

THE THIRTEEN WIVES OF AMASA MASON LYMAN

It will be difficult to discuss in any details the lives of the thirteen women who married Amasa Mason Lyman in the limited time we have here today. Even an analysis of the nine wives that remained married to Amasa would give us little time to do justice to their lives. It is my purpose here to just reference some of the highlights of their marriages and associations as a group of women and how they saw and handled the various complications of living in plural relationships. It is impossible to identify any details of their plural courtships, so no speculations will be proffered here about them. None of Amasa's diaries ever disclosed his intentions to take plural wives either, nor did he discuss the failed marriages if they can be called that. In the sense that we look at marriages today, those of the two Gray sisters do not meet that criteria; nor does that of Laura Lucinda Reed. I will not go into the details of those marriages except to say that you can read about them in the book that I am providing free of charge, which you can obtain on the table in the back of the room.

Amasa Mason Lyman's and **Louisa Maria Tanner's** earlier relationship and marriage are well documented; the details of their time together is clearly shown in the book just mentioned, in Uncle Albert's book and in Leo Lyman's well documented treatise. I only want to show how they interrelated with the rest of the wives.

Shortly before the Prophet Joseph's death on June 27, 1844, he taught Amasa about the law of plural marriage. After the death of the Prophet, to whom two of Amasa's wives had been married, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball called the brethren together and explained the Leverite marriage system, wherein the brother of a deceased husband took the wife or wives of his deceased brother to raise posterity to him. The wives of Joseph Smith were asked to choose among the brethren whom they wished to be married to and Eliza Maria Partridge Smith and Dionitia Walker Whitney Smith chose Amasa.

With Louisa's approval, on September 6 and September 8, 1844, Amasa married two Partridge sisters: first he married seventeen-year-old Caroline Ely Partridge, and next twenty-four-year-old Eliza Maria Partridge Smith. Then on November 14, 1844 he married Cornelia Eliza Leavitt. Dionitia Walker Whitney Smith married him in July of 1845; Paulina Eliza Phelps, Priscilla Rebecca Turley, Abigail Grey and Eliza Grey were married to him on January 16, 1846 in the Nauvoo Temple. On January 28, 1846, Laura Lucinda Reed became his wife, also in the temple. Harriet Pamela Partridge and Esther Gleason, both deceased, became his wives also on the 28th of January in the temple. Lydia Partridge became his thirteenth wife on February 7, 1853 in Salt Lake City. (5 minutes).

Esther Gleason had lived in the home of Bishop George Miller in Nauvoo for several years. This home was next door to the Lyman home in the 1842 census of the city. Esther died there on November 17, 1845. In the book with the heading Proxey Sealings, housed at the Historian's Library, it shows that Louisa Maria Lyman acted as proxy for Esther Gleason when she was sealed to Amasa Lyman. Heber C. Kimball performed the sealing

which was witnessed by Brigham Young and Parley P. Pratt, with Franklin D. Richards serving as the clerk. The fact that Louisa Maria stood as proxy for this sealing shows her full support, and intimate acquaintance with Esther, having been next door neighbors for a few years in the early 1840's.

Laura Lucinda Reed's marriage to Amasa Lyman was performed in the Nauvoo Temple on January 28, 1846.¹ There is no indication that this marriage was ever consummated, and there is no explanation as to why it even took place; nor why it did not endure. When and under what circumstances she became the associate of Thomas Steed is not given. She lived with Thomas for three years in Iowa at the same time that she was sealed to Amasa. Laura and Thomas were sealed in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City on March 24, 1853. Her sealing to Amasa was cancelled on that same day. She was the mother of fifteen children. Thomas Steed was a patriarch for many years indicating their faithfulness in the Church. (8 minutes)

Eliza Gray On January 16, 1846 Eliza, was sealed to Amasa in the Nauvoo Temple; eleven days later, on January 27, 1846 she was sealed to John Henry Rumel. Her sealing to Amasa was cancelled on February 7, 1851, in the Endowment House; and she was again sealed to John Henry Rumel on June 28, 1851 in the Endowment House.

Abigail Gray, On January 16, 1846, the same day as her sister Eliza, Abigail was sealed to Amasa; this sealing was cancelled on February 7, 1851, the same day as her sister's cancellation. She is given there as Abba Grey. She is sealed to John Henry Rumel on June 28, 1851, in the Endowment House, on the same day as her sister was.

