

Polygamy and Mormon Church Leaders
Dominicus Carter
June 21, 1806 – February 2, 1884

Dominicus Carter made his appearance on earth at the same time [Lewis and Clark](#) were making their way home from their famous exploration. Like the names of Lewis and Clark conjures up images of men destined for success, so too, does the name Dominicus, or at least in theory. However in this case, if success was to be found you'd have to look at the number of kids Dominicus fathered, and not for any remarkable discovery.

Carter was an average man, born to average parents, at a time when America was anything but. Having just staked her claim as a world leader, the majority of her citizens were looking at long, successful lives if they were willing to work for it.

Alas, not everyone was eager to jump aboard the same bandwagon. Some folks meandered down a divergent path by not taking advantage of the wholesome opportunities God blessed the country with. They felt more inclined to try their hand at garnering sympathy off the unsuspecting, and oft times found themselves in more trouble than they originally bargained for.

Such was the case with the [Mr. Dominicus Carter](#) we're looking at here. Through no fault of his own, he had virtually no formal schooling in his childhood, but he was trained in farming and blacksmithing, which proved to be very handy for him in later years. Mr. Carter, and his wife Lydia, heard about Mormonism and evidently joined their ranks in 1834 while living in Kirtland, Ohio.

Believing the stories of Mormon persecution, Carter packed up his family in 1838 and without looking back, headed for Missouri. One [FamilySearch](#) website provided the following info on the tragic results –

'In 1838 Dominicus and Lydia Smith Carter were a part of Kirtland Camp, the large wagon train that made the exodus from Kirtland to Missouri. While traveling, they lost their two-year-old daughter Sarah Emily. Then, twenty days after arriving in Far West, Lydia died, leaving Dominicus with four children....'

After the events in that saga, you'd be hard-pressed to find any two family websites with the same story. The number of conflicting stories are downright mind boggling, so if you're researching info on this man, have patience!

We've listed nine wives for Dominicus, although we're pretty sure there were others. The reason for limiting it to nine is because of the lack of info with other names listed in spreadsheets like Nauvoo Polygamy Report. They've listed 11-12 wives, but provide no other info other than names. When investigating anything for wives #10-11 we also found one wife had the same name as another person living at the time (Charlotte Duke), but the dates, and other people involved do not match the proper criteria.

The reason we've chosen to profile Mr. Carter can be seen in the lamentable stats of his legacy. While he did have a long life, and was surely loved by family members, there really wasn't anything remarkable about him outside of the number of kids he fathered.

Comments by family members about Carter's life provide an interesting portrayal of how Mormons view the trouble that seemed to follow him around in life. One family member, in an attempt to excuse Carter's polygamous lifestyle, gave the following synopsis of his life –

‘...while much has been said about his nine wives, he had already lost two of those wives, and three others chose to leave. During most of the Provo years he lived with four wives: Mary Durfee, Polly Miner, Elizabeth Brown and Fannie Nash. At his death all four of those women were at his bedside.’

Our response to this: okay, and your point would be...?

Dominicus was no different than other Mormon polygamists in the way he married sisters which constitutes nothing but incest. Making matters worse, he married a child. In 1844, Carter, age 37, married his 3rd wife, [Mary Durfee](#), who was 14 years old.

Here are some of the other quotes we found from his descendents ‘bragging’ about various events that took place in the family –

‘...more than once there were children born a day apart, and on one occasion Mary Durfee and Caroline Hubbard both gave birth on the same day...’

Imagine that scenario for a moment if you can. Where was he during the labor of the wives? Which wife was honored with having his support during her hour of need? Their comments are made like someone wearing a badge of honor. How is it honorable a respectable man would do such a thing?

We don’t agree with the following stat provided. We found Dominicus fathered 50 children, not 46.

‘By the count of his grand daughter Hannah Clark Pike, he had “46 children, 17 of whom preceded him in death, 87 grandchildren and 41 great grandchildren.”’

The next quote speaks for itself. Needless to say, we have no sympathy for consequences incurred by Mr. Carter’s behavior. He’s not honorable for not running from the Feds because there’s no honor in breaking the law. When he broke the law, he was also breaking the [12th Article of Faith](#) which says they believe in being subject to magistrates, and the laws of the land.




