

Chapter 19

Utah LDS Church Still Uses Allegations by Joseph's Enemies to Claim He Was a Polygamist

In order to understand the broader story of how the Utah LDS Church still uses the words of Joseph's enemies to promote that he was a polygamist, some writings by Dr. John C. Bennett, Francis M. Higbee, John W. Rigdon (Sidney Rigdon's son), and a poem written by an anonymous author are discussed in this chapter.

Each of these persons alleged that Joseph asked Nancy Rigdon (daughter of President and Mrs. Sidney Rigdon) to be his plural wife. Many malicious falsehoods were proclaimed, written, and published, causing Joseph to face a barrage of accusations.

Those accusations were destructive to Joseph's character, harmful to the Church, and most embarrassing to Joseph and Emma and the Rigdons. But the most lasting damage has been caused by Utah LDS Church leaders and historians republishing these false statements to strengthen their claim that Joseph had introduced polygamy into the Church. In addition, they have ignored Joseph's testimony when he explained under oath:

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 [Rigdon] family. (*Times and Seasons* 5 [May 15, 1844]: 539)

After laying the groundwork in this chapter, Joseph's side of the story will be given in detail in the next and final chapter. Joseph's side of the story is that Brigham Young and the majority

of the twelve apostles used Bennett's and Higbee's falsehoods to their advantage. They purposefully wove those evil men's statements against Joseph into the LDS *History of the Church*. In addition, other Utah LDS Church leaders have published documents to strengthen their own fraudulent claims that Joseph took plural wives.

Here are some examples of how Joseph's enemies slandered him and how Utah LDS Church leaders embraced those slanders in order to excuse their own polygamy—even if it meant endorsing questionable stories from disreputable sources which degraded Joseph.

**After Francis Higbee Confessed to
Being with a Prostitute, He Pled That His Main
Interest in Nancy Was Protecting Her from Joseph!**

According to Francis M. Higbee's written statement about the "Damages" case he brought against Joseph, the case involved Nancy Rigdon, whom Higbee had courted. Instead of attending the May 8 "Damages" court case, Francis M. Higbee wrote an article for the *Warsaw Signal* entitled "Communication," in which he wrote of

the base attack he (Joseph Smith), made upon the virtue of Miss Nancy Rigdon, in 1842, to whom I was at that time paying my addresses. The attack was of so base, so loathesome [*sic*], and so detestable a character, that I could not conceal my feelings from the base seducer . . . Joseph Smith. (*Warsaw Signal*, May 29, 1844)

Joseph's statements are of importance, because during that hearing he swore under oath that the allegations Higbee and Bennett made against him were untrue. Joseph asserted that Higbee's and Bennett's accusations had been fabricated by the two men to deceive Nancy's parents. Bennett and Higbee were attempting to convince Mr. and Mrs. Rigdon that Joseph was the guilty one, and that *they* were Nancy's protectors.

Of importance to this case is the fact that three years prior,

in the summer of 1841, Joseph brought charges before the Nauvoo Stake High Council against Higbee and Bennett. Both were found guilty of engaging in the practice of spiritual wifery. Among other crimes discovered in that case, the investigation disclosed that Bennett had performed abortions and that Higbee had contracted a venereal disease from a prostitute. Both Bennett and Higbee had suffered immense embarrassment when their sins were revealed, and Nancy Rigdon stopped dating Higbee after those disclosures. (See *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy* 1:115–128 and 2:21–40 for more information about these charges.)

John C. Bennett's Version

Below is Bennett's published version about the events surrounding Joseph's alleged proposition to Nancy Rigdon. Later in the chapter, Bennett's version will be compared to John Rigdon's version of the same alleged events, as stated in his affidavit.