The source for this information on both sisters is an old temple records index bureau card of Amasa Mason Lyman, which lists his wives on the back along with some of their sealing and cancellations dates. (11 minutes)

These four women: Esther Gleason, Laura Lucinda Reed, Eliza Gray and Abigail Gray, are not often counted as wives of Amasa Mason Lyman, but I have shown here, through some documentation, that they were in fact his wives in one sense of the word. Esther Gleason, particularly, remained sealed to him as she was deceased at the time of her sealing. The other nine women: Louisa Maria Tanner, Caroline Ely Partridge, Eliza Maria Partridge Smith, Cornelia Eliza Leavitt, Dionitia Walker Whitney Smith, Paulina Eliza Phelps, Priscilla Turley, Harriet Pamela Partridge and Lydia Partridge, have been considered his only wives in most studies done on the family. (13 minutes)

Dionitia Walker Whitney Smith Lyman was married in July of 1845 to Amasa Lyman. She was twenty-seven at the time. The reason is the same for this marriage as it was for Eliza Maria Partridge. She was one of those women, who, during the Nauvoo period, were married to Joseph Smith as a plural wife. The date is not known; and she is not on any list that has ever been published by the Church, or studied by historians, not even

¹Devery S. Anderson and Gray James Bergara, *The Nauvoo Endowment Companies, 1845-1856: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books), page 7 (pages 514-515 in the original).

included in the exhaustive study by George D. Smith called *Nauvoo Polygamy*² but the record is clearly there as follows. On December 30, 1845, her mother Nancy Walker was sealed to Brigham Young. Then two weeks later, on January 15, 1846, Dionitia Walker was sealed to Joseph Smith at half past twelve noon, Brigham Young acting as proxy, Heber C. Kimball performing the ceremony, with John D. Lee and Franklin D. Richards as witnesses. Amasa was working in the temple the day before and the day after, but is not mentioned on the 15th, although he was probably there. The polygamous wives of Joseph Smith were being sealed to the brethren during that time, as were those of the other brethren, there being no endowment sessions from the 13th to the 16th, so that this special work could be finished before leaving for the west. There is no mention in this record of her marriage to Amasa in July of 1845, but it is well documented and is proved by their relationship thereafter. However, as with Eliza Maria Partridge, the sealing to the Prophet Joseph was the primary sealing. (17 minutes)

In Eliza's record she says that Amasa started west with Dionitia, Caroline and herself, showing the relationship between them. Many of the Walker family also came to Utah in the Amasa Lyman Company. It arrived in Salt Lake City on October 17, 1848. Dionitia, together with the other six living wives, first made their home in Salt Lake City. They all lived there until 1851 when Amasa was called with Charles C. Rich to settle San Bernardino, California. She and most of the Lyman family made the long journey and spent the next six years in the colony.

Among the larger buildings of the settlement owned by individuals was the hotel built for Bishop William Crosby, and the two-story adobe home erected by Amasa for his families, which included for most of that time there the four wives, Louisa Maria, Priscilla, Dionitia, and Cornelia. Caroline left after several years and returned to Salt Lake.

Each of the wives with her children had separate apartments. There were a common kitchen and dining room in the home, but it is said that they seldom used them, each woman preferring her own establishment. Dionitia did not have any children by Amasa although they lived together for many years. (20 minutes)

Cornelia Eliza Leavitt was the daughter of Enoch Virgil Leavitt and Abigail Leonora Snow. Abigail was the sister of Eliza R. Snow and Lorenzo Snow; in other words, Cornelia was a niece to these Church leaders. Cornelia became Amasa's third wife. They were married on November 14, 1844 in Nauvoo. On January 10, 1846, Cornelia and her mother, along with Lydia Partridge and others, received their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple in the Second Company of that day. The record indicates that Cornelia was also sealed that day.³ (22 minutes)

Priscilla Turley was the daughter of Theodore Turley and Frances Kimberley, from Toronto, Canada. They moved to the U.S. when she was about ten and lived in Missouri

²George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008,) pages 621-623.

³Kate B. Carter, *Treasures in Pioneer History*, Volume 1 (Salt Lake City: D.U.P., 1952), pages 227-228.

prior to the arrival of the Mormons. Priscilla at one point hid Amasa from the mob, probably saving his life.

