

Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy

How Men Nearest the Prophet Attached Polygamy to His Name
in Order to Justify Their Own Polygamous Crimes

By Richard and Pamela Price

"What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one"—Joseph Smith (LDS History of the Church 6:411).

Chapter 54

The Majority of the Twelve Apostles Abandoned Joseph

This chapter was scheduled to be a study of the conflicting testimonies between Joseph and his accusers—John W. Rigdon, the LDS Church's primary witness in the Nancy Rigdon case; Dr. John C. Bennett, another LDS primary witness; and Francis M. Higbee, whom the apostles shielded by withholding parts of Joseph's testimony concerning Higbee that would have exonerated Joseph.

It is thought best, however, for the focus of this chapter to be upon the *Francis M. Higbee versus Joseph Smith Case*, because at its center are three important events. One is the discovery by the Prophet Joseph that Francis Higbee, a young unmarried member of the Church, was very ill with a venereal disease. The second event was the false accusations by Doctor John C. Bennett and Francis M. Higbee that Joseph Smith proposed marriage to nineteen-year-old Nancy Rigdon, daughter of President Sidney Rigdon. The third event involved Apostle Willard Richards, who in the summer of 1842 wrote a document that was delivered to Nancy Rigdon under the false pretense of it being a letter from Joseph Smith to Nancy. It was alleged by Higbee and Bennett that the document was a letter from Joseph to Nancy to entice her into becoming his plural wife.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, on May 11, 1842, the hand of fellowship was withdrawn from Doctor John C. Bennett, who was teaching and practicing spiritual wifery, another name for polygamy (see *Times and Seasons* 3 [June 15, 1842]: 830; *ibid.*, [July 1, 1842]: 839–842). Shortly thereafter Bennett published his infamous book *The History of the Saints: or An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*. Bennett inserted Richards' letter in his book, on pages 243–245, with the false claim that

"... Dr. Richards ... handed her [Nancy] the following letter from the Prophet Joe (written by Richards, by Joe's dictation,) and requested her to burn it after reading. ..."

Willard Richards never denied this accusation, and

when Joseph went to visit the Rigdon family and denied that he had authored the letter, he took Willard Richards with him. No doubt Joseph demanded that Richards tell the Rigdon family the truth.

Many years later, when Mormon historians were compiling the official history for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Willard Richards' spurious document was copied from Bennett's book and inserted into the history as being from Joseph himself. Despite the fact that it is not a history by Joseph Smith, and Joseph did not compile or write it, the official name of the history is *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Period 1. History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, By Himself*. The document is found in volume 5, pages 134–136. One thing is certain, Joseph would not have inserted the fake document into the history of the Church. He knew Apostle Richards wrote it, and that Bennett and Higbee and the polygamous apostles were using it for the purpose of making him appear to be polygamous.

The compilers of the *LDS History of the Church* did not insert Joseph's statement that he was not the author of the letter. Neither did they insert Sidney Rigdon's statement that Joseph had assured him in writing that he, Joseph, was not the author of the letter.

Joseph Faced a New and Lasting Problem in July 1841

Around the first of July 1841, Joseph was informed that Francis M. Higbee was ill and wanted Joseph to visit him. On May 8, 1844, Joseph recalled that visit, and he testified of the shocking and disgusting scene that he beheld upon entering the room where the ill Francis was lying on a bed upon the floor. Francis Higbee, a young man of twenty years, was held in high esteem by members of the Church, but he had evidently allowed himself to be led astray by the false teachings of Doctor John C. Bennett. At that time Bennett

was secretly teaching and practicing polygamy under the name of “spiritual wifery,” a term used by those of the Cochranite sect, who had brought polygamy into the Church at Kirtland a few years earlier. According to the testimonies of Joseph’s witnesses on May 8, 1844, and on June 8, 1844, Francis was suffering from syphilis, which at that time had no known medical cure. As previously documented, Francis became infected with syphilis upon visiting a “French girl,” a prostitute who had come to Nauvoo from the nearby town of Warsaw. Doctor Bennett was Higbee’s physician. When Bennett’s prescribed remedies failed to heal Francis, Joseph the Prophet was asked to visit and administer to Higbee. It was the custom of the Saints to call upon the elders to pray over their sick. Joseph administered to Higbee by anointing his head with oil, laying his hands upon Higbee’s head, and praying to the Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ for a healing. Joseph testified under oath:

I want to testify to this court of what occurred a long time before John C. Bennet left this city. I was called on to visit Francis M. Higbee; I went and found him on a bed on the floor. (*Times and Seasons* 5 [May 15, 1844]: 538)

After Joseph uttered these two sentences, Editor John Taylor cut off Joseph’s testimony on this subject by giving the lame excuse that the Prophet’s testimony was “too indelicate” for publication. Taylor’s excuse for not publishing Joseph’s testimony read:

[Here follows testimony which is too indelicate for the public eye or ear; and we would here remark, that so revolting, corrupt, and disgusting has been the conduct of most of this clique, that we feel to dread having any thing to do with the publication of their trials; we will not however offend the public eye or ear with a repetition of the foulness of their crimes any more.] (*ibid.*, 538–539)

Joseph’s testimony, whatever its contents, was not too revolting for the public to read. Withholding his testimony placed his life in jeopardy!

Let us study Joseph’s testimonies published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* and the *Times and Seasons*, along with the testimonies of Joseph’s witnesses about Francis M. Higbee and the nature of his illness. It will take an additional chapter to give a greater understanding of why Francis M. Higbee directed such great anger at the Prophet, and Higbee’s reason for suing Joseph for five thousand dollars.

For some reason, Apostle Taylor did not want Joseph’s testimony published concerning what he saw and heard upon entering the room where Higbee was lying. To understand the problem Joseph and the Church

facied, the nature of Higbee’s illness needs to be established. Testimony of Joseph’s witnesses states that Higbee was suffering from a venereal disease caused by promiscuity on Higbee’s part. History bears out that Joseph and members of the Church’s High Council dealt with and condemned the promiscuity of both Higbee and Doctor Bennett. History of this period in Church history is not complete without an understanding of the *Francis M. Higbee versus Joseph Smith Case*, and until the truth is published the Mormons will continue to claim that Joseph, the husband of only one wife, attempted to seduce the teenage daughter of his good friend, President Sidney Rigdon. And to add insult to Joseph, the Mormon accusations against him make him a liar over and over. They make his affidavits and statements of his innocence, perjured words.

Two sentences that Joseph spoke, and are quoted above, bear repeating. Joseph asserted:

I want to testify to this court of what occurred a long time before John C. Bennet left this city. I was called on to visit Francis M. Higbee; I went and found him on a bed on the floor.

Joseph plainly stated, “I was called on to visit Francis M. Higbee.” The Prophet did not stumble upon the scene unexpectedly. He was invited to visit Francis Higbee. Higbee, as an active member of the Church, whose father was a high priest, would have believed in and would have witnessed the anointing of the sick. He would have heard testimonies by many who claimed that they had been healed by the prayers of Joseph and other elders. As Higbee lay upon his pallet upon the floor, he had faith in Joseph as a minister and Prophet, and he hoped that he could be healed by the Lord hearing Joseph’s prayer for a miraculous healing.

Higbee’s Bed on the Floor Was Not Unusual

Joseph’s statement that he found Higbee on a bed on the floor may seem strange to today’s readers. However, it was not unusual to sleep on a bed or pallet on the floor in Nauvoo in 1841. In pre-Nauvoo days, when mobs attacked the Saints and drove them from their homes, bedding was most often among the items stolen from the Saints. Many Saints fled their persecutors, leaving behind their warm wool blankets, quilts, featherbeds, and bedsteads. One writer in describing life at Nauvoo has written:

Many residents were recent immigrants from the east or the British Isles who, like the refugees from Missouri, started out in Nauvoo with only the few possessions they had been able to bring with them. . . .

When bedtime came, it was without doubt welcomed, in spite of the lack of comfortable beds. . . . The weary

inhabitants of Nauvoo, for the most part, slept on straw or feather ticks on pallets on the floor or on lattice-rope beds. (George W. Givens, *In Old Nauvoo: Everyday Life in the City of Joseph* [Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1990], 185, 187)

Joseph's Witnesses Were Well Informed

It is evident upon reading the report of the *Francis M. Higbee versus Joseph Smith Case* in the *Times and Seasons* for May 15, 1844, that every witness for Joseph was aware of a vicious conspiratorial plot to bring the Prophet's downfall. Every man, from Brigham Young, president of the Quorum of Twelve, to his first cousin, Apostle Willard Richards, clerk of the Nauvoo Municipal Court, knew that at the center of the case was the false charge by Higbee that Joseph had plural wives, and that he had proposed marriage to Nancy Rigdon. It was crucial for Joseph's defense, that this testimony be made public. It may be recalled that this was not done. Editor John Taylor had plural wives and gave the weak excuse for not publishing the most revealing and vital part of Joseph's testimony.

