Polygamy on the Pedernales

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Polygamy and a Temple on the Pedernales

So we built a good little Temple to worship in.
—John Hawley

The intrinsic cultural patterns of Zodiac included polygamy, temple ritual, and socio-economic communitarianism, and, as such, they reflected antebellum Mormonism. RLDS president Joseph Smith III, in a letter to Joseph Davis of the Utah church in 1899, wrote, “nearly all the factions into which the Church broke had plural marriage in some form” in the post-1844 era before the Civil War. His father had been gathering concurrent wives as early as the Kirtland years. Joseph Smith Jr. further refined the practice at Nauvoo, moving it from private to doctrinal grounds. By 1860, plural marriage was an integral part of Mormonism in Utah Territory, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Texas.¹

Temple ritual and some form of economic cooperative also distinguished most of these groups from other American denominations. Just as Joseph Smith built and used temples and subjected his followers to the Law of Consecration and, later, tithing, so did temple building and forms of economic cooperation characterize the churches of Brigham Young, James Strang, William Smith, Alpheus Cutler, and Lyman Wight, who built the first Mormon temple west of the Mississippi.

James Strang took his first plural wife in 1850 at Beaver Island, Michigan. George Miller reinforced and continued the practice when he and his polygamous family joined the Strangites later that year. Plans were drawn in 1847 for a Strangite temple, and construction was underway in September 1849 on two and a half acres. However, the design, with its incorporated twelve towers and a Great Hall, was never finished. William Smith, the only surviving brother of Joseph Smith Jr. and a man whom Orson Hyde described as one who used the priesthood as a vehicle for “sensuality, avarice, and ease,” organized a church in 1847. It had failed by 1851, because of its polygamous practices. William Smith’s attempt to merge his church body with that of Wight included encouraging the Covington membership to emigrate to Texas. There they could join the Wightites and receive “endowments and blessings” in the Zodiac Temple.2

Alpheus Cutler, an intimate of Joseph Smith before his murder in 1844, and a member of the Fifty as well as a leader at Winter Quarters, led the Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite) from 1853 until his death in

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1864. Excommunicated in 1851 by Brigham Young, Cutler and his followers lived their own form of Mormonism, first in Mills County and then Fremont County, Iowa. Eschewing polygamy, although Cutler himself had practiced it earlier, the characteristics of the Cutlerites, as with other branches of the Mormons, included a form of economic communitarianism and the practice of sacred rites.\(^3\)

The environs of a temple were not required for Mormon ritualism at this time. Thus, the practice of sacral ceremonies outside of a temple was not uncommon among the various factions. The Cutlerites practiced them in Iowa, and the Wightites, discussed below, did the same in Texas before they built the Pedernales temple. Brigham Young, at the request of many of the LDS at Winter Quarters, Iowa, years before the Endowment House was built in Salt Lake City, approved the performance of eternal sealings, marriages, and adoptions.\(^4\)

The Cutlerites’ Order of Enoch was a common-stock proposition organized and directed by its church corporation. However, it did not function well, and participation by the membership remained optional. According to Danny Jorgensen, Cutler temple ritualism “involved a secretive initiation, assignment of a sacred personal identity, passwords to the spirit world, endowments (or blessings), ritual cleaning by water and anointings with oil, the receipt of a sacred undergarment, and ritual reenactment of sacred myths.” Other ordinances included baptism by proxy for the salvation of the dead, as well as monogamous marriage for eternity. The Cutlerites, even those who had earlier practiced polygamy, had abandoned the practice by 1853. The endowment of the first generation, coupled with the quickly decreasing numbers of followers after the death of Cutler in 1864, limited ordinances to the ritual baptism for the dead.\(^5\)

Temple ritualism, economic exclusiveness, and plural marriage fused the sacred and the secular at the Zodiac community. From its early beginnings in Wisconsin, this community defined its familial and individual concerns in religious terms. Apostle Lyman Wight,

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as the community prophet, patriarch, and leader, offered direct, authoritarian guidance. The rituals of the Pedernales temple delineated the focus of family and individual goals. Temple ritualism bound the community together: husbands and wives, parents and children, leaders and followers. It gifted (endowed) families with continuity that sublimated mortal death to eternal life, and unraveled the bindings of secular time and space. Those at Zodiac believed their temple work gifted them beyond the grave with everlasting exaltation—for themselves, their families, and their familial dead. Levi Laman Wight wrote years later that the Zodiac years had presented his people with the opportunity to worship “according to our desires, unity, peace, and harmony prevailing.”

John Hawley recorded that “Lyman told us we must build a house for to attend to the baptism for the dead and also the ordinance of washing of feet and a general endowment in the wilderness. So we . . . built a good little Temple to worship in. . . .” Completed on 17 February 1849, the first Mormon temple west of the Mississippi was a large, two-story log building that functioned as a multi-purpose center for Zodiac, with a company storehouse as well as an upstairs room for temple ritual. One of the two Mormon schools enumerated in the Census of 1850 met in the building. The Zodiac High Council gave permission for William Leyland to hold his classes in the large room on the second floor.

Various ordinances performed in the Zodiac Temple involved married and unmarried individuals. Ceremonies included baptism for the dead; washings of feet, head, and body; a general endowment; various anointings; adoptions; the sealing (marriage) of men and women for time and eternity; and the setting apart of kings, queens, and priests for eternity. Temple ritualism at times reorganized families, as well as saving them. When George Miller returned to Zodiac in early 1849, his Leyland stepchildren, who hated him, used the temple and its ceremonies to separate themselves from his

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rule. William Leyland recorded that on 8 April 1849, he received the endowment portion of “the washing of feet under the hands of the Twelve High Counsellors and their presidents along with sixteen elders and their presidents and on the 9[th] received the washings of the body and anointing.” The following month, William Leyland and his sisters Sophia, Sarah, and Eliza were adopted into the Lyman Wight family. Although the girls were only “adopted until they were of age,” William wrote that he was “adopted under the oath and covenant of the priesthood unto my salvation or damnation until I could save my father and raise him to be a king and priest.”

