

# A Time of Marriage: Monogamy and Polygamy in a Utah Town

By Larry Logue

Mormon theology has always put an extraordinary value on marriage. Church doctrine holds that a host of spirits waits in heaven to be given bodies by parents on earth, in order to begin the mortal phase of their existence. There is thus a special obligation for Mormons to marry and embody as many spirits as possible. Indeed, "no people hold more sacred the principle of marriage," wrote a church official at the turn of the century.<sup>1</sup> The early Mormon theologian Parley P. Pratt declared that "to marry and multiply is a positive command of Almighty God, binding on all persons of both sexes." To neglect this duty was "to fail to answer the end of our creation, and is a very great sin."<sup>2</sup> Brigham Young was especially insistent on the need for marriage, saying that there should be assigned to "each of the young men in Israel, who have arrived at an age to marry, a mission to go straightway and get married to a good sister."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. F. Cowley, *Cowley's Talks on Doctrine* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: Ben E. Rich, 1902), p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855), p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> John A. Widtsoe, comp., *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1925), p. 303.

This essay is a study of marriage patterns in early St. George, the principal town of "Utah's Dixie." St. George was founded in 1861 at Brigham Young's direction and was given the assignment of producing cotton and other warm-weather crops for Utah. Young had overestimated the area's farming potential: Dixie was plagued with poor soil, scarce rainfall, and unruly rivers. However, Young was unwilling to give up this southwestern outpost, and he authorized public-work projects, including Utah's first Mormon temple, to keep the struggling colony viable. Continual church support, through shipments of supplies from elsewhere in Utah, through the leadership's recruitment of new settlers, and through Young's winter sojourns in St. George, allowed the town to grow steadily, although food shortages recurred well after the first years of extreme hardship. From 748 people at its founding, St. George grew to 1,142 in 1870 and 1,332 in 1880.

The data for this essay have been compiled from family group sheets and other records of the families who lived in St. George in its first two decades. A first-settlers list and the 1870 and 1880 federal censuses identified the town's families in this period. The Mormon genealogical archives and a volume of genealogies for St. George's settlers<sup>4</sup> were searched for these families' records and nearly 90 percent of the families were found, resulting in a data set which includes the vital events of 2,389 individuals. This essay will focus on the adults in the data set — those who came to St. George as parents, plus those who came of age before 1880.

The importance of marriage was frequently affirmed in St. George. Sermons explained that "what God required [was] the regeneration of the Human family," and described marriages as "the channels which God had appointed for the bringing forth of the children of Men," allowing "the Spirits in the Celestial world to come on earth and tabernacle in the flesh, thereby to gain an experience which they could only gain by being clad in mortality."<sup>5</sup> A church leader "exhorted the young men and women to get married and fulfill the measure of their creation for there were ten thousands of choice Spirits every year waiting to tabernacle in the flesh."<sup>6</sup> A St. George resident, about to leave for a church conference in Salt Lake City, was told by Erastus Snow, the town's ecclesiastical leader, to "bring back a wife." And he did.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to this general advocacy of marriage, the church also urged members in good standing to marry more than one wife for time and eternity. Joseph Smith had explained this duty:

We shall not marry . . . [in heaven] hence it is necessary for us to marry here, and to marry as much as we can, for then in heaven a man will take the wives whom he

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<sup>4</sup> The genealogies are in Arthur K. Hafen, *Devoted Empire Builders (Pioneers of St. George)* (St. George: Privately published, 1969).

<sup>5</sup> A. Karl Larson and Katharine Miles Larson, eds., *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1980), April 27, December 4, 1884 (hereafter cited as *Walker Diary*).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, August 14, 1881.

<sup>7</sup> Autobiography of Joseph Orton, typescript, Washington County Library, St. George, p. 15.

married on earth . . . they will be his queens, and their children will be his subjects . . . hence we shall ourselves be gods!<sup>8</sup>

Subsequent leaders reinforced this belief, declaring that the purpose of plural marriage was for Mormon men to "have wives and posterity in the world to come and throughout the endless ages of eternity," and repeating Smith's promise that plural wives would become "queens in heaven, and rulers to all eternity."<sup>9</sup> Leading Mormons who did not take plural wives were viewed with suspicion. One prominent Mormon, referring to another who refused to marry a second wife, admitted that "we look on [him] as only half a Mormon."<sup>10</sup>

Plural marriage (also widely known in the nineteenth century as polygamy) was likewise promoted in St. George. Erastus Snow insisted in a sermon

that in taking [plural] wives we were only doing as God commanded us, and all that entered into [plural marriage] and carried out the divine behest of the great Eternal would progress and would always be in advance forever and ever of those who had refused and neglected to obey this glorious principle.<sup>11</sup>