MISS NANCY RIGDON

Miss Rigdon is the eldest unmarried daughter of Sidney Rigdon, Esq., and is a beautiful girl of irreproachable fame, great moral excellence, and superior intellectual endowments. She is a young lady of many charms and varied attractions; but she, too, was marked out for the *Cloister*. Joe could not suffer a pretty woman to escape without a *trial*. The *inquisitorial seraglio* must swallow up most cases, and secure the beautiful birds of gaudy plumage or fascinating charms. If they fail to be ensnared by the *Cyprian Saints*, they are liable to be taken in the net of the *Chambered Sisters of Charity*; if they pass that fiery ordeal, the poisoned arrows of the *Consecratees of the Cloister* await them: but this girl [Nancy] passed the Rubicon with heroic firmness. Knowing that I had much influence with Mr. Rigdon's family, Joe Smith said to me, one day last summer [1841], when riding together over the lawn, in Nauvoo, "If you will assist me in procuring Nancy

as one of my spiritual wives, I will give you five hundred dollars, or the best lot on Main Street.” I replied, “I cannot agree to it. Elder Rigdon is one of my best friends, and his family are now pure and spotless, and it would be a great pity to approach the truly virtuous.” “But,” said Joe, “the Lord has given her to me to wife. I have the blessings of Jacob, [meaning thereby a plurality of wives,] and there is no wickedness in it. It would be wicked to approach her, unless I had permission of the Lord; but, as it is, it is as correct as to have a *legal* wife, in a *moral* point of view.” I replied that it might be so, but that he must see her himself, as I could not approach her on a subject of that kind. There I supposed the matter had ended; but, at the funeral of Mr. Ephraim R. Marks, Mrs. [Orson] Hyde told Miss [Nancy] Rigdon that Joseph desired to see her at the printing-office where Mrs. Hyde and Dr. [Willard] Richards resided, on special business. [Ephraim Marks, son of William Marks, died April 7, 1842, and his funeral was April 9; see *LDS History of the Church* 4:586–587]. She said she would go, and accordingly did, but Joe was busily engaged at his store. Dr. Willard Richards, however, one of the holy twelve Mormon Apostles, and Spiritual High Priest, and Pander-General for Lust, whom I had long suspected as being up to his eyes in the business with Joe, came in, and said, “Miss Nancy, Joseph cannot be in today; please call again on Thursday.” This she agreed to do; but she communicated the matter to Colonel Francis M. Higbee, who was addressing her, and asked his advice as to the second visit. I then came to a knowledge of the facts, and went immediately to Joe, and said to him, “Joseph, you are a Master Mason, and Nancy is a Master Mason’s daughter, (so is Mrs. [Orson] Pratt, the daughter of Mr. Bates;) so stay your hand, or you will get into trouble—*remember your obligation.*” Joe replied, “You are my enemy, and wish to oppose me.” I then went to Colonel Higbee, and told him Joe’s designs, and requested him to go immediately

and see Miss Rigdon, and tell her the infernal plot—that Joe would approach her in the name of the Lord, by special revelation, &c., and to put her on her guard, but advise her to go and see for herself what Joe would do. He did so, and she went down. Joe was there, took her into a private room (his favorite assignation room,) and LOCKED THE DOOR. . . .

Joe then swore her to secrecy, and told her that she had long been the idol of his affections, and that he had asked the Lord for her, and that it was his holy will that he should have her as one of the *Chambered Sisters of Charity*; but that, if she had any *scruples* on the subject, he would *consecrate her with the Cloistered Saints*, AND MARRY HER IMMEDIATELY—that it would not prevent her from marrying any other person—that he had the blessings of Jacob granted to him—and that all was lawful and right before God. . . . She told him she would alarm the neighbors if he did not open the door and let her out *immediately*. He did so; and, as she was much agitated, he requested Mrs. Hyde to explain matters to her; and, after agreeing to write her a doctrinal letter, left the house. Mrs. Hyde told her that these things looked strange to her *at first*, but that she would become more reconciled on mature reflection. Miss Rigdon replied, “I never shall,” left the house, and returned home. In a day or two, Dr. Richards, who is notorious for *Hydeing* in these last days, 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, to wit:—

[Willard Richards’s Letter]

