Did polygamy end in 1890?

Plural marriage in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the wider Restoration

No. In 1890 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints formally changed its public policy. Some members continued to enter new plural marriages, and many existing families stayed together. The 1904 declaration explicitly made entering or performing a new plural marriage grounds for excommunication. Independent Mormon fundamentalist communities later carried the practice forward. [S01] [S02] [S33] [S38] [S52] [S66]

Three records that answer three different questions

1890 | What did the Church declare?

Wilford Woodruff advised members to refrain from marriages forbidden by law. On October 6 the general conference accepted the declaration as binding. [S01]

1901 | Did a new wedding take place?

Apostle Abraham Owen Woodruff married Eliza Avery Clark while already married to Helen May Winters. Their family correspondence survives. The evidence supports January 1901 more firmly than a specific day. [S29]

1906 | Did an existing family continue?

Church President Joseph F. Smith described his fine in a letter to his sister. A certified Utah judgment records his guilty plea for unlawful cohabitation and a $300 fine. [S31] [S32]

The following chapters trace the policy through diaries, sermons, family letters, legislation, sworn testimony and disciplinary records. The final register identifies each source, its location, and the passage checked.

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Chronology of the transition

1835 and 1843

The 1835 Doctrine and Covenants included a public statement of monogamy. Joseph Smith dictated the plural-marriage revelation on July 12, 1843. Its earliest surviving manuscript is a contemporary copy. [S05] [S06] [S07]

1852 to 1889

Orson Pratt publicly defended plural marriage in 1852. Federal laws of 1862, 1882 and 1887 progressively penalized bigamy and cohabitation and affected the Church's property. Woodruff recorded a revelation urging leaders to uphold divine law in November 1889. [S10] [S15] [S78] [S79] [S80]

September and October 1890

The Manifesto was dated September 24, released publicly September 25 and accepted in general conference October 6. [S01] [S02] [S23] [S24]

1891 to 1901

Woodruff testified about compliance in 1891. Later examples of new marriages include Charles E. Merrill's in 1891, Joseph H. Dean's in 1898 as reconstructed by Quinn, and Apostle Owen Woodruff's in January 1901. [S25] [S28] [S29] [S73]

1904 to 1907

Joseph F. Smith testified about his family in 1904 and issued the Second Manifesto on April 6. Apostle Matthias F. Cowley married again in 1905. Smith pleaded guilty to unlawful cohabitation in 1906. The Senate retained the monogamous Reed Smoot in 1907. [S30] [S32] [S33] [S35] [S72]

1910 to the 1930s

Church journals document disciplinary cases in 1910, 1911 and 1914. Some earlier plural couples continued to live together into the 1930s and beyond. Short Creek excommunications in 1934 and 1935 marked a further institutional separation. [S02] [S36] [S37] [S38] [S39] [S52]

Twenty-first century

The LDS handbook requires withdrawal of membership for knowingly entering plural marriage. U.S. and Canadian court records document plural-family cases outside the LDS institution. [S53] [S66] [S75]

What counts as an ending?

Plural marriage ordinarily means one man married to more than one woman in this history. A religious marriage could exist without recognition as a valid civil marriage. **A new ceremony** is different from continued cohabitation with wives married earlier. **Cohabitation** in historical legal records is a legal category that must be interpreted in the applicable statute and proceeding, not simply as a modern synonym for sharing an address. [S20] [S30]

Sealing concerns a religious relationship understood to extend beyond death. It is not automatically evidence of concurrent domestic or sexual relationships. Nauvoo records include differing kinds of sealings and incomplete evidence about particular relationships. The Church's current handbook likewise distinguishes living marriages from proxy ordinances involving deceased spouses. [S03] [S08] [S54]

Authorization is a question about people and decisions. A person might request a marriage, approve it, perform the ceremony, learn about it later, or vote on a disciplinary case. Evidence for one role cannot establish all the others. A decision by a member of the First Presidency also differs from collective approval by that body. [S02] [S28] [S71]

Mormondom here includes several Restoration traditions that trace connections to the movement founded by Joseph Smith. The Salt Lake City church, Community of Christ, the Strangite church and fundamentalist groups have different histories and policies. [S52] [S55] [S56] [S59]

How the sources were checked

Each historical claim is tied to a dated source or passage. A reporter’s published sermon supplies evidence of the teaching that circulated. A diary supplies what its writer recorded. A later interview can preserve evidence about an earlier event, with the intervening time and any dependence on other witnesses identified. [S07] [S17] [S50] [S67]

The source register identifies the edition examined. Several manuscript claims reach us through an editor or historian. Those entries name the intermediary. The official Taylor catalog announcement and the separate reproduction of the handwritten text have distinct entries. Current denominational rules were checked against the cited online editions on November 18, 2026. [S28] [S46] [S47] [S51] [S53] [S54] [S55]

This review covers selected accessible evidence and selected Kraut texts. The exact number of later marriages, the approval of particular ceremonies, and the proposed independent succession remain open questions. [S02] [S28] [S41] [S47] [S50] [S55]

Joseph Smith and the Nauvoo record

The 1835 Doctrine and Covenants included a public marriage article declaring that a man should have one wife. It was accepted on August 17, 1835, and printed as section 101, pages 251-252. Its authorship is uncertain, though commonly associated with Oliver Cowdery. Joseph Smith was absent from the assembly. His participation in or approval of this particular text is not established. [S05]

The beginnings of Joseph Smith's practice are less precisely documented than the Nauvoo period. Evidence about an early relationship with Fanny Alger is largely retrospective. An exact starting year should not be presented with the same confidence as the dated 1843 revelation. [S08]

On July 12, 1843, Smith dictated the revelation now printed as Doctrine and Covenants 132. The earliest surviving manuscript is Joseph C. Kingsbury's copy, not William Clayton's lost original dictation manuscript. The Joseph Smith Papers documents its provenance; Smith's contemporary journal and the cited same-day Clayton journal entry corroborate the revelation's production. It was first printed on September 14, 1852 and added to the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876. [S06] [S07]

In an August 18, 1842 letter, Smith invited the Whitneys to visit him in hiding. The Joseph Smith Papers identifies the recipients as Sarah Ann Whitney, by then sealed to him, and both her parents. It publishes the Church History Library's original. The editors give two reasons for secrecy: his risk of arrest and the private nature of the marriage. The letter alone does not establish the sexual character of the relationship. [S63]

Public denials coexisted with the private practice. The October 1, 1842 Relief Society certificate affirmed knowledge of only the published marriage system. The Church Historian's Press identifies Eliza R. Snow, Sarah M. Cleveland, and Elizabeth Ann Whitney as informed signers. Eliza R. Snow later said she distinguished authorized plural marriage from John C. Bennett's system. The editors infer that other informed signers likely made that distinction. That context matters, but so does the certificate's broad public wording. The evidence does not establish identical knowledge among all nineteen signers. [S09]

Emma's later testimony deserves to be heard. In an interview with Joseph Smith III published October 1, 1879, she denied knowing that Joseph had other wives or a revelation on polygamy. Clayton's July 12, 1843 journal records the revelation being read to her and her rejection of it. These records conflict. The contemporary record and surviving manuscript carry more weight on whether the revelation existed. They do not disclose all Emma knew or why she answered as she did. [S67] [S06] [S07]

Scripture and early public teachings

Jacob 2:27-30 establishes monogamy for its audience and contains language that LDS interpreters understand as permitting an exception when God commands it. Verses 31-35 emphasize the suffering of women and children. Reading only the exception omits the surrounding moral argument. [S04] [S01]

Doctrine and Covenants 132 combines sealing authority, eternal marriage, and plural unions. Its treatment of Abraham and other biblical figures cannot be reduced to a discussion of monogamous marriage. Nor does every reference to an eternal covenant automatically describe concurrent wives. The text addresses Emma directly and combines a consent provision in verse 61 with a qualification in verses 64-65. These are textual tensions that deserve direct explanation. [S03]

Orson Pratt, Brigham Young and Joseph F. Smith

Orson Pratt's August 29, 1852 sermon publicly defended a plurality of wives and called it “necessary for our exaltation to the fullness of the Lord's glory in the eternal world.” The published report is in Journal of Discourses 1:53-66, especially page 54. This public announcement must not be mistaken for the beginning of the practice. [S10]

Brigham Young's August 19, 1866 sermon linked polygamy to becoming gods. The same page tells listeners to be polygamists “at least in your faith” and criticizes refusal for worldly advantage. It does not clearly say that belief alone sufficed for the highest reward. The strong statement and that qualification must be presented together. The published locator is Journal of Discourses 11:269. [S11]

Joseph F. Smith's July 7, 1878 sermon argued that plural marriage brought greater blessings and could not be disregarded by those qualified to obey. He declared it applicable “when commanded and not otherwise.” His discussion of inability did not simply erase the claimed differences in reward. The sermon supports a demanding nineteenth-century teaching, with qualifications, rather than an unrestricted rule about every person in every era. [S12]

How to read a sermon report

The Journal of Discourses preserves published nineteenth-century sermon reports. It is not a recording, and the Church acknowledges transcription inaccuracies and does not treat the entire collection as present doctrinal authority. Those limitations do not erase what circulated under leaders' names. Precise wording should be attributed to the published report unless the shorthand record has also been checked. [S17]

John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff

John Taylor's Bear Lake discourse in Journal of Discourses 24:229-231 described the “law of celestial marriage, associated with which is the principle of plural marriage,” and treated obedience as spiritually necessary. Because the heading describes several discourses on a trip, an exact delivery day should not be invented. [S13]

Wilford Woodruff's December 12, 1869 sermon argued that giving up polygamy would not satisfy opponents who also rejected Mormon authority and revelation. He called polygamy “one feather in the bird, one ordinance in the Church and kingdom.” The illustration is an argument about broader opposition, not a self-contained prediction with an explicit date. [S14]

Woodruff's November 24, 1889 revelation warned church leaders against denying divine law or endangering themselves through promises to enemies. Kraut reproduces it, but it also survives independently in the Woodruff Papers and in George Q. Cannon's diary entry of November 25. Its existence and setting can therefore be checked without treating Kraut as the sole authority. [S15] [S16]

What changed for Woodruff?

