

# Polygamy

~ Part 3 of 4

(July 24, 2007)

So far we've discussed Fanny Alger and Lucinda Pendleton – two interesting figures in LDS history.

Prior to obtaining and translating the golden plates, the Smith family was friendly with another family by the last name of Beamon.

They were known to hunt for buried treasure together, with Father Beamon recognized as a successful “rodsman” and “scryer.”

Later, when Joseph Smith Jr. announced the retention of golden plates from the earth, Father Beamon assisted him in finding places to hide them.

The Beaman family – who had a daughter named Louisa, accepted the Mormon gospel – probably at the hands of Joseph Young and his brother Brigham Young, and even gave Joseph Smith, Jr. a place to stay in their home in 1834 when Louisa was nineteen or twenty years old.

Louisa wrote that the conversation Joseph provided was “meat and drink to me.”

In the same year, Father Beamon was advised by Joseph Smith to move his family to Kirtland, Ohio – which he did.

But three years later he died, and Louisa and her mother and sister ultimately landed in Nauvoo, Illinois in 1839, when Louisa was 24 years old.

A year later her mother died and it was then that Joseph revealed to Louisa's brother in law (a man last named Noble) what he called "the Principle" or "the plurality of wives."

Joseph said that "an angel of the Lord had commanded him (Smith) in the said order of marriage."

He then asked Noble to officiate in marrying his sister-in-law, Louisa, to him, adding:

*"In revealing this to you, I have placed my life in your hands, therefore do not in an evil hour betray me to my enemies."*

Louisa, being a true disciple of Smith, agreed to participate, and dressing up as a man, retired to the woods one evening, and was wed polygamously to Smith by Noble. She was 26, Smith was 35 when she became wife number 4.

In a court testimony in 1892, Noble reported that after he had married Smith to his sister in law, he said to him:

*"Blow out the lights and get into bed, and you will be safer there . . . and he took my advice."* But Noble also testified that he did not see the couple actually getting into bed together, but that *"Smith told me they did."*

LDS Author Tood Compton writes:

*"There is no good reason to doubt that Louisa's marriage to Smith included sexuality."*

When asked under oath, *"Where did Joseph and Louisa sleep together?"* he testified, *"Right straight across the river at my house they slept together."*

After Joseph Smith died, Louisa became a polygamous wife of one of the leading “brethren” of the Church – Brigham Young.

Interestingly enough, and for reasons not completely understood, when Joseph was shot and killed, the ruling members of the Church – especially Brigham Young and Heber C Kimball stepped forward and made his wives their own – if they could.

Of Joseph’s polygamous wives, Brigham married seven to nine of them; HCKimball married eleven; George A Smith and Amasa Lyman married one each, and other prominent church leaders took some for themselves.

Louisa was “sealed” to Brigham Young for time, with Young standing in as proxy for the deceased Joseph Smith, whom she was sealed to for “eternity.”

Louisa bore Young twins – Hyrum and Joseph. Both died.

She bore him another son whom they named Moroni who died in his childhood of “teething and canker.”

She bore another set of twins from Young – whom they named Alvah and Alma.

They died too.

In 1850, Louisa began to suffer with breast cancer that went untreated.

Four horrific years later, she passed.

She was the first plural wife Joseph took unto himself in the great Mormon city of Nauvoo.

Where her sexual liaisons with Smith produced no apparent children, her subsequent marriage to Smith's successor, Brigham Young, produced a number of offspring and introduced us to the more practical polygamy the Church is known for – lots of women punching out babies from the holy loins of a single leader.

We also begin to see, in Louisa's case, trends that take hold in the lives of the women who agreed to polygamous marriage – including the absence of the husband in the home (with the exception of some brief visits) and the important social role sister wives begin to play in the life of a polygamous wife.

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Where Louisa's tale of polygamy was simple and sorrowful, the story of Joseph Smith's fifth wife is categorically amazing partly because of the amount of documentation available to us about it, but moreso because of the frankly demented content.

She was born Zina Diantha Huntington.

She was a woman of great ability, possessing a profound work ethic in spite of delicate health and was afforded a substantive Christian upbringing as a child.

Her early journal writings present her as being intelligent, warm, but highly fanatical when it came to religious themes.