John Hawley was one of few individuals to experience the endowment ritual in both the Wightite and Utah branches of Mormonism. He celebrated the ceremony at Zodiac (1851) and later in Utah (1857). In 1893, under sworn oath in the Temple Lot Case, he compared and contrasted the ordinances and clothing associated with these rituals. According to him, Young and Wight both believed they had the authority to seal men and women together for time and eternity. Unlike the Utah Mormons, the Wightites wore their religious garments only for special occasions, including sealing ceremonies and for burial. The temple robe was supposedly patterned on that worn by the angel Moroni, an angelic messenger who Joseph Smith claimed had visited him. This outer garment was a loose frock without markings, being described by Hawley as an “entire covering of linen,” leaving bare only the hands, feet, and head. An apron, a facsimile of those allegedly worn by Adam and Eve, was as bare of markings as the garment. In contrast, the Utah garment was always worn by the initiated, who were counseled never to take it off, even to the

8. William Leyland journal, in H. H. Smith, “The Lyman Wight Colony in Texas,” 21–22. John Hawley either considered the type of ceremony in which Leyland participated as not an endowment, or was unaware that Leyland had received anointings and washings without the sealing ceremony to a woman for time and eternity. Hawley, Temple Lot Case, 455, carefully distinguished the difference between the first ordinances and marriage sealing, noting that while in Salt Lake City young men could receive the first part of the endowment without the sealing ceremony for time and eternity, such was not the case at Zodiac. Hawley’s temple experiences are recorded in three different documents: John Hawley to Bro. Joseph, Saints’ Herald (True Latter Day Saints’ Herald) (Lamoni IA), 28 June 1884, 412; Hawley; “Autobiography of John Hawley,” 7; and Hawley, Temple Lot Case, 451–62.
act of leaving one leg in the garment while washing. The apron and the tight-fitting Utah garment, joined together at the waist and legs to make one piece of clothing, had special markings. The temple clothing also included a robe with a “bandage” that came down from the shoulders, moccasins, and a cap.9

Hawley testified in the Temple Lot Case on behalf of the RLDS church, which defended Joseph Smith Jr. well into the twentieth century against the charges that he was the foundation of Mormon polygamy. Hawley testified that he encountered endowment practices first in Zodiac, and that “Lyman Wight was the first person that taught [to Hawley] anything about endowments according to my best recollection.” The Zodiac endowment, he alleged, involved only matrimonial concerns, the sealing of a man and women “together in order to enjoy each other society in eternity.” He described this as “spiritual wife marriage,” a negative term used in that era to attack the marriage practices of Utah Mormonism, the language of which was guaranteed to offend LDS sensibilities. Hawley testified further that sealings for time and eternity were performed for monogamous as well as polygamous couples at Zodiac.

Nonetheless, having more than one concurrent wife, according to Hawley, led to the accrual of extra spiritual advantages: “Those that were in spiritual marriage were said to be in polygamy, as well as those that were not. The understanding was that they would enjoy the same glory as others, but the ones that had more than one wife would enjoy a greater portion of it.” He further offered that it “was not a necessary and logical sequence” that those that had been married for time and eternity would have to practice the doctrine of plural marriage. If a man took more than one wife, according to Hawley’s understanding, then his “glory which was in eternity would be greater” than the husband who had only one wife.10

10. Hawley, Temple Lot Case, 453–56. In his autobiography, Hawley was writing of his endowment ceremony to his first wife, Harriet Hobart, performed near Austin in 1846. In the Temple Lot testimony, Hawley was referring to the endowment with his second wife, Sylvia Johnson, performed in 1851. Hawley’s
Wight was always concerned that the rite of eternal marriage orders, or patriarchal marriage, be correctly performed, and that couples were married for eternity as well as time. He earlier had ordained Pierce Hawley, John’s father, as a patriarch because, in Mormon theology, this office had the spiritual authority and power to discern an individual’s family line. Pierce Hawley discovered that his son was from the tribe of Ephraim, and of the royal blood and lineage of Joseph of Egypt. Eternal marriage under the Wightite system, like other Mormon factions, did not always have to be performed in a temple.11

Wightite marriages were often arranged. Lyman Wight and Pierce Hawley had made the selections for John Hawley (Harriet Hobart), Priscilla Hawley (John Young), and George Hawley (Ann Hadfield). On 4 July 1846, with Pierce Hawley and Otis Hobart officiating, John Hawley was ordained a king and priest, and anointed with oil after having his feet washed. John then washed Harriet’s feet, anointed her head with oil, and ordained her a queen. Lyman Wight then sealed John and Harriet for time and eternity. Hawley testified that the use of “the power of the priesthood” differentiated sealings from civil rites. The Mormons used them “instead of the legal form of marriage and at that time we looked upon it as being more binding for eternity than the other form of marriage.” His later marriage to Sylvia Johnson was monogamous. Harriet had left John sometime during the summer of 1848. Wight decreed that John had been divorced because of Harriet’s desertion.12

Hawley testified that the Utah ceremony at the Endowment House was “not the same endowments that I took under Lyman Wight’s administration.” The Zodiac endowment consisted of only

anti-LDS bias is also revealed, in that his writings never mention that he officiated as a counselor and presiding elder of the LDS church in Pine Valley, Utah Territory, during the 1860s; see Journal History of the Church, 173:22 March 1863; 180:8 May 1864, 3; and 198:31 December 1866, 2.

12. Turk, “Mormons in Texas”, 43, 52, 83; Hawley, Temple Lot Case, 452; Hawley, “Autobiography of John Hawley,” 6, 7, 10–11. Hawley’s testimony, Temple Lot Case, 454, revealed that at Zodiac “Lyman did the sealing and my father was a high priest in the church in old Joseph’s time and he did the washing of the feet and the anointing of the head.” Hawley, “Autobiography of John Hawley,” 9, wrote concerning Harriet: “But let me say she was of a quiet disposition and made me a good housekeeper. Lyman said we was entirely divorced from each other and I was at liberty to marry again.”
the one ceremony, including the following ordinances: the washing of feet, an anointing with oil, and the ordaining of the initiates as “kings, queens, and priests,” which Hawley averred comprised “the sum and substance” of the Zodiac endowment. His testimony cited that “Wilford Woodruff did the anointing and washing and Brigham Young did the sealing” for Hawley and his wife in the Endowment House. Unlike the Zodiac endowment, the couples in Hawley’s ceremony at Salt Lake City were separated by gender in different rooms. The Utah endowment involved the washing and anointing with oil of the entire body and feet of the initiate.