“Happiness is the object and design of our existence, and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping *all the commandments of God*; but we cannot keep ALL the commandments without first *knowing* them, and we cannot expect to KNOW ALL, or more

than we *now know*, unless we *comply with or keep* those we have ALREADY RECEIVED! That which is *wrong* under one circumstance, may be, and often is, *right* under another. God said, Thou shalt *not kill*; at another time he said, Thou shalt *utterly destroy*. This is the principle on which the government of Heaven is conducted, by REVELATION adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. *Whatever God requires is right*, NO MATTER WHAT IT IS, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire. If we seek first the kingdom of God, *all good things* will be added. So with *Solomon*; first he asked *wisdom*, and God gave it him, and with it EVERY DESIRE OF HIS HEART; even things which might be considered ABOMINABLE [polygamy] to all who understand the order of Heaven ONLY IN PART, but which, *in reality*, were *right*, because *God gave and sanctioned* BY SPECIAL REVELATION. A parent may whip a child, and justly too, because he stole an apple; whereas, if the child had asked for the apple, and the parent had given it, the child would have eaten it with a better appetite; there would have been no stripes; all the *pleasures* of the apple would have been secured, all the *misery* of stealing lost. This principle will justly apply to *all* of God's dealings with his children. Every thing that God gives us is *lawful and right*, and it is proper that we should ENJOY *his gifts and blessings*, WHENEVER AND WHEREVER he is disposed to bestow; but if we should seize upon those same blessings and enjoyments without *law*, without REVELATION, without COMMANDMENT, those *blessings and enjoyments* would prove cursings and vexations in the end, and we should have to lie down in sorrow and wailings of everlasting regret. But in *obedience* there is joy and peace unspotted, unalloyed; and as God has designed our happiness, the happiness of all his creatures, he never has, he never will, institute an ordinance or give a commandment to his people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which he has designed,

and which will not end in the greatest amount of good and glory to those who become the recipients of his law and ordinances. Blessings offered, but rejected, are no longer *blessings*, but become like *the talent hid in the earth* BY THE WICKED AND SLOTHFUL SERVANT; the proffered good returns to the giver; the *blessing* is bestowed on *those who will receive, and occupy*; for unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have ABUNDANTLY, but unto him that hath not, or *will not receive*, shall be taken away that which he hath, *or might have had*.

“*‘Be wise to-day; ’tis madness to defer!*”

Next day the fatal precedent
may plead;

Thus on till wisdom is pushed
out of time,’ into eternity.

“Our Heavenly Father is more *liberal* in his views, and *boundless* in his mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive, and, at the same time, is more terrible to the workers of iniquity, more awful in the executions of his punishments, and more ready to detect every *false way* than we are apt to suppose him to be; he will be *inquired of* by his children; he says, *Ask* and ye SHALL RECEIVE, *seek* and ye SHALL FIND; but, if ye will take that which is not your own, or which I have not given you, you shall be rewarded according to your deeds; but *no good thing will I withhold from them who walk uprightly before me*, and do my will in *all things*; who will listen to my voice and *to the voice of MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE SENT*; for I delight in those who seek diligently to know my precepts, and *abide by the laws of my kingdom*; for ALL THINGS SHALL BE MADE KNOWN UNTO THEM IN MINE OWN DUE TIME, *and in the end THEY SHALL HAVE JOY.*”

The original, of which the above is a literal copy, in the handwriting of Dr. [Willard] Richards, is now in my [Dr. John C. Bennett’s] possession. It was handed me by

Colonel F. M. Higbee [Francis M. Higbee], in the presence of General George W. Robinson. (John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, 243–245; *LDS History of the Church* 5:134–136)

Apostle Willard Richards never denied that he wrote and delivered the letter to Nancy Rigdon. In contrast, Joseph issued a statement in which he asserted that he was not the author of the letter. (See chapter 2 in Volume 2 of *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy* for more information about the letter.)

Utah LDS Church historians have ignored Joseph’s denial of authorship. After copying the letter directly from Bennett’s book, *The History of the Saints*, history revisionists attributed it to Joseph! To further convince people the letter had been authored by Joseph, it was promoted in status by the revisionists to that of being called an “essay” and given the title of “Happiness.” Then a fallacious statement was printed about the letter (see *LDS History of the Church* 5:134–136).

The compilers of Mormon history actually published an untruth in referencing the letter, which they knew was copied directly from Bennett’s book. They quote Bennett, who their own history maintains was expelled from the Church by Joseph Smith himself for abortion and adultery! Nevertheless, when they needed to “prove” Joseph was a polygamist, they stooped to endorsing even the questionable prevarications of a man such as Bennett. In referring to Richards’s letter, the Utah LDS Church compilers falsely declared:

It is not positively known what occasioned the writing of this essay; but when it is borne in mind that at this time the new law of marriage for the Church—marriage for eternity, including plurality [*sic*] of wives under some circumstances—was being introduced by the Prophet, it is very likely that the article was written with a view of applying the principles here expounded to the conditions created by introducing said marriage system. (*LDS History of the Church* 5:134)

Whichever compiler copied Willard Richards's fake letter from Bennett's book and pawned it off as an "essay" on "Happiness" written by Joseph Smith was guilty of purposefully changing historical facts to suit their own preconceived biases.