Other sermons reminded men that monogamists were unlikely to attain important offices in this life or glory in the afterlife.<sup>12</sup> Mothers were urged "to teach their daughters and encourage them in [plural marriage]."<sup>13</sup> One resident was instructed by Brigham Young to take a second wife, even though he and his first wife were opposed; they eventually obeyed.<sup>14</sup> A St. George woman had resolved not to protest polygamy because "I knew by the Spirit of God that it was true."<sup>15</sup> Another woman was convinced that plural marriage "was the only source through which I could attain salvation."<sup>16</sup> Marriage was clearly a sacred obligation for Mormons, and plural marriage was an equally sacred act for spiritually or socially aspiring Latter-day Saints.

This essay will show how the people of early St. George ordered their marriage-making, in light of their spiritual obligations and social circumstances. Since plural marriage was the truly distinctive feature of Mormon nuptiality, its measurable features compared with monogamy will be the initial focus of this essay; however, other aspects of family life in St. George that are illuminated by marriage data, such as the degree of parental control within

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1880* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1979), p. 163.

<sup>9</sup> Wilford Woodruff, quoted in Stanley P. Hirshson, *The Lion of the Lord: A Biography of Brigham Young* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 121.

<sup>10</sup> John Taylor, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>11</sup> Walker Diary, November 7, 1882. See also *ibid.*, December 3, 1880; January 1 and February 13, 1881; November 3, 1883.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, April 26, 1884, March 16, 1881.

<sup>13</sup> James G. Bleak, "Annals of the Southern Utah Mission," typescript, 2:177, Brigham Young University Library, Provo, Utah.

<sup>14</sup> L. W. Macfarlane, *Yours Sincerely, John M. Macfarlane* (Salt Lake City: L. W. Macfarlane, 1980), pp. 79-81.

<sup>15</sup> Autobiography of Ann Prior Jarvis, typescript, Brigham Young University Library, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup> Biographical Record of Martha Cragun Cox, typescript, Washington County Library, p. 27.

families and economic opportunities for new households, will be a major concern as well.

MONOGAMOUS MARRIAGES

There are 181 men and 199 women in the St. George sample who were involved in monogamous first marriages.<sup>17</sup> Monogamous marriages are those in which the husband never took a plural wife. These men may of course have married more than once if the first wife died, but they never had more than one wife at a time. Table 1 shows measures of age at first marriage for monogamous St. George residents compared with two cohorts of once-married couples from the Mormon Demographic History (MDH) project; the latter project is a study of the demographic history of Utah and the "Mormon Trail." St. George residents are divided into those married before and those married after 1860, and the closest MDH cohorts are shown for comparison. The table shows close agreement between St. George and the larger sample. Men were

TABLE 1  
AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE IN MONOGAMOUS MARRIAGES, ST. GEORGE AND  
"MORMON DEMOGRAPHIC HISTORY" (MDH) SAMPLES

	ST. GEORGE		MDH SAMPLE	
	Married before 1860	Married 1860-80	Married 1846-58	Married 1870-80
MEN				
Mean	25.1	23.8	25.1	24.4
Std. Dev.	5.2	4.1	5.7	4.9
Median	24.0	22.8	-----	-----
N	82	99	732	2013
Significance of difference	p>.05		p<.05	
WOMEN				
Mean	20.4	19.8	21.2	20.0
Std. Dev.	3.9	3.5	4.3	3.5
Median	20.0	19.1	20.4	19.4
N	88	111	732	2013
Significance of difference	p>.05		p<.05	

SOURCE: Calculated from M. Skolnick et al., "Mormon Demographic History I: Nuptiality and Fertility of Once-Married Couples," *Population Studies* 32 (March 1978): 14. All St. George data in Tables 1-11, Figure 1 are from Logue, "Belief and Behavior."

<sup>17</sup> An additional four cases, or 2 percent of the total, have an unknown age at marriage which cannot be estimated. See also Larry Logue, "Belief and Behavior in a Mormon Town: Nineteenth-Century St. George, Utah" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1984), Appendix A.

twenty-five and women about twenty in couples marrying before 1860. In the next generation, both sexes married about a year younger in each sample.<sup>18</sup>

Table 2 shows age-at-marriage data from several Eastern states roughly contemporary with the two St. George groups. Both men and women married earlier in St. George than their contemporaries in these five states. The difference is more pronounced for women than men: St. George women married over two years earlier than those in the East, whereas St. George men were about a year younger. These comparisons, taken together with the MDH averages shown in table 1, indicate that St. George monogamous couples differed little from their counterparts throughout the Mormon region in marrying earlier than men or women in the East.