The Utah ceremony also differed from the Texas one in that it involved the swearing of oaths “to avenge the blood of the prophets,” and included resurrection ordinances as well as ones for marriage. The penalty for revealing the “grip and oath” associated with avenging the Smiths’ murders “was disembowelment.” The candidate then received “a name we would be called for from the grave by.” Hawley stated that the Utah endowment did not include ordinations as kings, queens, and priests. Brigham Young had added a second endowment, wrote Hawley, that included “an anointing and setting apart for the resurrection, and” a power to be called “to rise from the dead, and to raise others.”

Young spoke to an audience in 1853, describing how Utah Mormonism felt about the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum. Asking if the blood of Joseph “had been atoned for,” Young answered that no “nation of men, without the Priesthood, has the power to make atonement for such sins. The souls of all such, since the days of Jesus, are ‘under the alter,’ and are crying to God, day and night for vengeance. And shall they cry in vain? God forbid! He has promised He will hear them in His own due time, and recompense a righteous reward.”

13. Hawley to Bro. Joseph, 412; Hawley, Temple Lot Case, 453, 454, 457, 458. Captain James Brown, during the first Mormon Battalion Reunion, held in Salt Lake City in 1855, told the audience that the members of the battalion “have got the spirit of revenge, to avenge the blood of the prophets shed in Carthage Jail, and we shall do it,” never to “give up till the blood of the prophets is avenged upon those who dwell on the earth”; see David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, eds., Army of Israel: Mormon Battalion Narratives (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 432.

The desire for vengeance by the Utah Mormons, and the blood-curdling oath of the Utah ceremony, must be set in the context of the place and time. The journal entries of Allen Stout, a worker in the Wisconsin pinery with the Wight and Hawley families, and a follower of Brigham Young across the western plains, reflect the horror and desire for vengeance that many Mormons held for the rest of their lives. Stout wrote, years after the murders, that

their beloved forms, reposing in the arms of death engendered such feelings as I am not able to describe. . . . I there and then resolved in my mind that I would never let an opportunity slip unimproved of avenging their blood upon the head of the enemies of the Church of Jesus Christ. . . . I feel like cutting their throats yet. And I hope to avenge their blood; but if I do not I will teach my children to never cease to try to avenge their blood and then teach their children and children’s children to the fourth generation as long as there is one descendent of the murderers upon the earth.15

Not only were the individuals who killed the Smiths held liable, but the United States and its people also remained guilty of the crimes and would be punished eventually by God. President J. M. Grant, second counselor to Brigham Young, preached that “it is a stern fact that the people of the United States have shed the blood of the Prophets, driven out the Saints of God, rejected the Priesthood, and set at naught the holy Gospel. . . . The result of rejecting the Gospel has been, in every age, a visitation from the chastening hand of the Almighty.” God’s “chastisement,” Grant believed, would “be administered in proportion to the magnitude and enormity of their crimes.” Consequently, he expected God “to use His whip on the refractory son called ‘Uncle Sam.’”16

The issue of privacy also differentiated the endowment ceremonies of Zodiac and Utah. Hawley testified that at Zodiac, anyone could attend. At Salt Lake City, “it was done secretly and no one was

permitted to see them only the officers and the ones talking the endowments. No one else was present or permitted to be present simply because no one else had any business there and they were not permitted to be there.” The availability of facilities was probably one reason for the difference in the practices. Zodiac was a frontier community with a two-story structure, the village’s only major community building besides the mill, and it served as a temple as well. The Endowment House in Salt Lake City had, according to Hawley, “a good many departments” with “a reception room, a small stairway to the veil, and it was pretty much all on the ground floor. Had dressing rooms, washing rooms, a prayer circle, and an altar.” The Utah Mormons had the time, the opportunity, and the security to build a private structure in which to house a much more polished ceremony than that at Zodiac.

Ordinances continued at Zodiac from 1849 to 1851. Shortly before the colony moved to Burnet County in 1851, several sessions in February and March celebrated baptisms for deceased family members. On 10 February 1851, Lyman Wight signed an attestation of purpose concerning the principle of such baptism. Convinced by scripture, the words of Joseph Smith Jr., and “twenty years in the cause of God,” the Zodiac leader wrote “that baptism for the dead is one of the most essential ordinances given to us by Christ our redeemer.” Only a covenanted people, he declared further, dedicated “even unto the principle of all they have and being placed under the controll of the Almighty God” could build an appropriate house and font for the sanctification of God’s followers. Wight averred that never before, in his opinion, had a site been worthy of such an edifice and the rites held within it. According to him, “the Lord Almighty [had] accepted” the Zodiac Temple. Stephen Curtis baptized Lyman Wight as a proxy candidate for his grandfather Levi Wight and Harriet Benton Wight as a proxy for Levi Wight’s wife, Susanna Wight. Official witnesses were Pierce Hawley, Sarah Schroeder, Joseph D. Goodale, and George Hawley.

