

APPENDIX D

Historical Accounts Referring to the Relationship of Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger

To date, nineteen different references to the Joseph Smith-Fanny Alger relationship have been identified in the historical record. Hopefully more will come to light in the future. An analysis of the various narratives shows that the first reference was written on January 21, 1838, probably two to three years after the event; no contemporaneous records have been located. Also, fifteen of the accounts were composed at least thirty-seven years after the incident; thirteen of the narratives are secondhand.¹ The first published reference to Fanny Alger by her full name occurred in 1881, although her first name was used in an 1875 anti-Mormon book, *Wife No. 19*, written by Ann Eliza Webb Young in 1875. Regardless, most Church members would not have known anything about her until Andrew Jenson mentioned her as “one of the first plural wives sealed to the Prophet” in his 1887 article in the *Historical Record*.

See Volume 1, Chapters 4–7 for analyses of these quotations.

Four References Written between 1838 and 1842

1. Oliver Cowdery, Letter to Warren A. Cowdery (Oliver’s brother), January 21, 1838, Letterbook, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. This is a handwritten copy made by Warren E. Cowdery (Oliver’s nephew). Typically letterbook entries are exact copies of the original letter, but in this case, it is not known whether “scrape” or “affair” was the original word:

I never confessed intimated \or admitted/ that I ever willfully lied about him [Joseph Smith]. When he was here we had some conversation in which in every instance, I did not fail to affirm that what I had said was strictly true A dirty, nasty, filthy scrape [“affair” is overwritten in Warren E.

1. See the summary in Todd Compton, “Truth, Honesty and Moderation in Mormon History: A Response to Anderson, Faulring, and Bachman’s Reviews of *In Sacred Loneliness*, section “The Date of Fanny Alger’s Marriage” <http://www.geocities.com/athens/oracle/7207/rev.html> (accessed February 11, 2007).

Cowdery's handwriting] of his and Fanny Algers was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deviated from the truth on the matter, and as I supposed was admitted by himself.

2. Ebenezer Robinson clerk, High Council Minutes, April 12, 1838, in Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 167–68:

George W. Harris testifies that one evening last fall O. Cowdery was at his house together with Joseph Smith jr., and Thomas B. Marsh, when a conversation took place between Joseph Smith jr & O. Cowdery, when he seemed to insinuate that Joseph Smith jr was guilty of adultery, but when the question was put, if he (Joseph) had ever acknowledged to him that he was guilty of such a thing; when he answered No. Also he believes him to be instrumental in causing so many lawsuits as had taken place of late.

David W. Patten testifies, that he went to Oliver Cowdery to enquire of him if a certain story was true respecting J. Smith's committing adultery with a certain girl, when he turned on his heel and insinuated as though he was guilty; he then went on and gave a history of some circumstances respecting the adultery scrape stating that no doubt it was true. Also said that Joseph told him, he had confessed to Emma, Also that he has used his influence to urge on lawsuits.

Thomas B. Marsh testifies that while in Kirtland last summer, David W. Patten asked Oliver Cowdery if he Joseph Smith jr. had confessed to his wife that he was guilty of adultery with a certain girl, when Oliver Cowdery cocked up his eye very knowingly and hesitated to answer the question, saying he did not know as he was bound to answer the question yet conveyed the idea that it was true. Last fall after Oliver came to this place he heard a conversation take place between Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery when J. Smith asked him if he had ever confessed to him that he was guilty of adultery, when after a considerable winking &c. he said No. Joseph then asked him if he ever told him that he confessed to any body, when he answered No.

Joseph Smith jr testifies that Oliver Cowdery had been his bosom friend, therefore he entrusted him with many things. He then gave a history respecting the girl business."

3. [No title], *Elder's Journal* 1, no. 3 (July 1838): 45.

Agreeable to your request, Brother [George] Harris and myself wrote, and sent to you our testimony, relative to what Oliver Cowdery said about the girl and mailed it on the 4th inst. but lest that letter should not reach you through the iniquity of men, I here send you the same, with the addition of Brother [George] Hinkle's testimony. They may not be the same words as the other, for we have not a copy of the former letter, however, this is the same in substance with some additions.

This may certify that I heard O. [Oliver] Cowdery say to Joseph Smith, Jr., while at George W. Harris' house in Far West, that he (Joseph) never confessed to him, (Oliver) that he was guilty of the crime alleged to him. And O. Cowdery gave me to understand that Joseph Smith, Jr. never acknowledged to him that he ever confessed to anyone, that he was guilty of the above crime.

