

LOUISA BEAMAN

(Sealed April 5, 1841)



Louisa Beaman was born February 7, 1815, to Alvah Beaman and Sarah Burtt Beaman in Livonia, New York, some twenty-five miles south of Palmyra.

In 1829, Alvah became one of the earliest converts to the religion and assisted Joseph Smith as he was translating the Book of Mormon by helping to hide the golden plates. The family migrated to Kirtland, Ohio, but in 1837, Alvah died. Louisa's sister Mary married Joseph B. Noble in 1834, and by 1840, Louisa was living with the Nobles in Montrose, Iowa, and later Nauvoo, Illinois.

Cyrus Wheelock remembered some of the earliest teaching from the Prophet Joseph Smith regarding plural marriage: "The first time I recollect hearing him [Joseph Smith] teach was in Iowa, at a place called Montrose. It was at Montrose in Iowa at the house of one [Joseph] Bates Noble."¹

Noble moved to Montrose, across the Mississippi River, to Nauvoo in 1839. He stayed until late 1841, dating this event to that period.²

Noble testified in 1869: "In the fall of the year A.D. 1840, Joseph Smith, taught him the principle of Celestial marriage or a 'plurality of wives,' and that the said Joseph Smith declared that he had received a revelation from God on the subject, and that the angel of the Lord had commanded him, (Joseph Smith) to move forward in the said order of marriage, and further, that the said Joseph Smith, requested him, (Joseph Bates Noble) to step forward and assist him in carrying out the Said principle."³

As the Prophet taught in Joseph B. Noble's home, the audience included members of his own family and his wife's sister, Louisa Beaman.⁴

The Noble clan embraced the instructions and Louisa specifically accepted a plural marriage proposal from the Prophet.⁵ Joseph Noble attested several times to this marriage.

In 1869, Noble signed an affidavit affirming "that, on the fifth day of April A.D. 1841, At the City of Nauvoo, County of Hancock, State of Illinois, he married or sealed Louisa Beaman, to Joseph Smith."⁶

Noble later related that "he performed the first sealing ceremony in this dispensation in which he united Sister Louisa Beman to the Prophet Joseph in May — I think the 5th day in 1841 during the evening under an Elm tree in Nauvoo. The Bride disguised in a coat and hat."⁷

The reference to a "coat and hat" is singular. While secrecy was routine, it appears to be the only description of a plural marriage that implemented the use of costume or camouflage. No other accounts associated with Louisa Beaman (or any other of Joseph Smith's plural sealings) include such details.

In 1892, when asked about the authority he used to seal Louisa Beaman to Joseph Smith, Noble stated with a hint of pride: "I know this, that the law giver [Joseph Smith] authorized it.

... I got it all right —right from the Prophet himself. That is where I got it. ... I sealed her to him and I did a good job too.”⁸

In an 1883 stake conference, Noble provided additional details: “The Prophet gave the form of the ceremony, Elder Noble repeating the words after him.”⁹

Elsewhere he declared: “It was the first ceremony of the plural marriage performed in this dispensation and that it was done in a whisper.”¹⁰

It appears this sealing was for time and eternity and included sexual relations. ([See Appendix B below for evidences of conjugal relations.](#)) Joseph B. Noble testified in the 1892 Temple Lot trial:

Q. Do you know whether Joseph Smith ever lived any with Louisa Beaman as his wife? ...

A. I know it for I saw him in bed with her. ...

Q. What made you say the other day that Joseph Smith and that woman you sealed to him slept together that night?

A. Because they did sleep together.

Q. If you were not there that night, how do you know they slept together?

A. Well, they slept together I know. If it was not that night it was two or three nights after that.

Q. Where did they sleep together?

A. Right straight across the river at my house they slept together. ...

Q. Did he sleep with her the first night after the ceremony was performed?

A. He did.

Q. Now you say that he did sleep with her?

A. I do.

Q. How do you know he did?

A. Well I was there.

Q. And you saw them go to bed together?

A. I gave him counsel. ...

Q. What counsel did you give him?

A. I said “blow out the light and get into bed, and you will be safer there,” and he took my advice or counsel. ...

Q. Well did you stay there until the lights were blown out?

A. No sir I did not stay until they blowed out the lights then.

Q. Well you did not see him get into bed with her that time?

A. No sir.

Q. And so you don't know whether he followed your advice from your own knowledge?

A. No sir, I did not see him, but he told me he did.

Q. Well, you know from your own knowledge that he did?

A. Well, I am confident he did.

Q. But you don't know it of your own knowledge from seeing him do it?

A. No sir, for I was not there.¹¹

Louisa Beaman apparently left no accounts of the sealing ceremony or of her relationship with the Prophet. However, in 1883 “Elder Noble bore testimony to the purity of character of his sister-in-law, who was a woman of irreproachable morality, who entered into the plural marriage relation on a deep-seated conviction that the doctrine was from God.”¹² She died in Utah in 1850, an active member of the church.

[Evidences of Plural Marriage: See Appendix A](#)

[Evidences of Sexuality: See Appendix B](#)

Endnotes:

1. Cyrus Wheelock, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent's testimony, part 3, page 533, question 42.
2. David L. Clark, *Joseph Bates Noble: Polygamy and the Temple Lot Case* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 2009), 60–66; Joseph B. Noble, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent's testimony, part 3, page 393, question 20.
3. Joseph B Noble, Affidavit, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Book 1:38, 4:38; printed in Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” in *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 221.
4. Joseph B. Noble, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent's testimony, part 3, page 395, questions 39–42.
5. See discussion in David L. Clark, *Joseph Bates Noble: Polygamy and the Temple Lot Case* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 2009), 59–87.
6. Joseph F. Smith affidavit books, CHL 1:3. See also Kenney, Scott G., ed. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, Typescript. 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–85), 6:452 (February 22, 1869). Noble seems to have struggled to remember the exact date. On Sunday, December 19, 1880, Charles L. Walker reported in his journal: “Br Nobles made a few remarks on the celestial order of marriage, He being the man who sealed Louisa Beaman to the Prophet Joseph Smith in

- 1840 under his instructions.” A. Karl Larson and Katherine Miles Larson, *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2 vols. (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2:515.
7. Quoted in Franklin D. Richards Journal, January 22, 1869, MS 1215, LDS CHL.
 8. Joseph Bates Noble, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent’s testimony, part 3, pages 432, 436, questions 793, 799, 861; sentence order reversed.
 9. Notes from a quarterly stake conference held at Centerville, Davis County, Utah, June 11, 1883; spelling standardized. Quoted in Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 232–33.
 10. George F. Richards Journals, June 10, 1883, CHL.
 11. Joseph B. Noble, Deposition, Temple Lot Case, part 3, pages 396, 426–27, questions, 52–53, 681–704. The complete transcript of the Temple Lot Case is more than 1,750 pages long (copies at the Community of Christ Archives and microfilm at LDS Church History Library). A shortened version has been available from the RLDS Church (now Community of Christ) with much of the testimony regarding plural marriage in Nauvoo omitted (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Publishing House, 1893); Price Publishing (Independence, Mo., 2003) reprints the RLDS version. See also Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community*, 310n104.
 12. Notes from a quarterly stake conference held at Centerville, Davis County, Utah, June 11, 1883; spelling standardized. Quoted in Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 232–33.

Appendix A—Evidences of Joseph Smith’s plural sealing to Louisa Beaman

- Joseph B. Noble, Affidavit, June 26, 1869, Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Books, 1:3, 4:1.
- George A. Smith, Letter to Joseph Smith III, October 9, 1869.
- Franklin D. Richards, Journal, January 22, 1869.
- Joseph B. Noble, quoted in Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruffs Journal*, 6:452, February 22, 1869.¹
- William Clayton, Affidavit, February 16, 1874.
- Almera Johnson, Affidavit, August 1, 1883.
- Joseph B. Noble, quoted in Karl A. Larson and Katherine Miles Larson, eds., *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2:515.
- Joseph Bates Noble, Testimony at the Temple Lot Case, Part 3, pp. 432, 436, questions 793, 799, 861.
- Joseph B. Noble, Affidavit, quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 2:102.
- Joseph B. Noble, quoted in Franklin D. Richards, Journal, January 22, 1869 (loose sheet, numbered 145).