It is time for the truth to be known—the truth according to a prophetic insight by Joseph Smith. One month before he was murdered, Joseph preached a sermon against those conspiring against him. To an audience numbering in the thousands, he foretold:

When facts are proved, truth and innocence will prevail at last. My enemies are no philosophers: they think that when they have my spoke under, they will keep me down; but for the fools, I will hold on and fly over them.

God is in the still small voice. In all these affidavits, indictments, it is all of the devil—all corruption. Come on! ye prosecutors! ye false swearers! All hell, boil over! Ye burning mountains, roll down your lava! for I will come out on the top at last. (*LDS History of the Church* 6:408)

When Joseph said "my enemies . . . think that when they have my spoke under, they will keep me down," he was speaking of a spoke on a wheel of a carriage. The wheel could mire so deeply in the mud that the wheel could not turn, and the carriage could not travel. In other words, Joseph felt his enemies hoped to bog him down in the mud of lies.

It is time for all those who believe that Joseph was a polygamist to wade out of the mud that bogs *them* down. They must face down those who do not wish them to know the truth and stand up for Joseph!

Bennett Used Masonic Code- Phrase to Put Joseph's Life at Risk

When Bennett published what is known today in Utah LDS history as Joseph Smith's essay on "Happiness" (Joseph's alleged letter to Nancy Rigdon) Bennett stated as quoted above: "I . . . went immediately to Joe, and said to him, 'Joseph, you are a Master Mason, and Nancy is a Master Mason's daughter . . . so

stay your hand, or you will get into trouble—*remember your obligation* [to Masonry].’ ”

As part of their Masonic oaths, Master Masons promise not to cheat, wrong, defraud, nor do personal violence in anger to fellow Master Masons. They also promise not to commit adultery with the wife of a Master Mason or seduce his sister, daughter, or other female relative. (These promises only apply to fellow Master Masons. They do not protect non-Masons, Entered Apprentices, or Fellow Crafts and their families. See Edmond Ronayne, *Ronayne's Hand-book of FREEMASONRY*, 172.)

In broadcasting to the world the accusation that Joseph was a Master Mason and was guilty of attempting to seduce the daughter of another Master Mason, Bennett incited and enraged the most radical adherents of that organization, thus putting Joseph's life at risk. Masons take oaths that they agree to be slain if they divulge Masonic secrets or commit other gross crimes against Masonry (see *ibid.*, 103–104). It is argued today that such oaths are merely symbolic, but in Joseph's day many men took those oaths literally. Regarding a Mason's "obligation" to follow the rules of that organization, it is claimed:

“Right or wrong his very existence as a Mason hangs upon obedience to the powers immediately set above him. The one unpardonable crime in a Mason is contumacy [insubordination] or disobedience.” (Robert Morris, *Webb's Monitor of Freemasonry*, 169; per *The Masonic Report: New Revised Pastor's Edition* by C. F. McQuaig, with James D. Shaw; 1976, Answer Books and Tapes, P.O. Box 1316, Norcross, GA 30091-1316 (Shaw was a former Thirty-third Degree Mason; McQuaig was never a Mason.)

Bennett's wide distribution of the "Happiness" essay, which broadcast Joseph had broken one of the highest laws of Masonry, put Joseph's life at immediate risk. This was especially so considering the violent nature of society in that day. The 1840s was a time of outlaws and "frontier justice," of

range wars, bushwhackers, and armed squabbles between clans and settlements. It was an era when most Midwesterners hated Church members due to their sympathetic treatment of Native Americans. It was a time of simmering disputations over race and slavery that would soon boil over into the United States Civil War. The country was full of enraged men vowing to choose sides and do away with all who opposed them. And Bennett had just given many of those men an excuse to do away with Joseph Smith!