Half a dozen more sessions were held from 11 February to 11 March 1851. The women normally used their maiden names, rather than those of their husbands. Recorders included John Young and

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Stephen Curtis, with Andrew Ballantyne, Stephen Curtis, and J. D. Goodale as the persons conducting the baptism. Proxy candidates included Pierce and Sarah Schrader (Schröder) Hawley; George Montague Sr. and his plural wife Eliza Segar; Stephen Z. Curtis; John F. Miller and Margaret Frances Andrews; Ralph Jenkins and Verona Brace; Irvin Carter and Mary Ann Six; and Jennet Turnbull and Andrew Ballantyne. Witnesses included George Hawley, John Hawley, Priscilla Hawley, I. F. Carter, Spencer Smith, Rodney Bray (Brace), Andrew Ballantyne, George W. Bird, Pierce Hawley, E. W. Curtis, Eber Johnson, William Ballantyne, Alaxe St. Mary, (Marion) Frances Andrews, J. S. Goodale, and Margaret Ballantyne.19

Lyman Wight’s attestation of baptism for the dead at Zodiac clearly demonstrates his rejection of the post-Joseph churches of Nauvoo and Salt Lake City. It also clearly rebuffs the authority of Brigham Young and the rites performed in the Nauvoo temple after Joseph Smith Jr.’s death. Thus, according to Wight, the Nauvoo temple was not worthy as a site for religious rituals, thus underlining the futility of its ordinances before the Lord and the world. The implications of the Texas directive are clear: only a covenanted, common-stock people, who had dedicated all they owned and who had been accepted and directed by the Lord God Almighty, could perform according to the worthiness of such rites. The conclusion of that train of logic was clear. In this case, Lyman Wight, not Brigham Young, was the Lord’s appointed messenger. Obviously some form of common-stock association was necessary, rather than the stewardship and tithing programs of Utah Mormonism. The inferences of the document of 10 February 1851 clearly reflect that Lyman Wight believed only he could officiate in such a position and that only those at Zodiac could build an acceptable temple and worthy perform its rites.

The writings of John Hawley and William Leyland, and the records of baptism for the dead, reveal the extent of Zodiac temple activities, including the wearing of garments, the receiving of endowments, and the performance of other religious rituals. In light of the contemporary records that have been discovered, it is reasonable to think other Zodiac members, who believed that baptism for the

19. Administrative records for baptism of the dead (February and March 1851), Lyman Wight records in Zodiac, RLDS archives.
dead was “one of the most essential ordinances given to us by Christ” (indicating other equally essential rites existed), used the temple. It is equally reasonable to conclude that many men and women at Zodiac were sealed to one another for time and eternity, and participated in the various rituals associated with temple Mormonism. The often extra-judicial nature of marriage arrangements in Wight’s colony characterized the communities of the Mormon dispersion. Winn, in *Exiles in a Land of Liberty*, argues that “Mormonism” was not simply an extension of Christian primitivism in the United States during the nineteenth century. Instead, this society “was a religious revolt, not simply a social protest movement.” Unable to separate “the secular from the religious elements in early Mormonism,” the followers of the Mormon Restoration refused “to bifurcate their lives into separate spheres of the sacred and the profane.”

Other scholars have crafted similar observations. Lawrence Foster, for example, in *Religion and Sexuality*, believes the various Mormon groupings sacralized marriage and divorce as ecclesiastical rather than secular procedures, which thus were beyond the realm and arm of secular society. The result separated the Mormons from the larger non-Mormon community. Foster wrote that often “Mormon arrangements were not fully in harmony with local marriage regulations or mores.” Joseph Smith and his first counselor Sydney Rigdon, neither of whom were ordained to perform secular marriages, both had troubles with civil governments as a result of their efforts to regulate Mormonism’s social and religious affairs when they intruded into the profane world. Control of divorce, marriage, and personal and family salvation (whether at Salt Lake City or Nauvoo or Beaver Island or Zodiac) provided these communities’ leaders with the key to regulate the lives of their members. Because polygamy was not a sanctioned form of marriage in the many civil jurisdictions of North America, the practice further isolated them from the larger population.

Polygamy was even more characteristic of Mormonism than temple ritualism. The unpublished 1987 manuscript of Toni R. Turk, “Mormons in Texas: The Lyman Wight Colony,” was the first to reveal

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the extent of Zodiac polygamy. A short history prefaces a genealogical index of many of the colony’s members. Turk notes that information about the colonists remains incomplete and at times inaccurate; the spellings of names, not only in the last century but also by later descendants, vary.\(^\text{22}\) Determining the extent of Wightite polygamy is further complicated by the scattering and destruction of some primary sources. Such sources for Zodiac polygamy are not generous, due to contemporary reticence. RLDS historians, the last to have access to the writings of Lyman Wight, do not quote the apostle on the subject. Other examples indicate Wightite reluctance to discuss the institution. John Hawley wrote unenthusiastically about marriage practices in his own autobiography but far more fully in other forums when discussing the endowment ceremonies and temple garments. Hawley’s comments are apologetic in nature, a defense of the RLDS Church, and are not complete. One example is that he mentions Brigham Young and Lyman Wight by name as teaching and practicing the doctrine, yet he refrains from noting that his sister, Mary Hawley, was a plural wife of Lyman Wight.\(^\text{23}\) He does not mention that his second wife, Sylvia Johnson, earlier may have been a second wife to Newell Drake, her sister Cynthia’s husband. He does not discuss the fact that his brother George Hawley took as his plural wife a woman already pluraly married to Orange Wight—Ann Hadfield, a sister to his own wife, Sarah Hadfield Hawley. George Hawley never mentions this fact, either, nor does his obituary. The obituary, interestingly enough, insists that George Hawley, a member of the local RLDS Stake High Council, had condemned Brigham Young as the author of polygamy.\(^\text{24}\)

Those who lived in the various Wight households were later as loath to mention their marriage practices as those from the Hawley homes. Orange L. Wight briefly mentions his own plural marriages but, understandably, does not discuss losing his second wife to

\(^{22}\) Turk, “Mormons in Texas,” 85–89, 96.