- Joseph Noble, Address, June 11, 1883, at Centerville, Utah, stake conference, in *Journal History*.
- Eliza R. Snow, “First list of wives,” Document #1, Andrew Jenson Papers, MS 17956, Box 49, fd. 16.
- Erastus Snow, Affidavit, in Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” 232.
- Erastus Snow, St. George Utah Stake [Conference], General Minutes, Sunday, June 17, 1883, 2 p.m., LR 7836 11, Reel 1.
- Bennett, *The History of the Saints*, 256: “Miss L***** B*****.”
- Orson Pratt, quoted in “Report of Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith,” 788. Date of sealing given but Louisa=s name not provided.
- Ann Eliza Webb Young, *Wife No. 19*, 72.
- Benjamin Winchester, Testimony to Joseph Smith III, Council Bluffs, Iowa, November 27, 1900, Community of Christ Archives.
- Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” 239; biography of Joseph B. Noble.
- Nauvoo Temple Proxy Marriage to Joseph Smith, January 14, 1846. Brown, *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings*, 281.
- Joseph Smith III, Letter to E. C. Brand, n.d. [likely early 1880s] Letter Press Book #4, pp. 63–67.
- Wilford Woodruff, “Historian’s Private Journal,” (one volume, 1858-1878), undated statement written between a July 1, 1866 entry and a November 18, 1874 entry. Date is 1840. See chart below.
- Johnson, *My Life’s Review*, 96.
- [Oliver Olney?], uncatalogued and untitled manuscript, Western Americana MSS, Beinecke Library, Yale University, folder labeled “Nauvoo Female Society.” Some of the writing on the document is dated October 18, 1843.

Appendix B — Evidences of Sexuality

The earliest evidence of sexual relations between Joseph Smith and Louisa Beaman was reported by John C. Bennett. In his 1842 *History of the Saints*, he wrote: “He [Joseph Smith] then went off to see Miss Louisa Beaman, at the house of Mrs. Sherman, and remained with her about two hours.”¹ Bennett’s actual relationship with the Prophet is controversial. In light of Bennett’s credibility problems, such statements must be evaluated with caution.

Joseph B. Noble, Louisa’s brother-in-law, however, made a plain statement in 1892 in a deposition taken in the Temple Lot Case establishing that the couple had intimate relations.²

Benjamin Winchester, who had a stormy relationship with the Prophet and other Church leaders and was excommunicated in September 1844, also corroborates conjugality in a 1900 statement:

Q. Were you personally acquainted with any of Smith’s wives?

A. Yes, but especially with Louisa Beaman from a girl. About the year 43 Joseph Smith took rooms for her in my father’s house, and Smith came to see her about once a week.

Q. Did they sleep together?

A. Yes they did.

Q. Was there only one bed in the room?

A. Yes just one bed.

Q. Are you sure it was in 1843?

A. No, but it was about that time, or from 42 to 44.³

Endnotes to Appendix B:

1. John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints: Or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, 229.
2. Joseph B. Noble, Deposition, Temple Lot Case, Part 3, pp. 396, 426-27, questions, 52–53, 681–704. The complete transcript of the Temple Lot Case is more than 1,750 pages long (copies at the Community of Christ Archives and microfilm at LDS Church History Library). A shortened version has been available from the RLDS Church (now Community of Christ) with much of the testimony regarding plural marriage in Nauvoo omitted (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Publishing House, 1893); Price Publishing (Independence, Mo., 2003) reprints the RLDS version. See also Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community*, 310n104.
3. Benjamin Winchester, Testimony to Joseph Smith III, Council Bluffs, Iowa, November 27, 1900.