Thomas B. Marsh.

This may certify that I heard Oliver Cowdery say in my house, that Joseph Smith, Jr. never confessed to him that he was guilty of the crime alleged against him and Joseph asked if he ever said to him (Oliver) that he confessed to anyone that he (Joseph) was guilty of the above crime, and Oliver, after some hesitation, answered no.

George W. Harris.

This may certify that having heard the report about the crime above referred to, I asked Oliver Cowdery last fall when Joseph Smith was in the Far West, if the report was true, for said I, if it is, as he is to be presented before the church, I wish to know of the truth of this matter beforehand. And he gave me to understand, either in plain words or implications, that it was false. I bear this testimony for the good of the honest hearted in the east and elsewhere, and for the good of Brother Joseph Smith, Jr. Brother Marsh will please copy this in the letter to the east and keep the original here.

George M. Hinkle.

4. Fanny Brewer, who lived in Boston, Massachusetts, was converted through the missionary efforts of the Prophet's brother, Samuel H. Smith. Samuel recorded for June 24, 1832: "In Boston. Held a meeting at Fanny Brewers."² His journal show that they also held other meetings there on June 25, 27, July 1, 8, and on other dates. Samuel's entry for July 29, 1832, reads: "Held a meeting at Sister Brewer's. Preaching in the forenoon and then baptized two, Fanny Brewer and Mary Voce."³ In 1842 Fanny Brewer reported having visited Kirtland, Ohio in 1837 in a statement, quoted in John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints; or, an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842), 85:

Testimony of Fanny Brewer, of Boston
Boston, September 13, 1842

To the Public:— I have long desired that some one who had a certain knowledge of the hidden practices and abominations at Nauvoo, would have the moral courage to come out, with a full development; and my desires have been realized in General Bennett's disclosures. As the ice is now broken, I,

2. Samuel H. Smith Journal, June 24, 1832.

3. *Ibid.*, July 29, 1832.

too, have a tale to tell. In the spring of 1837, I left Boston for Kirtland, in all good faith, to assemble with the Saints, as I thought, and worship God more perfectly. On my arrival, I found brother going to law with brother, drunkenness prevailing to a great extent, and every species of wickedness. . . . There was much excitement against the Prophet, on another account, likewise,—an unlawful intercourse between himself and a young orphan girl residing in his family, and under his protection!!! Mr. Martin Harris told me that the Prophet was most notorious for lying and licentiousness!! In the fall of 1837, the Smith family all left Kirtland, by revelation, (or necessity,) for Missouri.

Fifteen References Written between 1872 and 1903

1. William McLellin, Letter to Joseph Smith III, July 1872, Community of Christ Archives:

Now Joseph I will relate to you some history, and refer you to your own dear Mother for the truth. You will probably remember that I visited your Mother and family in 1847, and held a lengthy conversation with her, retired in the Mansion House in Nauvoo. I did not ask her to tell, but I told her some stories I had heard. And she told me whether I was properly informed. Dr. F. G. Williams practiced with me in Clay Co. Mo. during the latter part of 1838. And he told me that at your birth your father committed an act with a Miss Hill [sic]—a hired girl. Emma saw him, and spoke to him. He desisted, but Mrs. Smith refused to be satisfied. He called in Dr. Williams, O. Cowdery, and S. Rigdon to reconcile Emma. But she told them just as the circumstances took place. He found he was caught. He confessed humbly, and begged forgiveness. Emma and all forgave him. She told me this story was true!! Again I told her I heard that one night she missed Joseph and Fanny Alger. She went to the barn and saw him and Fanny in the barn together alone. She looked through a crack and saw the transaction!!! She told me this story too was verily true.

2. William McLellin quoted by J. H. Beadle, “Jackson County,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 6, 1875, 4:

He [McLellin] also informed me of the spot where the first well authenticated case of polygamy took place, in which Joseph Smith was “sealed” to the hired girl. The “sealing” took place in a barn on the hay mow, and was witnessed by Mrs. Smith through a crack in the door! The Doctor was so distressed about this case, (it created some scandal at the time among the Saints,) that long afterwards when he visited Mrs. Emma Smith at Nauvoo, he charged her as she hoped for salvation to tell him the truth about it. And she then and there declared on her honor that it was a fact—“saw it with her own eyes.”