\(^{24}\) Journal of History, 5, no. 2 (April 1912): 235; subject name listings in Turk, “Mormons in Texas”; subject name listings in the Newell Knight journal and autobiography 1800–1847, provide only conjecture, until definitive evidence is produced, for the polygamous relation of Sylvia Johnson and Newell Drake. It is known, however, that the Drakes and various Johnson relatives traveled in the party of the polygamous bishop George Miller.
George Hawley. Levi Lamoni Wight never speaks about polygamy in his father’s colony, although he and his wife both were children and stepchildren of polygamous parents. Gideon Carter, who lived in Wight households, openly talked about the philosophy and practice of Zodiac polygamy, but he, too, restricted identifying polygamous participants to only Lyman Wight and Orange L. Wight. Carter’s two sisters, Matilda and Rosilla, were Orange’s first and third wives.25

The Wight colonies were polygamous villages, from Mormon Coulee in Wisconsin (1844) to the final trek in Texas (1858). Where the prophet Joseph Smith Jr. led, apostle Lyman Wight followed.26 In a sworn statement to Utah historian Brigham H. Roberts in 1894, Gideon H. Carter explained plural continuity in Wight’s community. Carter, a son of a Danite killed during the Mormon-Missouri civil war, grew to manhood and lived for twenty years in the homes of Lyman Wight and Orange Lysander Wight. Carter went with the Wights to Texas. He averred that both Wights taught and practiced the doctrine, and Orange Lysander Wight married the two Carter sisters. He also avowed that both Lyman Wight and Joel S. Miles took plural wives during the trek.27

Not only had Joseph Smith taught the principle to Wight, Carter said, but Smith had also given Wight authority to perform such marriages, as well as other ceremonies of the church. Wight supposedly issued a pamphlet explaining the principle, with many special regulations on how to live the doctrine. Lyman argued that (1) it was of God; (2) Joseph Smith Jr. bore testimony of it; and (3) the practice of it could bring “wisdom, truth, and virtue capable of bringing great good to the world.” Wight’s teachings and this publication apparently caused a stir among the surrounding population, and the pamphlet was withdrawn. Not only were non-Mormons upset with the pamphlet, but polygamy within the colony also caused some agitation at Zodiac. Younger members in Wight’s group, “who found no warrant for it in

26. A reading of Lyman Wight’s An Address clearly reveals the admiration and sense of discipleship that Lyman Wight had for Joseph Smith Jr.
the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants," opposed the doctrine. This outcry may have risen from the fact that single, marriage-age females were few at Zodiac. Wight, according to Carter, discontinued performing plural marriages because of the local prejudice against it and because the "people were not pure enough." Those men who already had plural wives continued to live with their wives and support their families.\textsuperscript{28} Just when Wight discontinued the practice is not clear. Hawley mentioned in his autobiography that one reason the sect left Zodiac in 1851 was due to some neighbors’ unrest over polygamy. In addition, some at Zodiac were questioning the necessity and scriptural basis for it. For example, Richard Hewitt, in an addendum to a letter in 1849 to James Strang, queried the Beaver Island leader and wanted to know "your mind . . . about men having the priesthood having more wives than one. The principle is taught amongst all that I have been with. . . . If it is consistent I want you to let me know . . . so Bro. Miller and myself will know what to do." George Miller allegedly had told Hewitt that the Zodiac polygamists would go to hell with "their whoring." Either Hewitt did not know that Miller himself had three wives, or Hewitt was convinced that Wight’s teachings about the practice were wrong. Hewitt did not like the practice, writing that "I don’t find such things in the Book of Covenants, nor in the Book of Mormon, nor in the writings of the apostles, and I don’t want to be deceived nor flattered any more." The fact that Hewitt counseled with Miller instead of Wight, as well as his plaintive lament to Strang about the need for trusting his leaders to tell the truth, clearly suggests that Hewitt, and perhaps others, were not only questioning the principle of polygamy, but also Wight’s leadership as well.\textsuperscript{29}

Polygamy came to the Wightite world, and indeed to the world of all Mormons, through Joseph Smith Jr. He started it, taught it, lived it, and, in part, died of it with his brother on a warm, muggy June evening at Carthage Jail. Orange L. Wight, unlike most members of his father’s colony, rejoined the LDS Church later in life and died a testifying member. He stated in his memoirs that his father, Joseph Smith Jr., George Miller,\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 3–4.\textsuperscript{29} Hawley, “Autobiography of John Hawley,” 10; George Miller to James J. Strang, 12 June 1849, with addendum by Richard Hewitt, quoted in H. H. Smith, “George Miller,” 230–31.
William Clayton, David Clayton, bishop Isaac Higbee, and John Higbee had taught him the principles of polygamy as a young man. The faithful believed God ordained the practice, and Joseph Smith directed it. Orange Wight wrote that Lyman Wight believed Joseph Smith to be “a Prophet, seer and revelator inspired by God,” remembering that “plural marriage was practice[d] and taught by the Prophet and Apostles of that day. In all of this time I did not hear Pres. Brigham Young’s name mentioned in connection with plural marriage.” Wight was not slighting Brigham Young, whom his father resented and eventually grew to hate. Instead, Orange Wight was protecting Young and the LDS Church from the assertions by RLDS apologists, such as John Hawley, that Joseph Smith Jr. never practiced plural marriage and that such doctrines began only with Young, Wight, and others. The internal contradictions of Hawley’s sworn testimony in the Temple Lot Case in 1893, when compared to his letter of 26 June 1884 to Joseph Smith III and Hawley’s 1889 “Autobiography,” reveal either that his mind was beginning to lose its full faculty or that he was making a stumbling attempt at perjury on behalf of his church.

Table 8, next page, identifies twelve marriages contracted by Wightites from February 1844 to July 1846. Five were certainly polygamous. It seems that such relationships could have been hidden only shortly from the rest of the small community. Hawley did write that he had no idea that the young woman he had been courting during the journey to Texas (probably Patience Curtis) had become the spouse of a married man just a short time earlier, “and of course I dropped her mighty quick. That was the first intimation that I had that there was anything of the kind practiced. That was the first case of spiritual marriage that ever came to my knowledge.”

