," n.d.



Benjamin F. Johnson wrote in 1904: "I do know that at his [Joseph Smith's] Mansion home was living Maria and Sarah Lawrence and one of Cornelius P. Lott's daughters as his plural wives with the full knowledge of his wife, Emma, of their married relations to him."<sup>29</sup> The case of Maria Lawrence is strengthened because William Law charged the Prophet with living "in an open state of adultery" with her from October 12, 1843, to May 23, 1844.<sup>30</sup>

Notwithstanding, Gordon A. Madsen hypothesizes: "Possibly Joseph planned to prove his innocence, not only by his and Maria's denial of sexual intercourse but also by the testimony of a reputable physician that he had conducted a physical examination and found that Maria was still a virgin."<sup>31</sup> This speculation is problematic because, since Maria was sealed to Joseph in a "time and eternity" sealing, then sexual relations would be permitted. In addition, virginity cannot always be proven by physical exam even if the woman has never experienced intercourse.

### *Malissa Lott*

Malissa Lott made a plain disclosure of her physical relationship with Joseph Smith during the Temple Lot case:

Q. There was not any children born to you by Joseph Smith?

A. No Sir.

Q. Have you ever borne any children since that time?

A. Yes sir, I have. . . .

Q. State now the reason why you never bore any children by Joseph Smith?

A. Well that is something impossible to do,—that is something I can't tell. . . .

Q. . . . Now you said there were no children born of that marriage [to Joseph Smith]?

A. I said I had none.

Q. You had none by Joseph Smith?

A. Yes sir, and you asked me why I hadn't any and I told you I couldn't tell you, that you would have to go to some higher authority than I to tell you that. . . .

Q. Did you ever room with Joseph Smith as his wife?

29. Johnson, "More Testimony," March 9, 1904.

30. *People vs. Joseph Smith*, May 24, 1844, Circuit Court Record, Hancock County, Book D, pp. 128–29. See also William Clayton, *The Nauvoo Diaries of William Clayton, 1842–1846, Abridged* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published [Smith-Pettit Foundation], 2010), 49; Thomas Gregg, *History of Hancock County, Illinois*, 301; Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 375.

31. Gordon A. Madsen, "Joseph Smith as Guardian: The Lawrence Estate," 202.

A. Yes sir.

Q. At what place?

A. At Nauvoo

Q. What place in Nauvoo?

A. The Nauvoo Mansion.

Q. At what place in the Mansion?

A. Do you want to know the number of the room, or what?

Q. Well just what part of the house the room was in if you can give it?

A. Well I can give it and the number of the room too. It was room number one.

Q. Room number one?

A. Yes sir.

Q. Who else roomed there?

A. I don't know of any one. . . .

Q. So you roomed with him [Joseph Smith] in the Nauvoo Mansion in room number one?

A. Yes sir. . . .

Q. How often did you room there with Joseph Smith?

A. Well that is something I can't tell you.

Q. Well was it more than once?

A. Yes sir, and more than twice.

Q. Well that is something I would like to know?

A. Well there is something I would like to know. If I am to be asked these questions I would like to know if I am to answer them. I have told you all about this thing that I know, and I can't see any reason in your worrying me with these questions, and I would like to know if I have to answer them?

Q. Well if you decline to answer them say so, and that will do?

A. I don't decline to answer any question that I know anything about.

Q. Well answer that question then?

A. What is the question?

Q. I asked you how many times you had roomed there in that house with Joseph Smith? I do not expect you to answer positively the exact number of times, but I would like to have you tell us the number of times as nearly as you can remember it?

A. Well I can't tell you. I think I have acted the part of a lady in answering your questions as well as I have, and I don't think you are acting the part of a gentleman in asking me these questions.