Sometime after this, the mob was after the Prophet and he was in hiding as well. Different families took turns carrying his dinner to him. One day her mother sent Priscilla to the Whitmers with a basket of food. As she walked along the path a man stopped her and said: "Little girl, your folks know where Joseph Smith is. Now, you tell me." She looked at him and said: "If they did know, they wouldn't tell a little girl like me." The man stepped aside and let her pass. Thus again she helped save a man's life.

At one point Theodore Turley asked Amasa to take one of his daughters to wife. Amasa told him if he took any of them it would be Priscilla as he wished to protect her always. So she became Amasa's seventh wife on January 16, 1846, in the Nauvoo Temple, at the age of sixteen. She continued to live with her parents for a long time. She went to school, worked for others and helped whenever she could with needy neighbors and friends. She came to Utah with the pioneers in Brigham Young's Company in 1848.

While in San Bernardino she had two children and cared for Cornelia's two boys while Cornelia was ill. After returning to Utah she moved to Fillmore where she had four more children, two dying in their early years. She later lived in Idaho and California with her children. She died in September of 1904 at Redlands, California. (25 minutes)

Paulina Eliza Phelps was the daughter of Morris Charles Phelps and Laura Clark. She was four when her parents joined the Church in 1831. She was blessed by Parley P. Pratt in a dungeon in Richmond, Missouri, and was baptized by her father on June 1, 1835, in Crooked River, Missouri. She was one of the children whom the Prophet Joseph blessed and promised that she would come to the Rocky Mountains.

When she was fourteen her mother died at Macedonia, Illinois. Her mother was an accomplished midwife and nurse and taught Paulina her skills and love of helping others. She decided early to never accept money for any of her work, except in produce, but she never looked for payment either. She felt her life's work was a calling from the Lord. While she was caring for the sick in the home of Sydney Tanner, she met Amasa. She married him on January 16, 1846 in the Nauvoo Temple and gave her devotion and loyalty to him as long as she lived.

During the exodus from Nauvoo she drove a four-horse team for Sidney Tanner across the plains to pay for her fare. She took care of Mrs. Tanner during her illness until the latter's death and then for a time cared for the eight motherless children. After arriving in Salt Lake in October of 1848 she lived there until late 1850, when she moved to Parowan with her three children. She was assigned to Parowan by Brigham Young without her husband. The local brethren built her a two-room adobe which used to sit on the west side of Parowan's church square. After Cornelia came from California, she took care of her and her two boys until Cornelia died. She raised Cornelia's boys until they made homes of their own.

She was left a widow early in life and became a trained obstetrician, studying under Dr. Ellis R. Shipp, in Salt Lake City. She presided at the birth of more than 500 babies. Her careful record is still preserved in the D.U.P. Museum in Parowan. She was the mother of seven children, six boys and one girl. She died in Parowan on October 11, 1912. A statue is erected to her name at the park on the south side of Parowan. (29 minutes)

The last four wives of Amasa Mason Lyman to be studied here were daughters of Edward Partridge and Lydia Clisbee.

Harriet Pamela Partridge as noted above, died early in her life in Nauvoo. She was sealed to Amasa in the Nauvoo Temple on January 28, 1846, her sister Caroline Ely Lyman acting as proxy for the deceased.

Lydia Partridge was the last of Amasa's thirteen wives to be married to him. She crossed the plains partially in company with her mother and her mother's new husband William Huntington until he died at Mt. Pisgah. She stayed at Mt. Pisgah for about a year and then at Council Bluffs for over a year, leaving in the summer of 1848 in company with Amasa and some of his other wives, arriving in the Salt Lake Valley on October 17, 1848. She lived in Salt Lake City with her mother until she married Amasa on February 7, 1854. She was twenty-four and he was forty at that time. She continued to live with her mother and sometimes with her sisters until she moved with most of the family to Fillmore in about 1864. She and Amasa had four children.

Lydia was in poor health nearly all of her life. As early as 1851 she had a siege of rheumatism. At the age of forty-four she became seriously ill and was tenderly cared for by her son Edward, who was eighteen and her daughter-in-law Ida Evelyn, who was sixteen, and by her sisters Caroline and Eliza. They would take turns sitting up with her during the night. After sixteen weeks of painful illness she passed away on January 16, 1875. She is buried in Fillmore, the only one of Amasa's wives to be buried by his side. (33 minutes)

Caroline Ely Partridge and **Eliza Maria Partridge** have the greatest amount of information preserved about them, some of it from Eliza's journal, with which most of you are familiar, and some of it from Emily's writings found at the University of Utah. I am going to quote briefly from Emily's material which contains Caroline's and the other children's histories. She gives some very detailed information of the family's early life in Painesville, Ohio and in Missouri. It is some of the best documented history of the time and is well worth reading. We will start however, with their expulsion from Jackson County.