Taylor's excuse for deleting parts of the Prophet's testimony is very troubling. Joseph gave his testimony to show that he was innocent of the charges against him. If Joseph's testimony had been published it might have saved his life, and the lives of his two brothers, Hyrum and Samuel. Those who wanted to destroy Joseph also wanted to destroy Joseph's brothers, Patriarch and President Hyrum Smith, Bishop Samuel Harrison Smith, Apostle William Smith, and the Prophet's eldest son, Joseph Smith III, whom Joseph the Prophet had blessed and proclaimed would someday be his successor.

Joseph III was only eleven years old when his father was assassinated, and it was obvious that he could not lead the Church at that time. If Joseph were killed, it was Hyrum's right to be his successor. In the event that Joseph and Hyrum were assassinated, their brother, Bishop Samuel Smith, was the next successor to the office of Prophet/President. Bishop Samuel Smith's character was without blemish, and he hated polygamy. Of Samuel, Mother Lucy Smith declared: **And here, let me say, that Samuel was never censured by revelation, to my knowledge, for he always performed his missions faithfully, and his work was well approved.** (Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and His Progenitors for Many Generations*, 225)

The Testimonies of Joseph's Witnesses

There is much to be learned from the brief testimonies of Joseph's witnesses:

H. J. Sherwood: H. J. Sherwood, one of Joseph's witnesses, gave insight into the administration that took place when Joseph visited Higbee. Sherwood swore: **I have several times had conversations with Higbee; I recollect that near two years ago there was a fuss about John C. Bennets spiritual wife system before the High Council [in 1842]. I recollect a French woman coming up from Warsaw, and that Francis M. Higbee had medical assistance * * * * * Dr. Bennet attended him, Joseph Smith administered unto him but it was irksome; Higbee assented that it was so, he did not contradict it, he promised to reform—he would do better, he would do so no more.** (*Times and Seasons* 5 [May 15, 1844]: 540)

The court record for May 8, 1844, reveals that according to the testimonies of Joseph's witnesses, Doctor Bennett talked freely to them about Higbee's sickness. Higbee was evidently in one of the early stages of the disease when Joseph visited him. If so, Joseph could have seen swelling upon Higbee's body, as well as chancres, rashes, and lesions—a very shocking sight!

Brigham Young: Brigham Young testified in Joseph's defense. According to the court record:

BRIGHAM YOUNG, sworn, With regard to Francis M. Higbee, at the time that is spoken of, I stopped opposite Mr. [William] Laws' store [which was across the street directly north of Joseph's store], we had been conversing with Dr. Bennet when I came into the room, Francis Higbee rather recoiled and wished to withdraw; he went out and sat upon a pile of wood. He said it is all true, I am sorry for it, I wish it had never happened. I understood Bennet who related some of the circumstances, he [Bennett] cried and begged of us to forgive him, and said if he could be permitted to stay in the city as a private individual he should be happy; that was about what he said; it is true, I am sorry for it[.] I wish it had never been so; as we came up, Dr. Bennet, Mr. [Francis] Higbee, and Mr. [Joseph] Smith, had been talking about it, I have not mentioned it before, I knew of the whole affair, it was on the 4th of July, or a few days after—it was shortly after I came from England. I was in the City Council when Mr. Higbee said all was settled.

Cross-examined:—I have heard Dr. Bennet say all these things were facts; he acknowledged that Higbee had the ——— [a venereal disease] and that he had doctored him, he acknowledged that, and a great deal more. (ibid., 539)

Joel S. Miles: Joel S. Miles, another witness for Joseph, testified:

I recollect the time that he [Higbee] was sick, when Dr. Bennet attended him, I went to see him nearly every day . . . (ibid., 540)

Hyrum Smith: Hyrum Smith, also a witness for

Joseph, swore:

Francis M. Higbee acknowledged that it was the truth, that he was sorry, and had been a thousand times; he acknowledged his connection with the woman on the bill; . . . Francis said he knew it was true, he was sorry and had been a hundred times; the very things that we had challenged him with, he acknowledged. . . . he said he was sorry, that he wanted it [the fact that he had a venereal disease] buried, and it was agreed to do so. Francis did not say any thing about his sickness, but Dr. Bennet made those observations to him that he had doctored him in the time of his sickness. . . .