#### THE INCIDENCE OF POLYGAMY

Determining the extent of plural marriage is a twofold problem. The numerator in a plural-marriage rate, consisting of polygamous individuals, is conceptually straightforward, although the discussion below will point out practical problems in identifying polygamists. The denominator, on the other hand, is conceptually as well as practically difficult. Identifying Mormon men who

TABLE 2

#### AGE AT MONOGAMOUS FIRST MARRIAGE IN ST. GEORGE COMPARED WITH OTHER AMERICAN POPULATIONS

	MEAN AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE	
	Men	Women
St. George		
All monogamists	24.4	20.0
Kentucky, 1859	25.0	21.5
Massachusetts		
1860	26.2	23.6
1875	26.4	23.9
Rhode Island, 1860	.....	23.3
Vermont		
1859	25.8	23.0
1870	25.5	23.0
New Jersey, 1868	24.8	22.4

SOURCE: Thomas P. Monahan, *The Pattern of Age at Marriage in the United States* (Philadelphia: Stephenson-Brothers, 1951), pp. 157, 161, 174, 176, 207.

<sup>18</sup> The statistical significance of the decline in age between the two MDH cohorts is partly a function of the large number of cases in the sample.

were "at risk" of becoming polygamists is no easy matter, because the church did not intend plural marriage to be universal. In principle, plural marriage was carefully regulated by the church hierarchy. Church policy required a man who wanted to take a plural wife to consult the church's president, who was to await a divine revelation approving the marriage. Although in practice approval could be granted by lesser authorities,<sup>19</sup> the desire for exclusivity is clear. Brigham Young underscored this desire when he specified who should seek church approval:

[Plural marriage] was never given of the Lord for any but his faithful children; it is not for the ungodly at all; no man has a right to a wife, or wives, unless he honors his priesthood and magnifies his calling before God.<sup>20</sup>

One evidence of good standing in the priesthood was to have entered celestial marriage. Although it was closely allied with plural marriage, this ordinance could be performed for first marriages as well. Celestial marriage was, however, restricted "to those members of the Church only who are adjudged worthy of participation in the special blessings of the House of the Lord."<sup>21</sup> It was thus governed by rules of fitness similar to those for plural marriage. Indeed, in many cases the sealing of a member's first marriage would demonstrate his probable worthiness for a subsequent plural marriage.

In practice this system did not work entirely as intended. The only place in Utah where marriages could be sealed before the St. George Temple was completed in 1877 was the makeshift Endowment House in Salt Lake City. Travel was clearly a problem in having any temple ordinance performed for remote residents. There is nonetheless a pattern visible in the marriage data from St. George. Only two of the seventy-six polygamists with church data<sup>22</sup> did not have any of their marriages eventually sealed. Some of the marriages that were sealed showed slippage in the system of approval: eight first marriages were sealed *after* the second marriage, and five more men had the second marriage sealed but not the first. The point is, however, that all but two of the polygamous husbands proved at some time that they were worthy of one of the church's principal blessings. In contrast, fourteen percent of monogamous marriages with church data were not sealed during the couple's lifetime. For one reason or another, these couples never obtained the priesthood's eternal sanction for their marriage. Although there were imperfections in the approval process, it is reasonable to expect that most, if not all, of the husbands in these

<sup>19</sup> The official policy is quoted in William Alexander Linn, *The Story of the Mormons, from the Date of Their Origin to the Year 1901* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), p. 587. Approval in practice is described in Nels Anderson, *Desert Saints; the Mormon Frontier in Utah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 401 and Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1954), p. 141.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Gustive O. Larson, *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood* (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1971), p. 40.

<sup>21</sup> James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1968), pp. 445-46.

<sup>22</sup> Tabulations of church ordinance data for individuals in this essay will exclude families reconstructed without a family group sheet. Such families are about one-fourth of total families in the St. George sample; see Logue, "Belief and Behavior," Appendix A.

marriages could not have gotten permission to take a second wife and were thus ineligible for plural marriage. The denominator, or the at-risk population for plural marriage in St. George, will therefore be figured in two ways in this essay. One way will use the full population, to measure polygamy's impact on the whole community; the other will reduce the denominator by 14 percent to estimate the prevalence of polygamy among the population that truly qualified for plural marriage.

