

RUTH VOSE

(Sealed February or May 1843)



Born February 26, 1808, in Watertown, Massachusetts, Ruth Vose was one of two children of Mark and Sally Vose. Baptized by Brigham Young August of 1836, Ruth married non-Mormon Edward Sayers on January 23, 1841. The *Times and Seasons* reported: "In St. Louis, Mo. Jan. 23rd, by Elder A. P. Rockwood Mr. E. Sayers to Miss Ruth D. Vose formerly of Boston, Mass."¹

Joseph Smith became closely associated with the Sayers when hiding from Missouri lawmen in August of 1842.² After evading the Missouri sheriff, Joseph "proceeded through the timber to Brother Sayers' house where he was very kindly received and made welcome."³ William Clayton, recorded:

On the 11th [August 1842], the sheriffs returned, but the Prophet had concluded to keep out of their reach; and, consequently, they could not find him. The sheriff tarried in Nauvoo several days, frequently uttering heavy threats to be executed if the President failed to give himself up, but the officer finally concluded to leave the city. The President remained secure at Brother Sayers' of the north of the city, about a mile from the corporation, where he was visited frequently by Sister Emma and his brethren.⁴

Apparently, Joseph Smith believed that the officers would be less inclined to search the home of a non-member. During the stay, the Prophet became good friends with Edward, although Ruth's husband felt no desire to convert.

In 1869, Ruth signed an affidavit that reads:

Be it remembered that on this first day of May, A.D. 1869, personally appeared before me, Elias Smith, Probate Judge for Said County, Ruth Vose Sayers who was by me Sworn in due form of law and upon her oath Saith that on [blank] day of February 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 Hyrum Smith, Presiding Patriarch of Said Church, according to the laws of the Same, regulating Marriage; in the presence [blank].⁵

Ruth states the sealing was performed by Hyrum Smith who did not accept plural marriage until several months later on May 26, 1843. Therefore, either the identity of the sealer or the date is in error. Regardless, Ruth Vose's sealing to Joseph Smith is important among all of the Prophet's plural marriages to legally married women because it is documented to have been for eternity only, not time and eternity and therefore did not include sexual relations.⁶

Within the research papers of Andrew Jenson, author of the 1887 *Historical Record* article on Joseph Smith's plural wives, is the following statement:

Sister Ruth/ Mrs. Sayers was married in her youth to Mr. Edward Sayers, a thoroughly practical horticulturist and florist, and though he was not a member of the Church, yet he willingly joined his fortune with her and they reached Nauvoo together some time in the year 1841;

While there the strongest affection sprang up between the Prophet Joseph and Mr. Sayers. The latter not attaching much importance to the theory of a future life insisted that his wife Ruth should be sealed to the Prophet for eternity, as he himself should only claim her in this life. She was accordingly then sealed to the Prophet in Emma Smith's presence and thus were became numbered among the Prophets plural wives. She however continued to live with Mr. Sayers and remained with her husband until his death.⁷

Another document confirms that concerning Joseph's plural sealing to Ruth Sayers: "Joseph did not pick that woman. She went to see whether she should marry her husband for eternity."⁸

Ruth and Edward chose to return to Boston where they stayed until 1849. She was unable to be sealed by proxy to Joseph in the Nauvoo temple, but Church President Lorenzo Snow arranged for a vicarious ceremony to be performed for Ruth in the Salt Lake Temple in 1899.⁹ After their five-year stay in Boston, Ruth and Edward moved to Utah, reuniting with old acquaintances.

Edward died in 1861 and Ruth in 1884. Her obituary gives a glimpse of her demeanor: "Tall and erect in figure, a countenance always beaming with human kindness, charitable to the poor and ever ready to comfort the disconsolate, she endeared herself to her associates. She was a woman of brilliant conversational powers and possessed a ready fund of valuable information, especially upon topics of interest to the Saints. She was never tired of relating incidents of her Boston life nor of dwelling upon Gospel themes and the days of Joseph and Hyrum."¹⁰

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

Endnotes:

1. "HYMENEAL. MARRIED," *Times and Seasons*, 2 (February 15, 1841): 324.
2. See Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Volume 2, Journal, 1832–1842* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 403–18 (August 11–17, 1842).
3. *History of the Church*, 5:90.
4. George D. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle; The Journals of William Clayton*, 533.
5. Ruth Vose, Affidavit, May 1, 1869, Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Books, 1:9; see also 4:9.
6. Recognizing that Joseph Smith's marriages could have been for either "time and eternity" or just "eternity," P.P. Kelley questioned Malissa Lott in 1892 regarding the type of sealing ceremony that she experienced with the him: "Did you live with Joseph Smith as his wife, or were you just simply sealed to him for eternity?" (Temple Lot Case, complete transcript, part 3, pages 97, questions 94.) Malissa, who was single at the time of her sealing to the Prophet, had earlier stated: "I was married to him for time and all eternity." (Ibid., page 95, question 56.
7. Andrew Jenson Papers [ca. 1871–1942], LDS Archives. It appears that the documents in these folders were used to compile Jenson's 1887 *Historical Record* article on plural marriage. See Joseph F. Smith affidavit books, LDS Archives, 1:9 for date of this sealing "February A.D.

1843.”However the affidavit states that the sealing was performed by Hyrum Smith, which is unlikely because Hyrum did not accept plural marriage until May of that year.

8. Recorded by D. Michael Quinn Papers, Yale University, Addition—Uncat WA MS 244 (Accession:19990209-c) bx 1. I have been unable to identify the primary document to verify this quotation.
9. Salt Lake Temple Sealing Records, Book D, 243, April 4, 1899; Thomas Milton Tinney, *The Royal Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr.* (Salt Lake City: Tinney-Greene Family Organization, 1973), 41.
10. “Ruth Sayers,” *Deseret News Weekly*, August 20, 1884, 496.

Appendix — Evidences of Joseph Smith’s Sealing to Ruth Vose

- Ruth Vose, Affidavit, May 1, 1869, Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Books, 1:9, 4:9.
- Eliza R. Snow, “First list of wives,” Document #1, Andrew Jenson Papers, MS 17956, Box 49, fd. 16.
- Jenson, Documents #5 and #16, Andrew Jenson Papers, MS 17956, Box 49, fd. 16.
- Proxy sealing to Joseph Smith, April 4, 1899, under the direction of President Lorenzo Snow, Salt Lake Temple Sealing Records, Book D, 243, GS film, 184,590, LDS Family History Library. Tinney, “The Royal Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith” 41, 63.
- Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” 234.