In 1889 Woodruff warned against promises to opponents. In September 1890 he said that he had prayed for guidance and acted to preserve the Church. In a November 1891 address in Logan, he described what he believed would follow from continued resistance, including imprisonment and interruption of temple ordinances. Distinguish the dates and audiences when quoting him. [S15] [S16] [S23] [S24] [S01]

A theological question with two kinds of evidence

A person could believe a religious principle remained true and also accept an instruction to stop practicing it. Woodruff expressly made that distinction under oath in 1891. The later fundamentalist argument adds another proposition, that someone retained authority to continue performing the marriages. The 1886 manuscript and the later Woolley accounts supply different kinds of evidence for that proposition. [S25] [S43] [S47] [S50]

Congress, the courts and Utah statehood

Congress first targeted bigamy in federal territories in 1862. The Morrill Act also limited territorial real-estate holdings by religious and charitable organizations, while preserving existing vested rights. [S78]

In 1882 the Edmunds Act made a man's cohabitation with more than one woman a separate misdemeanor. Section 8 restricted voting and officeholding for people in specified relationships. Prosecution became possible without establishing that another wedding ceremony had occurred. [S79] [S20] [S81]

The 1887 Edmunds-Tucker Act dissolved the Church corporation, directed forfeiture proceedings with exemptions for specified religious-use property, and took voting rights from women throughout Utah Territory. These measures help explain why property, family support and voting rights recur in contemporary sources. [S80] [S18] [S20] [S23]

In Reynolds v. United States, 98 U.S. 145 (1879), the Supreme Court rejected religious duty as a defense to the bigamy prosecution. This historical holding should not be paraphrased as a universal rule that religious practice has no constitutional protection. In Late Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints v. United States, 136 U.S. 1 (1890), the Court upheld the federal dissolution and property measures at issue. The decision and Woodruff's fear for temple work are related but distinct evidence. [S21] [S22] [S01]

Utah statehood followed a separate civil process. The 1894 enabling act required an acceptable constitution. Article III of the 1895 constitution prohibited plural marriages, and Utah entered the Union January 4, 1896. The sequence explains the political importance of a credible public commitment, without proving every private motive for the Manifesto. Restrictions had also begun before 1890: Woodruff had already forbidden new plural marriages in the Salt Lake Endowment House. [S69] [S70]

Reading cohabitation cases accurately

In the case of Angus M. Cannon, Cannon v. United States (1885), the Supreme Court initially accepted a trial instruction that proof of intercourse was unnecessary. On May 10, 1886, it vacated its own judgment for lack of appellate jurisdiction. The later opinion in In re Nielsen (1889), at page 187, expressly states that living together as husband and wife sufficed for the cohabitation offense. Joseph F. Smith's 1906 guilty plea was a separate Utah state proceeding. [S65] [S81] [S32]

The 1890 Manifesto in its own words

The Manifesto is dated September 24, 1890, was released September 25, and was sustained on October 6. Its text declared submission to law and advised against contracting prohibited marriages. It did not expressly dissolve all existing plural families or remove section 132. [S01] [S02]

> “refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land.” [S01]

Woodruff denied the Utah Commission’s allegations of recent ceremonies and teaching, recounted an alleged 1889 Endowment House ceremony, pledged submission to federal law and stated his advice about future marriages. The text contains no general instruction dissolving existing families. [S01]

Cannon's September 23-24 diary documents Woodruff's initiative and editorial assistance from George Reynolds, Charles W. Penrose, and John R. Winder, with further changes suggested by Cannon. Woodruff's September 25 journal connected his action both to the Church's temporal survival and to prayer and inspiration. Editorial collaboration is documented. The claim that it proves an absence of inspiration is an interpretation the documents cannot establish. [S23] [S24]

Lorenzo Snow presented the October 6 resolution. It treated Woodruff as holder of sealing authority and asked the conference to accept the declaration as “authoritative and binding.” Emmeline B. Wells recorded both the public presentation and the attention it drew. [S01] [S76]

The change was real, even though implementation was inconsistent. A useful counterweight to claims that no one took it seriously appears in Emmeline B. Wells's April 28, 1892 diary: she recorded Joseph F. Smith explaining why the principle had been allowed to be abolished. Her report establishes what she understood him to say, not a verbatim transcript or a statistical census. [S62]

In the Church’s later account, some members separated while others maintained their families. Church leaders themselves disagreed over the statement’s scope. This helps explain why observers could sincerely report a policy change and still document exceptions. [S02] [S25] [S61]

Public assurances and family obligations

Woodruff testified on October 19, 1891 that a religious principle could remain believed while its practice ceased. He also represented the Manifesto's intended compliance as including unlawful cohabitation in existing relationships. The document therefore prevents an easy claim that continued conjugal life was always understood to be exempt from the public commitment. [S25]

The First Presidency and apostles' amnesty petition is dated December 19, 1891, although the consulted printing appeared in February 1892. It acknowledged earlier teaching about plural marriage and exaltation, described suspension of the commanding law, and promised obedience. Harrison's January 4, 1893 amnesty was conditional on prior abstention from unlawful cohabitation since November 1, 1890 and future compliance. A pardon was not authorization to continue the conduct. [S26] [S27]

In his October 13, 1890 diary, George Q. Cannon described speaking with prosecutor Charles S. Varian about visits, support, illness and the risk of prosecution. A father’s wish to visit a sick child made the uncertainty concrete. Woodruff’s 1891 testimony and his petition to the president illuminate what leaders publicly promised about cohabitation. [S61] [S25] [S26]

What Joseph F. Smith later testified

In 1904 Joseph F. Smith acknowledged continued relations with five wives. He put the number of children born to him since 1890 at eleven, later describing this as his recollection and expressing uncertainty about the dates of particular births. The 1906 committee majority report reproduced the initial figure. The full hearing preserves the qualification. The Senate allowed the monogamous Reed Smoot to retain his seat on February 20, 1907. [S73] [S30] [S72]

Smith's November 26, 1906 letter to his sister, Martha Ann Smith Harris, describes a $300 fine and costs associated with his latest baby. A certified judgment reproduced in the Congressional Record independently records his guilty plea and sentence for unlawful cohabitation. These sources establish ongoing family relations well after both declarations. They do not establish a new plural wedding in 1906. [S31] [S32]

The state judgment, a personal letter to a sister, and testimony under questioning each document continued family life. They answer a different question from the records of new ceremonies on the next pages. [S30] [S31] [S32] [S73]

New plural marriages after 1890

The Church's historical essay acknowledges new marriages in Mexico, Canada, and some United States locations after the Manifesto, including approval by individual First Presidency members for a period. It also says that no definitive record establishes the collective decision-making process. Avoid both blanket claims: that every marriage was unauthorized, or that every marriage represented a uniform official policy. [S02]

One example of individual approval is Joseph H. Dean. On the basis of Dean's diary, Quinn reports that George Q. Cannon approved his proposed plural marriage on December 3, 1897, culminating in a ceremony in Mexico in May 1898. Cannon's own entry confirms the December interview but says nothing about its subject. The authorization details are from Dean as quoted by Quinn, pp. 79-80, note 281. The letter text was copied later. The original Dean pages were not independently inspected. [S28] [S71]

President Lorenzo Snow's January 8, 1900 public statement denied that members or officers had authority to enter or perform plural marriages. The January 1901 Woodruff family case makes the difference between a president's published rule and actual compliance concrete. It does not by itself make Snow the authorizer of that particular union. [S69] [S29]

A particularly strong case is Apostle Abraham Owen Woodruff's marriage to Eliza Avery Clark in **January 1901**, while Helen May Winters was already his wife. The edited family correspondence documents the relationship. The editors prefer January 18, while another reconstruction proposed January 13. Family records also contain a different date. They state that no official Church document records the ceremony or officiator. The month and year are sufficient for the site's main argument. [S29]