Certain social benefits accrued because of these marriages. Strong, cohesive internal bonds developed among the community’s members, through the linking of various family groups into family-kin framework relationships. Lyman Wight’s three polygamous wives were daughters or sisters of several of the more important colonists (Andrew Ballantyne, Otis Hobart, and Pierce Hawley),

31. Hawley, Temple Lot Case, 455.
Polygamy on the Pedernales

Table 8
Wight Colony Marriages from 1844 to 1846

* Plural Marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bride and Groom</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 February 1844</td>
<td>Rosina Minerva Wight to John F. Miller</td>
<td>Black River Falls, WI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 February 1844</td>
<td>Anna Christina Wight to Spencer Smith</td>
<td>Black River Falls, WI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 February 1844</td>
<td>Matilda Carter to Orange Lysander Wight</td>
<td>Black River Falls, WI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 February 1844</td>
<td>Sarah Hadfield to Orange Lysander Wight*</td>
<td>Prairie La Crosse, WI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 1845</td>
<td>Mary Hawley to Lyman Wight*</td>
<td>DuPage, IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1845</td>
<td>Patience F. Curtis to Joel S. Simonds*</td>
<td>Unknown (during trek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 September 1845</td>
<td>Bernice Monroe to Charles Bird</td>
<td>Near Mound City, KS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 September 1845</td>
<td>Eliza Curtis to George W. Bird</td>
<td>Near Mound City, KS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 September 1845</td>
<td>Marion Sutherland to William Curtis</td>
<td>Near Mound City, KS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 July 1846</td>
<td>Priscilla Hawley to John Young</td>
<td>Austin, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 July 1846</td>
<td>Ann Hadfield to George Hawley</td>
<td>Austin, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 July 1846</td>
<td>Harriet Hobart to John Hawley</td>
<td>Austin, TX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

binding them to Wight in family and religious links. Andrew Ballantyne was the millwright, the master artisan of the company. Otis Hobart clerked for the church at Black River and Zodiac. Pierce Hawley served as a counselor to bishop George Miller and became the colony’s patriarch. Orange L. Wight’s marriages to Sarah Hadfield and Matilda Carter at Black River, Wisconsin, further attached the Hadfield and Carter family members to his father’s group. Lyman Wight’s marriages also helped to sublimate ethnicity in the colony. Through Wight’s wives, the Scots Ballantynes were linked familiarly to the American Hawleys. Plural marriages linked the community’s families more closely because the practice itself isolated them from the much larger monogamous society of the United States.

The strong influence of plural marriage in Zodiac’s social relationships can be inferred by examining the twenty-one families that made the trek to Texas in 1845. Although only three heads of household—Lyman Wight, Orange Lysander Wight, and Joel Simonds Miles—were known to be plurally married, more than sixty percent of the families, more than forty percent of the adults, and more than fifty percent of all community members had relatives in one of those three families.32

From 1848 to 1850, plural families came and went at Zodiac, and other polygamous marriages were made. The families of Lyman Wight, Orange Wight, and Joel Simonds Miles arrived with the original company. George Miller and his three wives (Mary Catherine Fry, Elizabeth Boughton, and Sophia Wallace Leyland) came to Zodiac in February 1848. George Montague Sr. married Nancy Daniels Richardson the following year. George Miller departed the colony in 1849, and neither Joel S. Miles nor his wives Patience and Delia were recorded as living at Zodiac in the census of 1850. It is known that Montague and John F. Miller (an original colonist, a son of George Miller, a son-in-law of Lyman Wight, and possible polygamist) remained at Zodiac after George Miller’s departure.33

Of the ten known couples wedded at Austin and Zodiac, all identified in Table 9, next page, five were monogamous, four polygamous, and one possibly polygamous. Jenette Sutherland, in April 1847, became the second concurrent wife of Ezra Alpheus Chipman, joining Malinda Porter, Ezra’s early sweetheart and wife. Marion Sutherland, the former monogamous wife of William Curtis (married in September 1845), joined Ezra, Malinda, and Jenette in the Chipman household as a third plural spouse about 1850. George Montague Sr., as noted above, married Nancy Daniels Richardson. That same year Orange L. Wight took his third wife, Rosilla Carter, sister to his first wife, Matilda. A possible plural marriage occurred between Margaret Francis Andrews and John F. Miller in late 1849 or early 1850.

Identifying the polygamous households in 1850 at Zodiac is problematic. Turk recognizes the plural relationships of Lyman Wight, Orange Wight, Ezra Chipman, Joel S. Miles, George Montague Sr., George Miller, and the possible polygamous situation of John F. Miller, although Turk believes that Miller was not married to Margaret Francis Andrews before the death of Rosina Minerva Wight. By 1850, known plural households at Zodiac included those of Lyman

Table 9
WIGHT COLONY MARRIAGES 1847 TO 1851
*Plural Marriage **Possible Plural Marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bride and Groom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 April 1847</td>
<td>Jenette Sutherland to Alpheus Chipman*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>1848 Ann Hadfield to George Hawley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>1849 Rosilla Carter to Orange Lysander Wight*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>1849 Nancy Daniels Richardson to George Montague*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 October 1849</td>
<td>Sylvia Johnson to John Hawley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About 1849</td>
<td>Marion Sutherland to Ezra Alpheus Chipman*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849/1850</td>
<td>Margaret Francis Andrews to John F. Miller**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849/1850</td>
<td>Emeline Curtis to Meacham Curtis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849/1850</td>
<td>Elizabeth Hewitt to E. B. Hewitt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 August 1850</td>
<td>Maria Henrietta Racig to William Curtis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>1848 Ann Hadfield to George Hawley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>1849 Rosilla Carter to Orange Lysander Wight*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wight, Orange Wight, George Montague Sr., and Ezra Chipman, a total of four men and sixteen wives. Joel S. Miles may have been living at Grape Creek. The households of John F. Miller and Abraham Moncur as well may have also been polygamous by 1850.

County and census documents support the assumption that John Miller’s household in 1850 was monogamous. A Gillespie County mortuary schedule penciled on an “Assessor’s Guide Book—Gillespie County” for 1850 notes that Roseanna Miller, age twenty-three and born in Ohio, died on 26 March 1850 from a two-day illness, resulting from a “mortification” of the chest. Undoubtedly still weakened from the birth of daughter Rosina Romilia on 6 February 1850, the young mother could not withstand the pleurisy or pneumonia that struck her down. The population schedule for Zodiac in 1850, from information gathered during the late summer, enumerates Frances Miller, a female eighteen years of age, living with John Miller and his three children, the oldest being four years of age. This teenage girl was Margaret Francis Andrews, a daughter of Nancy Daniels Richardson, the plural wife of George Montague Sr. Mother and daughter lived next door to one another. A Wightite justice of the peace, Ralph Jenkins, married Margaret and John on 11

July 1850. Without further evidence, it remains speculative whether they had privately and polygamously married before the death of Roseanna Miller.