**Bennett's and Higbee's Falsehoods
Published in an Anonymous Poem**

An anonymously published poem—the creation of an enemy of Joseph—told Higbee's and Bennett's fabricated tales in poetry. The poem was published and republished in the newspapers of the day. The poem had twenty-two stanzas and one hundred and thirty-two lines. Only verses six through eleven are reproduced here to show the extent of the persecution heaped upon Joseph. These verses reference Joseph's alleged seduction of Nancy Rigdon to be his plural wife. The poem stated:

THE BUCKEYE'S FIRST EPISTLE TO JO.

6

**Have you forgot the snare you laid
For *Nancy*, (lovely Buckeye maid?)
With all your priestly arts array'd
Her to seduce;
Assisted by that wretched bawd
Who kept the house.**

7

**But she, in virtues armour steel'd,
Was proof against what you *reveal'd*,
And to *your doctrines* would not yield
The least belief;**

Although the scriptures you did wield
In your relief.

8

And when you saw, she would detest
Such doctrines, in her noble breast,
And did despise the man, the priest;
Who taught them too
A sallow, yellow, lustful beast,
Poor Joe, like you.

9

'Twas then you chang'd your *lover's sighs*,
And vengeful hate flash'd in your eyes
When you found out she did despise
You as a man;
You took to circulating lies,
Your usual plan.

10

Just that you might destroy her fame
And give to her a ruined name,
So that if she should ever proclaim
What you had tried;
Your friends might turn on her the shame
And say she lied.

11

But Joe, in this you fairly tail'd,
Though you her father's house assail'd
She met you face to face; you quailed
Before her frown,
And like a counterfeit she nail'd
You tightly down. (*Warsaw Signal*, April 25, 1844)

Joseph's comment about this poem is recorded in LDS history.

A piece of doggerel appears in the *Warsaw Message* of this date [February 7, 1844], entitled “Buckeye’s Lamentations for the Want of More Wives,” evidently the production of Wilson Law, and breathing a very foul and malicious spirit. (LDS *History of the Church* 6:210)

It is evident that the author of this poem intended to harm Joseph and to give support to Bennett’s and Higbee’s false charges against him. Nancy Rigdon is referred to in the poem as the “lovely Buckeye maid” because she and her family came from Ohio, which is known as “the Buckeye State.” The author referred to Joseph in a derogatory manner, describing him as a lustful beast, a liar, and a man without any moral principles. The slanderous poem is an example of the character assassination to which Joseph was subjected.

The untruths written about Joseph in the poem, as well as in Bennett’s and Higbee’s writings, fulfill in part the prophecy spoken to Joseph by a “heavenly messenger sent from the presence of God” on the night of September 21, 1823. According to Joseph, the messenger prophesied to him, saying:

That God had a work for me to do, and that my name should be had for good and evil, among all nations, kindreds, and tongues; or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people. (*Times and Seasons* 3:753)

Today, the Utah LDS Church continues to ignore Joseph’s testimony of what transpired in 1842 between him and the Rigdon family. In so doing, they are still giving support to Higbee’s and Bennett’s accusations against Joseph. Their historians have never published the truth of why Joseph went to the Rigdon home—taking with him Willard Richards, the one who wrote and delivered the spurious letter. Joseph gave Sidney Rigdon a written statement in which he declared that he (Joseph) was not the author of that letter. But the present Utah LDS Church

leaders do not want people to consider such evidences that favor Joseph because such evidences also condemn the leaders of their church who took over after Joseph was killed.

The evidence mounts that Joseph told the truth when he testified in the *Francis Higbee v. Joseph Smith* case that the treacherous tale told by Francis Higbee and John Bennett was fabricated by them to deceive Sidney and Phebe Rigdon. Brigham Young, Willard Richards, and other apostles found it convenient to build upon Higbee's and Bennett's dishonesty to make it look as if polygamy was introduced into the Church by Joseph.

The writings of the Utah LDS Church historians convey the idea that Joseph was not a man of truth, but that he was given to lying and mistreating women. In their historical accounts of Joseph's last days, they have omitted his bold statements against polygamy. How can the Utah LDS Church justify depicting Joseph Smith as a righteous, stalwart man on every subject except polygamy, but when discussing polygamy, infer that he was a liar?