A different kind of case is Matthias F. Cowley's marriage to Lenora Mary Taylor in Canada in **1905**. The Church's own biographical topic identifies the marriage and his resistance to the new prohibition. This is evidence of a violation after the Second Manifesto, not proof of general institutional permission after 1904. [S35]

An approval refused

Apostle Heber J. Grant later reported receiving ten applications for plural marriages in a single day during a 1900 visit to Mexico. He said he refused every one. This episode, as quoted in the Church’s historical essay, shows the danger of treating every request as an approval or assuming that apostles responded alike. [S02]

The geographic boundaries also mattered. The essay acknowledges ceremonies in Canada, Mexico and the United States. It leaves open whether ceremonies occurring inside the United States were specifically authorized to take place there. [S02] [S28]

What the spouses told the Senate

Charles E. Merrill and Chloe Hendricks

Charles E. Merrill said he entered a religious marriage with Annie V. Stoddard in 1888. His first wife died in 1889. He then entered a licensed marriage with Chloe Hendricks in 1891 while his relationship with Stoddard continued. His father, Apostle Marriner W. Merrill, officiated in 1891. Charles called Hendricks his legal wife and reported two households. He could not say his father knew of his continued cohabitation with Stoddard. The example shows how the civil and religious histories of one household can differ. [S73] [S30]

Clara Mabel Barber Kennedy and James Francis Johnson

Kennedy testified that Johnson already had a wife when he married her in Juárez, Mexico. She agreed when counsel first suggested 1896. On cross-examination, counsel used her age and birthday to calculate May 19, 1894. Her mother, Emma Mathews, corroborated the proposal and departure for Juárez but did not witness the ceremony. Kennedy could not identify the officiator from a photograph or say whether he knew Johnson already had a wife. The 1906 committee majority report gives about 1896 and identifies the officiator more confidently. The strongest supported conclusion is a new marriage in the mid-1890s. [S73] [S30]

Questioned about leaving the household, Kennedy described mistreatment, said she would have stayed had she been treated well, and still identified herself as a Mormon. Her account gives both her reason for leaving and the meaning she assigned to her faith. [S73]

Benjamin Cluff Jr. and Florence Reynolds

A BYU Studies investigation traces their relationship through a diary, family accounts and church records. Seymour B. Young described blessing Florence in connection with her husband. Historian Brian Q. Cannon favors an August 1900 wedding in Mexico, while identifying competing dates. A daughter’s recollection supplies the reported private approval from Joseph F. Smith. A blessing entry, a later family account and a recorded ceremony would carry different weight on who officiated. [S74]

The Second Manifesto and its enforcement

On April 6, 1904, Joseph F. Smith declared new plural marriages prohibited and made entering or performing them grounds for excommunication. The conference report prints the declaration on page 75 and its endorsement on page 76. Leaders framed the statement as reaffirmation. Historians also recognize the sharper disciplinary boundary it introduced. The printing's reference to September 26, 1890 should not replace the first Manifesto's actual September 24 date. [S33] [S34]

> “I hereby announce that all such marriages are prohibited” [S33]

John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley resigned from the Twelve in 1905, with vacancies addressed publicly in 1906. Resignation from an office must not be conflated with withdrawal of church membership. [S30] [S35]

October 3, 1910
Excommunication for performing plural marriages and entering a new one after April 1904 A concrete enforcement case. The published diary redacts the person's name. [S39]

March 28, 1911
John W. Taylor excommunicated Richards records the council decision and multiple reasons involving disobedience and plural marriages. [S36]

May 11, 1911
Cowley restricted from exercising priesthood functions This punishment was not excommunication. [S37]

March 30, 1914
John W. Woolley excommunicated The diary identifies performance of plural marriages as a reason. [S38]

1934 and 1935
Short Creek excommunications and a more distinct fundamentalist community A milestone in institutional separation, not the first existence of dissent or the disappearance of old families. [S52]

Resignation from the Twelve, restriction of priesthood functions, and excommunication were different actions. Actual council records allow the date and the penalty in each case to be stated precisely. [S35] [S36] [S37] [S38]

The 1886 manuscript and the claim of succession

The Church History Library's September 2025 announcement lists **John Taylor revelation, 1886 September 27**, collection **MS 34928**, among newly accessible material. A separately reproduced handwritten text discusses the enduring covenant, Abraham, and obedience. Its existence should not be dismissed merely because it is not in the canon. [S46] [S47]

The text does not name a five-man council or confer an independently continuing succession of authority. That is a separate historical claim. The absence of such language does not disprove every possible additional meeting, but the manuscript alone cannot prove that meeting. [S47]

Kraut reproduces a Woolley statement dated October 6, 1912 describing a visitation tradition and Taylor's refusal to surrender the principle. That text does not contain the later five-man commission account. The fuller September 22, 1929 narrative describes authority to perpetuate marriages and ordain successors. Its appended Daniel R. Bateman endorsement says he was not present for the setting apart of the five men. These differences matter when evaluating independent corroboration. [S43] [S50]

A scholarly dispute also cites an Andrew Kimball diary entry from January 25, 1897 reporting an earlier Woolley visitation story. The cited manuscript was not independently inspected here. Even if the transcription is accurate, it establishes an earlier story of visitation rather than every element of the later commission narrative. It would therefore be too strong to say that the entire tradition first appeared in 1929. [S51]

The June 17, 1933 First Presidency statement expressly denied that such a revelation existed. It also argued that even if given, it had not been adopted and did not bind church members. J. Reuben Clark's July 18 memorandum records acquisition of the original in July, after the public statement. This chronology establishes denial followed by documented possession. It does not, by itself, prove either deliberate earlier suppression or complete prior ignorance of every copy. [S48] [S49]

For Latter-day Saints who accept centralized sealing authority, the conference’s 1890 resolution identified Woodruff as the person authorized to act. For fundamentalists who accept Woolley’s account, Taylor had previously entrusted continuing authority to others. The documents let readers examine when each claim was recorded and by whom. Whether the authority came from God is a religious judgment. [S01] [S43] [S47] [S50]

Ogden Kraut’s sources, checked

Kraut collected difficult-to-find documents and argued for the continued religious obligation of plural marriage. His May 16, 1990 address to the B. H. Roberts Society states the argument most directly. His online catalog also includes reproductions of works by other people. The checks below identify the author of each passage. [S40] [S41] [S42] [S43] [S44] [S45] [S77]

1886 revelation date

Revelations 1880-1890, p. 30, prints September 26. The manuscript and official catalog identify September 27. [S42] [S46] [S47]

1933 statement signers

The Church and the Priesthood, p. 88, names Charles Nibley. The statement is signed by Grant, Ivins, and J. Reuben Clark. [S43] [S48]

Woodruff and Mountford

In the centennial speech Kraut suggests Woodruff took another wife seven years later. Quinn identifies Lydia von Finkelstein Mountford as a possibility and characterizes his evidence as circumstantial. [S41] [S28]

The Reorganized Church’s 1972 accommodation

The allowance concerned existing plural families among converts in India and prohibited additional wives. [S41] [S58]

Celestial Marriage

The web text is a compilation of Orson Pratt's The Seer material. [S45]

Marriage Covenant

Kraut calls himself the compiler. The chapter offering 27 rules for plural marriage credits Orson Pratt. Family rules express what an author thought people should do. Evidence about what couples actually did comes from records such as their letters and testimony. [S77] [S29] [S73]

Compromise and Concession argues that changes by institutional leaders did not displace priesthood law. Records independent of Kraut support his claim that marriages continued. The further conclusion about who retained authority depends on a theological and historical succession argument. [S44] [S47] [S50] [S73]

Women on belief, marriage and separation

Women's testimony is evidence in its own right. At the January 13, 1870 Great Indignation Meeting, women defended plural marriage, described religious commitment, and resisted federal intervention. Those public statements establish the speakers' expressed convictions, not the experience of every wife. [S18]

Emmeline B. Wells's May 17, 1875 diary records loneliness while she and her daughter were ill and her longing for her husband's sympathy. The emotional cost of an individual family arrangement can coexist with religious commitment. Neither advocacy nor suffering should be dismissed because it complicates a preferred narrative. [S19]

Fanny Stenhouse took a different public position. In her 1872 Exposé of Polygamy, she described the practice from inside a household that had lived it and wrote expressly to challenge it. Read the 1872 work separately from its expanded 1874 successor, Tell It All. Her opposition is no more a universal verdict than the Salt Lake speakers' defense. Both groups of women belong in the record. [S68]

The Woodruff correspondence brings the transition into the household: secrecy, attachment, and unequal practical burdens appear in letters involving Helen, Owen, and Avery. Such sources make wives participants in the history rather than anonymous entries in a count of marriages. [S29]

On October 6, 1890 Wells recorded the Manifesto being presented to the conference. She called the meeting an “exciting time on account of the Manifesto.” Her 1892 entry records Joseph F. Smith explaining why the principle had been allowed to be abolished. Together they show a participant tracking the change as it unfolded. [S76] [S62]