In 1831, when she was ten years old, her father, a strict Presbyterian decided that none of the churches on the earth were right.

As you recall, this common opinion of the day was known as “primitivism” or an attitude of a “restorationist.”

When Mr. Huntington heard the name “prophet” associated with Joseph Smith, he was anxious to meet him.

Not able to, a neighbor traveled and returned with this news:

“A prophet is once again on the earth.”

He also brought with him a Book of Mormon.

We get a glimpse into Zina’s emotional state as she recorded her thoughts after just physically touching the Book of Mormon. She wrote:

“I saw the Book of Mormon, that strange, new book, lying on the window sill of our sitting room. I went up to the window, picked it up, and the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit accompanied it to such an extent that I pressed it to my bosom in a rapture of delight, murmuring as I did so, “This is the truth, truth, truth!”

Sounds like the perfect candidate for Mormonism and polygamy to me.

After having a “heavenly vision” Zina was baptized by Hyrum Smith when she was fourteen.

Zina was gifted with many spiritual giftings including overpowering spiritual manifestations in the woods, speaking in tongues (which she did her entire life and became one of the churches most prolific expressors) and even raising a dead man to life.

In 1836, Joseph Smith (once again) counseled her father to sell his absolutely exquisite farm and land and to move to Kirtland, Ohio.

This they did.

Surprisingly, the family, though supposedly strict Presbyterians, believed the temple in Kirtland to be just like the temple in Jerusalem (it's so surprising to me when faithful LDS honestly make this unbelievable assumption) and Zina had a few experiences of "seeing" angels singing inside.

Once in the presence of Joseph, the well-heeled father of Zina put most of their money in his Kirtland anti-bank and lost it all.

In 1837 he lost his land too.

The family suffered great financial hardship, even to the point of going hungry at times, but helping to offset such woe was the fact that Mr. Huntington was made a high counselor, which would be the equivalent of a General Authority in the Church today.

The family then moved to Missouri, where Zina wrote that it was akin to the "Exodus" found in the Bible.

They relocated a year later to Nauvoo Illinois where Zina's mother died.

The family was so sick many couldn't attend the funeral. Because of their illness, Joseph invited them to live with he and Emma.

This is just another instance where Joseph picked a wife from people who lived with him before.

Ironically, Zina actually met her first husband while living under Joseph's roof.

His name was Henry Jacobs, who was described in several places as being very handsome.

Henry was a seventy in the Church and was called to serve many missions once he was married. (He served one before).

While living with Joseph and grieving over the loss of her mother, Zina was comforted by Joseph. She asked the prophet if she would know her as her mother in the next life?

"Certainly you will," he replied. "More than that, you will meet and become acquainted with your eternal Mother, the wife of your Father in Heaven."

"And have I then a Mother in Heaven" exclaimed the teenager.

Joseph replied. "You assuredly have. How could a Father claim his title unless there were also a Mother to share that parenthood?"

As a point of history, a woman named Eliza R Snow learned of this special extra-biblical doctrine soon afterward and wrote a favorite Mormon hymn: O, My Father, where she is addressing her heavenly father AND mother in prayer.

Family tradition – which reveals an exceptional propensity toward heavenly visions – states that Zina's mother visited her several times from the grave to give her messages.

After the death of Zina's mother, her father married Lydia Partridge, who had

two daughters who would both become polygamous wives of Joseph.

So here is Zina, romantically in love with a man she is courting named Henry Jacobs.

And somewhere while being courted by the handsome Jacobs, Joseph the prophet introduces to her “the Principle” and then he asks her to marry him!

Zina was torn on a number of accounts. First, she firmly believed Joseph was a prophet.

Second, she was in love with Jacobs.

Third, she probably respected Emma, and knew Emma would never agree to such an arrangement.

It seems Zina put the prophet off either by not answering his proposal or flatly rejecting it.

Now Joseph was not accustomed to rejection. And it often made him not only more determined, but frequently caused him to invoke the name of God in the matter.

Of the dilemma, Zina wrote:

O dear Heaven, grant me wisdom! Help me know the way!

In early 1841, she made her choice – she would marry the handsome Henry Jacobs.