In the case of Nancy Rigdon, the Utah LDS Church has published statements that declare Joseph lied in that case. He is represented by them as having defamed her character in an effort to hide his alleged attempt to seduce her and make her his plural wife. An excerpt from an affidavit by Nancy's brother, John W. Rigdon, is printed below. John Rigdon portrayed Joseph as a scheming, lying, mean man—a liar and a predator, who was willing to destroy Nancy's character.

There are differing versions of what transpired in the case of Nancy Rigdon. One is Joseph Smith's testimony. Different accounts were given by Dr. Bennett and John Rigdon. John Rigdon's account does not agree with Bennett's. Neither of their claims agree with Joseph's. They cannot all be true! In their zeal to prove Joseph was a polygamist, Utah LDS Church leaders, historians, and writers have chosen to hide Joseph's version and to promote the accounts of Joseph's enemies.

John Rigdon's Affidavit Differs from Bennett's Version

Primary sources verify that Joseph Smith told the truth. Yet, as late as 1905, Joseph Fielding Smith Jr.¹ published John W. Rigdon's affidavit to give credence to Bennett's and Higbee's claims about the Nancy Rigdon case. Notably, Joseph Fielding Smith Jr. made no mention of the fact that these men's accounts varied significantly. Age alone cannot explain the disparity between John Rigdon's version and Bennett's version of the same event. (John Rigdon, brother of Nancy Rigdon, was seventy-five at the time he made the affidavit allegedly recalling an event that happened when he was either thirteen or fourteen years old.) In addition, no mention was made of the testimonies of Joseph and Nancy Rigdon and her father, which show that Bennett's and John Rigdon's accounts are not true. Here is the John Rigdon affidavit:

AFFIDAVIT OF JOHN W. RIGDON

State of Utah
County of Salt Lake. } ss.

John W. Rigdon, being duly sworn, says: I am the son of Sidney Rigdon, deceased. Was born at Mentor, in the State of Ohio, in the year 1830, and am now over seventy-five years of age. . . .

And deponent further says: Joseph the Prophet, at the City of Nauvoo, Illinois, some time in the latter part of the year 1843, or the first part of the year 1844, made a proposition to my sister, Nancy Rigdon, to become his wife. It happened in this way: Nancy had gone to Church, meeting being held in a Grove near the temple lot on which the "Mormons" were then erecting a temple, an old lady friend who lived alone invited her to go home with her, which Nancy did. When they got to the house and had taken their bonnets off, the old lady began to talk to her about the new doctrine of polygamy which was then being taught, telling Nancy, during the conversation, that

1. In 1905, Joseph Fielding Smith Jr. worked in the LDS Church Historian's office. Later, he became Assistant LDS Church Historian, apostle, and LDS Church President (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Fielding_Smith).

it was a surprise to her when she first heard it, but that she had since come to believe it to be true. While they were talking Joseph Smith the Prophet came into the house, and joined them, and the old lady immediately left the room. It was then that Joseph made the proposal of marriage to my sister. Nancy flatly refused him, saying if she ever got married she would marry a single man or none at all, and thereupon took her bonnet and went home, leaving Joseph at the old lady's house. Nancy told father and mother of it. The story got out and it became the talk of the town that Joseph had made a proposition to Nancy Rigdon to become his wife, and that she refused him. A few days after the occurrence Joseph Smith came to my father's house and talked the matter over with the family, my sister, Mrs. Athalia Robinson also being present, who is now alive. The feelings manifested by our family on this occasion were anything but brotherly or sisterly, more especially on the part of Nancy, as she felt that she had been insulted. A day or two later Joseph Smith returned to my father's house, when matters were satisfactorily adjusted between them, and there the matter ended. . . .

John W. Rigdon.

Sworn to before me this 28th day of July, 1905.

[Seal.]

James Jack, Notary Public.

(Elder Joseph F. Smith Jr., *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage: A Discussion; Correspondence between Elder Joseph F. Smith Jr. Of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Mr. Richard C. Evans, Second Counselor in the Presidency of the "Reorganized" Church*, 81, 83–84)

As the following chart illustrates, John Rigdon's description of what occurred in the case of Nancy Rigdon does not agree with the account given by Dr. Bennett. As the chart demonstrates, the two accounts conflict with each other on at least thirty major points!

