

Polygamy and Mormon Church Leaders

Alpheus Cutler

February 29, 1784 – June 10, 1864

“It is no exaggeration to say that Cutler, next to the apostles, was one of Mormonism's most important leaders during this period.” – Journal of Mormon History, “[Conflict in the Camps of Israel](#),” DANNY L. JORGENSEN, p. 31

1808

One thing to keep in mind when it comes to this family and others in early Mormonism is everyone involved is either married to, or a blood relative of each other. It's almost impossible to extract definitive information on who fathered whom, or making sense of how they know each other. To complicate matters further, some have lied about a father's identity by using pseudonyms, even to their own children.

Our story about Alpheus picks up in 1808 with his first marriage, as records of Cutler's life before that time are sparse. He met and married Lois Lathrop (distant cousin of Joseph Smith) while living in New Hampshire. Several years into their marriage they moved to western New York, where he and his family listened to a sermon by David Patten and Reynolds Cahoon.

1833

Following Patten's sermon, they asked him to pray for their ailing daughter, Lois, and according to journals after laying hands on her, she was cured. (There are also [stories](#) of the daughter, 21 yrs old, making the request they lay hands on her). Not long after she was temporarily healed from TB, the [family](#) quickly joined the Church and moved to Kirtland sometime between 1833-1834. She ended up dying about 4-5 yrs later.

1844

By the age of sixty-seven, people then and now, are typically found sitting on a porch reflecting on days gone by. Alas, this wasn't the case for Alpheus Cutler who found himself estranged from the religious empire he helped to build in Nauvoo, Illinois. Until that time Cutler was content in following the prophet Joseph Smith whom he, and many others, believed had been sent by God to reestablish true Christianity.

Unfortunately, in June 1844 contentment was a hard commodity to come by after Smith and his elder brother Hyrum were killed during a gunfight in Carthage. Big egos, allegations of usurping authority, and the ensuing chaos didn't take long to settle in, all of which caused a major schism to rise within its ranks.

Smith's widow, Emma, her children, and a good portion of the Saints decided polygamy wasn't part of God's plan, and their wholesale rejection of the everlasting covenant frazzled the nerves of an already skittish clan. Banking on Smith's prophecy his son (Joseph Smith III) would be next in line to run the Church, in no way, shape, or form would they obey orders doled out by the likes of Brigham Young.

Brigham had overcome all others in the power struggle for Mormon leadership and was a strong advocate of the plural wife system. At this point the only person [Emma](#) felt she could trust was Cutler, thus he became the liaison between the two parties during negotiations and the inevitable dismantling of the original Mormon Church.

1845-1853

Before the Nauvoo dust would settle, Young and company made big plans. However, seeing them come to fruition would take time and it'd also take the effort of the remaining faithful to pull their weight and obey orders of the new leader.

While performing assigned duties to build and oversee a temporary residence in Winter Quarters, Nebraska, Alpheus was charged with establishing missions within the tribes of local Indians. The rumors didn't set too well with Orson Hyde who was his superior. Hyde felt Cutler had overstepped the strict boundaries of what Young had commissioned him to perform. As a result, Alpheus was summarily stripped of all authority and cut off from the Church.

Upon the advent of his excommunication in August 1851, Cutler turned his attention to gathering the few supporters he had and trudged off to Manti, IA, where he once again established another community of saints for God. This time around they called themselves 'The True Church of Jesus Christ', aka the 'Cutlerites'. In 1853 they settled in the southwestern point of Iowa based upon a celestial sign he claims he saw in a vision which was prophesied of by Smith before his demise.*

Historically speaking, the Cutlerites have denied Alpheus was a polygamist and continue to do so today. According to biographer Danny L. Jorgesen, (PhD. University of South Florida), [Cutler](#) abandoned his extra wives when another polygamist was threatened with arrest in the 1850's.

In spite of repeated denials, the Nauvoo Temple Record tells another story showing multiple sealings performed by him to six other women with church authorities present. Further proof shows Cutler continued his conjugal relationship with second wife Luana, ex-wife of Orrin Porter Rockwell.

