

**Polygamy and Mormon Church Leaders**  
**John Smith, aka 'Uncle John'**  
**July 16, 1781 – May 23, 1854**

Leviticus 18:6; “None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the LORD.”

When I originally decided to write another installment for our polygamy series, it never occurred to me I'd come across the intensely deplorable info I found.

In my simple way of thinking I wrongly assumed I'd find much of the same stuff I had previously, and man, was I ever wrong. There's just no way to articulate how utterly disturbing this story is and whenever I thought I was putting the finishing touches on it, new info would rear its ugly head making the previous findings seem like child play.

This time around we're looking at the life of another John Smith from the enclaves of Mormon history; Joseph Smith's uncle, aka, 'Uncle John'. What his namesake nephew (John Smith) lacked in fanfare and pageantry, he made up for in unbridled loyalty for the prophet, and tenets of the 'principle'. About the only remarkable event that can be hung on his wall of achievements is how he managed to marry so many women whose lives resembled a war zone.

Mr. Smith was from New Hampshire, the eighth of eleven kids born to Asael Smith and Mary Duty. At the prompting of his older brother Joseph Smith, Sr., he and his wife Clarissa joined Mormonism circa 1831-1832. It's said that he was on his deathbed, suffering terribly from Consumption (Tuberculosis), but shortly after being baptized in a frozen creek he made a miraculous recovery, and straightaway began performing missionary work for the Church.

In 1833 John moved his family to Kirtland, OH and worked in the capacity of whatever callings given him. A long paper trail reveals the numerous times he publicly chastised family and other church members for sinning by publishing fire and brimstone epithets, warning recipients of God's swift destruction for unacceptable behavior.

Moving from Kirtland to Missouri, then Illinois and Utah, brought out the man's 'short fuse' as many described it. Being a perfectionist, he expected everyone else to follow suit, never tolerating the antics of those who tried to buck the system. He became the Church Patriarch in 1848, and served numerous missions on the Atlantic seaboard, as well as in the Midwest and Intermountain region.

He married his first wife Clarissa in 1815 and had four kids with her, one of which died. This is the only wife he had biological children with. He ended up marrying several other wives, all on the same day no less, when he was 64 years old. Each of these wives were roughly his age, but you'll find a broad range of conflicting tales on all of the marriages which is strange considering the Church takes great pride in their polygamous past.

Some info portals have chosen not to recognize anyone but Clarissa, while others confess to one or two other wives at best. I've discovered if the info comes from his family, the only marriage noted is Clarissa, whereas independent resources (outsiders), are more inclined to list numerous marriages to other women taking place simultaneously to his marriage with Clarissa.

The common denominator in each of them? No one has the same story twice. No surprise there.

Two of his later marriages were actually cancelled several years after the fact in 1894\* by Wilford Woodruff, one of which was to Bathsheba Smith, the first wife of George A. Smith. John had taken her and her children in when George abandoned her and left for southern Utah with Zilpha, the fourth of eleven wives.

This pivotal event is where the sins of Mormonism takes a deep dive into the black abyss of the monstrous, shameful behavior they've chained themselves to. Bathsheba wasn't just another wife being passed around from one General Authority to another. [George A. Smith](#) was John's son, making Bathsheba his daughter-in-law and don't be too shocked yet as this is just the tip of the iceberg.

### *Selling Blessings of God*

The following quote comes from Bathsheba's diary when her husband George abandoned her and the kids;

"This was December 1850, the saddest day I had yet seen. Two days before my husband started south, I was out of wood and the house open and cold. Father Smith invited me and the children to live with his family until my house could be finished. This I gratefully accepted. We furnished our own provisions and I did work for the family ... . Father, seeing that I had time to spare, asked me to record blessings that he gave ... I wrote so much for him that I found myself earning quite a nice little sum each week (p. 29)."

There was apparently more to this situation than what Bathsheba wrote in her diary, otherwise Woodruff wouldn't have cancelled the temple sealing.