In the Nauvoo record, the Church identifies Helen Mar Kimball as fourteen at her sealing and acknowledges sealings to women already married to other men. The surviving evidence varies by relationship. A sealing record establishes the ordinance without settling each question about domestic or sexual life. [S08]

For the post-1890 period, Clara Kennedy’s sworn account adds a different perspective. She described her own marriage, her reasons for leaving, and the limits of her memory about the ceremony. Her testimony can be read alongside public advocacy and the private diaries above. [S73]

Today’s LDS policy on marriage and sealing

Today's LDS General Handbook, section 32.6.1.2, requires a membership council and withdrawal of membership when someone knowingly enters a plural marriage. The current rule is explicit. [S53]

Sealing policy is a separate issue. A widower may be sealed to another wife without cancellation of his earlier sealing. A living woman ordinarily requires cancellation before another sealing. Proxy policy permits deceased women, as well as men, to be sealed to multiple spouses to whom they were legally married, subject to the handbook's conditions. These rules should not be described as permission for concurrent living marriages. [S54]

The current Church topic says plural marriage is not required for exaltation, acknowledges that some nineteenth-century leaders taught the idea, and rejects it as established doctrine. It also says no one will be compelled to remain in an unwanted eternal marriage. Those are present institutional positions. They can be reported alongside the earlier printed teachings without pretending that the historical language never existed. [S55]

What the policy means for the historical question

The 1843 revelation remains in the current Doctrine and Covenants alongside the 1890 declaration. A member can consult the canonical texts, the living-marriage rules and the proxy-sealing rules in the same official collection. Each addresses a different question. A present-day sealing to a deceased spouse is a different event from an 1890s ceremony uniting two living people while a prior spouse was alive. [S03] [S01] [S54] [S29]

Nineteenth-century leaders sometimes linked plural marriage with the highest degree of exaltation. The Church’s current topic addresses that teaching directly. A historian can document both what a preacher taught in a dated sermon and how the Church states its position today. [S10] [S11] [S12] [S55]

Beyond the Salt Lake City church

Community of Christ

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), now Community of Christ, developed separately. Joseph Smith III became its president in 1860. The denomination upholds monogamy. In 1972, it accommodated existing plural families among converts in India, while prohibiting additional marriages and teaching monogamy to the children. Its scripture states the general principle. Its denominational history explains the application in India. [S56] [S57] [S58]

James Strang's church

James J. Strang's followers formed a separate Restoration community in the Midwest. The Beaver Island chronology places the introduction of plural marriage in 1849, and Strang himself took additional wives. The present Strangite church's FAQ says its members do not practice polygamy. It explains its position through civil law and the need for a prophet's authorization. [S82] [S59]

Short Creek and the fundamentalist split

Historian Ken Driggs traces the shift from a loose network of families to communities with competing leadership claims. Short Creek became a center in the 1930s. Some people followed a priesthood council, while others remained independent. A succession dispute involving Joseph Musser and Rulon Allred divided council followers. Arizona's 1953 raid separated children and mothers from their homes and brought national attention to Short Creek. [S52]

Apostolic United Brethren and FLDS

In a 2008 statement, the Apostolic United Brethren identified plural marriage as a tenet and distinguished their community from the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS). The FLDS-hosted Woolley account documents a particular tradition of authority. A statement from either group cannot establish the beliefs or behavior of every fundamentalist family. [S60] [S50] [S52]

In Brown v. Buhman (2016), a U.S. appellate court described an Apostolic United Brethren family with one civil marriage and three spiritual marriages during the period before the court. In Canada, a British Columbia judge recorded 2017 findings of guilt for practising polygamy against Winston Blackmore and James Oler, followed by entry of convictions in 2018. These dated records establish twenty-first-century practice outside the LDS institution. [S66] [S75] [S55]

How many marriages continued?

The exact number of new marriages remains unknown. The Church's 2025 topic page gives an estimate of about 200 plural marriages after the Manifesto and cites Kathryn M. Daynes and Thomas G. Alexander. The figure is an estimate for the transition under discussion. It cannot serve as a worldwide total for all independent movements after 1890. [S55] [S02] [S52]

A ledger with defined boundaries

A separate Church essay reports 315 marriages in a ledger of marriages and sealings performed outside temples between October 17, 1890 and September 8, 1903. Researchers identified 25 plural marriages and 290 monogamous marriages. Of the 25, 18 took place in Mexico, three in Arizona, two in Utah, one in Colorado, and one aboard a ship on the Pacific. The essay expressly describes the ledger as incomplete. The original ledger was not inspected for this dossier. [S02]

The 25 identified entries are evidence that new marriages occurred. The 7.9 percent figure applies only to this ledger. The estimate of about 200 draws on broader historical research. The two figures cannot be added or used to extrapolate an annual rate. [S02] [S55]

How many people lived in plural families?

Demographic comparisons need a date, place, and denominator. The proportion of adult men with multiple wives differs from the proportion of women in plural unions, the proportion of households, or the share of men, women, and children living in those households. A small percentage of men can account for a larger share of the population. For example, the Church's Utah essay estimates that 25 to 30 percent of the population lived in plural households in 1870. That includes children, and is not the percentage of married men who took another wife. [S64]

Applied to an individual family, reliable claims may be narrower still. Owen Woodruff's marital relationship is documented, while the exact day and officiator are uncertain. The proposed Wilford Woodruff-Mountford marriage is circumstantial. The existence of Taylor's 1886 handwritten text is documented, while the later succession account requires separate evidence. [S29] [S28] [S46] [S47] [S50]

Editorial handoff for DidPolygamyEndIn1890.com

Suggested homepage text

> No. In 1890 Wilford Woodruff advised Latter-day Saints to refrain from marriages forbidden by law, and the Church accepted his declaration. Some members still entered new plural marriages, and many earlier families continued living together. In 1904 Joseph F. Smith explicitly made entering or performing a new plural marriage grounds for excommunication. Independent Mormon fundamentalist communities later continued the practice outside the Church. [S01] [S02] [S29] [S33] [S38] [S52] [S66]

A website reader should be able to follow every claim

Use the chapter titles in the contents as navigation. Place a source link beside each factual assertion it supports. Show the creator, document date, repository or edition, page or entry date, and the verification note. The bracketed S-numbers in this PDF map to the source register and the embedded JSON. Keep these identifiers stable when reordering pages.

Label a quotation as a quotation only when its exact wording has been checked. Keep source wording, editorial paraphrase, and statements of belief distinct. When a source is an edited diary or a modern compilation, name both the original author and the immediate edition. Preserve any date range, qualification or conflict attached to a claim.

For the website's case pages, use the Woodruff family letters for a new marriage, Smith's letter and court judgment for continuing family life, and Richards's diary for actual discipline. For disputed authority, show the 1886 text, the 1912 and 1929 accounts, the 1933 denial and the later acquisition memorandum in date order. [S29] [S31] [S32] [S36] [S37] [S38] [S43] [S47] [S48] [S49] [S50]

For statistics, display a date range and denominator, and call an estimate an estimate. For modern rules, display the access date. Keep a correction log. One example worth preserving is the 1886 vacatur of the 1885 Cannon judgment and the later explanation in Nielsen. [S02] [S55] [S65] [S81]

The PDF contains an attached file named research-data.json with the chapter text, citation IDs, verification notes, and exact source URLs. Readers whose PDF software does not expose attachments can use the searchable pages directly.

Annotated source register

S01 to S06

S01 Wilford Woodruff, Official Declaration 1, 1890

Contemporary declaration in the current canon | Declaration and October 6 acceptance. Appended explanatory addresses

Woodruff commits to the law and counsels against contracting marriages it forbids. Snow's resolution calls it authoritative and binding and identifies its September 24 date.

Read the original declaration separately from later explanatory material.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/od/1?lang=eng

S02 The Manifesto and the End of Plural Marriage

Modern official historical synthesis | Post-Manifesto marriages, authorization, ledger, and enforcement

The essay confirms the dates October 17, 1890 to September 8, 1903 and 25 plural marriages in 315 ledger entries: Mexico 18, Arizona 3, Utah 2, Colorado 1, Pacific boat 1. It calls the ledger incomplete, describes individual approval for a time and records uncertainty about collective decisions.

Institutional acknowledgment. Not an original marriage register.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/the-manifesto-and-the-end-of-plural-marriage?lang=eng

S03 Doctrine and Covenants 132

Current canonical text of the 1843 revelation | Verses 7, 15-20, 29-39, 51-56, 61-65

The passage addresses Emma and combines first-wife consent with an exception concerning refusal to administer the law. It also discusses sealing authority and biblical plural wives.

Use S06 for manuscript provenance.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/132?lang=eng

S04 Book of Mormon, Jacob 2

Scriptural text | Verses 23-35, especially 27 and 30

Verses 27 and 30 juxtapose the one-wife instruction and possible divine command. Verses 31-35 center the suffering of women and children.