Together they'd have three or four children, although their youngest daughter, Lydia, died in infancy. Luana took custody of the kids she had with Rockwell, and they were subsequently

sealed to Cutler. After Alpheus' death, his grandsons who lived with him were raised by their Uncle Thaddeus (Alpheus' son). This arrangement stayed intact until they moved to Utah where they could be surrounded with their father's family (Heber C. Kimball) and join the mainstream church whom they referred to as 'Brighamites'. See [Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History, pp 162-163.](#)

Alpheus' achievements in life include serving in the War of 1812, being selected as one of the first members in the Council of the Fifty, and joining the Masonic Lodge of which he was a Master Mason. Cutler was a leading member of Smith's bodyguards and was selected to be the chief architect for the temples. He was a stone mason by trade, helped build the Kirtland and Nauvoo Temples, and was also the architect for Nauvoo schoolhouse. His father, Knight Cutler, served in the Revolutionary War.

Standing over six feet tall and heavy-set with a large build, Alpheus had a boisterous, outspoken personality to match his physique. His reputation preceded him wherever he went and at the time of his death, weighed over 300 lbs. He was the father of fourteen children and died at the age of eighty from complications due to TB.

Alpheus' wife Lois, and his remaining followers (125 members) moved to Bitter Lake, MN, pursuant to his commandment to do so after his death, and from there they too became involved with the RLDS (Reorganized Latter-day Saints). This is the church [Emma](#) and others founded when they split with Brigham Young.

Over the next fifty plus years the Cutlerites would separate, move, and be whittled down several times until they were completely absorbed into the RLDS, just as other factions were. Today the RLDS Church is known as CoC (Community of Christ).

The chart below contains vitals for all seven wives. Unless noted otherwise, references were obtained from [Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy: A Preliminary Demographic Report by George D. Smith.](#)

*(The heavenly sign was two crescent moons with their backs touching)

	Wife/Age @ marriage (Noble's age)	Marriage Date	Kids	Other info	Wife's marital status

1



[Lois](#)

[Lathrop](#) - 20

(24)

11/17/

1808

1

[Born](#)

[9/24/1788](#)

[NH](#)

[Died](#)

[3/23/1878](#)

[MN](#)

Lois' name is

on [Nauvoo Temple](#)

[Endowment Names](#)

[List.](#)

Lois was member

of the [Relief Society](#) in 1842.

[Differing Visions, p 162-163](#)

reports Lois & Luana having endowments done

on the same day -

1/16/1846.

Two of their daughters

(Emily Trask Cutler

& Clarissa Crissy Cutler)

married [Kimball](#) &

both died in 1852.

Each daughter had 1 child (both names are

Single

					<p>on the Nauvoo Temple Endowment Names list)</p> <p>Cryptic info on</p> <p>endowments are also given in History of the Church 7:543-544.</p> <p>Several different</p> <p>earlylds.com references show conflicting data on # of kids for Lois.</p> <p>Info ranges from 8 – 13 kids.</p> <p>The majority of info on Lois states she was Alpheus' only wife.</p> <p>She served in the Relief Society</p> <p>under the direction</p> <p>of Emma Smith.</p>	
2		<p>Luana</p> <p>Hart</p> <p>Beebe</p> <p>Rockwell –</p> <p>31</p> <p>(61)</p>	<p>1/14/</p> <p>1846</p>	<p>3-4</p>	<p>Born</p> <p>10/13/1814</p> <p>NH</p> <p>Died</p> <p>3/6/1897</p> <p>UT</p> <p>Luana had four</p> <p>husbands; Orrin Porter</p> <p>Rockwell, Alpheus</p>	<p>Divorced</p>

Cutler,
Wheeler Baldwin &
Isaac Perry.
[Pseudonyms](#) for
children w/ Alpheus
taken from Luana's
husbands & Alpheus'
mother's maiden
name.
They were Jacob
Lorenzo Boyd, Olive
Luana Perry &
Lydia Ann Perry.
Lydia died in
infancy. Jacob was
told his father
was a scout
for Pioneer
Companies
& Olive was given
the name of
another husband of
Luana's.
These names were
used to cover
up they were

kids of Alpheus &
none of the kids
knew the truth.
[Herald Extra](#) reports
Rockwell's over
indulgent
devotion to Joe Smith
caused her to leave
Orrin & move
back to parent's
MO home in 1845.
Ancestry.com
[lists](#) Alpheus' name,
but some [don't](#)..
[findagrave](#) lists
names
of 4 husbands.
[WikiTree](#) &
[earlylds.com](#) provides
brief info on
marriage to Rockwell
& reason for
divorce in 1845 &
also has info
on her marriage to
Baldwin & Perry.
Wheeler Baldwin's

