

Mosiah Hancock recalled being sealed to Mary Dunn in the Nauvoo Temple in 1846. She was two months past her twelfth birthday and he was three weeks shy of his. This ceremony was obviously undertaken in haste as preparation for leaving the city only days later: "On about January 10, 1846, I was privileged to go in the temple. . . . I was sealed to a lovely young girl named Mary, who was about my age, but it was with the understanding that we were not to live together as man and wife until we were 16 years of age. The reason that some were sealed so young was because we knew that we would have to go West and wait many a long time for another temple."<sup>81</sup> Although Mosiah writes warmly about Mary, it is unknown whether the marriage was ever consummated. Each married other spouses in Utah. Mary wed Martin Luther Ensign in Salt Lake City in 1852 and had nine children.<sup>82</sup>

One study showed that the average age for plural wives married in one area of Utah was around twenty.<sup>83</sup> Such data do not directly tie to Joseph Smith's counsel, but it is possible that he privately taught these policies to Brigham Young and other Nauvoo polygamists.

### *Helen Mar Kimball*

One of Joseph Smith's two fourteen-year-old plural wives was Helen Mar Kimball. Current evidence indicates that Helen's father brokered the union out of a desire to show his loyalty and devotion to the Prophet. Late in life, Helen wrote: "He [her father] taught me the principle of Celestial marriage and having a great desire to be connected with the Prophet, Joseph, he offered me to him; this I afterwards learned from the Prophet's own mouth. My father had but one ewe lamb, but willingly laid her upon the altar."<sup>84</sup> Richard Lloyd Anderson observed: "Helen says several times that her father took the initiative to arrange the marriage and very possibly he did so with a view to committing her to the Prophet before her budding social life produced a choice or a proposal" from someone else.<sup>85</sup>

Available documents indicate the Joseph's role was not completely passive in that he taught Helen Mar concerning the principle after Heber intro-

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1850 priesthood council where Johnson testified of the relationship between Joseph Smith and Mary Heron Snider. See Chapter 16.

81. Amy E. Baird, Victoria H. Jackson, and Laura L. Wassell, comps., "Mosiah Lyman Hancock Autobiography (1834–1865)," 20–21.

82. See <https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.2.1/M7XC-T6X> (accessed July 4, 2012).

83. Larry Logue, "A Time of Marriage: Mormon Monogamy and Polygamy in a Utah Town," 13.

84. Typescript and holograph, reproduced in Holzapfel and Holzapfel, *A Woman's View*, 482–87.

85. Richard Lloyd Anderson, Letter to Dawn Comfort, May 9–15, 1998.

duced her to the topic. It is obvious that Helen's sealing was for both time and eternity. In 1886 Helen told a Brother Hyrum Kimball that she "was sealed to the Prophet in Nauvoo." She wrote: "He was astonished and so was I that he was ignorant of this fact."<sup>86</sup>

The question of sexual relations between Joseph and Helen Mar has drawn different conclusions from researchers. D. Michael Quinn wrote that "fourteen-year-old Helen Mar Kimball . . . later testified that he [Joseph Smith] had sexual relations with [her]."<sup>87</sup> However, Quinn provides no documentation for this bold statement, and I have not found any supportive evidence. Researcher Michael Marquardt disagreed: "Helen Kimball's sealing to Joseph Smith was a spiritual one unlike other wives who had sexual relations with the prophet."<sup>88</sup> Todd Compton claimed a more central position: "Some conclude that Helen Mar Kimball, who married Smith when she was fourteen, did not have marital relations with him. This is possible, as there are cases of Mormons in Utah marrying young girls and refraining from sexual relations until they were older. But the evidence for Helen Mar is entirely ambiguous in my view."<sup>89</sup>

The primary document referring to the relationship, an 1881 poem penned by Helen, has been interpreted in different ways:

I thought through this life my time will be my own  
 The step I now am taking's for eternity alone,  
 No one need be the wiser, through time I shall be free,  
 And as the past hath been the future still will be.  
 To my guileless heart all free from worldly care  
 And full of blissful hopes and youthful visions rare  
 The world seamed bright the thret'ning clouds were kept  
 From sight and all looked fair but pitying angels wept.  
 They saw my youthful friends grow shy and cold.  
 And poisonous darts from sland'rous tongues were hurled,  
 Untutor'd heart in thy gen'rous sacrafise,  
 Thou didst not weigh the cost nor know the bitter price;  
 Thy happy dreams all o'er thou'st doom'd also to be  
 Bar'd out from social scenes by this thy destiny,  
 And o'er thy sad'nd mem'ries of sweet departed joys  
 Thy sicken'd heart will brood and imagine future woes,  
 And like a fetter'd bird with wild and longing heart,

86. Charles M. Hatch and Todd M. Compton eds., *A Widow's Tale: The 1884-1896 Diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney*, July 11, 1886, 169. The Hyrum Kimball she mentions is not the husband by the same name of Sarah M. Granger Kimball.

87. Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, 639.

88. Marquardt, *The Rise of Mormonism*, 609.

89. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 14; see also Compton, "Early Marriage in the New England and Northeastern States, and in Mormon Polygamy: What Was the Norm?" 231.

Thou'lt dayly pine for freedom and murmur at thy lot;  
 But could'st thou see the future & view that glorious crown,  
 Awaiting you in Heaven you would not weep nor mourn.  
 Pure and exalted was thy father's aim, he saw  
 A glory in obeying this high celestial law,  
 For to thousands who've died without the light  
 I will bring eternal joy & make thy crown more bright.  
 I'd been taught to reveire the Prophet of God  
 And receive every word as the word of the Lord,  
 But had this not come through my dear father's mouth,  
 I should ne'r have received it as God's sacred truth.<sup>90</sup>

One year after writing this poem, she elaborated:

During the winter of 1843, there were plenty of parties and balls. . . . Some of the young gentlemen got up a series of dancing parties, to be held at the Mansion once a week. . . . I had to stay home, as my father had been warned by the Prophet to keep his daughter away from there, because of the blacklegs and certain ones of questionable character who attended there. . . . I felt quite sore over it, and thought it a very unkind act in father to allow [my brother] to go and enjoy the dance unrestrained with others of my companions, and fetter me down, for no girl loved dancing better than I did, and I really felt that it was too much to bear. It made the dull school still more dull, and like a wild bird I longed for the freedom that was denied me; and thought myself a much abused child, and that it was pardonable if I did murmur.<sup>91</sup>

It is clear that Helen's sealing to Joseph Smith prevented her from socializing like an unmarried woman. After leaving the Church, dissenter Catherine Lewis reported Helen's saying: "I would never have been sealed to Joseph had I known it was anything more than ceremony."<sup>92</sup> Assuming that Catherine remembered and reported this statement accurately, the question arises regarding her meaning of "more than a ceremony." At least two possibilities exist. One interpretation affirms that Helen was referring to sexual relations. However, a review of all available historical manuscripts fails to produce any documentation to support sexuality in the relationship, although, admittedly, discussion of sexual relations is sparse in nineteenth-century documents. Also, as described above, Utah policies were to postpone conjugality until later years, a policy that may have begun with the Prophet himself. LDS historian Spencer Fluhman agreed:

90. Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, "Autobiography, March 30, 1881," in Holzapfel and Holzapfel, *A Woman's View*, 482-87.

91. *Ibid.*, 224; poem originally published in *Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 12 (November 15, 1882): 90.

92. Catherine Lewis, *Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons; Giving an Account of their Iniquities*, 19.

“Readers concerned about whether or not the marriage was consummated are left without conclusive evidence for or against. . . . While the question of sexuality thus remains open, there is no documentary evidence that such was the case with Helen. In fact, her reminiscences convey little social interaction with Joseph Smith after the marriage, let alone an intimate physical relationship.”<sup>93</sup>

The second explanation, which is corroborated by Helen's poignant poem, is that the ceremony prevented her from associating with her friends as an unmarried teenager, causing her distress during her thirteen-month plural marriage (May 1843 to June 1844). Her verse: “Bar'd out from social scenes by this thy destiny / And o'er thy sad'nd mem'ries of sweet departed joys / Thy sicken'd heart will brood and imagine future woes, / And like a fetter'd bird with wild and longing heart / Thou'lt dayly pine for freedom and murmur at thy lot . . .” communicates frustration from the restrictions on her social interactions with her peers, who subsequently shut her out from their group good times.