Henry was close to Joseph – as was Zina – and the two asked Joseph to marry them. He agreed.

But when the moment came, Joseph did

show, so the mayor of Nauvoo – John C. Bennett – performed the ceremony.

Not too many days later, the newlyweds ran into Joseph on the street and asked why he hadn't shown to marry them.

With brazen chutzpah Joseph stated:

“The LORD made it known to me that you (Zina) is supposed to be my celestial wife.” Smith also suggested that she and Henry could continue to live together in earthly matrimony.

It seems Henry was amiable to the proposal but Zina resisted.

In October of the same year, however, Joseph sent Zina's brother to her with a message. It said:

“An angel with a drawn sword has stood over Smith and told him that if he did not establish polygamy” he would lose his petition and his life.”

At seven months pregnant, Zina acquiesced. And her writing essentially stopped.

Henry and Zina continued to live together as husband and wife, though a week after their sons birth, Henry was sent on a mission to Chicago. A year later, he was called to another 3 month mission to New York, arriving home in October.

Six months later, he was sent to Tennessee to campaign for Joseph Smith presidential aspirations.

During this time, Zina picked writing back up and while Henry was out of state, recorded that she and her “husband” attended a Masonic ritual together. Her

husband in all probability being Joseph Smith.

Shortly thereafter, Joseph was shot.

Compton writes that Zina and her children with Henry were sealed to Smith, but that she remained Henry's for time.

Now after Joseph was meeting his maker, if the woman he was sealed to had a faithful LDS earthly husband, she would remain married to him for time.

If she had no earthly husband, or, if her earthly husband was inactive or unfaithful in the Church, an apostle would stand in as proxy for Joseph for an eternal sealing and as an earthly proxy for himself.

This was true except with the case of Zina and Brigham Young.

Zina had a faithful husband in the LDS church – Henry Jacobs. But Brigham Young insisted that he stand in as a proxy in her eternal sealing to Joseph.

Huntington Family tradition records that Brigham Young said “If you would marry me, you would get to a higher glory.”

All I can say is Holy freaking schnit.

So in September of 1844, she married Brigham Young but continued living with Henry.

Three months later, Henry was made president of the Seventy and was sent on a mission.

Two weeks later Zina was “endowed” by Brigham Young without Henry present in the state.

After the Saints left Nauvoo for Winter Quarters, while Henry was on another mission, Zina and Brigham began living together as husband and wife.

Henry was notified of this by letter.

On his way home from the mission, Henry wrote that he felt all alone – and he was.

He penned loving and affectionate letters to Zina. Which went unanswered.

Upon his return from the mission Brigham sent him on, Henry sealed three women to his companion WW Phelps and had another woman sealed to himself.

A court was held on them at Winter Quarters. Phelps was excommunicated and Henry was “silenced.”

In time, Zina, who was now tied to Brigham Young and distanced from her first love, spent time with Brigham Young, discussing, among other things, “*Joseph’s kingdom.*”

One of her journal entries reads:

*“Attended meeting all day. Elder Taylor spoke beautifully. The President (BYoung) addressed us like a Father and a God.”*

Utah polygamy brought trials of loneliness and the appearance of favoritism.

Zina wrote:

*No one will know the hours of painful loneliness that I saw day and night.*

In April of 1850, while living on old log

row, a series of small hutch cabins stuck behind Brigham's Lion house that still stands there on the corner of South and East Temple, Zina bore him a daughter.

A letter from Henry near that time shows he was still favorable to the church, but in February of 1851, he was disfellowshipped after Brigham Young met with his local authorities.

Rumor has it that he was disciplined for trying to win Zina back.

By September of 1851 Zina moved into the Lion House, a vertical promotion which was standard operation in polygamous homes, and Henry remarried.

Henry was then and thereafter described as a "man of sorrows."

Zina spent the rest of her days touring and promoting the wonders of polygamy.

Todd Compton states that clearly, linkage to Joseph Smith was seen as a necessity for "complete salvation."

In February of 1898, Zina's brother described her as "unsound" and a little demented.

She died at 80 years of age in 1901.

And in a final irony, she was buried not next to Brigham Young, not near Joseph Smith, but in a plot next to Henry and the Sons they had together.