[Dialogue Journal](#) (p 86) notes that seven weeks before his death and shortly after Clarissa's (wife #1) death, he also married Mary Franky. Neither she, nor Bathsheba are recorded in the list of wives for John in George D. Smith's 'Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy' which is where I retrieved vital stats on the majority of his wives for this report. FYI: George D. Smith's publication on Nauvoo polygamy was ground-breaking work in the world of Mormon polygamy publications.

Interestingly enough, info on Mr. Smith's vocation is sparse at best. Everything I found spoke of his childhood and jumped to the time he was baptized in 1832. From there on, narratives from his personal journal were long on condemning others, and short on what he did to sustain himself, not to mention how he kept all those mouths fed he had burdened himself with.

One noteworthy reference on his income came from the Dialogue report (p 86) showing his fee of \$1.00 for every patriarchal blessing he provided which were numerous even by Mormon standards (5,560). Bathsheba's journal speaks of this behavior in our citation above. Somehow he didn't find it necessary to limit his service of blessing people to church members, as he was also known for blessing 'Gentiles' when, or if, it was requested of him.

Such behavior is reminiscent of psychics charging clients for telling them what they want to hear about their future. God condemned this activity thousands of years ago, just as He does now.

Leviticus 19:31 – Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I [am] the LORD your God.

There's one other interesting item of note about John Smith's family.

Wife #7 is Asenath Hurlbut. Her last name conjures up anger in many Mormons, then and now. Rumors have swirled around for years that she's related to the infamous Philastus Hurlbut; public enemy #1 for all Mormons.

[Transcriber's notes](#) and commentary from an article by Dale Adams rejects the idea Philastus Hurlbut was related to Asenath. Genealogical records of the area show an abundance of Hurlbuts in American history, alas, none have produced Philastus' name.

Regardless of the man's past or DNA, Philastus' name has stuck in the craw of Mormon history and the fact remains his boisterous outcries of Smith's BoM production won't go away.

In my experience and research of Mormonism, my opinion is Philastus was a pseudonym used by a man who wanted to fit into Mormonism. After his conversion and while on a mission for his new found faith, he caught wind the BoM closely resembled [Spaulding's book \(Manuscript Found\)](#). Upon that new discovery he decided to make a few bucks and a name for himself in exposing Smith's nefarious activities.

In the meantime, he also tried to court Electa Sherman, Asenath's daughter. Although the ambiguity in Philastus' actions is quite evident, it shouldn't come as a surprise seeing as how everything tied to Mormonism has a strange twist to it.

[Dale Broadhurst](#) who wrote extensively on early Mormonism, reported on a story told by a Mormon elder (Benjamin Winchester), who claimed Hurlbut was actually a relative of his. Broadhurst commented the Hurlbut brothers were probably uncles of Winchester, thus making Asenath his aunt.

After researching and spending countless hours on that subject, I'm sticking to my analysis. He may or may not have been Winchester's relative, but I'm thinking he was some random guy wandering the earth looking for a place to fit in somewhere. When summarizing Philastus' background, a caption in Mr. Broadhurst's article said, 'Not even a closet for a skeleton'. No better summation could be so fitting. It'd be easier to nail jell-o to a wall than it would be to find any historical proof about this guy's background.

Why John Smith would marry her is anybody's guess.

Further info on John Smith and his wives can be found by clicking on links embedded in this document.

In April 1894 Woodruff announced at the semi-annual General Conference that when/if someone is sealed to another at the time of their death, revisions to such endowments, or sealings should not be changed post mortem.

You can read his full speech in Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, Vol. 5

	Wife/Age @ marriage (Smith's age)		Marriage date	Kids	Other info	Wife's marital status
1	Clarissa Lyman – 25 (34)		9/11/1815	4	<p>Born 6/27/1790 NH</p> <p>Died 2/14/1854 UT</p> <p>1 daughter died in infancy.</p> <p>Findagrave reports she was baptized 9/1831, 3-4 mo. before John.</p> <p>Only wife listed on Findagrave.</p> <p>Her son John Lyman married Augusta Kingsley Howe, daughter of Marietta, wife #5.</p> <p>This makes them step-siblings.</p>	Single

2

Ann

1/15/

Carr - 55

0

1846

Born

???