3. Martin Harris, quoted in Anthony Metcalf, *Ten Years before the Mast* (Malad, Ida.: By the Author, 1888), 72:

In or about the year 1833, the servant girl of Joe Smith stated that the prophet had made improper proposals to her, which created quite a talk amongst the people. Joe Smith went to Martin Harris to counsel with him concerning the girl's talk. Harris, supposing that Joe was innocent, told him to take no notice of the girl, that she was full of the devil and wanted to destroy the prophet of God; but Joe Smith acknowledged that there was more truth than poetry in what the girl said. Harris then said he would have nothing to do in the matter, Smith could get out of the trouble the best way he knew how.

4. Ann Eliza Webb, *Wife No. 19, or the Story of a Life in Bondage, being a Complete Exposé of Mormonism, and Revealing the Sorrows, Sacrifices, and Sufferings of Women in Polygamy* (Hartford, Conn: Dustin, Gilman & Co., 1875), 66–67:

Mrs. [Emma] Smith had an adopted daughter, a very pretty, pleasing young girl, about seventeen years old. She was extremely fond of her; no own mother could be more devoted, and their affection for each other was a constant object of remark, so absorbing and genuine did it seem. Consequently it was with a shocked surprise that the people heard that sister Emma had turned Fanny out of the house in the night. . . . By degrees it became whispered about that Joseph's love for his adopted daughter was by no means a paternal affection, and his wife discovering the fact, at once took measures to place the girl beyond his reach. . . . [T]he storm became so furious, that Joseph was obliged to send, at midnight, for Oliver Cowdery, his scribe, to come and endeavor to settle matters between them. . . . The scribe was a worthy servant of his master. He was at the time residing with a certain young woman, and at the same time he had a wife living. . . . The worthy couple—the Prophet and his scribe—were sorely perplexed what to do with the girl, since Emma refused decidedly to allow her to remain in her house; but after some consultation, my mother offered to take her until she could be sent to her relatives. Although her parents were living, they considered it the highest honor to have their daughter adopted into the Prophet's family, and her mother [Clarissa Hancock Alger] has always claimed that she was sealed to Joseph at that time.

5. Eliza J. Webb [Eliza Jane Churchill Webb], Lockport, New York, Letter to Mary Bond, April 24, 1876, P21, f11, item 7, 8, Community of Christ Archives:

Fanny Alger's mother says Fanny was sealed to Joseph by Oliver Cowdery in Kirtland in 1835-or 6. . . . Fanny Alger had lived in Joseph's family several years, and when she left there she came and lived with me a few weeks. I suppose your mother will remember what a talk the whole affair made.

6. Eliza J. Webb [Eliza Jane Churchill Webb], Lockport, New York, Letter to Mary Bond, May 4, 1876, P21, fl 1, item 9, Community of Christ Archives:

I do not know that the “sealing” commenced in Kirtland but I am perfectly satisfied that something similar commenced, and my judgment is principally formed from what Fanny Alger told me herself concerning her reasons for leaving “Sister Emma.”

7. Historicus [pseud.], “Sketches from the History of Polygamy: Joseph Smith’s Especial Revelations,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard* 2, no. 1 (April 1881): 1:

Emma Smith, Joseph’s wife, had a young girl in her employment by the name of Fanny Olger or Alger. It was the time the present Joseph Smith was an infant, (he was born in November 1832) and in consequence of the free-loveism of the prophet, Emma’s recovery was very much retarded, and for several months she was in a very low condition. She discovered that Joseph had been celestializing with this maiden, Fanny, who acknowledged the truth, but Joseph denied it in toto and stigmatized the statement of the girl as a base fabrication. Emma, of course, believed the girl, as she was very well aware that no confidence could be placed in her husband, and she became terrible worked up about it. She was like a mad woman, and acted so violently that Oliver Cowdery and some of the elders were called in to minister to her and “cast the devil out of sister Emma.” Whatever may have been sister Emma’s other faults, she certainly must have had a very forbearing and forgiving disposition, for she condoned this offense as well as innumerable other similar ones.

8. Clark Braden, *E. L. Kelley and Clark Braden, Public Discussion of the Issues between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and The Church of Christ (Disciples) Held in Kirtland, Ohio* (St. Louis: Clark Braden, 1884), 202:

Lewis Bond⁴ and Ezra Bond have repeatedly stated that their father and mother, who were amongst the first Mormons in Kirtland, repeatedly declared that Smith practiced polygamy in Kirtland, and that he followed a girl into a privy and committed fornication with her.