Q. Well I will ask you the questions over again in this form,—was it more than twice?

A. Yes sir.

Q. Well how many times?

A. I could not say.

Q. Did you ever at any other place room with him?

A. In what way?

Q. Of course I mean as his wife?

A. Yes sir.

Q. At what places?

A. In my father's house.

Q. At other places did you ever room with him as his wife?

A. Well now I think that is all the places it is necessary for me to answer you one way or the other. . . .

Q. Did you ever room with Joseph Smith at any other place or places than at the Nauvoo Mansion and your father's house,—that is did you ever room with him as his wife?

A. Them is all the places I remember.

Q. Those are the only places you remember?

A. Yes sir.

Q. Now at the times you roomed with him, did you cohabit with him as his wife?

A. Yes sir.

Q. And you never had any children?

A. No sir, I answered that question before and told you no.<sup>32</sup>

The following year on August 4, 1893, when interviewed by Joseph Smith III, she affirmed that she was the Prophet's wife "in very deed":

Q. Were you married to my father?

A. Yes . . .

Q. Was you a wife in very deed?

A. Yes

Q. Why was there no increase, say in your case?

A.. Through no fault of either of us, lack of proper conditions on my part probably, or it might be in the wisdom of the Almighty that we should have none. The Prophet was martyred nine months after our marriage.<sup>33</sup>

Decades later, R. C. Evans, who had been a member of the RLDS First Presidency but later disaffiliated, wrote:

32. Malissa Lott, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Part 3, pp. 97, 105–6, questions 87–93, 224–60. Joseph Smith III who believed Malissa was not married to his father during his lifetime, recorded in 1894: "Melissa Lott. I knew her well, a bright good girl. Am glad that she was only for eternity or adopted into the family. But she was plenty large and old enough to be any man's companion in cohabitation when I knew her; and about the only one of the entire outfit named by you [of twenty possible plural wives of Joseph Smith] whom I would be inclined to believe if she should tell me herself that father did cohabit with her." Joseph Smith III, Letter to Bro. E. C. Brand, January 26, 1894, p. 66.

33. Melissa Lott Willes, Statement, August 4, 1893.

When in Salt Lake City I called at the residence of Patriarch John Smith, brother of Joseph F. Smith, and son of Hyrum Smith, nephew of the original prophet Joseph Smith, and while there his wife, Helen, told me, among many other interesting things, that “Melissa Lott told me that when a girl she sewed for Emma Smith and took care of the children. Joseph had to pass through her room to go to Emma’s room. She said Joseph never had sexual intercourse with her but once and that was in the daytime, saying he desired her to have a child by him. She was barefooted and ironing when Joseph came in, and the ceremony was performed in the presence of her parents.”<sup>34</sup>

### *Olive Frost*

Joseph E. Robinson wrote: “During the afternoon I called on Aunt Lizzie. . . . She knew Joseph Smith had more than two wives. Said he married . . . Olive Frost [who] had a child by him and that both died.”<sup>35</sup> On April 20, 1885, Joseph Smith III interviewed James Whitehead, a former clerk for Joseph Smith, who affirmed the information.<sup>36</sup>

### *Mary Heron Snider*

Joseph E. Johnson reported that he knew “the first frigging [slang for sexual relations]—that was done in his house with his mother in law—by Joseph.”<sup>37</sup> Johnson’s statement represents the only evidence I have been able to identify regarding a polygandrous plural relationship between Joseph Smith and Mary Heron Snider. However, Johnson seems credible so I have included Mary here as a possible conjugal wife. The fact that Mary Heron was not sealed to her legal husband, John Snider during their lifetimes, even though the opportunity was repeatedly available (including by proxy between her 1852 death and John Snider’s 1875 passing), is consistent with a sealing between her and the Prophet. John Snider remained an active Latter-day Saint, suggesting either that he was entirely unaware of the relationship (which is unlikely if his son-in-law, Joseph E. Johnson, knew about it) or that he knew about it and supported it. (See Volume 1, Chapter 16.)

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34. R. C. Evans, *Forty Years in the Mormon Church*, 38.