(64)

2/28/1790

MA or CT???

Died

???

UT

Earlylds.com lists

her name w/ no

other info.

Possible link to

her father &

mother (Wanton

& Sarah). On

p 112 of report

it says she was

married to Elias

Ford of Cummington,

MA, who died &

then married \_\_\_\_

Brimhall.

Moved to UT.

No kids.

No definitive

info on this

woman except for

					her name appearing in a few resources.	
3	Miranda (Myranda) Jones Davis Newton – 61 (64)		1/15/ 1846	0	Born 11/16/1784 MA Died 12/9/1857 UT Info on this woman is wide & varied. Earlylds.com gives wrong date of birth as 11/16/1804. She had 2 other marriages; James Davis & Nathan Newton. She had 3 kids w/ Davis. Info on her Findagrave memorial page is sparse.	Widow

More detailed info on findagrave can be found on memorial pages for other people.

#### Findagrave info

on Nathan is as follows; he was a widower w/ 3 kids when he married Miranda in 1821 & she was widow of James Davis w/ 3 kids.

This link reports

Nathan & Miranda produced 3 kids;

Miranda b. 1822

Miriam Lyon b. 1824

Lucy b. 1829

If you're counting, that's 9 kids total.

4

Mary  
Aiken  
Smith - 48  
(64)



1/15/  
1846

0

Geni.com reports  
she joined the  
Church in  
1841 & migrated  
westward to Nauvoo  
& then UT.

Born  
8/13/1797  
Widow

NY  
Died  
4/27/1877

UT  
Mary was a teacher,  
originally married  
to Silas Smith,  
brother of Joseph  
Smith, Jr., nephew  
of John Smith.  
This makes her  
a niece to John  
Smith by marriage.  
The Church has  
written extensively

about this woman,  
her achievements &  
work she did for  
the early church.

She & Silas  
had 3 sons, her  
husband died  
in 1839 .

Mary & sons  
traveled w/ John's  
wagon train  
to Utah.

[Wikipedia](#) says she  
traveled w/ Young's  
group. Either way,  
her son Jesse drove  
the wagon team  
for John Smith.

Her son Jesse  
had 5 wives,  
44 kids.

He was 18  
when his 1<sup>st</sup>

child was born

& 70 w/

the youngest.

Dialogue reports she

was "...sealed to

John for time at

an earlier date

by Joseph Smith, Jr.

The Journal of

Jesse N. Smith

(her son) also refers

to marriages between

Mary Aiken & Julia

Hills (wife #6)

to John Smith

13 August 1843,

'with the prophet

officiating (p. 7).'"

The date given by

George D. Smith in

1846 is probably

wrong.

Her name appears

		in Nauvoo Temple Record as 1846.				
5	Sarah Marietta Kingsley (Howe, Cleveland, Smith) – 57  (64)		1/15/  1846	0	Born  10/20/1788  MA  Died  1856  UT  In 1807 married John  Howe, he died in  1825 – 1 kid.  In 1826 married John  Cleveland – 2 kids  1842 married Joseph Smith (she was wife #18)  While secretly married  to Joe Smith she was  Emma Smith’s counselor  for the Relief Society.  In 1846 married John  Smith for time,  stayed w/ husband	Married

Cleveland through  
both marriages to  
Joseph & John  
Smith.

Fatherhood questions  
still linger.

Sources say a son  
born to her  
belonged to Joseph  
Smith while others  
dismiss such theories.

Her daughter, **Augusta  
Cleveland**, married  
John Smith's son,  
John Lyman Smith.

Augusta was 17  
years old at time  
of marriage.

This makes the  
kids step-siblings.

6

Julia  
Ellis  
Hills  
Johnson –  
62  
(64)



1/15/  
1846

0

Born

9/26/1783

MA

Died

3/30/1853

IA

Earlylds.com

shows she was

re-baptized 3/1970.