9. John Hawley, John Hawley Autobiography, January 1885, Community of Christ Archives, excerpts typed March 1982 by Lyndon Cook:

4. The parents were Ira Bond (1798–1887) and Charlotte Wilcox Bond (1803–82) and the children were Eveline Bond, Ezra Bond (b. 1826), Mary E. Bond (b. 1828), Eber Wilcox Bond (b. 1835), Milton J. Bond (b. 1838) and Myron H. Bond (b. 1843). The Bonds converted some time in 1833 and moved to Kirtland before Eber’s birth on December 9, 1835. When the body of Saints left Kirtland, the Bonds remained in Ohio. The parents, Ezra and Mary, were in Kirtland at least as late as 1880. There appears to be no record for a “Lewis Bond” or similar name in the family, so it seems to be a mistake on Braden’s part.

What I heard [from] John Olger one of the first (or among the first) members of the Church toald me his Sister was Seald to Joseph in Curtlin, this he Said to me in 1868.

10. Alfred Holbrook, *Reminiscences of the Happy Life of a Teacher* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Elm Street Printing, 1885), 223–24:

I do not think, however, that Mr. Rigdon ever favored the idea of polygamy. . . . The doctrine was first broached in Kirtland by the revelation of Joe Smith, with reference to the daughter of one of the old inhabitants of Kirtland, who was sealed to Joe as his spiritual wife. It was not the prevalent doctrine, nor generally received as binding upon other persons than those who were called by a distinct revelation.

11. Chauncy Webb quoted in Wilhelm Wyl, *Mormon Portraits: Joseph Smith the Prophet, His Family and His Friends: A Study Based on Facts and Documents* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Company, 1886), 57:

Mr. W. [probably Chauncy G. Webb]: “He [Joseph Smith] was sealed there [in Kirtland, Ohio] secretly to Fanny Alger. Emma was furious, and drove the girl, who was unable to conceal the consequences of her celestial relation with the prophet, out of her house.”

12. Eliza R. Snow, Document 10, in Andrew Jenson Papers, MS 17956, Box 49, fd. 16:

Alger, Fanny, Joseph Smith’s wife. One of the first wives Joseph married. Emma made such a fuss about. Sister E. R. Snow was well acquainted with her as she lived with the Prophet at the time. She afterwards married in Indiana where she became the mother of a large family. A brother Alger lives in St. George.

13. Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 233:

Fanny Alger, one of the first plural wives sealed to the Prophet . . .

14. Mosiah Hancock, an addition written in 1896 to the “Autobiography” of his father, Levi Ward Hancock, Ms 570, microfilm, 61–65. Transcribed by Don Bradley and reproduced here line for line:

As early as the Spring of 1832 Bro Joseph said
 “Brother Levi, The Lord has revealed to me that
 it is his will that righteous men shall take
 Righteous women even a plurality of Wives
 that a Righteous race may be sent forth Uppon [sic]
 the Earth preparatory to the ushering in of the
 [page 62] Millennial Reign of our Redeemer For the Lord
 has such a high respect for the nobles of his king-
 dom that he is not willing for them to come throu-

gh the Loins of a careles [sic] People—Therefore; it behoves [sic] those who embrace that Principle to pay strict attention to even the least requirement of our Heavenly Father”—I wish the People to understand that Satan in those days sought to kill the influence of of the Noble Prophet! And men whos [sic] whole being was not wrapt up in the work of the Lord! often were overpowered by the adversary to [sic] frequently—I wish to be understood by those who may suppose that I was to [sic] young to understand or remember that I have a right to remember for as for tea, coffee Whiskey and Tobacco are concerned I have kept the word of wisdom in that respect [...]

[***]

When my Father had started on his first mission to preach this Gospel He felt that perhaps he had done wrong in not telling the Prophet that he had made arrangements to marry Temperance Jane Miller of New Lyme—When Father returned from his mission he spoke to the Prophet concerning the matter The Prophet said—“Never mind Brother Levi about that for the Lord has one prepared for you that will [page 63] be a Blessing to you forever!”—

At that time Clarissa Reed was working at the Prophet's She told the Prophet She loved brother Levi Hancock

The Prophet had the highest respect for her feelings She had thought that perhaps she might be one of the Prophet's wives as herself and Sister Emma were on the best of terms My Father and Mother understanding each other were inspired by the spirit of the Lord to respect His word through the Prophet—Therefore Brother Joseph said “Brother Levi I want to make a bargain with

you—If you will get Fanny Alger for me for a wife you may have Clarissa Reed [Levi Hancock and Clarissa Reed Hancock married March 29, 1833]. I love Fanny”