On the other hand, if Helen were sexually involved with the Prophet as a plural wife, her anticipation of pregnancy and other wifely responsibilities might have made it clear she was no longer single. In view of the conservative sexual standards embraced at that time, her longings to dance with teenage boys and otherwise socialize may have been subdued as she adopted the lifestyle of a married women, even if the matrimony was secret and polygamous. If no physical intimacy was included because of her physical immaturity, the marriage would seem more symbolic than real, except as it prevented her from associating with her friends, for whom she would have had no good explanation for her withdrawal.

As mentioned in Chapters 14 and 23, Helen Mar Kimball was not called to testify in the 1892 Temple Lot trial. If she had been sexually involved with the Prophet in their plural marriage, her exclusion from the depositions is difficult to explain. Helen lived in Salt Lake City and had written two books defending plural marriage. Her first, *Plural Marriage as Taught by the Prophet Joseph: A Reply to Joseph Smith [III], Editor of the Lamoni Iowa "Herald"* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882) was a direct response to the claims of the RLDS Church, the plaintiffs in the Temple Lot lawsuit. Her second book, *Why We Practice Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884), echoed many of the same arguments. In addition, Helen lived geographically closer than two of the other witnesses who were called, Malissa Lott (thirty miles south in Lehi) and Lucy Walker (eighty-two miles north in Logan). Both of these women affirmed that sexual relations were part of their plural marriages to the Prophet.<sup>94</sup> Helen's diary journal for March 1892 documents that

93. J. Spencer Fluhman, “‘A Subject That Can Bear Investigation’: Anguish, Faith, and Joseph Smith's Youngest Plural Wife,” 41–51.

94. Malissa Lott, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's Testimony, Part

she was aware of the visit of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) contingent, but there is no indication that they or LDS Church leaders approached her to testify.<sup>95</sup> That she would have been an excellent witness to discuss and defend the fact that Joseph Smith taught and practiced plural marriage is undeniable.

The most obvious reason that Helen Mar Kimball was not summoned is that she could not explicitly testify that her plural marriage with the Prophet included conjugality. As noted in Chapter 14, the polyandrous wives then living (Mary Elizabeth Lightner, Zina Huntington, and Patty Sessions) were similarly not deposed. Proving that Joseph Smith practiced full sexual polygamy was a focus of the attorneys for Church of Christ (Temple Lot) because it showed that the RLDS Church, which did not practice plural marriage, was not the “true” successor to Joseph Smith’s church.

Stanley B. Kimball, Heber C. Kimball’s biographer, concurred:

Many years later in Utah she [Helen] wrote a retrospective poem about this marriage from which we learn that it was “for eternity alone,” that is, unconsummated. Whatever such a marriage promised for the next world, it brought her no immediate earthly happiness. She saw herself as a “fetter’d bird” without youthful friends and a subject of slander. This poem also reveals that Joseph Smith’s several pro forma marriages to the daughters of his friends were anything but sexual romps. Furthermore, the poem reinforces the idea that, despite the trials of plurality in mortality, a “glorious crown” awaited the faithful and obedient in heaven.<sup>96</sup>

### *Nancy Maria Winchester*

The second fourteen-year-old sealed to Joseph Smith is Nancy Maria (also “Mariah”) Winchester, born August 10, 1828.<sup>97</sup> Two late sources support that at some point she might have been sealed to Joseph Smith. The

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3, p. 105, question 227; Lucy Walker, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, pp. 450–51, 468, 473, questions 29–30, 463–74, 586. See also Lucy Walker, “Lucy Walker Statement,” n.d., quoted in 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;

95. Charles M. Hatch and Todd M. Compton eds., *A Widow’s Tale, the 1884–1896 Diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney*, 494–95. Journal entries recorded on the days the depositions were taking place include Helen’s complaints of health problems, but also recount visits to family and friends. For example, on March 14 she wrote: “Sol’s girl baby died” and she “went down” to visit. The following day she attended the funeral. *Ibid.*, 495.

96. Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer*, 98.

97. While Nancy Maria may have been sealed to the Prophet after August 10, 1843, thus making her fifteen, not fourteen, such a sealing would have been contrary to Joseph’s apparent agreement with Emma on July 13, 1843, to stop marrying plural wives.