Married

Ezekiel Johnson 1801.

Earlylds.com reports

they had 11 kids,

this is wrong; there

were 16. According

to a thesis on BYU

website w/

encouragement of

Joe Smith in 1843,

she later married

John Smith 1/1846.

This 'encouragement'

came @ same time he

Married

married two of her  
daughters, Delcina  
Johnson (wife #19)  
& Almera Woodward  
(wife #29).

Julia & Ezek. were  
well off, she left him  
& took all household  
goods, etc., when  
he wouldn't join  
church. She gave  
majority of the  
money to church  
for temples.

Her son David  
was a Danite.

She died in IA,  
choosing not  
to go to UT.

Husband finally  
joined church and  
was beaten to death  
by anti-Mormons

in Jan 1848.

They never reunited

as a couple.

Sealed to

John for time at

an earlier date

by the prophet

Joseph Smith, Jr.

The Journal of

Jesse N. Smith

(Mary & Silas

Smith's son), refers

to marriages

between Mary Aiken,

& Julia Hills to

John Smith on

13 August 1843,

'with the prophet

officiating (p. 7)'.

This makes 1846

marriage date wrong.

Dialogue Journal, p 86,

reports; "Benjamin F.

Johnson states, “My mother [Julia Hills] having finally separated from my father, by the suggestion or counsel of the Prophet, she accepted of and was sealed by him to Father John Smith” (1947, 20-21; see also Wright 1963, 159).” Benjamin Johnson was her son.

7	Asenath Hurlbert (Hurlburt) aka Asenath Casena Hurlbutt (Hurlbut) Sherman - 65 (64)		1/15/1846	0	Born 8/2/1780 MA Died 1854 UT Asenath had an interesting life. The list of	Widow
---	---	--	-----------	---	--	-------

names in her

bio is due

to use of

phonetic spelling

during that time.

It's likely her

name was Asenath

Casena Hurlbut.

Married [Elkanah](#)

[Sherman](#) (1782-1817)

on May 9, 1803.

He was born

in VT, died in

Kirtland, OH

c 1817.

They had 4 kids.

This family (Sherman)

& others are

deeply intertwined

through marriages,

kids, etc.

They've served in

several high council

					positions through Church history. Her son Lyman Royal Sherman married Delcina Johnson, daughter of wife #6, Julia Hills Johnson. This makes them step- siblings. See notes above for other info on Philastus Hurlbut.	
8	Rebecca Smith - 57 (64)		1/15/ 1846	0	Born 4/29/1788 NH or MA Died 1867 UT Earlylds lists her b/day as 4/27/1785. Her husband Henry	Widow ???

					<p>White died 8/1845.</p> <p>Earlylds lists 4 kids, findagrave lists 7.</p> <p>Findagrave lists her b/day @ 1785.</p>	
9	<p>Bathsheba Bigler Smith - 23  (36)</p>		<p>12/10/ 1845</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>Born 5/3/1822</p> <p>Died 9/20/1910</p> <p>SLC</p> <p>Officiated in each of the temples constructed during her lifetime: Nauvoo, Logan, Manti, St. George, &amp; Salt Lake.</p> <p>Married to John's son, George, had 3 kids w/ him.</p> <p>Woodruff later rescinded marriage to John.</p> <p>Served as 4<sup>th</sup></p>	<p>Married</p>

president of the

.Relief Society

You can read

her autobiography at

Book of Abraham

Project website. Her

family converted to

LDS 8/1837 when

George A. Smith was

proselytizing in the

area. They became

friends & promised to

marry when she got

older.

At the time she

would've been 15 &

Smith, 20 years old.

In 1841 he became

an apostle @ age 24.

Earlylds doesn't list

her marriage to

John.

10

Mary	1854	0	Born	???
Franky –			???	
???				
(73-74)			Died	
			???	
			Only info on Mary	
			was found in	
			Dialogue Journalreport	
			which said she	
			married Smith 7	
			wks before his	
			death.	