

## **Polygamy and Mormon Church Leaders**

### **Joseph Bates Noble**

**January 14, 1810 – August 20, 1900**

“...Joseph Smith, requested him, (Jos. Bates Noble) to step forward and assist him in carrying out the Said principle, saying ‘in revealing this to you I have placed my life in your hands, therefore do not in an evil hour betray me to my enemies.’” [Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists 1841-44, Gary James Bergera](#)

In a sermon delivered by Brigham Young, Joseph Bates Noble heard the Mormon gospel for the first time. Daylight hours were a precious commodity and they weren't spent on frivolous activities so taking time out of his day to hear a stranger preach was a pretty big deal for Noble. Like the majority of others in the nation, Joseph's family was poverty-stricken and every penny earned was sent to his ailing parents to help feed the mouths of his 13 siblings.

After hearing Brigham Young and Spencer Kimball's version of the gospel in 1832 he made the decision to convert. Within two years his life would be vastly different from the mundane work he had trained for in a mill and the focus of his carpentry work would soon be exchanged for keeping the [secrets of Joseph Smith](#). Shortly after converting he moved to Kirtland to help further the cause of Mormonism and within two years found himself packing again to move to Missouri.

Not long after his arrival (May 1834) Noble volunteered to join Zion's Camp and became one of the foot soldiers for Smith's army, defending the Church in their call to arms. Once there, he and others handed over every dime they had to Joe Smith and found himself in yet another financial hardship by having to borrow money from the Church at a high interest rate. Oddly enough, neither the hundreds of other Mormons, nor Noble, thought twice about the strange situation and in so doing, became one of the 30 or so insiders to Joe Smith's schemes.

Four months later (September 1834) he married the first of his eleven wives, [Mary Adeline Beman](#). She was the sister of Louisa ([Joseph Smith's wife #5](#)) and Artimesa ([Erastus Fairbanks Snow's wife #1](#)).

Noble sealed his fate of devotion to the prophet by keeping the secret about Smith's nefarious deeds of plural marriage in 1840 and later testified he officiated in the marriage ceremony of his sister-in-law Louisa Beman to Joe Smith in April 1841. See [Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists](#), p. 16 and [Historical Record](#), Vol. 6, p. 221.

In June 1844 he was part of the team who rode to Carthage with other Mormons as Joseph, Hyrum, and two others were taken into custody and headed off to the Carthage jail. On the way there, Noble became violently ill and the party stopped to offer aid. During the stop, Joseph Smith prayed over him and gave Noble the sword he had worn as a commander in the Nauvoo Legion.

At the end of the Nauvoo period (1839-1845) Joseph Noble was a husband to three wives and the father of two children (by this time 6 other children of Joseph & Mary had died). Moving, living in temporary housing and planning a trek west to the Rockies somehow didn't interfere with Joseph's long range plan of building his kingdom on earth. While living in their temporary home at Winter Quarters, NE in 1847, he married Susan Hammond Ashby, a recent widow and mother of 11 kids.

He served as a bishop in both Nauvoo and Winter Quarters before moving to Utah where he summarily met and married seven more women. Noble was the father of 31 kids, husband to 11 wives, and in addition to being in charge of Smith's sword, his claim to fame was his 2<sup>nd</sup> wife Sarah who gave birth to the first child born in LDS polygamy.

Noble served on bishopric counsels, temple ordinance committees, he helped build temples and even went on a mission to England. His last official church office was a calling as Church Patriarch on June 13, 1897.

While his name in Mormon history is held in high regard and he's seen as a righteous man, the decision of crowning him with such a prestigious title is in the air. He married little girls, left expectant wives so he could serve missions for the Church, in addition to allowing his wives and kids to live in abject poverty.

You can find further info on Joseph's wives & kids in the embedded links below. Unless otherwise noted, vital stats on each wife came from George D. Smith's Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy.