Distinguish the text from competing theological interpretations.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/2?lang=eng

S05 Statement on Marriage, circa August 1835

Joseph Smith Papers documentary edition | 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, section 101, pp. 251-252. Source introduction

The conference adopted the marriage statement on August 17 while Smith was absent. The editors distinguish contested authorship, later reports about Cowdery and inability to establish Smith's assent.

Authorship and Joseph Smith's approval are uncertain.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-3-statement-on-marriage-circa-august-1835/1

S06 Revelation, July 12, 1843

Joseph Smith Papers manuscript edition | Eight-page Kingsbury copy. Source note and historical introduction

The Kingsbury copy is the source of all extant versions. The edition gives September 14, 1852 for first publication and 1876 for addition to the Doctrine and Covenants.

Earliest surviving copy; Clayton's original is not extant.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-july-1843-dc-132/1

Annotated source register

S07 to S12

S07 Joseph Smith journal, July 12, 1843

Contemporary journal with editorial annotation | Manuscript p. [307]. Annotation citing Clayton's same-day journal

Smith's journal mentions receipt of a revelation. The editors quote William Clayton's entry from the same day on its substance, production and Emma's reaction.

The journal text and editorial annotation are distinct layers.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-2-10-march-1843-14-july-1843/315

S08 Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo

Modern official historical synthesis | Early chronology, ages, sealings, and evidentiary uncertainty

The essay calls the evidence for Fanny Alger fragmentary, drawing on accounts made decades later. It qualifies the evidence for particular marriages and discusses Helen Mar Kimball.

The essay differentiates evidence from inference about individual relationships.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/plural-marriage-in-kirtland-and-nauvoo?lang=eng

S09 Emma Smith and others, statement, October 1, 1842

Contemporary certificate in a documentary edition | Times and Seasons 3, no. 23, p. 940. Editorial introduction

The introduction identifies nineteen women and at least three with direct knowledge. The certificate disavows Bennett's system and affirms the published account of marriage.

The introduction identifies informed signers and explains Bennett context.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/church-historians-press/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society/part-1/1-6?lang=eng

S10 Orson Pratt, Celestial Marriage, August 29, 1852

Published sermon report | Journal of Discourses 1:53-66, especially 54; BYU edition

Pratt's August 29, 1852 published sermon calls the principle necessary for fullness of exaltation. The phrase is verifiable at lines 3938-3946 of the BYU edition.

Delivery date differs from volume publication date.

https://scriptures.byu.edu/jod/JoD01.pdf

S11 Brigham Young, Beneficial Effects of Polygamy, August 19, 1866

Published sermon transcription | Journal of Discourses 11:266-272, especially 269

Two published transcriptions agree on the statement about becoming gods and the qualification about faith. The BYU catalog identifies the printed page. Its original scan could not be visually verified.

The words are attributed to the published report.

https://jod.mrm.org/11/266/
https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Journal_of_Discourses/11/41

S12 Joseph F. Smith, Plural Marriage, July 7, 1878

Published sermon transcription | Journal of Discourses 20:24-31, especially 26 and 28-31

Page 26 makes obligation conditional upon command. Pages 28-31 distinguish degrees of reward and capacity to practice.

Includes both obligation and commandment qualifications.

https://jod.mrm.org/20/24/

Annotated source register

S13 to S18

S13 John Taylor, The Work of God, Bear Lake discourses

Published sermon report, 1883 volume | Journal of Discourses 24:227-235, especially 229-231

The heading describes discourses on Taylor's Bear Lake trip. The text associates plural with celestial marriage and applies strong obedience language to the audience, without furnishing a particular delivery day.

The printed heading does not specify an exact delivery day.

https://jod.mrm.org/24/227/

S14 Wilford Woodruff, The Holy Ghost and related subjects, December 12, 1869

Published sermon transcription | Journal of Discourses 13:156-169, especially 166

Woodruff's December 12, 1869 report situates the feather illustration within a claim that opposition extended to prophets, apostles, revelation and the wider faith.

The feather illustration concerns the breadth of opposition.

https://jod.mrm.org/13/156/

S15 Revelation to Wilford Woodruff, November 24, 1889

Document transcription in the Woodruff Papers | Religious Dreams and Visions 1880s, manuscript pp. 3-7

The transcription warns against denying divine law and against endangering the leaders by promises to enemies. Interpretations should acknowledge its original setting.

Corroborated by Cannon's contemporary diary, S16.

https://wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/documents/96a6715e-4774-4ac8-ac3e-51053a2dab59/transcript

S16 George Q. Cannon journal, November 1889

Contemporary diary in an official documentary edition | November 23-25, especially November 25 copied revelation

Cannon records Woodruff's revelation of the previous night in the context of legal pressure. Clean URL verified: https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-q-cannon/1880s/1889/11-1889?lang=eng

Provides the legal discussions surrounding Woodruff's text.

https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-q-cannon/1880s/1889/11-1889?lang=eng

S17 Journal of Discourses overview

Current institutional position on a historical collection | Overview paragraphs

The Church recognizes Brigham Young's support for publishing the sermons, shorthand transcription problems and the collection's limited authority for current doctrine.

Describes editorial limitations and historical institutional support.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/journal-of-discourses?lang=eng

S18 Great Indignation Meeting minutes, January 13, 1870

Contemporary public statements in a documentary edition | Deseret Evening News, January 14 and 15, 1870, p. [2] in each issue

Contemporary meeting reports preserve speakers' defenses of religious teaching and family choice. Speakers include Sarah M. Kimball and Bathsheba W. Smith.

Statements represent speakers, not a survey of all wives.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/church-historians-press/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society/part-3/3-13?lang=eng

Annotated source register

S19 to S24

S19 Emmeline B. Wells diary, May 17, 1875

Contemporary private diary | May 1875, entry for May 17

Wells describes her daughter's illness, her own poor health, feeling alone, and a longing for comfort from her husband. These are specific circumstances she narrates.

Loneliness during illness of Wells and her daughter. Preserve that immediate context.

https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/emmeline-b-wells/1870s/1875/1875-05?lang=eng

S20 Antipolygamy Legislation

Official historical synthesis | Laws of 1862, 1882, and 1887. Enforcement section

The historical synthesis identifies the Morrill, Edmunds, and Edmunds-Tucker acts and effects including unlawful-cohabitation penalties and loss of women's voting rights in Utah.

Use the actual decisions, S21 and S22, for precise judicial holdings.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/topics/anti-polygamy-legislation?lang=eng

S21 Reynolds v. United States, 98 U.S. 145, 1879

Supreme Court opinion | Discussion of religious duty as a defense to bigamy

Reynolds rejects religious belief as a defense to the territorial bigamy offense. A separate correction to the sentence in the case does not change that holding.

Historical holding, not a summary of all present religious-liberty law.

https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/98/145

S22 Late Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints v. United States, 136 U.S. 1, 1890

Supreme Court opinion | Corporate dissolution, property, and Edmunds-Tucker provisions

The opinion upholds the dissolution and property provisions at issue. A reader should distinguish the corporate property measures from a direct order closing temples.

Do not turn Woodruff's feared consequences into orders the Court expressly made.

https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/136/1

S23 George Q. Cannon journal, September 23-24, 1890

Contemporary diary | September 1890 entries and reproduced Manifesto draft

Cannon gives Woodruff's initiative and describes the roles of Reynolds, Penrose, Winder and Cannon in drafting for publication.

Documents initiative, editing, and stated inspiration.

https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-q-cannon/1890s/1890/09-1890?lang=eng

S24 Wilford Woodruff journal, September 25, 1890

Contemporary journal transcription | Journal 1886-1892, p. 328

Woodruff links his decision both to temporal survival and to prayer and feeling inspired. The transcribed entries reproduce inconsistent weekday headings, so the calendar date is the reliable locator.

Use the September 25 calendar date when citing this entry.

https://wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/documents/4f571201-03ea-4f03-b946-0a9f43185e3b/page/ea64cd01-57b5-4e19-b4d0-84b4e0e8ef41

Annotated source register

S25 to S29

S25 Wilford Woodruff court testimony, October 19, 1891

Contemporary legal testimony transcription | Utah Territory Supreme Court testimony, p. 1

The October 19 court transcript gives Woodruff's distinction between belief and practice and his statement that the Manifesto included unlawful cohabitation with previously married wives.

Distinguishes belief from practice and addresses existing cohabitation.

https://wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/documents/bf0a329d-0fd1-4644-b359-be93bc366cbe/page/25cc1c16-2cf8-4035-b445-145b3c2222e5

S26 First Presidency and apostles, amnesty petition, December 19, 1891

Contemporary published petition | Contributor printing, February 1892

The published petition acknowledges earlier teaching about the highest exaltation and says the commanding law was suspended. Harrison's proclamation independently identifies the December 19 petition date.

