

Polygamy and Mormon Church Leaders
Orson Pratt
September 19, 1811 – October 3, 1881

“Here was my husband, gray headed, taking to his bed young girls in mockery of marriage. Of course there could be no joy for him in such an intercourse except for the indulgence of his fanaticism and of something else, perhaps, which I hesitate to mention.” – Sarah Marinda Bates Pratt, Wife #1 (Van Wagoner, Sarah Pratt: The Shaping of an Apostate, *Dialogue, Journal of Mormon Thought* Vol. 19, Number 2, Summer 1986, pg 92.)

Orson Pratt was baptized on his nineteenth birthday in 1830 by his older brother Parley who had just converted to Mormonism just a few weeks earlier. He was one of the original twelve Mormon apostles, ex-communicated in 1842 for arguing with Joseph Smith about polygamy and then reinstated as a member and apostle in January 1843.

Despite his contentions with Smith over the accusation Smith had hit on his wife Sarah, Orson soon became enamored with the Church again and became an ardent advocate of polygamy, marrying ten women with whom he fathered 45 children.

He served as Britain’s Mission President from 1848-1851 and served a mission in Austria in 1865 although they were eventually kicked out of the country by the Austrian government.

Orson was a self-motivated man, making him a viable asset to the Church.






Pratt also served as Speaker of the House for Utah Territorial Legislature and was an elected member of the Utah Legislative Committee seven times. Keep in mind he did all this while serving missions, farming, teaching school and writing missionary pamphlets. (LDS Biographical Encyclopedia 1:87)


His first wife Sarah became an outspoken advocate against polygamy and was eventually excommunicated for voicing her opinions. She lashed out publicly against her husband Orson for marrying young women one after another. His tenth wife was actually younger than a daughter he had with his first wife Sarah.

Orson had open and very public disagreements with Brigham Young on several occasions and this is what many believe placed him out of reach in becoming a prophet of the Church who would succeed Brigham. His disagreements ranged from the Adam-god theory, fostering doubts regarding Smith’s calling to be a prophet and his own preconceived ideas of all material things of the universe being immortal.

He served as **Church Historian** from 1874 until his death in 1881, authored many pamphlets in addition to the well known Mormon publication “The Seer”. The Seer was a periodical written for the purpose of giving outsiders the inside knowledge of the more peculiar aspects of Mormonism. Pratt had become a staunch defender of polygamy and held a belief in the theory that all material was eternal. You can access the works here or read all of them in book-form where they’ve been compiled in chronological order.

Orson Pratt was the last of the original twelve LDS apostles and died from complications of diabetes. His funeral was held at the General Conference on October 7, 1881.

		Wife/Age @ marriage (Pratt's age)	Marriage date	Kids	Other info	Wife's marital status
1		Sarah Marinda Bates – 19 (24)	7/4/1836	12	Died in SLC 12/25/1888	Single
2		Charlotte (Charlatte) Bishop – 19 (31)	3/10/1843	0	Our genealogy link says Orson married her and she died. Orson Pratt Brown's site states she left him in 1845 & married a Mr. Tyler.	Single
3		Mary Ann Merrill – 25 (35)	3/27/1845	5	Died in Provo 12/12/1903	Single
4		Sarah Louise Chandler – 23 (34)	1/17/1846	0	Died in Mt. Pisga, Pottawattamie, IA 6/1846.	Single
5		Adelia Ann Bishop – 30 (34)	1/13/1846	6	Died in SLC 12/29/1913	Single
6		Marion Ross – 22 (40)	2/19/1852	6	Died in SLC 7/19/1901. She adopted 7 other kids.	Single
7		Sarah Louisa Lewis – 21 (41)	6/21/1853	1	Died in SLC 9/27/1855. Their daughter Willow died 10/27/1854 @ 7 wks of age.	Single

8		Juliaette Ann Phelps – 16 (44)	12/14/1855	7	Died in Provo 3/13/1919	Single
9		Eliza Crooks – 28 (45)	7/24/1858	5	Died 1/9/1869 In Toole from childbed fever 2-3 wks after giving birth to 5 th child. 1 st child died @ 4 yrs old. 3 rd died @ 15 yrs. 4 th @ birth. 5 th @ 20 yrs.	Single
10		Margaret Graham – 16 (57)	12/28/1868	3	She was younger than his daughter Celestia. Died in SLC 3/13/1907. Married Joseph Dickman – 5 kids w/ him. Had 3 kids w/ unknown 2 nd husband.	Single