‘During the 1880s, when polygamists were hunted and tried, many men went into hiding – but Dominicus Carter stood his ground. As a result, he served time in the state penitentiary. He was in his seventies. ... He bore a strong testimony to the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith and advised his posterity to abide in his faith.’



We’re wondering...did he have a strong testimony about Jesus, or just Joseph Smith?

Our last bit of info on Dominicus comes from [FamilySearch](#) who noted his youngest child, Arthur, was born in 1875.


This means Dominicus would’ve been 69 years old at the time. We also found that one of his kids died c. 1953. Remember, Dominicus was born in 1806...



You can find extensive documentation for Dominicus & his wives in the embedded links in the chart below.


		Wife/Age @ Marriage (Carter's Age)	Marriage Date	Kids	Other Info	Wife's Marital Status
1		<u>Lydia Smith</u> - 19 (21)	5/11/ 1828	6	<p><u>Born</u> <u>1/12/1809</u> <u>ME</u> <u>Died</u> <u>10/23/1838</u> <u>MO</u></p> <p>Their daughter died 2 wks before Lydia passed away. Findagrave lists 7 kids while Dominicus' Findagrave page lists 5 total.</p> <p>Genealogy site <u>willowrise.com</u> notes they had 6 kids.</p> <p>1/13/1846 – sealing date</p> <p><u>Nauvoo Demographic Report</u> has no listing of any children produced from this marriage.</p> <p><u>Earlylds</u> site lists Lydia as wife #1 with 6 kids.</p> <p><u>FamilySearch</u> provides the following info on Lydia – 'LYDIA SMITH Married 11 May 1828 at Newry, Oxford, Maine. She was the wife of his youth. She died in Far West 23 Oct 1838 twenty-one days after they had arrived there from Kirtland, and only four days before Governor Boggs issued his Extermination Order.' This link also listed the names & b/days of 6 kids.</p>	Single
2		<u>Sylvia Amaret Mecham</u> - 18 (32)	3/21/ 1839 or 3/23/ 1839	2	<p><u>Born</u> <u>7/28/1820</u> <u>NY</u> <u>Died</u> <u>5/24/1894</u> <u>UT</u></p> <p>Some resources document she & Dominicus were married 3/28/1839.</p> <p>Endowed 1/21/1846, or 1/13/1846</p> <p><u>Findagrave</u> documented 2 kids w/ Dominicus & 2 kids w/ John Snider (Snyder). It also notes she wasn't fond of polygamy, thus their divorce. This page also said she crossed the plains in 1851.</p> <p><u>Nauvoo Demographic Report</u> lists 5 kids in their marriage.</p> <p><u>Geni.com</u> page for Dominicus notes Sylvia was once his wife.</p> <p><u>Mormon Polygamy Documents</u> notes marriage to Dominicus and then to John Snider.</p> <p>Sylvia was a member of the Relief Society in Nauvoo.</p>	Single

					<p>Married Snider Nov. 5, 1855 in SLC, UT.</p> <p>Sylvia's listed on the Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register.</p> <p>Short bio of her life included in the Mormon Polygamy Documents noted above.</p> <p>willowrise.com mentions their marriage, the death of 1 son and their divorce.</p> <p>Earlylds site notes their marriage, 1 kid. They have her listed as wife #2.</p> <p>FamilySearch lists 2 kids for this marriage. Conflicting stories on when, where their youngest son died. Some records show he died @ 3 mos. old, others say 2 yrs.</p>	
3		<p>Mary Ette (Etta) Durfee - 14 (37)</p>	6/2/1844	13	<p>Born 3/21/1830 NY Died 12/6/1885 UT</p> <p>Findagrave lists 11 kids by her & Dominicus & Nauvoo Demographic Report lists 13 kids.</p> <p>Endowed 1/13/1846</p> <p>willowrise.com notes their 13 kids & Mary as wife #4</p> <p>earlylds site notes their marriage and Mary as wife #3.</p> <p>FamilySearch provided 1850 Census data for Mary & Dominicus, married on 2 January 1844. Lists 13 kids. She was wife #3.</p> <p>Another FamilySearch provided the following info: In January 1844 he took his first plural wife, Mary Durfee.</p>	Single
4		<p>Sophronia Babcock - 23 (39)</p>	1/1846	1	<p>Born 7/14/1822 NY Died 8/26/1847 IA</p> <p>Findagrave documents she died from hemorrhaging during childbirth The unnamed child died as well. She & Dominicus en route to Utah at the time of her death.</p> <p>Nauvoo Demographic Report notes marriage & 1 child.</p> <p>Earlylds lists marriage of Dominicus & Sophronia, but no other info is forthcoming. Another earlylds site lists Sophronia as wife #9 with no other data.</p> <p>Genealogy site willowrise.com gives two variant marriage dates of 1842 & 1838. It also notes her death in childbirth, stating she was wife #2.</p>	Single