Cross-examined. . . . I do not recollect of him saying [that he had got a bad disorder with the French Girl] he said he should not have been seduced, if it had not been by Dr. Bennet, when charged with them, Francis said they were true . . . he said "I will alter, I will save my character." . . . he said he would not receive any thing again from abroad . . . there were several present when this took place. (ibid., 539–540)

In this statement Hyrum is referring to a specific time when "there were several present."

Exactly one month later, on June 8, 1844, Hyrum Smith referred to Higbee's illness in a statement before the Nauvoo City Council. Hyrum's assertion is recorded in "a brief SYNOPSIS of the PROCEEDINGS of the MUNICIPALITY of the City of Nauvoo, relative to the destruction of the press and fixtures of the "Nauvoo Expositor."

Hyrum referred to Francis M. Higbee in connection with Sylvester Emmons, editor of the *Nauvoo Expositor*. Francis M. Higbee was one of the publishers of that paper (see *Nauvoo Expositor* 1 [June 7, 1844]: 1).

The record shows that Hyrum enquired, who was Judge [Sylvester] Emmons? When he came here he had scarce two shirts to his back, but he had been dandled by the authorities of the city, &c. and was now editor of the "Nauvoo Expositor," and his right hand man Francis M. Higbee, who had confessed to him [Hyrum] that he had had the P** [Pox; another name for syphilis]. (*The Nauvoo Neighbor* [June 19, 1844], 2)

There were a number of physicians at Nauvoo with whom Doctor Bennett and the Higbee family could have consulted if they wanted a second opinion or questioned the correctness of Doctor Bennett's diagnosis. So far, no report of another physician disputing Dr. Bennett's diagnosis has been found. In fact, there are a number of references to Higbee agreeing that the charges against him were true.

Francis M. Higbee and Doctor Bennett Made False Affidavits against Joseph

As discussed in earlier chapters, there was an in-depth investigation by Joseph the Prophet and members of the Church's High Council into Doctor Bennett, Francis Higbee, and their spiritual wifery connections. Before it was over, the investigation had spread from the High Council into the Nauvoo City Municipal Council and the Masonic Lodge.

At some point during the investigation, Bennett reported that Francis had told him that he had seduced a certain young lady. Research reveals that young woman was Nancy Rigdon. Bennett's report of Francis' alleged seduction reached Joseph, and the Prophet confronted Francis Higbee with Bennett's report. Higbee did not deny that he told Bennett that he had seduced Nancy. Higbee admitted to Joseph that he did tell Bennett he had seduced her. However, Higbee declared that he lied to Bennett. Joseph was very upset, and was determined to make Nancy's parents, President and Mrs. Sidney Rigdon, aware of what Higbee had told Bennett. Before Joseph went to visit the Rigdons, Higbee and Bennett concocted a story that would take the pressure off of themselves and place the focus on Joseph. They made "affidavits" against Joseph to blind Nancy's parents.

When Joseph learned that Francis Higbee and Doctor Bennett had sworn falsely against him by making false affidavits, the Prophet defended himself by making an affidavit declaring his innocence, and giving it to President Rigdon. On May 8, 1844, Sidney Rigdon testified under oath in Joseph's defense:

Cross-examined. . . . I recollect Joseph Smith came to me with a complaint against Higbee and Bennet, and made affidavit that it was true; I have the affidavit in my house. (*Times and Seasons* 5 [May 15, 1844]: 539)

The authors of "Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy" have been unable to locate a copy of, or a reference to, Joseph's affidavit that he placed in Sidney Rigdon's hands.

Under oath, Joseph related what actually had happened. The Prophet declared:

Bennet said Higbee pointed out the spot where he had seduced a girl, and that he had seduced another. I did not believe it, I felt hurt, and labored with Higbee about it; he swore with uplifted hands, that he had lied [to Bennett] about the matter. I went and told the girl's parents [Sidney and Phebe Rigdon], when Higbee and Bennet made affidavits and both perjured themselves, they swore false about me so as to blind the family. I brought Francis M. Higbee before Brigham Young, Hyrum Smith, and others; Bennet was present, when

they both [Bennett and Higbee] acknowledged that they had done these things, and asked us to forgive them. . . . Higbee has been guilty of adulterous communication, perjury, &c.; which I am able to prove by men who heard them confess it. I also preferred charges against Bennett, the same charges which I am now telling; and he got up and told them it was the truth, when he pleaded for his life, and begged to be forgiven; this was his own statement before sixty or seventy men; he said the charges were true against him and Higbee. (ibid.)