The actual measurement of a plural marriage rate causes practical as well as conceptual problems. Although the numerator is conceptually simple, counting those involved in polygamy can be difficult. Studies that have used censuses place the ratio of polygamists to all husbands at under 10 percent,<sup>23</sup> but census schedules do not actually indicate polygamous marriages. Polygamy must, in the absence of other sources, be inferred from the listing of multiple wives in a household. However, polygamists often maintained multiple households, some of which were in different towns. When a census is the sole source, name repetition in Mormon towns makes linking of plural households difficult at best and nearly impossible where multiple towns were involved. Polygamists who at the time of enumeration had only one wife, due to the death of a plural wife, would likewise be overlooked, as would those who were absent traveling with one or more wives, leaving one apparently monogamous wife in town.

The St. George data set, on the other hand, was constructed from family group sheets and published genealogies, in addition to censuses,<sup>24</sup> and the linkage of plural households is simple and reliable. To calculate a rate comparable to the census polygamy rates compiled in other studies, the households in the 1870 and 1880 St. George censuses can be classified as monogamous or polygamous from the information in the data set of reconstructed families. Each household is classified by the status of the husband at the time of the census; husbands who maintained several households are counted once. The top half of table 3 shows plural-marriage rates for St. George households. Instead of the 9 percent incidence found in one study of southern Utah censuses,<sup>25</sup> nearly 30 percent of St. George households were involved in polygamy in 1870 and 33 percent in 1880. This is a much higher polygamous proportion than in any census study to date, but it is more reliable, since it makes full use of the supplemental sources available for determining a husband's status. If the number of households is reduced by 14 percent to allow for husbands who were unlikely to enter polygamy because of their presumed inactivity in the church, over 34 percent of all "eligible" households were polygamous in 1870, as were nearly two in five in 1880. Either method of defining the denominator produces unprecedented rates for plural marriage.

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<sup>23</sup> Two studies have used census data for polygamous incidence rates. Anderson, *Desert Saints*, pp. 394–95, used manuscript schedules for southern Utah, finding that about 9 percent of households contained more than one wife. James E. Smith and Phillip R. Kunz, "Polygyny and Fertility in Nineteenth-Century America," *Population Studies* 30 (November 1976): 465–80, used aggregate census figures and an estimate of total polygamists to arrive at an 8.8 percent incidence.

<sup>24</sup> See Logue, "Belief and Behavior," Appendix A.

<sup>25</sup> Anderson, *Desert Saints*, pp. 394–95.

TABLE 3  
PLURAL MARRIAGE RATES FOR CENSUS HOUSEHOLDS  
AND HUSBANDS

	1870	1880
A. CENSUS HOUSEHOLDS		
Monogamous households	126	162
Polygamous households	53	80
Total households	179	242
Polygamous as % of all households	29.6	33.0
Polygamous as % of "eligible" households*	34.4	38.5
B. HUSBANDS		
Permanent monogamists in data set	212	
Ever-polygamous husbands in data set	101	
Total husbands	313	
Polygamists as % of all husbands	32.3	
Polygamists as % of "eligible" husbands*	37.5	

\* Denominator reduced to estimate members who were "unapprovable" for plural marriage; see text.

Determining polygamy's incidence from other sources poses different problems. Published genealogies can be biased toward elites, and elite Mormons were especially likely to be polygamists. The analysts who found an incidence of 27 percent in one set of genealogies strongly suspected such a bias.<sup>26</sup> The St. George data set, however, includes nearly 90 percent of the families counted in the censuses and has no significant elite bias.<sup>27</sup> The usual method of figuring polygamous incidence from genealogies is to follow a group of men through their lives, noting which ones took plural wives and which did not. In addition to the 27 percent incidence found in one study, two other historians found plural marriage rates of 12 percent and 17 percent of married men.<sup>28</sup> An

<sup>26</sup> Smith and Kunz, "Polygyny and Fertility."

<sup>27</sup> See Logue, "Belief and Behavior," Appendix A.

<sup>28</sup> Smith and Kunz, "Polygyny and Fertility"; Stanley S. Ivins, "Notes on Mormon Polygamy," *Western Humanities Review* 10 (Summer 1956): 229-39; Dean L. May, "People on the Mormon Frontier: Kanab's Families of 1874," *Journal of Family History* 1 (Winter 1976): 169-92. The incidence for Kanab, though it is based on genealogies, reports the current status of each household rather than whether it eventually became polygamous; the author notes the possibility that the incidence may have actually been higher due to husbands with wives in other towns. Ivins's study has been especially influential, serving as the principal basis for the commonly expressed belief among historians that polygamy involved 10 percent or less of men. See Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 238-39; Jeffrey, *Frontier Women*, p. 164; Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 246; Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p. 199; Phillip R. Kunz, "One Wife or Several? A Comparative Study of Late

analogous rate can be calculated for St. George by dividing the husbands in the data set into those who ever married plurally and those who remained monogamous before and after coming to the town. The bottom half of table 3 shows these incidence rates. Again, just under a third of all men took a plural wife, increasing to 38 percent of all "eligible" men. The close agreement between the two methods shown in the table reaffirms, on the one hand, the unexpectedly high incidence of plural marriage in St. George and indicates, on the other hand, that census studies which show polygamy rates lower than those based on genealogies may be affected by inadequate data.