				<p>FamilySearch lists her name, her death, death of her son and endowment as January 1846 – also notes she was wife #2.</p> <p>FamilySearch provides marriage data document of Sophronia and Dominicus for 1823 which is incorrect, as she was born in 1822.</p> <p>Still another FamilySearch link provided the following info on Sophronia and her younger sister Eliza –</p> <p>‘...His next plural wife was Sophronia Babcock, probably marrying in January 1846 in Nauvoo. Some records indicate he also married Sophronia's younger sister Eliza Babcock...’</p>	
5		<p>Eliza Babcock – 18 (39)</p>	1/ 1846	0 <p> Born 10/8/1828 NY Died 7/12/1868 UT </p> <p>Eliza was the younger sister of Sophronia, wife #4.</p> <p>Eliza's Findagrave page provides the following info –</p> <p>“MARRIAGE: Eliza was first married to Brigham Young. Eliza obtained a divorce from Brigham Young on Dec. 4, 1851. She remained in Utah and married John Groves. Eliza had children, but all died in infancy...</p> <p>ELIZA BABCOCK--Name transcribed from Winter Quarters Wards Membership Lists 1846 - 1848. Taken from a variety of historical sources.”</p> <p>The Findagrave info is probably incorrect based on all other info we've gathered.</p> <p>Nauvoo Demographic Report notes 0 kids in their marriage</p> <p>Geni.com documents she is the sister of Sophronia.</p> <p>Wikipedia lists her as wife #47 for Brigham Young. It also says they divorced in 1853. She was 24 when they married, and Brigham was 51.</p> <p>Overland Travels contains minimal info on Eliza; birthday, death date, and incident when a wagon ran over her while on the trek west.</p> <p>Most info on Eliza is sketchy, consisting of conflicting data when she arrived in UT, when she divorced Brigham Young, and other marriages to Carter, and John Groves.</p> <p>Earlylds site lists her as wife #4. Married 10 January 1846.</p> <p>Willowrise.com documents her & Dominicus w/</p>	Single

					<p>marriage date c. 1849.</p> <p>Mormonpolygamydocuments mentions Eliza's marriage to Brigham.</p> <p>A FamilySearch link provided the following info on Sophronia and her younger sister Eliza –</p> <p>‘...His next plural wife was Sophronia Babcock, probably marrying in January 1846 in Nauvoo. Some records indicate that he also married Sophronia's younger sister Eliza Babcock. It appears that Dominicus and Eliza were married in 1846 during the Nauvoo period, but she was back with her mother soon after as evidenced by the Winter Quarters Wards Membership Lists. Eliza crossed the plains as Eliza Babcock, and in 1855 she married John Groves.’</p> <p>Geni.com lists marriages to Brigham Young, Dominicus, and John Groves. Gives variant death date of 1874.</p> <p>Ancestry.com lists Eliza as wife #33 for Brigham w/ no other data.</p> <p>Mormon scholar, Jeffrey Johnson, noted in ‘A Journal of Mormon Thought’ Eliza sought & received a divorce from Brigham Young in 1853.</p> <p>It looks like Eliza married Dominicus on January 10, 1846. It's not known when/where they were divorced. When she left for UT the 1st time, Overland Travel Co. recorded her name as Babcock, indicating she was single again.</p> <p>Eliza eventually made it to UT, married & divorced Brigham by 1853, and married John Groves in 1855.</p>	
6		<p>Polly Miner – 19 (45)</p>	10/9/1851	10	<p>Born 5/9/1832 OH Died 3/25/1896 UT</p> <p>Earlylds lists their marriage 9 October 1851. Another earlylds site lists their marriage w/ no other data.</p> <p>Findagrave lists 8 kids w/ Dominicus & Nauvoo Demographic Report lists 10 kids.</p> <p>willowrise.com notes their marriage, 9 kids, wife #5.</p> <p>FamilySearch documents sealing papers of Polly Miner & Dominicus 4 October 1851.</p> <p>Ancestry.com notes 9 kids</p>	Single