Francis M. Higbee Says Joseph Is Called of God

Doctor John Bennett was expelled from the Church (see *ibid.*, 3 [July 1, 1842]: 839), and Francis M. Higbee was forgiven after he made promises to reform and to correct the untruths he had written and spread about Joseph. History shows that Higbee did not keep his promises. However, he did write a letter to his parents, in which he said, "I have no feelings against Joseph: I have fully satisfied myself that he has been called of God. . . . I am fully satisfied with him."

His father, Elias Higbee, submitted extracts from Francis' letter to Editor John Taylor, who published:

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM F. M. HIGBEE.

Nauvoo, Dec. 25th 1842.

Editor of the Times and Seasons:

DEAR SIR:—Please publish the following extracts from a letter received from Francis M. Higbee, written to his parents, in answer to a letter written to him by them, upon the subject of two letters purporting to be written by him to J. C. Bennett and published in his book, entitled the "History of the Saints."

Respectfully yours, as ever,

ELIAS HIGBEE.

Cary's Academy, Pleasant Hill, Nov. 28, 1842.

DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER:—I received your letter to-day, under date of Nov. 13th which contained astonishing news to me indeed; and equally as painful as strange, and that is the fact of Bennett's book containing two letters from me, as such a thing has no foundation in truth. He has not got a scratch on earth, nor never did he have, with my name subscribed by my own hand, except the affidavit that fell into his hands.

But as for any other document, or paper of any description, sort, or size, with my name to it, he has not got it from me; nor from any one authorized to give it, for as such no one ever possessed the power of executing from me, either directly or indirectly. And if he has published any thing over my signature, or name, it is forged, and I forever detest and disclaim any such thing. I have been solicited both by letter, and in person, to come out with such a lingo as Bennett, and others have done and

attempted in days gone by. My assistance has loudly been called for in such a s[c]heme, or adventure, and in one instance since I left home I have had what some might consider (were they disposed to be dishonest) a great offer or proposition made me, if I would assist in the management, and bringing into existence, a newly modeled concern against the church; that is a corrected and revised story fresh from the mint. *But God forbid*, as long as he gives me health, and strength, and vigor of mind, I scorn the idea. * * * * *

I have never had any feelings against the church, or people; with the exception of a very few. * * * * *

I have always respected, and revered, the work or faith and shall always continue so to do. * * * * *

I want you to understand that I have no feelings against Joseph: I have fully satisfied myself that he has been called of God, to do a great, and mighty, work in the earth, and let it suffice to say I am fully satisfied with him.—All our former difficulties (if such they might be called) were forever effectually settled before I left [Nauvoo]. Bennett has by his artful cunning, or low cunning, sought to bring them into existence, but I hope without effect; for I should much regret any such thing. * * *

Bennett has been the instigator probably of more real trouble and misery than any other man we have ever met with, or ever shall find in this world. Vain man! would it not have been better for *him* if he had had a millstone tied about his neck, and then be cast into the sea? For there is hope of a tree if it be cut down that the tender branches will spring up again; but there is no hope of him. He has lain himself down and is already wasting away, like the morning dew before the sun in the meridian splendor and in the glory of his power. * * * * *

Yours as ever,

FRANCIS M. HIGBEE

(*ibid.*, 4 [December 15, 1842]: 47)

Francis M. Higbee Traveled from Conference to Conference Exhibiting Affidavits against Joseph

During the May 8, 1844, hearing of the *Francis M. Higbee versus Joseph Smith Case*, Cyrus H. Wheelock, one of Joseph's witnesses, testified that Francis Higbee was going from conference to conference, where he was showing affidavits that told "of the guilt of Mr. [Joseph] Smith." The record states:

MR. WHELOCK, sworn:—With regard to this case I know nothing, but through a circumstance occurring at Nashvill. Elder [James] Blakesly [Blakeslee] came to my house to preach, he preached and was upholding the authorities of the Church very much, he came over here and apostatized the same day; I then came over and went

(Continued on page 31)

to see him, I asked him why he had changed his mind so quick? he said he had seen affidavits of the guilt of Mr. [Joseph] Smith, he told me Mr. [Francis] Higbee was going about to the different [Church] conferences [showing the affidavits]. I told him [Blakeslee] I thought he [Higbee] had better send some one else, his conduct was not the best and I know of circumstances that were not right. (ibid., 5 [May 15, 1844]: 540)

**James Blakeslee and
Francis M. Higbee Cut off from Church**

In the same issue of *Times and Seasons* there appeared the following:

NOTICE.

