

ZINA HUNTINGTON

(Sealed October 27, 1841)



Zina Diantha Huntington was born on January 31, 1821, in Watertown, New York, the fourth of ten children of William Huntington and Zina Baker. While the Huntingtons heard of Joseph Smith in 1831, they did not join the church until 1835 after they had read the Book of Mormon several times. The following year they moved to Kirtland where they lived until 1838. Thereafter they stayed in Missouri eleven months and then relocated to Nauvoo.

In 1840, Zina met Henry Jacobs and agreed to wed him. Oa Cannon, Zina's biographer, wrote:

While Zina and her brothers were living with the Prophet and Emma she met and became engaged to Henry Bailey Jacobs. They asked the Prophet to perform their marriage ceremony which was to be held at the County Clerk's office [March 7, 1841]. When the couple arrived the Prophet was not there. After a wait, they decided to ask the clerk, John C. Bennett, if he would perform the marriage, which he did. When the couple later met the Prophet, Zina asked him why he hadn't come as he had promised. He told her it had been made known to him that she was to be his Celestial Wife and he could not give to another one who had been given to him.¹



On May 1, 1869, Zina Huntington signed the following affidavit:

Be it remembered that on this first day of May A.D. eighteen sixty nine before me Elias Smith Probate Judge for Said County personally appeared, Zina Diantha Huntington ^Young^ who was by me Sworn in due form of law, and upon her oath Saith, that on the twenty-Seventh day of October A.D. 1841, 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 Dimick B. Huntington, a High Priest in Said Church, according to the laws of the same; regulating marriage; In the presence of Fanny Maria Huntington.²

Concerning her October 27 sealing to Joseph Smith, Zina also penned:

When I heard that God had revealed the law of celestial marriag that we would have the privilige of associating in family relationship in the/ worlds to come I searched the scripture & buy [by] humble prayer to my Heavenly Father I obtained a testimony for himself [sic.] that God had required that order to be established in his church. I mad[e] a greater sacrificse than to give my life for I never anticipated a gain to be look uppon as an honorable woman by those I dearly loved [How] could I compremise conscience [and] lay aside the sure testimony of the spiret of God for the Glory of this world[?]"³

Like other eternity-only plural wives, Zina referred to the events and the process that led up to her sealing to the Prophet, but she left no record discussing any special interactions with him after the marriage ceremony.

In an 1898 interview with RLDS Elder John W. Wight, Zina D. Huntington was questioned regarding her relationship with the Prophet.

Q. How, then, could you have been sealed to Joseph Smith without first having heard the doctrine of plural marriage?

A. Joseph Smith sent my brother Dimick to explain it to me.

Q. It is a fact, then, that you were never taught it by Joseph Smith himself?

A. My brother Dimick told me what Joseph had told him. I knew it was from the Lord, and I received it. Joseph did not come until afterward.

Q. You mean by that, then, that after your brother Dimick had returned to Joseph and given him the information that you had accepted such teaching, that Joseph then came to you, prior to having been sealed, and taught you the doctrine of plural marriage?

A. I told you that the Lord had revealed to Joseph Smith that he was to marry me. I received it from Joseph through my brother Dimick.

Q. Who was present at the time that Joseph taught you the doctrine of sealing, besides, yourself and Joseph?

A. My brother Dimick.⁴

A portion of an 1887 newspaper article based upon an interview with Zina Huntington affirms that she was not Joseph Smith's first plural wife in Nauvoo: "Louisa Beman, married to the Prophet April 5, 1841 ... the first woman of modern times who ventured into polygamy."⁵ If Zina's sealing preceded Louisa, it seems likely that she would have clarified it.⁶

In addition, in the 1898 interview with RLDS elder John W. Wight and Zina provided clarifying responses regarding the type of sealing she experienced with the Prophet:

Q. "Then it is a fact, Mrs. [Zina] Young, is it not, that you married Mr. Smith at the same time you were married to Mr. [Henry] Jacobs?"

A. "What right have you to ask such questions? I was sealed to Joseph Smith for eternity."⁷

Q. "Mrs. Young, you claim, I believe, that you were not married to him for time?"

A. "For eternity. I was married to Mr. Jacobs, but the marriage was unhappy and we parted."...

Q. "I presume you are aware of the fact that it is claimed by your church that the marriage with Mr. Jacobs was not an agreeable one."

A. "That is true." . . .

Q. "It is a fact then, Mrs. Young, that Joseph was not married to you only in the sense of being sealed for eternity?"

A. “As his wife for time and eternity.”

Q. “Mrs. Young, you have answered that question in two ways; for time, and for time and eternity.”

A. “I meant for eternity.”⁸

When the interviewer Wight pointed out the confusion, Zina clarified that her sealing was “for eternity.”⁹ Critics might assert that Zina was attempting to cover up polyandrous sexual relations. However, Zina was undoubtedly aware that the RLDS interviewer was trying to establish that Joseph Smith did not experience conjugal relations with anyone but Emma, his legal wife. An admission by Zina that her marriage was for eternity only and without sexual relations played right into Wight’s hands by providing him with the exact evidence he was seeking. Nonetheless, Zina knew that some of Joseph’s plural marriages were for time and eternity and included connubial relations. As a consequence, she may have been reticent to comply with Wight’s designs by providing evidence that might have used to perpetuate a deception.