Contradictions Between John C. Bennett's and John Rigdon's Versions	
Bennett's Version	Rigdon's Version
Prior to Joseph's attempt, Nancy Rigdon was <i>tipped off once</i> regarding his plot.	Prior to Joseph's attempt, Nancy was <i>not tipped off</i> .
Nancy <i>played along with</i> Joseph's plot in order to catch him in the act.	Nancy was <i>taken completely by surprise</i> by Joseph's plot.
In 1842, Joseph asked to meet Nancy . . .	In 1843 or 1844, Joseph asked to meet Nancy . . .
On April 9 . . .	At latter part of the one year or the first part of the next . . .
On a <i>Saturday</i> ² . . .	On a <i>Sunday</i> . . .
While at <i>funeral of Ephraim Marks</i> .	While at a regular <i>Church service at the Temple Grove</i> .
Meeting was arranged by <i>twenty-six-year-old</i> ³ <i>Marinda Hyde</i> . . .	Meeting was arranged by <i>unknown "old lady"</i> . . .
Who <i>lived with her two children</i> ⁴ . . .	Who " <i>lived alone</i> " . . .
In part of the <i>Printing Office</i> . ⁵	In her " <i>own home</i> ."
They met at <i>Printing Office</i> .	They met at <i>old lady's home</i> .
Nancy walked <i>alone</i> to Printing Office.	Nancy walked <i>with old lady</i> to her home, where they took off their bonnets.

2. According to www.timeanddate.com, April 9, 1842, was on a Saturday.

3. Marinda was born June 28, 1815, making her age twenty-six on April 9, 1842. (See Howard H. Baron, *Orson Hyde: Missionary, Apostle, Colonizer*, 53.)

4. Howard H. Baron, *Orson Hyde: Missionary, Apostle, Colonizer*, 133, 323

5. Ebenezer Robinson, *The Return* 2:324, 346–347

Contradictions Between John C. Bennett's and John Rigdon's Versions	
Bennett's Version	Rigdon's Version
First meeting attempt <i>failed</i> . So <i>Apostle Willard Richards</i> asked Nancy to reschedule.	First meeting attempt <i>succeeded</i> . <i>No mention of notable Apostle Richards</i> being involved at all.
Actual meeting occurred <i>five days later</i> —on Thursday.	Actual meeting occurred <i>that very same day</i> —on Sunday.
Willard Richards and Marinda Hyde named as key players (and inferred they also were having an affair).	Willard Richards and Marinda Hyde not named (and no affair inferred).
<i>Joseph</i> arrived first evidently <i>alone</i> .	<i>Nancy</i> arrived first with the “ <i>old lady</i> .”
<i>Nancy</i> entered room where <i>Joseph</i> was waiting.	<i>Joseph</i> entered room where <i>Nancy</i> was waiting.
<i>Joseph</i> took her to a second, more private room and locked the door.	“ <i>old lady</i> ” left the room, where <i>Joseph</i> and <i>Nancy</i> remained.
<i>Joseph</i> immediately suggested they have an <i>affair</i> .	<i>Joseph</i> immediately proposed <i>marriage</i> .
<i>Joseph</i> only <i>secondarily</i> offered marriage.	<i>Joseph</i> mentioned no secondary offer.
Marriage was offered only if affair made Nancy uncomfortable.	No mention of affair.
<i>Joseph</i> locked the door to detain Nancy.	No mention of locked door, nor of Nancy being detained.
Nancy detained until she threatened to scream to “ <i>alarm the neighbors if he did not open the door and let her out immediately</i> .”	Nancy nonchalantly “ <i>took her bonnet and went home</i> .”

Contradictions Between John C. Bennett's and John Rigdon's Versions	
Bennett's Version	Rigdon's Version
<i>Joseph</i> departed first, leaving <i>Nancy</i> behind.	<i>Nancy</i> departed first, leaving <i>Joseph</i> behind.
<i>Joseph</i> left <i>Nancy</i> in the <i>Printing Office</i> .	<i>Nancy</i> left <i>Joseph</i> “ <i>at the old lady's house.</i> ”
Before he departed, they agreed <i>Joseph</i> would write <i>Nancy</i> a “doctrinal letter” of explanation.	No such significant factor was mentioned.
<i>After</i> the meeting, <i>Nancy</i> was instructed by <i>twenty-six-year-old</i> <i>Marinda Hyde</i> .	<i>Before</i> the meeting, <i>Nancy</i> was instructed by an unnamed “ <i>old lady.</i> ”
<i>No mention</i> of <i>Joseph</i> ever going to <i>Rigdon</i> home to make amends.	<i>Joseph</i> went to <i>Rigdon</i> home <i>twice</i> to make amends to entire <i>Rigdon</i> family (father, mother brother, sister, and more).
As promised, <i>Joseph</i> dictated an important doctrinal letter to <i>Nancy</i> . . .	No mention of any such important letter.
Which Apostle <i>Willard Richards</i> personally delivered to <i>Nancy</i> .	<i>No mention of Richards</i> ever being involved during any portion of entire episode.
Letter became known as the famed <i>essay on “Happiness.”</i>	No mention of the famed <i>essay on “Happiness.”</i>