At a meeting of the High Council, in the city of Nauvoo, this 18th day of May, 1844.

Resolved, That James Blakesley [Blakeslee], Francis M. Higbee, Charles Ivans, and Austin Cowles, be cut off from this church for apostasy.

GEORGE W. HARRIS, Prest. pro. tem.
JOSEPH M. COLE, Clk. pro. tem.
(ibid., 543).

James Blakeslee Takes Wheelock's Advice

According to testimony by Henry Green, James Blakesley, a dynamic seventy in the Church, who later became an apostle in the Reorganized Church, went to Nauvoo and visited with Joseph Smith to determine the truth about polygamy. President Joseph Smith III of the Reorganized Church, editor of the *Saints' Herald*, published Green's letter to Heman C. Smith, RLDS Church historian. President Joseph Smith III's statement precedes Green's letter:

BRO. HEMAN C. SMITH hands us the following item, which we publish for what it may be worth, as corroborating statements or facts of history.

NETAWAKA, Kan., Aug. 3, 1899.

Apostle H. C. Smith; Dear Brother:—I have just read, "Was Joseph Smith a Polygamist?" [a tract by Heman C. Smith, published in 1899 by the RLDS Church. Ed.]. In 1861, in Syracuse, Ohio, Apostle James Blakeslee and myself were in conversation concerning the heresies that crept into the church which resulted in its rejection, according to the word of the Lord. Bro. Blakeslee related many things from knowledge that you have [in the tract] in the early forties before Joseph's martyrdom.

When the statement of Elder William Marks, as published in the *True Latter Day Saints' Herald*, vol. 1, was under consideration, he said it was truth.

He asked me if I was acquainted with Captain Dan Jones. Being answered that I was, then he asked if I knew whether Elder D. Jones went into polygamy or not. To this I had to say I did not know, for I had lost track of him after 1853, when I began to retrace my steps from the old church.

Bro. Blakeslee in those days lived some distance from Nauvoo, but he was informed in some way of the heresies that were secretly creeping into the church at Nauvoo, and it grieved him and he came to Nauvoo to inquire whether the report was true or not; and he went to Joseph himself, and Captain D. Jones was in the room with him, and Joseph after a little hesitation answered to his question with a manifest grief, "Yes, and I am afraid it has gone too far to be checked [polygamy] and it will result in the overthrow of the church;" and Joseph rose to his feet with much apparent anxiety over the matter and commanded both in the name of the Lord (Blakeslee and Jones) to proclaim against the heresy in preaching and teaching with a loud voice.

You see now why he asked whether D. Jones went into it or not. If there is anything in this has added evidence in your effort to set down error and contention, you are welcome to use it.

Your brother for the truth,
HENRY GREEN.

(*Saints' Herald* [August 16, 1899]: 523)

Summary

The last thing that Brigham Young and other polygamists wanted at Nauvoo was an investigation into whether or not Joseph was a polygamist. Brigham and the other apostles knew that Joseph could, and would, prove to the court that he had only one wife, Emma Hale Smith; and they knew also that Joseph would not hesitate to expose their polygamy. There were many Saints at Nauvoo who were aware that members of the Quorum of Twelve had plural wives and children born of those plural wives. An investigation by the civil court of whether or not Joseph was a polygamist was sure to bring the conduct of the guilty apostles into question and public exposure. This, Young and his cohorts could not allow because it was evident to them that if there was a thorough investigation of the innocent Prophet, the polygamy trail would lead to them. The guilty apostles would then be charged with bigamy, and perhaps go to jail. Joseph had to be sacrificed to protect Brigham Young and his followers in polygamy. The best way for the apostles at Nauvoo to protect themselves was for them to falsely pretend to defend Joseph, and at the same time give his persecutors full reign, in an effort to bury forever Joseph's true version of what happened in the Bennett, Higbee, and Nancy Rigdon case.