7		<u>Elizabeth Brown</u> – 19 (45)	6/20/ 1852	8	<p><u>Born</u> <u>6/18/1833</u> <u>OH</u> <u>Died</u> <u>9/9/1914</u> <u>UT</u></p> <p>Married 20 June 1852.</p> <p><u>Findagrave</u> lists the 8 kids she had w/ Dominicus. It also states their youngest child (<u>John F. Carter</u>) died in 1953, 147 years after his father was born. Dominicus was 57 yrs old when John was born, and Elizabeth was 30.</p> <p>Dominicus' <u>Findagrave</u> page notes they married in 1852.</p> <p><u>Earlylds</u> lists Elizabeth's name, marriage to Dominicus (no date), and no other viable info. Another <u>earlylds</u> site lists her as wife #6, no other data.</p> <p><u>FamilySearch</u> provides copy of marriage/sealing document for Dominicus & Elizabeth</p> <p><u>FamilySearch</u> also provides copy of short autobiography she wrote c. 1881. Another document in <u>FamilySearch</u> provides insight of Elizabeth's daily life. Apparently, she was the wife who got the short end of the deal while others were treated with respect and given nice homes. Elizabeth ran the family farm providing food for the rest of the families and was chronically poor.</p> <p><u>Nauvoo Polygamy Demographic Report</u> notes 8 kids.</p> <p><u>willowrise.com</u> notes marriage, 8 kids, listed as wife #6.</p>	Single
8		<u>Caroline Maria Hubbard</u> – 23 (48)	10/20/ 1854	2	<p><u>Born</u> <u>3/22/1831</u> <u>NY</u> <u>Died</u> <u>10/2/1907</u> <u>UT</u></p> <p>Caroline's <u>Findagrave</u> page gives the following info on her life –</p> <p>“Caroline was married 4 times: 1st marriage to: JOHN MARCELLUS PERRY on Dec. 23 1849 2nd marriage to: DOMINICUS CARTER on Oct. 20 1854 3rd marriage to: WILLIAM BETTIE on Sep 01 1860 ??? 4th marriage to: AMOS FENSTERMAKER on July 07 1866</p>	Divorced?

					<p>Caroline Hubbard was Dominicus' 8th wife. They had 2 children together and divorced. The book "Carter Pioneers of Provo Utah" states that she divorced him 25 Jan 1861. In 1866 she married Amos Fenstermaker."</p> <p>Dominicus' Findagrave page notes they married in 1854, and divorced in 1861.</p> <p>Nauvoo Demographic Report lists 2 kids in their marriage.</p> <p>Earlylds lists their marriage 20 October 1854, no other viable info on Caroline. Another earlylds site lists her as wife #7, no other viable data.</p> <p>willowrise.com notes marriage 10/27/1854, 2 kids, wife #7.</p>	
9		<p>Frances Nash – 19 (50)</p>	<p>1/6/1857</p>	8	<p>Born 10/4/1836 Surrey, England Died 5/16/1908 UT</p> <p>Married 6 January 1857</p> <p>Frances' Findagrave page notes she married Wm. Henry Davis after Dominicus' death. Findagrave also lists 8 kids she had w/ Dominicus.</p> <p>Dominicus' Findagrave page notes they married in 1857.</p> <p>Nauvoo Demographic Report notes only 1 kid in their marriage</p> <p>Terrys.org.uk is a family genealogy website w/ limited info on Frances.</p> <p>FamilySearch page gives basic vitals & image of Frances.</p> <p>FamilySearch page shows pics & other info of their 6 kids</p> <p>Earlylds lists marriage of Dominicus & Frances, but no other info is forthcoming. Another earlylds site lists her as wife #8, no other data.</p> <p>willowrise.com notes marriage 1/6/1857, 8 kids, and she was wife #8</p> <p>FamilySearch has limited data for this page. It includes data for his sealing endowments to his parents, marriage to Frances in 1857 and another endowment sealing four years later in 1861.</p>	Single

					FamilySearch provides document of sealing to spouse for Frances (Fanny) Nash & Dominicus Carter 6 January 1857.	
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