On November 5, 1833, more than 200 homes – including the Partridge home – were destroyed in Jackson County by the unruly mobs. Their next move was to Caldwell County where they remained for about three years buying land and building a house. While there Bishop Partridge was taken by the mob and sent to prison in Richmond,

without due process of law. He was held for about three weeks. By this time the writing on the wall was clear. The Mormons would have to leave Missouri. Their father arranged with King Follett to take them to Quincy, Illinois. From there they moved to Nauvoo. In Nauvoo they found a place to live and started to build a house on a lot that their father bought. First he put up a stable, but before it had been used as such he decided to move his family into it so he could be nearer to his work of building and making a garden.

Just before moving into the stable, Harriett Pamela died on May 16, 1840. She was later sealed to Amasa as noted previously. Also, before the family moved into the stable, their father was taken sick and in ten days he died and left his family in a most uncomfortable situation. He died on May 27, 1840.

After the funeral, Brother William Law took them into his house to stay until their house was finished. He and his wife were very kind to the family and doctored Lydia and Eliza who were very sick. In about three weeks they moved into their own house. Several years later their mother married William Huntington and the family moved in with his family.

When Caroline was sixteen, on September 6, 1844, she became the first plural wife of Amasa. Later her sisters Eliza Maria and Lydia were also married to him.

The time period between Nauvoo and Salt Lake has been covered in many books and in some of the history above. Also the moves to San Bernardino and Fillmore have been treated sufficiently for this lecture.

After Amasa left the Church, the Partridge sisters left Amasa. By then Caroline had five children. During this trying time, working along with Eliza, they earned \$102.00 in eighteen months by weaving. They also did sewing, spinning, coloring, house work, tending gardens and almost every kind of work that women could do, to maintain themselves.

Eliza's son Platte was called to Oak City to be bishop there and Caroline's son wanted to go with him to see if they could find work, so Caroline went with them to keep house. Very soon she bought a lot, which had a log room with a dirt floor. She and her family lived there until her boys were able to build a two-room adobe addition in front of the log room. This addition had two attic rooms that were used as bedrooms.

The Relief Society was organized in Oak City on May 3, 1874, and Caroline was chosen as president, a position she held for thirty-two years. She tried throughout those years to relieve the poor and wait on the sick; prepare the dead for burial, and comfort the bereaved. While president she worked and inspired the Society to build themselves a comfortable brick room for their meeting place.

In May of 1881, she and her daughter Harriet went with her brother Edward, who drove them to St. George. It took them five days to travel what is now just a few hours' trip. They met their sister Emily, who went down on the train from Salt Lake. They spent a

week working in the temple for their kindred dead; they did the endowment work for their parents and had their mother sealed to their father, and the three of them and their dead brother and sister were sealed to their parents. Caroline was very happy to be baptized for fifty of her dead kindred.

The first part of May, when Caroline was eighty-one years and four months old, she contracted pneumonia and passed away on May 8, 1908, in the south room of the adobe house which her sons had built for her. President Joseph F. Smith and her nephew, Apostle Francis Marion Lyman, eldest son of Louisa Maria Tanner Lyman, were the speakers at her funeral. She was buried at the Oak City Cemetery by the side of her sister Eliza, with whom she had lived so much of her life. (41 minutes)

Eliza's history comprises pages twenty-eight to 104 of the book that has been distributed today. It is the most complete history of Amasa's wives. There are a few paragraphs that I would like to quote to end this lecture about the lives of these amazing women.

This will have to end our lecture at this time. Cousin Leo has addressed Amasa's life from 1860 to 1871 in the 2 o'clock lecture. Vignettes of Caroline Ely, Eliza Maria, and Lydia were presented last hour. Tomorrow at 9 o'clock there will be a vignette of Louisa Maria, at 11:00 on Paulina, Priscilla Dionitia and Cornelia; Leo will deal with Amasa's life from 1815-1838 at 10:00, and then at 4:00 he will treat his life from 1838-1860. At 2:00 I will discuss Amasa's beliefs and his service for the period 1832-1877.

Thank you for your attention and participation. (43 minutes)