		Wife/Age @ marriage (Noble's age)	Marriage Date	Kids	Other info	Wife's marital status
1		Mary Adeline	9/11/	9	Born October 19, 1810	Single

**Beman -  
23  
(24)**

1834

NY  
Died  
February 14, 1851  
UT

Mary's life was  
a nightmare at  
best. A bio on  
her tells us  
she was a  
teacher & met  
Noble, whom she  
was friends w/  
for a few yrs  
before marriage.  
Eventually they  
had 9 kids; 3  
survived to  
adulthood. Her  
sister Louisa Beman  
was wife #5 for  
Joe Smith; another  
sister (Artemisia) was  
the 1st of 16 wives  
for Erastus Snow.

					<p>Earlylds shows 3 of their kids died before the age of 7 yrs.</p> <p>Geni.com gives list of 9 kids – 6 of those died before they left Nauvoo.</p> <p>xmission reports she died w/in 3 yrs of arriving to UT.</p> <p>She was 40 yrs old.</p> <p>who'syerdad-e.com reports their son Edward Alvah Noble married Fanny Young.</p> <p>A bio on Mary can be found at A Nobleman in Israel, pp 63-68.</p>	
2		<b>Sarah Buffum Alley – 23</b>	4/5/1843	1	<p>Born October 19, 1819 MA</p> <p>Died</p>	Single

(33)

December 28, 1846

NE

Her bio can be read

at [A Nobleman in](#)

[Israel](#), pp 68-69;

she was the 11<sup>th</sup> of

13 kids, HC 5:385

reports her baptism

by Joe Smith

[myheritage.com](#) shows marriage  
to Noble & full name as Sarah

Buffum Alley Noble.

According to [Gary](#)

[Bergara](#) she was

1<sup>st</sup> person in the

Church to give

birth as a polygamist.

[Wikipedia](#) also gives

info on Sarah &

her brother John B.

[Alley](#). [Findagrave](#)

provides image of

Mormon pioneer gravestone

in NE where she's

					<p>buried w/ others.</p> <p>She married Noble right before the Church was kicked out of Nauvoo.</p> <p>Once they arrived in their semi-permanent home in NE Sarah became ill and died.</p> <p>She was 27 yrs old.</p>	
3		<p><b>Mary Ann Washburn - 14 (33)</b></p>	<p>6/28/1843</p>	5	<p>Born November 18, 1828 NY</p> <p>Died October 10, 1882 UT</p> <p>Geni.com reports her mother (Tamar Washburn) Washburn) married Mary Ann's father who was her uncle.</p> <p>Dougnoble.comcites Mary Ann giving birth to a daughter while crossing the plains to UT.</p>	Single

The girl lived 8 yrs.

Also see [Geni.com](#)

Their son Joseph

Bates Washburn Noble was

their only child to

survive to adulthood;

3 other kids died young. He

changed his name after his

mother divorced his father.

A week after giving

birth to her 1<sup>st</sup> child, Joseph

married his

4<sup>th</sup> wife, Susan

Hammond Ashby.

[Seedwinwhiting.com](#)

[Geni.com](#) shows Mary

Ann divorced Noble & married

Edwin Whiting. [Geni.com](#)

lists her as Whiting's

5<sup>th</sup> wife. She married him in

1857 & they

had 2 sons.

A short bio for

her can be found

on Whiting's site.

[Earlylds](#) lists her

					<p>name, but only</p> <p>shows 4 wives total</p> <p>for Joseph Noble.</p> <p>Another bio can be found at A Nobleman in Israel, pp 69-71.</p> <p>She died when she was 54.</p>	
4		<p><b>Susan Hammond Ashby - 38 (37)</b></p>	<p>3/3/1847</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>Born August 8, 1808 MA</p> <p>Died May 16, 1851 UT</p> <p>Susan's 1<sup>st</sup>husband Nathaniel Ashby was a well respected member of the Church who died in NE when the Mormons were on the way to UT.</p> <p>Susan &amp; Joseph had 1 daughter (Louisa).</p>	<p>Widow</p>

					<p>Susan's daughter Elizabeth Ashby was wife</p> <p>#5 for Erastus Snow. Another daughter, (also named Susan Ann Ashby) was wife</p> <p>#3 for Lorenzo Dow Young.</p> <p>Susan had taken in the kids for wife</p> <p>#1 (Mary) when Mary died, but she died as well just 3 months later.</p> <p>A bio on her can be found at A Nobleman in Israel, pp 71-72.</p> <p>She was 42.</p>	
5		<b>Millicent London - 47 (43)</b>	6/12/1853	0	<p>Born December 22, 1805</p> <p>NJ</p> <p>Died</p>	???