Petition date and publication date are different.

https://wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/documents/cdff4b77-d54c-4432-b8ed-83e3712e6f20/page/3999f266-043f-4b66-9726-8292ba4d35f8

S27 Benjamin Harrison, Proclamation 346, January 4, 1893

Presidential proclamation in a documentary repository | Eligibility and future-compliance conditions

Harrison's executive text conditions the pardon on abstaining from unlawful cohabitation since November 1, 1890, and fully obeying the laws in the future.

Conditional amnesty, not approval of continued unlawful cohabitation.

https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-346-granting-amnesty-and-pardon-for-the-offense-engaging-polygamous-or-plural

S28 D. Michael Quinn, LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904

Archival historical scholarship | Dialogue 18, no. 1 (Spring 1985), pp. 9-105. Mountford, pp. 63-65. Dean, pp. 79-80 and note 281.

The publisher's text calls the 1897 Mountford identification circumstantial. The account of the 1897 Dean-Cannon meeting and May 1898 ceremony cites Dean's diary. Note 281 dates the copied letter text to 1930. The underlying Dean pages were not inspected.

Consult the publisher’s searchable text or the paginated article.

https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V18N01_11.pdf
https://www.dialoguejournal.com/articles/lds-church-authority-and-new-plural-marriages-1890-1904/

S29 Lu Ann Faylor Snyder and Phillip A. Snyder, editors, Post-Manifesto Polygamy, 2009

Family correspondence with scholarly introduction | Utah State University Press. Pp. 18-19, 128, 170-171

The editors' account on printed p. 18 dates the Woodruff-Clark marriage to January 1901. Their note on p. 170 discusses dates. They identify no official church record of this ceremony or its officiator. The published family correspondence provides separate testimony to the relationship.

Separate contemporary letters from editorial reconstruction of the wedding.

https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/master/gdc/gdcebookspublic/20/20/71/55/14/2020715514/2020715514.pdf

Annotated source register

S30 to S34

S30 United States Senate Report 4253, June 11, 1906

Government report reproducing testimony | 59th Congress, first session. Printed pp. 11 and 14. Compare full testimony in S73.

Senate Report 4253, majority report p. 14, quotes Smith identifying five wives and eleven children born since 1890. It points to testimony vol. 1, pp. 129, 133, 148, 197, 382. Use the count as testimony at the time of questioning.

The committee majority selected testimony. Its summary of Kennedy is more definite about date and officiator than her full testimony.

https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/SERIALSET-04905_0g_00-412-4253-0000/pdf/SERIALSET-04905_0g_00-412-4253-0000.pdf
https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/SERIALSET-04905_0g_00-412-4253-0000/

S31 Joseph F. Smith to Martha Ann Smith Harris, November 26, 1906

Contemporary letterpress copy in a modern edition | My Dear Sister, Letters chapter, p. 426, notes 127-130

The November 26, 1906 letter to Martha Ann records the separate fine and costs in Smith's own words. The edition identifies its source as the letterpress copy. The judgment in S32 independently confirms the $300 fine.

Sent original not extant. Publisher dates the book 2018. Generated chapter citation says 2019.

https://rsc.byu.edu/my-dear-sister/letters-4

S32 State of Utah v. Joseph F. Smith, judgment reproduced in Congress

Certified court record in the Congressional Record | February 20, 1907, p. 3426. Judgment dated November 1906

The Congressional Record's certified Utah judgment, printed p. 3426, gives the guilty plea and $300 fine. The printed weekday and calendar date conflict. The adjacent senator's rhetoric is separate from the judgment.

Cite the underlying judgment separately from the senator’s editorial comments.

https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1907-pt4-v41/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1907-pt4-v41-6-1.pdf
https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1907-pt4-v41/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1907-pt4-v41-6.pdf

S33 Joseph F. Smith, Second Manifesto, April 6, 1904

Contemporary official conference statement | Conference Report, April 1904, printed p. 75

Conference Report, April 1904, printed p. 75, prohibits entering or solemnizing new plural marriages and makes participants liable to excommunication. The same printing gives September 26 for the first Manifesto, against its dated text.

The printing gives an inaccurate September 26 date for the first Manifesto.

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:LDS_Conference_Report_(1904_April;_74th_Annual).pdf/77

S34 Resolution endorsing the Second Manifesto, April 1904

Contemporary conference proceedings | Conference Report, printed p. 76

The following printed conference page, p. 76, records the resolution and its unanimous adoption. It gives the public endorsement of Smith's enforcement declaration.

Records adoption and support for enforcement by church courts.

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:LDS_Conference_Report_(1904_April;_74th_Annual).pdf/78

Annotated source register

S35 to S40

S35 Matthias F. Cowley, Church History Topics, 2022

Modern official biography | 1905 marriage, resignation, and 1911 priesthood restriction

The institutional biography specifically names Lenora Mary Taylor and places the marriage in Canada in 1905. It reports the subsequent request for resignation from the Twelve. Its wedding account is historical synthesis.

The marriage account cites Jorgenson and Hardy's 1980 historical study. Original marriage record not inspected.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/topics/matthias-f-cowley?lang=eng

S36 George F. Richards journal, March 28, 1911

Contemporary participant diary | March 1911 entry recording Taylor's excommunication

The March 28, 1911 entry records a unanimous decision to excommunicate John W. Taylor for insubordination, after an investigation that included plural marriages.

Preferred to a later biography with a one-day date discrepancy.

https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-f-richards/1910s/1911/1911-03

S37 George F. Richards journal, May 11, 1911

Contemporary participant diary | May 1911 entry on Cowley's discipline

The May 11, 1911 entry states that Cowley was deprived of exercising priesthood rights. Richards records a different sanction from the one imposed on John W. Taylor.

Restriction of priesthood functions, not excommunication.

https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-f-richards/1910s/1911/1911-05

S38 George F. Richards journal, March 30, 1914

Contemporary participant diary | March 1914 entry on John W. Woolley

Under March 30, 1914, Richards records John Woolley's excommunication and specifically identifies weddings he performed for already-married men.

Records discipline for performing plural marriages.

https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-f-richards/1910s/1914/1914-03?lang=eng

S39 George F. Richards journal, October 1910

Contemporary participant diary | October 3 and 8 entries

Richards's October 3, 1910 entry reports a redacted individual's excommunication for both performing marriages and taking a wife after 1904. The October 8 entry records instructions to local leaders.

The October 3 offender's name is redacted in the edition.

https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-f-richards/1910s/1910/1910-10

S40 Ogden Kraut online book catalog

Author website catalog | Books page

The catalog links the online books and pamphlet compilations and explains that bracketed numbers represent original page numbers. It establishes the site collection's contents.

Gateway to selected relevant works, not independent corroboration of their claims.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=30

Annotated source register

S41 to S45

S41 Ogden Kraut, The 1890 Manifesto 100th Anniversary

Fundamentalist historical and theological address | B. H. Roberts Society, University of Utah, May 16, 1990; 18 pages in Pamphlets set 2

The adapted pamphlet gives the society, University of Utah venue, and May 16, 1990 date. Printed p. 11 suggests Woodruff took another wife seven years after 1890. Kraut does not name her in that sentence. Quinn identifies Mountford as a circumstantial inference.

Online text says adapted for printing. Separate printing date not verified.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=611

S42 Ogden Kraut, compiler, Revelations 1880-1890

Compilation of attributed revelations and editorial notes | 1970 compilation. Reprints June 1979 and November 1986. Pp. 30-31 and 38-42

The compilation lists its publication and reprint history. Printed p. 30 dates Taylor's revelation to September 26, in conflict with the date on the document and in the official catalog.

Combined web edition also includes a separately dated 1973 part.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=189

S43 Ogden Kraut, The Church and the Priesthood

Fundamentalist theological argument and documentary compilation | Pioneer Publishing, April 2002. Pp. 51-55 and 88

The book is dated April 2002. It reproduces Woolley traditions and identifies Charles Nibley as a signer in the 1933 statement discussion. The actual statement gives J. Reuben Clark Jr.

Distinguish reproduced Woolley texts from Kraut's interpretation.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=101

S44 Ogden Kraut, Compromise and Concession

Fundamentalist interpretation of institutional change | Pioneer Publishing, first printing 1977; Manifesto discussion, pp. 150-159

The web edition identifies Pioneer Publishing and the first printing in 1977. The Manifesto discussion presents Kraut's theological interpretation and quotes a substantially later Woolley account.

Theological conclusions require premises beyond documentary chronology.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=231

S45 Celestial Marriage, extracts from Orson Pratt's The Seer

Historical text reproduced in a later web compilation | Kraut website. Extracts identified as 1853 Seer material

The web compilation identifies Orson Pratt and his periodical The Seer, including January 1853 on the opening page. Cite Pratt for passages reproduced here.

Attribute Pratt's historical words to Pratt, not to Kraut.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=341

Annotated source register

S46 to S50

S46 Church History Library, Newly Accessible Collections, September 2025

Official archival announcement | September 22, 2025; John Taylor revelation, September 27, 1886, MS 34928

The official archive's September 2025 announcement names John Taylor's September 27, 1886 revelation and gives collection identifier MS 34928.