Whatever the relationship between Zina and Henry Jacobs during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, it is clear that Zina and Henry were united after the martyrdom since she conceived a son with him approximately June 30, 1845.

When Henry and Zina attended the Nauvoo Temple on February 2, Henry stood as a witness as Zina was resealed to Joseph Smith for eternity. At this point, a strange thing occurred. Zina, who was seven months pregnant with Henry’s child, was sealed to Brigham Young for time. The motivations for this sealing are unclear. Reportedly, Joseph Smith asked the Twelve to marry his widows to take care of them, but Zina needed no such support as Henry was a dutiful husband.¹⁰

Zina’s dissatisfaction with her marriage to Henry may have played a role. She told an interviewer in 1898: “I was married to Mr. Jacobs, but the marriage was unhappy and we parted.”¹¹ She also characterized the union as “a most unhappy and ill-assorted marriage.”¹² Whether she had privately met with Brigham Young and requested a separation from Henry is unknown.

Despite her February 2, 1846, temple marriage for time to Brigham, Zina traveled with Henry as they left Nauvoo for the West just five days later. Henry cared for pregnant Zina who delivered their second child, Henry Chariton Jacobs, on March 22 at the crossing of the Chariton River in Iowa. A little over two months later while camped at Mt. Pisgah, Iowa, Brigham Young called Henry on a mission to England, apparently informing him that Zina was no longer his wife and advising him to marry another wife.

Despite these heart-wrenching proceedings, Henry Jacobs remained true to his faith and to Brigham Young, writing to Zina on June 25, less than a month after leaving on his mission: “I do not blame any person ... may the Lord our Father Bless Brother Brigham and ... tell him for me I have no feelings against him nor never had.”¹³

Within weeks as a missionary, Henry had proposed to two different women.¹⁴ He went on to wed three more times with each union ending in divorce.¹⁵

In the wake of her religious divorce from Henry, Zina moved closer to the inner circle of Brigham Young’s plural wives where she was accepted and cared for until arriving at Salt Lake City on September 20, 1848. With Brigham’s help and assistance from her brothers Dimick, Oliver, and

William, she was established in a small cabin in the central fort. Zina’s biographers recount the next events:

In early February 1849, Brigham stopped by — apparently unannounced — one Sunday evening, and the two “had a very agreeable viset.” ... The next week, on 13 February, Zina for the first time invited Brigham to her home for supper. Zina does not mention seeing her husband again for a month. Then on 15 March Brigham reappeared, and this time, she records briefly, he “stayed the night.” The next day Zina “prepared to move”—evidently as a result of Brigham’s instructions the previous night.

The following day Zina reflected in her journal: “Many are the reflections of my minde. My Father & mother is not;]Joseph is not; BY [Brigham Young] is very kinde indeed.”¹⁷ Regarding this entry, Bradley and Woodward ask: “Why, on the eve of this public change in her marital status, twenty-four hours after what was probably the consummation of her marriage with Brigham Young, does she linger over the fact that her father, mother, and idolized prophet-husband Joseph Smith are dead before reminding herself that Brigham ‘is very kinde indeed’? ... Conspicuous by his absence from this list of loved ones is the still-living Henry Jacobs who, by every indication, loved her passionately. Where were her memories of him?”¹⁸

Like the experiences of other women with legal husbands, Zina’s plural marriages are odd even by polygamy standards. They are polyandrous in a ceremonial sense, but sexually, they seem to represent consecutive matrimonies to Henry and then Brigham. That her sealing to Joseph Smith was for eternity only and without conjugality or for time and eternity and consummated is undocumented, except for Zina’s one statement in the Wight interview, and will probably never be known. Regardless, there is no evidence of polyandrous sexuality in any of Zina’s marriages.

Zina Huntington sent a letter to Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner on June 27, 1886, the anniversary of Joseph Smith’s martyrdom:

We remember this day, of all days to us. I went into Sister Eliza’s. We talked over our past a little, then Sister E. spoke in tongues to comfort and cheer us, and how the vale was thinning as we advanced I cannot tel but you will feel the spirit of it.

At 3 PM Sister Emily P Young sent over for Susan, and Sister Presendia was there, to be administered [to.] [...] we left her resting. I wonder what Joseph will want next to go on with the work in the other Land just so we are prepared all right. I hope she will soon be restored.¹⁹

Zina served as the third General President of the Relief Society, set apart on April 8, 1888, and as the first Matron of the Salt Lake Temple in 1893. Eight years later she died firm in the faith she had sacrificed for most of her life.