The confusion as to the extent of polygamy at Zodiac is extended by the subterfuge of plural wives giving varying names to the census taker. Two of Lyman Wight’s wives (Residence 243) were enumerated as Margaret Ballantyne and Mary Hawley; a third, Mary Ann Hobart, used the first name of her father (thus Mary Ann Hobart Otis). Sarah Hadfield and Rosilla Carter maintained their maiden names in Orange Wight’s residence (No. 257), as did Nancy Andrews in George Montague’s home (No. 262). In the Ezra Shipman (Chipman) household (No. 265), the act of protecting plural wives enters the realm of the strange: although plural wife Janette Sutherland maintains her maiden name, her sister Marion, Ezra’s third wife and the former monogamous wife of William Curtis, is enumerated under the name of her first husband.

Once the reader is aware that Zodiac wives were willing to deceive the outside world about their marriage relationships, then the probability increases that the Scots shoemaker, Abraham Moncur, was the polygamist husband of Jane V. Ballantyne Moncur and her sister, Ellen Bell. Ellen Bell, listed as thirty-seven years of age with seven-year-old daughter, Janeth, was actually Hellen Ballantyne (age 41), the sister of Abram’s first wife, Jane Ballantyne. Hellen earlier had been married on 14 November 1843 at Nauvoo to William Bell. He may have begun the trek from Wisconsin to Texas, but he did not complete it, leaving his wife with Janeth. In 1850, Ellen Bell was living in the Moncur household with her daughter.

35. Assessor’s Guide Book—Gillespie County, 1850, Texas State Library, Austin, TX, with manuscript copy at Gillespie County Historical Society Archives; Black, ERLDS, 4:438; “John Miller,” res. 261, and “George Montague,” res. 262, population schedule I, census of 1850, Gillespie County; Gillespie County Commissioners’ minutes, A (1850–1856): 3, Gillespie County archives, Fredericksburg, TX; Gillespie County marriage record, 1:11 July 1850, 1, Gillespie County archives.


The immediate family members of the sisters Moncur-Ballantyne are recorded in the Ballantyne home (No. 259): brother Andrew “Ballantine,” age thirty-six, a millwright, as head of household; their mother, Janet Turnbull “Ballantine,” age 64; three more unmarried brothers—William (26), a carpenter; James (23), and Robert (age 21), both herdsmen; as well as the family of another sister without a husband, Jeanette Ballantyne Hay and her three children. The immigrant Scots family members obviously lived together when unmarried, reinforcing Jane Margaret’s and Jane V.’s plural relationships to Lyman Wight and Abram Moncur. The only family member not living at home is Hellen Ballantyne, who with her daughter resided in the Moncur household. That she was a plural spouse seems likely.³⁸

George Hawley was married to the sisters Ann and Sarah Hadfield concurrently after 1852. This caused community tension, for Sarah had been the second wife of Orange L. Wight. Ann Hadfield bore George Hawley a daughter, Martha A. Hawley, about 1849 at Zodiac. Sarah Hadfield bore Orange Wight four children, the last at Hamilton Creek, Burnet County, Texas, in August 1852. Although it is known that she subsequently left Wight and went to Hawley, the immediate circumstances of the triangle are unknown. Ann Hadfield bore George Hawley a daughter on 30 March 1859 in Washington County, Utah. Turk only notes that Sarah married George Hawley before 1859. The actual date was probably in 1852 or 1853, before most of the Hawley clan left Mormon Mills in Hamilton Valley and moved on to Indian Territory. This included George Hawley and his two wives, with Sarah’s children by her first marriage to Orange L. Wight. There they reconverted to the LDS faith and moved on to Utah Territory. Sarah Hadfield Hawley died in 1864 and was buried at Pine Valley, Washington County, Utah. Her husband and her sister later moved to Galland’s Grove, Iowa, where they joined the RLDS faith.³⁹

Why, then, do early contemporary sources identify only a few individuals who practiced the doctrine? Gideon Carter, according to Heman Hale Smith, testified in a California court in 1874 that only Lyman Wight and Orange Lysander Wight practiced plural marriage in the Zodiac community, which is consistent with his sworn statement to Brigham Roberts twenty years later. Several other known Wightite accounts of Zodiac events disappeared while in the care of RLDS historian Heman C. Smith. A diary by Spencer Smith, Lyman Wight’s son-in-law, and journals by Wight and his scribe, William Leyland, were destroyed in a fire. Those parts from the destroyed works that are quoted by Heman Hale Smith in “The Lyman Wight Colony” fail to mention, perhaps not surprisingly, the practice of polygamy at Zodiac.40

Contemporary non-Mormon accounts of early Texas Mormonism downplay polygamy as a feature of Wight’s communities. Noah Smithwick, a friend of the Wightites for at least fifteen years, denied knowledge of polygamous activity among them. Samuel E. Holland, a contemporary of Lyman Wight in Burnet County from 1851 to 1853, never mentioned any practice of polygamy. Early secondary commentaries are also inaccurate. Don Biggers and J. Marvin Hunter, good amateur historians of the Texas Hill County, further confused the subject. Biggers, quoted by Hunter, recorded in 1925 the general belief that “no one knows whether they practiced polygamy.” Hunter, following the lead of Heman Hale Smith as well as Biggers, wrote that Lyman Wight was the “only one of the colony who followed” the practice, and that “[a]ll of the other men, except one, were young men and loyal to their wives.” Historian C. Stanley Banks, in “The Mormon Migration into Texas,” handled the problem of polygamy in the Lyman Wight colony by simply ignoring it.41

Biggers and Hunter may actually have believed what they wrote, or they may have been influenced by the fact that they had life-long acquaintances with many Wightite descendants in the Hill County. For example, Ezra Alpheus Chipman, the last polygamous patriarch from Wight’s colony, died on 3 June 1913 in Bandera County, at the age of ninety-five.