Obviously, the numerous discrepancies between Bennett's and John Rigdon's versions of the same alleged event cast great doubts on the veracity of either one. Moreover, Joseph's innocence in the Nancy Rigdon issue is evident by

- Joseph's statements under oath of his innocence in the Francis Higbee suit;

- Sidney Rigdon’s statements and support of Joseph in the Francis Higbee suit;
- Sidney Rigdon’s letter published in the *Wasp* of August 27, 1842, denying Bennett’s version on behalf of Nancy (see *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy* 2:36).

These evidences make any allegation false that Joseph propositioned Nancy or wrote the “Happiness” essay. In addition, Nancy’s father, Sidney, would have been in a better position than his son—who was thirteen or fourteen years old at the time and seventy-five years old when he made the affidavit—to know the truth of these events. The use of either of Bennett’s or John Rigdon’s accounts to prove Joseph was a polygamist is greatly flawed.

Using Bennett’s essay on “Happiness” to “prove” Joseph was a polygamist is analogous to the following scenario in today’s world. The current LDS Church President rightly excommunicates someone for adultery and committing felonies. The felon then threatens the president’s life. In addition, he publishes to the Internet a salacious essay (equal to Richards’s letter/essay on “Happiness”) with the president’s name forged on it. He also posts a video to the Internet (equivalent to Bennett’s book and his promotional tour) with lurid narration accusing the president of performing immoral acts. After all of this, LDS Church historians cite the felon’s media productions to “prove” that the LDS Church President actually did these alleged immoral acts! If the thought of such actions repulses the reader, then one should be equally repulsed every time it is claimed that the essay on “Happiness” and Bennett’s writings against Joseph Smith are true!

Conclusion

The authors are convinced that Joseph told the truth about the Bennett/Higbee/Nancy Rigdon events and that all other versions of these events are untrue (see *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy* 2:21–40 for more evidence supporting this position). Obviously, since Apostle Willard Richards delivered a false letter to Nancy Rigdon, he was deeply involved in a scheme to make it appear that Joseph had attempted to get Nancy Rigdon to be his

(Joseph’s) plural wife. This scheme to defame Joseph worked so well that the Utah LDS Church cites Willard Richards’s letter (the “Happiness” essay) to prove that Joseph started polygamy.

The fact that Willard Richards delivered the false letter to Nancy Rigdon during the time Higbee and Bennett were alleging that Joseph had tried to entice Nancy into becoming his plural wife shows how far the polygamous apostles were willing to go in their conspiracy against Joseph. Surely, Apostle Richards did not act alone. He would not have made such a bold move against Joseph without the full support of his first cousin Brigham Young, President of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

The deceptive letter was delivered to Nancy under the pretense that it was a doctrinal letter authored by Joseph. The crafty letter was written in an attempt to convey the idea that polygamy, which is condemned in the Scriptures, can be right when commanded by God. This letter supports disjunctive revelation—the idea that God’s laws can be different for one group of people than for another. This concept of God is contrary to the teachings of the Book of Mormon that states, “I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another” (2 Nephi 29:8 [LDS]; 2 Nephi 12:60 [RLDS]).

In view of these facts, Joseph’s actions and sworn testimonies deserve to be carefully reconsidered, and those of his accusers should be highly suspect. As Joseph stated:

In all these affidavits, indictments, it is all of the devil—all corruption. Come on! ye prosecutors! ye false swearers! All hell, boil over! Ye burning mountains, roll down your lava! for I will come out on the top at last. (*LDS History of the Church* 6:408)