In an 1895 memoir she reflected: “I received a testimony for myself from the Lord of this work, and that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God before I ever saw him, while I resided in the state of New York, given in answer to prayer. I knew him in his lifetime, and know him to have been a great, true man, and a servant of God. ... I wish to bear my testimony to the principle of celestial marriage, that it is true.”²⁰

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

Endnotes:

1. Oa Jacobs Cannon, "History of Henry Bailey Jacobs," MS 6891 1, CHL.
2. Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:5, CHL.
3. Zina D. H. Young—Undated Biographical Sketch, in Zina Card Brown Collection, MS 4780, Box 2, Fd. 17 (on Reel 2).
4. John Wight, "Evidence from Zina D. Huntington Young," ((Interview with Zina, October 1, 1898, *Saints Herald* 52 (Januray 11, 1905): 29; see also in Martha Sonntag Bradley and Mary Brown Firmage Woodward, *Four Zinas: A Story of Mothers and Daughters on the Mormon Frontier* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2000), 114.
5. "J.J.J.," "Two Prophets' Widows," *St. Louis Globe Democrat*. August 18, 1887:6. This newspaper article quotes Zina Huntington who in turn recites the *Historical Record* where "Louisa Beman" is listed first and Fanny Alger second of Joseph Smith's plural wives.
6. Eliza R. Snow is interviewed later in the article, but she does not address the issue of the chronology of Joseph Smith's plural sealings, including those to Louisa Beaman, Zina Huntington and more importantly, Fanny Alger's marriage that occurred several years earlier in Kirtland.
7. In her biography of Zina Huntington, Oa Cannon corroborated this view: "Seven months after their marriage, Zina was sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith for eternity. This sealing took place on October 27, 1841 with Zina's brother, Dimick, officiating and Fanny A. Huntington present as a witness. Three months later Zina gave birth to her first son, Zebulon." (Cannon, Oa Jacobs, "Zina D. H. Young," MS 6891 2, CHL.)
8. Wight interview, "Evidence from Zina D. Huntington Young," *Saints Herald*, January 11, 1905, 29.
9. Family tradition supports this interpretation. Oa Jacobs Cannon, granddaughter of Zina Huntington, wrote: "Henry obeyed the voice of the Prophet and signed a slip which is still in the Salt Lake Temple agreeing that his marriage (civil) should remain for time only and allowing her to be sealed for eternity to the Prophet Joseph Smith." (Cannon, Oa Jacobs, "Zina D. H. Young," MS 6891 2, CHL.)
10. Susa Young Gates, Undated and untitled statement, Susa Young Gates Papers, Box 12, fd. 2, p. 78.
11. Zina D. Huntington Jacobs Young, quoted in Wight, "Interview: Evidence from Zina D. Huntington Young, October 1, 1898," 29; see also Bradley and Woodward, *Four Zinas*, 114.
12. [Emmeline B. Wells] "A Distinguished Woman: Zina D. H. Young," 99. It is possible that this is Wells's assessment rather than a quotation from Zina. However, Zina lived until 1901, and the women were neighbors and associates in the Relief Society and other organizations.
13. Henry Bailey Jacobs, Letter to Zina D. H. Young, June 25, 1846, Zina D. H. Young Collection, quoted in Bradley and Woodward, *Four Zinas*, 153.
14. Bradley and Woodward, *Four Zinas*, 153; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 88.
15. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 660.
16. Bradley and Woodward, *Four Zinas*, 183.
17. Quoted in Bradley and Woodward, *Four Zinas*, 184.
18. Bradley and Woodward, *Four Zinas*, 184.
19. Zina D. Young to Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, June 27, 1886, Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Collection, MSS 363, BYU HBLI Special Collections, item 9.

20. Zina Huntington, et. al *Salt Lake Herald Church and Farm Supplement*, January 12, 1895: 212.

Appendix — Evidences of Joseph Smith's Sealing to Zina Huntington

- Zina D. Huntington Affidavit, May 1, 1869, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:5, 4:5,
- Malissa Lott, "First list of wives," Document #1, Andrew Jenson Papers, MS 17956, Box 49, fd. 16.
- Jenson, "Plural Marriage," 233.
- Oliver Huntington, Journal, February 18, 1883, October 27, 1887.
- John Wight, interviewer, "Evidence from Zina D. Huntington Young, October 1, 1898," Saints Herald 52 (January 11, 1905): 28–30.
- Emmeline B. Wells, "A Distinguished Woman: Zina D. H. Young," 99.
- William Hall, *The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed*, 43–44.
- John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, edited by W. W. Bishop, 132.
- Nauvoo Temple proxy marriage to Joseph Smith, February 2, 1846, in Brown, *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings*, 284.
- Joseph Smith III, Letter to Bro. E. C. Brand, n.d., [likely early 1880s] Letter Press Book 4, 63–67.
- Jane Wilkie Hooper Blood, *Autobiography and Abridged Diary*, edited by Ivey Hooper Blood Hill, 241, July 22, 1892.
- 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 for 1840. See chart below.