The alternate URL is the archival catalog entry. The text of the revelation was examined in S47.

https://churchhistorylibrary.churchofjesuschrist.org/blog/newly-accessible-collections-september-2025?lang=eng
https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/record/3aec2ea6-fdeb-4866-9529-47e27f9cd3b9/0?lang=eng&view=browse

S47 John Taylor revelation, September 27, 1886

Holograph reproduced and transcribed by the B. H. Roberts Foundation | Full short text

The transcription and reproduced original address the covenant and the works of Abraham. The complete short text contains no list of five men, independent council, or succession procedure.

The repository is not the Church History Library. No commission of five men appears in this text.

https://bhroberts.org/records/fbkJxk-j6rrBf/original_handwritten_copy_of_john_taylors_1886_revelation

S48 First Presidency official statement, June 17, 1933

Contemporary institutional statement reproduced by the B. H. Roberts Foundation | Deseret News, Church Section, pp. 2-4

The 1933 text denies the revelation's existence, addresses its standing if it had existed, and is signed by Grant, Ivins, and J. Reuben Clark Jr. This verification uses the reproduction and transcription, without independent examination of the newspaper's original pages.

Signed by Heber J. Grant, Anthony W. Ivins, and J. Reuben Clark. Newspaper facsimile not independently inspected.

https://bhroberts.org/records/fbkJxk-WrhUBb/first_presidency_heber_j_grant_anthony_w_ivins_j_reuben_clark_publish_official_statement_denouncing_the_practice_of_plural_marriage_in_the_church

S49 J. Reuben Clark memorandum, July 18, 1933

Contemporary memorandum reproduced by the B. H. Roberts Foundation | Account of acquisition of Taylor's original revelation in July 1933

July 18, 1933 memorandum reports that Frank Y. Taylor brought the paper to President Grant about July 15. It documents possession and timing, not earlier knowledge or deliberate concealment.

Acquisition chronology does not alone establish everyone's earlier knowledge.

https://bhroberts.org/records/fbkJxk-rD6Snk/memorandum_from_j_reuben_clark_explaining_how_the_first_presidency_acquired_the_1886_revelation

S50 Lorin C. Woolley account, September 22, 1929, and Bateman endorsement

Retrospective testimony on a fundamentalist website | 1886 Revelation page. Five-man commission and appended endorsement

The 1929 account names five men authorized to solemnize marriages and to appoint others. Daniel R. Bateman endorsed the account while expressly denying witnessing their setting apart.

Recorded 43 years after the claimed events. Distinct from the 1886 manuscript.

https://www.fundamentalchurchofjesuschrist.com/rev.html

Annotated source register

S51 to S55

S51 Fred C. Collier, New Light on the Lorin Woolley Story and Early Fundamentalist Beginnings

Historical argument citing an earlier diary | Discussion of Andrew Kimball's January 25, 1897 entry

Collier quotes the January 25, 1897 Kimball diary for an earlier account of visitation. That quotation does not describe an ordination or five-man council. Original diary was not separately inspected.

Underlying Kimball manuscript not independently inspected. Use as a qualified source lead.

https://josephsmithspolygamy.org/new-light-on-the-lorin-woolley-story-and-early-fundamentalist-beginnings/

S52 Ken Driggs, Twentieth Century Polygamy and Fundamentalist Mormons in Southern Utah

Historical scholarship | Juanita Brooks Lecture, January 3, 1990. Early movement and Short Creek sections

Driggs describes loosely affiliated fundamentalists, the 1934-35 Short Creek excommunications, and origins of separate movements. A lecture about historical development, not a current census.

Use for historical development, not present leadership or population counts.

https://library.utahtech.edu/special_collections/Juanita_Brooks_lectures/1990-twentieth.html

S53 General Handbook, chapter 32

Current official membership policy | Sections 32.6.1.2 and 32.11.4. Accessed November 18, 2026

The current handbook requires a membership council and withdrawal of membership for knowingly entering a plural marriage.

Requires withdrawal for knowingly entering plural marriage.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/32-repentance-and-membership-councils?lang=eng

S54 General Handbook, chapter 38

Current official sealing policy | Sections 38.4.1.2, 38.4.1.3, and 38.4.1.8. Accessed November 18, 2026

The handbook specifies separate rules for women and men, spouses who die, and sealings by proxy. Conditions such as written consent and the status of other spouses matter.

Living and deceased spouse rules differ.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/38-church-policies-and-guidelines?lang=eng

S55 Plural Marriage, current Topics and Questions page

Current official doctrinal explanation | Questions on the end of plural marriage, exaltation, and unwanted eternal arrangements. See note 24 for the estimate. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Verifies the present church positions on exaltation, agency and independent groups. Also expressly estimates about 200 post-Manifesto plural marriages. This is an estimate cited to Daynes and Alexander, not a census.

The quoted estimate concerns the historical transition discussed by the Church.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/plural-marriage?lang=eng

Annotated source register

S56 to S60

S56 Community of Christ history

Denominational historical account | 1850s reorganization and Joseph Smith III's 1860 leadership

The movement took shape apart from the Utah church, including opposition to plural marriage. Joseph Smith III was ordained president at Amboy, Illinois, on April 6, 1860.

A distinct institutional tradition, not a result of the 1890 Manifesto.

https://cofchrist.org/history/

S57 Community of Christ First Presidency policy on nonmonogamy and priesthood

Denominational policy document | One-page PDF. Monogamy and ministerial conduct

The First Presidency policy affirms monogamy and addresses nonmonogamous relationships involving priesthood ministers. It cites D&C 150:10 and World Conference Resolution 1182.

Direct evidence of the denomination's stated policy.

https://www.communityofchrist.ca/uploads/1/2/3/5/123523644/nonmonogamy_and_ph-english__1_.pdf

S58 Community of Christ Latter-day Seekers, Culture

Denominational explanation | 1972 provision for converts in India

The mission's explanatory page specifies India, preexisting plural families, no additional wives and teaching children monogamy. D&C 150:10 states monogamy and adaptation generally. Attribute the India conditions to this explanation.

Compare the denominational explanation of India with section 150:10-11. The scripture gives the general principle. The history explains the local application.

https://www.latter-dayseekers.org/culture.html
https://doctrineandcovenants.com/sections/cofchrist/section-150/

S59 Strangite church official FAQ

Current denominational self-description | Question 6, polygamy. Accessed November 18, 2026

This particular church says it does not now practice polygamy and connects it with legal and prophetic authorization. Statements on the site describe that church, not all Strangite groups or a legal survey.

States that the church does not practice polygamy today.

https://www.ldsstrangite.com/faq.html

S60 Apostolic United Brethren statement reported in Deseret News, May 27, 2008

Contemporary report of a group statement | Bluffdale polygamous sect distances itself from FLDS

The 2008 AUB leadership statement described plural marriage as a basic tenet and distinguished its beliefs from FLDS beliefs. The source is journalism reporting the group's own statement.

A dated statement of beliefs. Not an independent audit of conduct.

https://www.deseret.com/2008/5/27/20254790/bluffdale-polygamous-sect-distances-itself-from-flds/

Annotated source register

S61 to S65

S61 George Q. Cannon journal, October 1890

Contemporary diary | October 13, 1890, conversation with prosecutor Charles S. Varian.

Cannon's account dates the Varian interview October 13, 1890. He described a dangerously ill son, a visit despite perceived danger, support, and uncertainty over the reach of prosecutions.

Documents uncertainty. Support and sexual relations remain distinct.

https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-q-cannon/1890s/1890/10-1890?lang=eng

S62 Emmeline B. Wells diary, April 28, 1892

Contemporary listener's account | April 1892 entry reporting Joseph F. Smith's remarks

Wells recorded on April 28, 1892 that Joseph F. Smith explained why plural marriage had been allowed to be abolished. The account reports remarks, not a verbatim sermon or reliable count of adherents.

Not a verbatim sermon transcript or population estimate.

https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/emmeline-b-wells/1890s/1892/1892-04?lang=eng

S63 Joseph Smith letter to the Whitney family, August 18, 1842

Contemporary original letter in a documentary edition | Joseph Smith Papers, two pages. Source note and introduction

The surviving letter is addressed to Sarah Ann Whitney and both her parents, August 18, 1842. The documentary editors identify Sarah's sealing and give the possible dual explanation of secrecy: arrest risk and marital privacy.

Addressed to parents and daughter. Preserve the full recipient context.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-newel-k-elizabeth-ann-smith-and-sarah-ann-whitney-18-august-1842/1

S64 Plural Marriage and Families in Early Utah

Official historical synthesis with demographic references | Participation, household experience, and sources for variation

The essay estimates 25-30 percent of the 1870 population lived in polygamous households. Denominator is people, not married men, weddings or individual households.

The essay cites Lowell C. Bennion in note 22.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/plural-marriage-and-families-in-early-utah?lang=eng

S65 Cannon v. United States, 116 U.S. 55 (1885), vacated, 118 U.S. 355 (1886)

Supreme Court opinion in United States Reports | 1885 opinion, pp. 55-56. Vacatur, May 10, 1886, p. 355.