35. Joseph E. Robinson, *Diary*, October 26, 1902. See also D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, 588.

36. Joseph E. Robinson, *Notes*, n.d., original in possession of John Hajicek.

37. Misc. Minutes, Sept. 2, 1850, Brigham Young Collection, Ms d 1234, LDS Church History Library, restricted; Quinn, Box 3, fd. 2, Quinn Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

### **Ambiguous, Contradictory, or Limited Data for Three Plural Wives**

Evidence of sexual involvement between Joseph Smith and three other wives exists, but suffers from ambiguities or other credibility problems. Contradictory evidence exists regarding Eliza R. Snow. In addition, single accounts for both Sarah Ann Whitney and Hannah Ells imply sexuality but without adequate secondary verification.

#### *Eliza R. Snow*

The most quoted statement dealing with Eliza R. Snow's relationship with Joseph Smith was made by Angus Cannon when recounting his conversation with Joseph Smith III:

He [Joseph Smith III] said, "I am informed that Eliza Snow was a virgin at the time of her death." I in turn said, "Brother Heber C. Kimball, I am informed, asked her the question if she was not a virgin although married to Joseph Smith and afterwards to Brigham Young, when she replied in a private gathering, 'I thought you knew Joseph Smith better than that.'"<sup>38</sup>

Less commonly referenced is an 1877 letter from Eliza to Daniel Munns, an RLDS member:

You ask (referring to Pres. Smith), "Did he authorize or practice spiritual wifery? Were you a spiritual wife?" I certainly shall not acknowledge myself of having been a carnal one. . . . I am personally and intimately acquainted with several ladies now living in Utah who accepted the pure and sacred doctrine of plural marriage, and were the bona fide wives of Pres. Joseph Smith." (Emphasis in original.)<sup>39</sup>

This firsthand statement seems to indicate either that Eliza did not have sexual relations with the Prophet or that she was carefully trying to avoid admitting to it, even though she freely implied its occurrence with Joseph's other plural wives.

As discussed in Chapter 25, other stories and rumors have sprung up regarding Eliza's relationship with Joseph and Emma Smith, but they date after her death and are thus late and second-hand or even more distant. Despite several available narratives, the issue of her physical relationship appears to be unresolved.

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38. Angus Cannon, Statement, in 1905 interview with Joseph Smith III, LDS Church History Library.

39. Eliza R. Snow, Letter to Daniel Munns, May 30, 1877.

*Sarah Ann Whitney*

The marriage ceremony spoken to seal Joseph Smith and Sarah Ann Whitney implied that mortal offspring could occur:

I give you S. A. Whitney my Daughter to Joseph Smith to be his wife to observe all the rights between you both that belong to that condition I do it in my own name and in the name of my wife your mother and in the name of my Holy Progenitors by the right of birth which is of Priest Hood vested in me by revelation and commandment and promise of the living God obtained by the Holy Melchizedek, [Jethro], and other of the Holy Fathers commanding in the name of the Lord all those powers to concentrate in you and through to your posterity forever.<sup>40</sup>

Additional evidence is lacking although Wilhelm Wyl, an anti-Mormon writer, asserted in 1886: "He [Joseph Smith] seduced her [Elizabeth Whitney's] daughter [Sarah Ann Whitney]."<sup>41</sup>

*Hannah Ells*

In 1869, LDS Church member John Benbow signed an affidavit affirming: "President Smith frequently visited his wife Hannah at his (John Benbow's) house."<sup>42</sup> Whether those visits included conjugal relations is not clear, but possible.

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40. Sealing ceremony between Joseph Smith and Sarah Ann Whitney, quoted in H. Michael Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary*, 315–16; see also Revelations in Addition to Those Found in the LDS Edition of the D&C, in *New Mormon Studies: A Comprehensive Resource Library*.

41. Wilhelm Wyl, *Mormon Portraits*, 90.

42. Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:74; Jenson, "Plural Marriage," 223; Hannah Ells, Letter to Sister [Phoebe] Woodruff, Nauvoo, May 4, 1845.