Hunter relied on Noah Smithwick’s statements, suggesting that Smithwick’s veracity was strengthened because of his lack of a vested concern in the Mormons. Smithwick, to the contrary, had possessed specific interests in them since 1846, when they arrived at Austin and he vouchsafed their presence and conduct. He also bought their mill and property on Hamilton Creek in 1853. Five families remained at the mill and worked for him, while three of those families emigrated to California under his guidance in 1861.

The Wightite families at Smithwick’s mill had close connections to polygamy. Several of the Hawley clan, including the family of John Hawley, stayed for a time. Mary Hawley, daughter of Pierce and sister to John, was the fourth and final wife of Wight, and the first to die, at the age of twenty-two. John F. Miller was a son-in-law to Lyman Wight and a son of George Miller, the leading polygamists in the colony. Smithwick, through the normal congress of friendly and employee relations, would have known the convoluted marital relationships of the Wightites. Smithwick, however, had the best of reasons not to discuss the matter. Many were his friends.

RLDS historians continued to underplay the extent of the practice at Zodiac. Heman Hale Smith, in a letter of 1920 to Charles Ramsdell, made some corrections “in the Lyman Wight article,” referring to his manuscript titled “The Lyman Wight Colony 1846–1858,” that he earlier had sent to the Texas historian. Smith informed Ramsdell that the practice of plural marriage among the Wight colonists “was not general . . . there being no evidence of it outside the indiscretions of Lyman and his son Orange.” Smith supported his assertion by citing Gideon Carter’s testimony at San Bernardino in 1874: that

Lyman Wight had three wives; that Orange Wight took a plural wife at Prairie La Cross, Wisconsin, a sister of Gideon Carter; and that he had married another Carter sister in 1849 at Zodiac.\textsuperscript{43}

Gideon Carter apparently answered the questions of the court strictly, not volunteering any more than what was asked. Although he boasted that he never joined the Mormon church, for nearly thirty years he had lived and associated with men who participated in the inner life of the community. Carter knew far more than that to which he testified. In 1858, he was selected, for example, for grand jury duty for Bandera County. Ten fellow members of that jury were members of the former Wight colony: I. F. Carter, E. A. Chipman, O. L. Wight, William Ballantyne, Andrew Hoffman, William Curtis, Charles Bird, B. F. Bird, George Hay, and O. B. Miles. These men were linked in plural relationships. I. F. Carter was Gideon Carter’s brother; their sisters had been plural married to Orange Wight. Ezra Chipman as well as Orange Wight had been plural married. At least one of William Ballantyne’s sisters, and most likely three, had been plural wives. Andrew Hoffman’s wife was the niece of the three Ballantyne sisters. George Hay was a brother-in-law to Andrew Hoffman and nephew of the Ballantyne sisters. William Curtis’s first wife, Marion Sutherland, had divorced him and plural married Ezra Chipman. Charles and B. F. Bird were brothers-in-law of their brother George’s wife, Eliza Curtis, the sister of William Curtis. Only Orlando B. Miles is the possible exception in the juror list; he cannot be linked definitively to a plural relationship, plural relative, or knowledge of the practice. He may have been, however, a brother or cousin to Joel S. Miles, an original Wight colonist with two wives.\textsuperscript{44}

Why, then, did Heman Hale Smith, the great-grandson of Lyman Wight, indicate a limited practice of polygamy at Zodiac to Dr. Ramsdell? Smith’s grandparents were Spencer Smith, a relative of Joseph Smith Jr., and Anna Christina Wight, a daughter of Lyman Wight by his first wife, Harriet Benton Wight. Spencer Smith was an original follower of Lyman Wight, who attempted to force Spencer into plural

\textsuperscript{43} Herman Hale Smith to Charles W. Ramsdell, 20 July 1920.

\textsuperscript{44} Turk “Mormons in Texas”, 42; Bandera County district minutes, fall term, 1858, 26:1 August 1858, Bandera County archives, Bandera, TX; see subject name listings in Turk, “Mormons in Texas.”
marriage in 1848 to Sophia Leyland. Heman C. Smith, son of Spencer and Anna Smith and father to Heman Hale Smith, was born at Zodiac at 1850. Spencer Smith and Heman C. Smith later joined the RLDS church, in which Heman C. Smith was raised, serving the Reorganized church as a general authority and church historian.

Heman C. Smith’s denial of extensive polygamy at Zodiac makes sense when the reader realizes that Joseph Smith III, the first president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and son of Joseph Smith Jr., notoriously and steadfastly denied to his death, in the face of obvious and contrary evidence, that his father was its genesis in origin and practice. Heman Hale Smith succeeded his father as RLDS church historian. Historian Smith’s assertion to Professor Ramsdell that Zodiac polygamy was limited becomes understandable in light of the way that he vigorously defended his church’s positions: namely, that polygamy began with Brigham Young, and that Brighamite polygamy affected only two men at Zodiac. The weight of the entire evidence—the fact that both Heman Smiths were immediate relatives of polygamists, the fact that they supported the RLDS denials about polygamy, and the fact that important journals, diaries, and memoirs of the Zodiac community disappeared while in their keeping—inevitably leads to the belief that their writing concerning Texas polygamy should be evaluated very carefully.45

Temple ritual, a communal economy, and polygamy were integral keys to Wightite socialization. The operations of each created a cohesive yet isolated community in the larger Hill Country society. Texas polygamy functioned not only along the frontier, but beyond the mainstream of Hill Country custom. The practice bonded its membership into a cohesive, mutual organization, aloof from the ‘foreigners’ who surrounded them. As in other Mormon communities, Wightite polygamy, although it had not led to the wellsprings of murder as in Nauvoo, still contained the seeds of its own demise and a denial of its own history.

45. See several of the examples listed in footnote 1 at the beginning of this chapter for the difficulties that the RLDS church and Joseph Smith III faced in the growing evidence that his father was the fountainhead of Latter Day Saint marriage practices.