					<p>June 21, 1871</p> <p>UT</p> <p>whosyerdad-e.com</p> <p>shows she's part of the "Minor" family from Somerset, England.</p> <p>What little info we found is conflicting.</p> <p>A Nobleman in Israel, p. 72</p> <p>notes her marriage to Noble w/ conflicting b/day of 12/29/1805.</p>	
6	 <p>Julia Rosetta Thurston - 15 (47)</p>	<p><b>Julia Rosetta Thurston - 15 (47)</b></p>	<p>1/18/1857</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>Born November 12, 1841 OH</p> <p>Died December 20, 1916 UT</p> <p>who'syerda-e.com lists her name &amp; marriage to Noble.</p> <p>bearspack.com</p>	<p>Single</p>

gives short bio  
on Julia becoming  
6<sup>th</sup> wife of Noble,  
divorced him &  
married James Jacob  
Arthurs in 1865.  
She had a few kids  
w/ him, in 1878  
he left for Alaska  
& she never  
heard from him  
again. She married  
3<sup>rd</sup> husband Samuel Cowan  
12/25/1881  
& had 3 kids w/  
him. All 3 kids  
died & Cowan  
died in 1888.  
She outlived 6  
of her 12 kids.  
See [A Nobleman](#)  
in [Israel](#), pp 72-76.

7		<b>Loretta Sylvia Meacham - 19 (47)</b>	1/18/ 1857	11	Born January 4, 1838 PA Died July 2, 1913 UT Findagrave says  she traveled to  UT w/ her  father & family  in 1854. Three  years later she  married Noble.  She was known by  her nickname 'Rettie'.  See A Nobleman in Israel, pp 76-79	Single
8		<b>Jane Wallace - 24? (57)</b>	6/27/ 1867	0	Born 1843?  Death  ???  Geni.com gives b/day  1812 in MA, no  other vitals or  info. Several sites  list her b/day as  1843, but no	???

					<p>other identifiers.</p> <p>Dougnoble.com</p> <p>gives marriage date</p> <p>6/27/ 1867 –</p> <p>no other info –</p> <p>wife #8</p>	
9		<p><b>Sarah</b>  <b>Wallace –</b>  <b>58</b>  <b>(60)</b></p>	<p>12/23/  1870</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>Born 1846?</p> <p>Death</p> <p>???</p> <p>Geni.com gives</p> <p>b/day 1812</p> <p>in MA, no</p> <p>other vitals or</p> <p>info.</p> <p>Doubnoble.com</p> <p>gives marriage date</p> <p>11/23/1870, no</p> <p>other info –</p> <p>Wife #9</p>	<p>???</p>
10		<p><b>Catherine</b>  <b>Wallace –</b>  <b>58</b>  <b>(60)</b></p>	<p>11/23/  1870</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>Born 1812?</p> <p>Death</p> <p>???</p> <p>Dougnoble.com</p>	<p>???</p>

					<p>gives marriage date</p> <p>11/23/1870, no</p> <p>other info – Wife</p> <p>#10. Geni.com link</p> <p>gives b/day</p> <p>1812 in MA,</p> <p>no other vitals</p> <p>or info</p>	
11		<p><b>Hannah Kerr (Keer) – 58 (60)</b></p>	<p>11/23/1870</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>.Born</p> <p>1812?</p> <p>Death</p> <p>1872?</p> <p>Geni.com gives</p> <p>b/day 1812 in</p> <p>MA, no other</p> <p>vitals or info.</p> <p>Dougnoble.com</p> <p>gives marriage date</p> <p>11/23/1870, no</p> <p>other info – Wife #11</p>	<p>???</p>