The 1885 court accepted the trial instruction on proof of cohabitation. Its 1886 order recalled the mandate, vacated the judgment and dismissed the writ for lack of jurisdiction.

The Supreme Court vacated its own 1885 judgment for lack of jurisdiction. Use In re Nielsen for the later statement of the evidentiary rule. **[S81]**

https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USREPORTS-116/pdf/USREPORTS-116-55.pdf
https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/usrep/usrep118/usrep118355/usrep118355.pdf

Annotated source register

S66 to S70

S66 Brown v. Buhman, Tenth Circuit, April 11, 2016

Federal appellate opinion | No. 14-4117, p. 4, factual background

The 2016 Tenth Circuit opinion identifies the family as AUB members, and for the period under review, one civil and three spiritual marriages. It cannot establish the family's marital status today.

Used only for the family and religious affiliation described in the record, not present legal advice or current family status.

https://attorneygeneral.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Opinion-in-Brown-v.-Buhman-14-4117.pdf

S67 Last Testimony of Sister Emma, published October 1, 1879

Retrospective interview, reproduced by the B. H. Roberts Foundation | The Saints' Herald 26, no. 19, pp. 289-290

The October 1, 1879 printed interview records Emma's denial of a revelation and of knowledge of other wives. It is retrospective testimony to compare with contemporary documents.

Interview with Joseph Smith III. Compare the earlier Clayton entry in S07.

https://bhroberts.org/records/S5HjRj-QoM4xb/emma_hale_smith_denies_that_joseph_practiced_polygamy

S68 Fanny Stenhouse, Exposé of Polygamy, first published 1872

Participant memoir in a scholarly edition | Linda Wilcox DeSimone, ed., Utah State University Press, 2008. Introduction to the reader, pp. 27-28

The 2008 edition identifies the 1872 original and the distinct expanded 1874 Tell It All. Stenhouse speaks of her experience, faith and criticisms in her introduction to readers and subsequent text.

Separate the original work from the later expanded Tell It All.

https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/master/gdc/gdcebookspublic/20/20/71/59/52/2020715952/2020715952.pdf

S69 Official Declaration 1, Manifesto, Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual

Institutional manual quoting a historical presidential statement | Lorenzo Snow, Deseret Evening News, January 8, 1900, p. 4; Endowment House chronology

The manual accurately quotes Snow's public January 8, 1900 prohibition. A separate available reproduction of the whole newspaper statement also addresses unlawful cohabitation and individual responsibility.

The alternative link reproduces the signed statement, “Polygamy and Unlawful Cohabitation,” Deseret Evening News, January 8, 1900, p. 4.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-student-manual/official-declaration-1-manifesto?lang=eng
https://bhroberts.org/records/7Xrrkc-gtCnKb/lorenzo_snow_reaffirms_the_churchs_prohibition_on_polygamy

S70 Utah Constitution, article III, and Utah State Archives constitutional inventory

Legal text and official archival description | Article III, first clause; 1894 enabling legislation, 1895 constitution, 1896 admission

The Utah legislature's Article III text prohibits plural marriages. The state archives inventory confirms enabling legislation, constitution adopted 1895 and formal admission January 4, 1896.

State constitutional prohibition is separate from ecclesiastical policy.

https://le.utah.gov/xcode/ArticleIII/UC_AIII_1800010118000101.pdf
https://archives.utah.gov/research/inventories/series/3214/

Annotated source register

S71 to S76

S71 George Q. Cannon journal, December 3, 1897

Contemporary participant diary | December 1897 entry. Compare Quinn, pp. 79-80, note 281

Cannon's December 3 entry lists J. H. Dean as one of the people with whom he had an interview. No topic, authorization or marriage appears in that sentence.

Confirms the interview with Dean, not the subject of their conversation.

https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-q-cannon/1890s/1897/12-1897?lang=eng

S72 United States Senate, Expulsion Case of Reed Smoot of Utah

Official Senate historical account | Outcome of February 20, 1907

Official Senate history confirms Smoot was a monogamist and retained his seat on February 20, 1907, despite the committee judgment. No extrapolation to the disposition of other investigations.

Distinguish the committee report from the Senate's final disposition.

https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures/expulsion/091ReedSmoot_expulsion.htm

S73 U.S. Senate, Proceedings before the Committee on Privileges and Elections in the Reed Smoot case, volume I

Sworn testimony printed by the Government Printing Office, 1904 | Smith, pp. 129, 133, 197 and 377-382. Kennedy, pp. 388-408. Charles E. Merrill, pp. 408-418. Emma Mathews, pp. 420-424.

Smith qualified his count of children. Kennedy’s suggested wedding year changed under questioning. Her mother corroborated the proposal and trip. Merrill explained the difference between his 1888 religious and 1891 civil marriages.

https://archive.org/stream/proceedingsbefor01unitrich/proceedingsbefor01unitrich_djvu.txt
https://archive.org/details/proceedingsbefor01unitrich

S74 Brian Q. Cannon, “Shaping BYU: The Presidential Administration and Legacy of Benjamin Cluff Jr.”

Historical study using diaries, letters and interviews | BYU Studies 48, no. 2. See “Post-Manifesto Marriage and Resignation from BYU,” especially notes 106-108.

The study documents the Cluff-Reynolds relationship, discusses conflicting wedding dates, quotes Seymour B. Young’s account of a blessing, and identifies the daughter’s later recollection as the source for reported approval.

https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/shaping-byu-the-presidential-administration-and-legacy-of-benjamin-cluff-jr

S75 R. v. Blackmore, 2018 BCSC 1225

Supreme Court of British Columbia, reasons on access to sentencing exhibits | Justice Donegan, July 23, 2018, paras. 1-3.

The court records guilty findings on July 24, 2017, formal convictions on March 9, 2018, and sentencing on June 26, 2018. These dates concern two named defendants.

https://canadianmedialawyers.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/R_v_Blackmore_2018_BCSC_1225.pdf

S76 Emmeline B. Wells, diary, October 6, 1890

Contemporary diary in the Church Historian’s Press edition | October 6, manuscript pp. 302-303.

The entry describes the public presentation of the declaration and the attention it drew from those present.

https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/emmeline-b-wells/1890s/1890/1890-10?lang=eng

Annotated source register

S77 to S82

S77 Ogden Kraut, compiler, Marriage Covenant

Fundamentalist compilation of earlier authors | Preface and “Twenty-Seven Guiding Steps for Plural Marriage,” around the printed p. 180 marker.

Kraut identifies himself as compiler. The chapter credits Orson Pratt and gives rules for family life. These passages convey religious ideals. They supply no count of weddings after the Manifesto.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=147

S78 U.S. Congress, Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act, July 1, 1862

Statutes at Large, original printed statute | Ch. 126, 12 Stat. 501-502. See sections 1-3.

Section 1 defines the bigamy offense in federal territories and other areas under exclusive United States jurisdiction. Section 3 limits real estate holdings of religious or charitable organizations in the territories, subject to vested rights.

https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-12/pdf/STATUTE-12-Pg501.pdf

S79 U.S. Congress, Edmunds Act, March 22, 1882

Statutes at Large, original printed statute | Ch. 47, 22 Stat. 30-32. Section 3 at p. 31. Sections 8-9 at pp. 31-32.

Section 3 defines unlawful cohabitation as a misdemeanor. Section 8 restricts voting and officeholding for specified people. Section 9 distinguishes opinion alone from the statutory disqualifications.

https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-22/pdf/STATUTE-22-Pg30-3.pdf

S80 U.S. Congress, Edmunds-Tucker Act, 1887

Statutes at Large, original printed statute | Ch. 397, 24 Stat. 635-641. Section 13 at p. 637, section 17 at p. 638, section 20 at p. 639.

The act provides for forfeiture proceedings with religious-use exemptions, dissolves the Church corporation, and removes voting rights from women in Utah Territory.

https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-24/pdf/STATUTE-24-Pg635.pdf

S81 In re Nielsen, 131 U.S. 176 (1889)

United States Supreme Court opinion in U.S. Reports | Page 187, in the Court’s double-jeopardy analysis.

The Court explicitly states that proof of sexual intercourse was unnecessary to establish unlawful cohabitation and describes living together as husband and wife as sufficient.

https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/usrep/usrep131/usrep131176/usrep131176.pdf

S82 Helen Collar Papers, subject cards on Mormon history at Beaver Island

Historical research notes, Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University | “Chronology,” entries for 1849, 1850 and later marriages.

The chronology records Strang’s introduction of plural marriage and subsequent marriages on a separate institutional timeline. BYU’s biographical authority record also identifies the year 1849.

https://www.cmich.edu/research/clarke-historical-library/explore-collection/explore-online/michigan-material/beaver-island-history-helen-collar-papers/beaver-island-history/subject-cards---mormons

https://archives.lib.byu.edu/agents/people/2390