

## MARINDA NANCY JOHNSON

(Two Sealing Dates: April 1842 and May 1843)



Marinda Nancy Johnson was born on June 28, 1815, in Pomfret, Vermont, to John Johnson and Alice Jacobs. The Johnsons moved to Hiram, Ohio, in 1818. After hearing about the Restoration in the winter of 1830, they traveled to Kirtland to meet the Prophet and were baptized. They invited the Smith family to stay with them at Hiram, so Joseph and Emma moved in and were living there in the spring of 1832.



The relationship between Joseph Smith and Marinda Nancy Johnson is difficult to decipher due to a lack of evidence. Todd Compton assessed: “For such an important woman, Marinda is surprisingly under documented. I know of no holograph by her and have found only four letters to her.”<sup>1</sup> “Marinda left no known reference to the marriage [with Joseph Smith], beyond signing an affidavit attesting that it happened.”<sup>2</sup>

Two separate sealing dates for Joseph Smith’s marriage to Marinda Nancy Johnson are available. Joseph Smith’s journal contains a list of a few of his plural wives written after the July 14, 1843, entry in the handwriting of Thomas Bullock: “April 42 Marinda Johnson to Joseph Smith.”<sup>3</sup>

Four months before, Joseph Smith received a revelation for her:

Verily thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have called upon me to know my will concerning my handmaid Nancy Marinda Hyde — behold it is my will that she should have a better place prepared for her, than that in which she now lives, in order that her life may be spared unto her; therefore go and say unto my servant, Ebenezer Robinson, and to my handmaid his wife — Let them open their doors and take her and her children into their house and take care of them faithfully and kindly unto my servant Orson Hyde returns from his mission, or until some other provision can be made for her welfare and safety. Let them to these things and spare not, and I the Lord will bless them and heal them if they do it not grudgingly, saith the Lord God; and she shall be a blessing unto them; and let my handmaid Nancy Marinda Hyde hearken to the counsel of my servant Joseph in all things whatsoever he shall teach unto her, and it shall be a blessing upon her and upon her children after her, unto her justification, saith the Lord.<sup>4</sup>

It is not known whether the statement “let my handmaid Nancy Marinda Hyde hearken to the counsel of my servant Joseph in all things whatsoever he shall teach unto her” is a general admonition or a specific reference, perhaps to plural marriage.

Marinda personally testified concerning a second sealing through a signed affidavit “that on the [blank] day of May A.D. 1843, at the City of Nauvoo, County of Hancock, State of Illinois, She was married or Sealed to Joseph Smith, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, by Brigham Young, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, of Said Church, according to the

laws of the same, regulating Marriage; in the presence of Eliza Maria Partridge Lyman, and Emily Dow Partridge Young.”<sup>5</sup>

Generally, a signed affidavit is considered more reliable than an entry in a journal by a scribe from an unknown source, but whether the first date is in error or two sealing ceremonies were performed is unclear.

If the 1842 date for the sealing between Joseph and Marinda marriage is correct, then Joseph may have been sealed to Marinda in an eternity-only sealing without Orson Hyde’s knowledge. However, John D. Lee remembered that Orson gave his permission: “Hyde’s wife, with his consent, was sealed to Joseph for an eternal state.”<sup>6</sup>

Whatever the sequence, Orson appealed to Joseph to perform his own plural marriage weeks after returning from his mission, stating in 1869: “In the month of February or March, 1843, I was married to Miss Martha R. Browitt, by Joseph Smith, the martyred prophet, and by him she was sealed to me for time and all eternity in Nauvoo, Illinois.”<sup>7</sup>

The details of the relationship between Marinda and the Prophet will probably never be known. If Marinda had chosen Joseph as her eternal husband, she apparently changed her mind because she chose to be sealed to her legal husband Orson Hyde in the Nauvoo temple on January 11, 1846.<sup>8</sup>

Marinda Nancy Johnson relocated to Salt Lake City in 1852 and later divorced Orson Hyde. She died in 1886, a member of the church.

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

## Endnotes:

1. Todd Compton, “Remember Me in My Affliction”: Louisa Beaman and Eliza R. Snow Letters, 1849,” *Journal of Mormon History* 25, no. 2 (Fall 1999), 48.
2. Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 229.
3. Photography of hologram in Richard E. Turley, Jr. *Selected Collections from the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002): 1: DVD 20. See also Scott Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 396.
4. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Volume 2, Journal, 1832–1842* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 361; revelation is dated “Dcr 2d 1841.” See also *History of the Church* 4:467.
5. Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:15, 4:15, CHL.
6. John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled, or, The Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop*, John D. Lee and W. W. Bishop, eds. (St. Louis: Byron, Brand, 1877), 147. Lee added “but I do not assert the fact.”
7. Affidavit of Orson Hyde, September 15, 1869, MS 3423, CHL; affidavit was copied into Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 2:45; published in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1905), 74.

8. Lisle Brown incorrectly lists a proxy sealing between Marinda and Joseph Smith for January 11, 1846. In fact, the sealing that day was between Marinda and her legal husband, Apostle Orson Hyde. See Thomas Milton Tinney, *The Royal Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr.* (Salt Lake City: Tinney-Greene Family Organization, 1973), 8 (first proxy sealing to the Prophet occurred January 12).

## **Appendix — Evidences of Joseph Smith’s Sealing to Marinda Nancy Johnson:**

- Joseph Smith, Journal, a list of marriages in the handwriting of Thomas Bullock, entered after July 14, 1843: “Apr 42 Marinda Johnson to Joseph Smith.” Turley, Selected Collections, Vol. 1, DVD #20, MS155\_1\_6\_320.jpg.; it is written in the hand of a different scribe from previous entries on an undated page after the final entry in that journal dated July 14, 1843. Transcribed in Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, 396.
- Marinda Nancy Johnson Hyde, Affidavit, May 1, 1869, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:15, 4:15.
- Emmeline Wells, Letter to Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, March 12, 1887.
- Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 147.