“I will” Said Father—“Go brother Levi and the Lord will prosper you” Said Joseph—Father goes to the Father Samuel Alger—his Father's Brother in Law and [said] “Samuel the Prophet Joseph loves your Daughter Fanny and wishes her for a wife what say you”—Uncle Sam Says—“Go and talk to the old woman about it twi'll be as She says” Father goes to his Sister and said “Clarissy, Brother Joseph the Prophet of the most high God loves Fanny and wishes her

for a wife what say you” Said She “go and talk to Fanny it will be all right with me”—Father goes to Fanny and said “Fanny Brother Joseph the Prophet loves you and wishes you for a wife will you be his wife”? “I will Levi” Said She. Father takes Fanny to Joseph and said “Brother Joseph I have been successful in my mission”—Father gave her to Joseph repeating the Ceremony as Joseph repeated to him [page 64] Clarissa Reed being in poor health Father takes her to his folks in Rome—The reason of mother’s poor health was this She worked hard at the Prophets—He had many visitors at that time and it used to be frequently the Case that many of those worthies ? Chewed tobacco to that extent that it would seem that where they had been sitting in a Room for a little while that a flock of geese had been waddling about the floor the filth was so great and Mother being of a refined nature could not stand such nonsense —Not far from this time Joseph received the Revelation on the word [received February 27, 1833] of wisdom—As time progressed the

Apostates thought they

had a good hold on Joseph because of Fanny and some of the smart ? ones confined her in an upper room of the Temple [completed April 1836] determined that the Prophet should be settled according to their notions

Brother Joseph came to Father and said “Brother Levi what can be done”?—There being a wagon and a dry goods Box close by and Joseph being strong and Father active Father soon gained the window Sill and Fanny was soon on the ground Father mounts his horse with Fanny behind him and altho dark they were in New Lyme forty five miles distant—And when the worthies ? sent Fannys [“y” overwriting “ie”] dinner the next day they were astonished not to

be able to find her—Father by that time had returned and his animal was in the Stable

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[...] On the 14th of June [over-writing May] 1835 my little sister Sariah was born She lived only a few days On the 14th of May 1836 my Sister Amy was born in Kirtland

15. Benjamin E. Johnson, quoted in Dean R. Zimmerman, ed., *I Knew the Prophets: An Analysis of the Letter of Benjamin E. Johnson to George F. Gibbs, Reporting Doctrinal Views of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1976), 37–39:

— And now To your Question, “How Early did the Prophet Joseph Practice Polygamy?”—I hardly know how wisely to Reply, for the Truth at times may be better withheld[;] But as what I am writing is to be published only uunder Strict Scrutiny of the wisest[.] I will Say, That the Revilation [D&C 132] to the Church at Nauvoo July 21th 1843 on the eternity of the Marriage Covenant and the Law of plural Marriage, was not the first Rivilation of the Law Received & Practiced by the Prophet—In 1835 at Kirtland I learned from my Sisters Husband Lyman R Shirman, who was close to the Prophet and Received it from him. “That the ancient order of plural marriage was again to be practiced by the Church[.] This at the time did not impress my mind deeply. Altho there then lived with his Family a Neighbors daughter Fanny Alger. A vary nice & Comly young woman about my own age. towards \whoom/ not only mySelf but every one Seemed partial for \the/ ameability of her character and \it/ was whispered eaven \then/ that Joseph Loved her—After this there was Some trouble with Jarid Carter. and through Bro Shirman I learned that “As he had built himself a new house he now wanted another wife” which Joseph would not permit”—and then there was Some trouble with Oliver Cowdery, and whisper Said it was Relating to a girl then living in his Family And I was afterwords told by Warren Parish That He himself & Oliver Cowdery did know that Joseph had Fanny Alger as a wife for They were Spied upon & found together—And I Can now See that as at Nauvoo—So at Kirtland That the Suspician or Knowledge of the Prophets Plural Relation was one of the Causes of Apostacy & disruption at Kirtland altho at the time there was little Said publicly upon the Subject—Soon after the Prophet Flight in winter of 37 x 8 The Alger Family left for the west and Stopping in Indiana for a time Fanny Soon Married to one of the Citizens there & altho she never left the State She did \not/ turn from the Church nor from her friendship for the Prophet while She lived.