name
mentioned in
[D&C 52:31](#),
[Joseph Smith Papers](#).
Who's Who in
the D&C, &
[BYU Studies](#).
[Earlylds.com](#) gives
marriage date of
Luana & Baldwin
8/1858 in IA.
Has different spelling
for her last name –
[Bybee](#).
Earlylds.com
also gives names
of 6 kids for
Luana & Orrin.
Her father, [Isaac](#)
[Beebe](#), was
prominent in early
days of Mormonism.
Luana's name
is on the [Nauvoo](#)
[Temple Endowment](#)

					Names List. Born in same town as Lois – Lebanon, NH. Frisby-family.com lists a name for a daughter born in 1849 & endowment to Rockwell for same date.	
3		Margaret Carr – 74 (61)	2/3/ 1846	0	Born 10/16/1771 NC Died ??? ??? Margaret’s name is on Nauvoo Temple Endowment Names List. Earlylds shows she & Lois married to Alpheus Margaret & younger sister Abigail (wife #4) were recruited in NC. Both	Unknown

					names are listed as Alpheus' wives in Journal of Mormon History, Volume 21, Issue I, p. 34 & BYU Biographical Registers.	
4		Abigail Carr – 65 (61)	2/3/1846	0	Born 10/4/1780 NC Died ??? ??? Younger sister of Margaret (wife #3). No extraneous info on her or sister except for LDS writings (BYU) provided. Margaret's & Abigail's names are listed as Alpheus' wives in Journal of Mormon History, Volume 21, Issue I, p. 34	Unknown

					& BYU Biographical Registers.	
5		Sarah ‘Sally’ Cox Hutchings – 51 (61)	2/3/ 1846	0	Born 2/26/1794 NJ Died 9/28/1863 UT Sally was a busy gal. Married Elias Hutchings in OH 1816 – they had 13 kids. He died 1/1845. Md. & endowed to Alpheus 2/3/1846. Sally went to UT w/ Ezra T. Benson’s company 10/1849. Gapages.com provides bio on Elias & info on 11 kids, states only 5 kids lived to adulthood.	Widow

[geni.com](#) provides names & dates for 13 children. By the time they joined LDS (1830) they had 8 kids (2 of which died), 3 other children (twin girls age 8 & a 9 yr old girl) died before they moved to MO in 1839. Her name appears on [Nauvoo Temple Endowment Names List](#). [Earlylds.com](#) gives marriage date to Hutchings but not Alpheus. Name is listed as Alpheus' wife in Journal of Mormon

					History, Volume 21, Issue I, p. 34 & BYU Biographical Registers.	
6		Disey Caroline McCall Allen – 43 (61)	2/3/ 1846	0	Born 10/26/1802 NC Died 10/16/1890 Disey was member of the Relief Society in 1842. Mormon Church History Blogspot records marriage of Alpheus & Disey. It also mentioned almost 300 others waiting for endowments . Disey went to UT w/ Overland Travel Company along w/ sister Rachel. Earlylds.com shows Disey's late husband	Widow

					Joseph K. Allen died 4/1843 in Nauvoo. They were md. in TN 1832. Conflicting reports if they had kids. Her name is on Nauvoo Temple Records List. Name is listed as Alpheus' wife in Journal of Mormon History, Volume 21, Issue I, p. 34 & BYU Biographical Registers.	
7		Henrietta Clarinda Miller Cutler - 23 (61)	1/31/ 1846 or 2/3/ 1846	0	Born 11/16/1822 NY Died abt. 1850-1851 KS Familysearch.org reports Henrietta married Moses Cutler	Widow

12/1842.

Moses died in

Nauvoo 10/1844
shortly

after twin girls

were born (Philinda
& Clorinda).

Clorinda died in

infancy. Philinda lived

w/John & Eliza

Daley & moved

to UT after

Henrietta died.

Name is listed

as Alpheus' wife

in Journal of Mormon

History, Volume 21,

Issue I, p. 34 & [BYU](#)

[Biographical
Registers.](#)