The best measure of polygamy's prevalence that can be calculated for St. George has not been attempted elsewhere. The St. George data set includes an entry and exit date for each person who lived in the town from 1861 to 1880; it is simple to divide each individual's time in the town (that is, his or her "person-years" in St. George) into monogamy and polygamy. Table 4 shows the results of this division, which was done in the following ways: Married years lived in St. George by a single-wife couple were counted as monogamous. If the husband took a plural wife, the status of all spouses changed at that moment, and they were thereafter counted as polygamous. Children followed the status of their parents, except that they were dropped from the count after age eighteen; this was done because monogamous-polygamous status is difficult to interpret for young unmarried adults. If these individuals married and remained in the town, however, they were re-entered into the tabulation as a new couple. To assess plural marriage's prevalence among those eligible for church approval, the person-years for husbands, wives, and children were reduced by 14 percent and the polygamous rate was re-figured on this base.

Table 4 shows a polygamous incidence for husbands similar to those found in table 3. One-third or more of their person-years were spent in polygamy,

TABLE 4

PERSON-YEARS LIVED IN ST. GEORGE BY MONOGAMOUS-POLYGAMOUS STATUS, 1861-1880

	Husbands	Wives	Children
Monogamy	2041.9	1199.3	6125.3
Polygamy	933.2	1954.6	5923.6
Total	2975.1	3153.9	12048.9
Polygamous %	31.4	62.0	49.2
Polygamous % of "eligible" person-years*	36.5	72.1	57.2

\* Total person-years reduced to estimate members of families whose head was "unapprovable" for plural marriage; see text.

Nineteenth-Century Marriage in Utah" in Thomas G. Alexander, ed., *The Mormon People: Their Character and Traditions* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), pp. 53-73. Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?*, p. 444, while agreeing with the low overall incidence, suspects that "in some communities" polygamy included as many as 20 to 25 percent of men.

which again indicates that polygamy was more significant than most analysts assume. The person-years method also allows measurement from the viewpoint of wives and children. Except for the town of Kanab, where 30 percent of wives were in plural marriages, participation of women and children in polygamy has usually been gauged by speculation rather than measurement.<sup>29</sup>

Table 4 shows that plural marriage in St. George affected family life deeply. Two-thirds of all wives' experience in the town before 1880 was in plural marriages, as were half of all child-years. Taking only those marriages where the husband could reasonably expect to have gotten permission to enter polygamy, the data are even more remarkable. In marriages where the husband "magnified his calling," almost three-quarters of wives' experience was spent in polygamy, and well over half the children's time was spent with a shared father. This indicates the profound familial impact of what was, for men, a minority practice. Not quite two in five of men in good church standing took plural wives, but in doing so they transformed the experience of the town's families. A shared husband was clearly the rule for wives; this meant that most women were eventually subjected to the strains of divided attention, which occasionally led to competition and jealousy.<sup>30</sup>

It also meant, on the other hand, that most wives had the chance to try new household working arrangements. One polygamous household in St. George, for example, "had our work so systematized and so well ordered that we could with ease do a great deal," since the wives divided the domestic chores.<sup>31</sup> The prevalence of polygamy also helps to explain the self-assurance of the "system of mutual support" that plural wives formed to make "the difficulties [of plural marriage] more bearable" and to fight the non-Mormons' anti-polygamy campaign.<sup>32</sup> For example, one of St. George's leading plural wives could confidently proclaim that "it looks very odd to me nowadays to see a man living alone with one wife," which struck her as being "selfish, contracted, drawn up into a nut shell."<sup>33</sup> A child, especially one born into the home of parents who had been granted the church's ordinances, was likely to find one or more "aunts" and their children in the family by 1880. The confusion that this

<sup>29</sup> The figure for Kanab women is in Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation Among the Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), p. 229. May, "Mormon Families," notes that 24 percent of all Kanab residents were in plural families; see also note 61 below. Speculation on women and children is found in Ann Vest Lobb and Jill Mulvay Derr, "Women in Early Utah" in Richard D. Poll et al., eds., *Utah's History* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), pp. 337-56, who estimate that 25 percent of women lived in polygamy; Jeffrey, *Frontier Women*, estimates that between 10 and 20 percent were plural wives; Arrington and Bitton, *Mormon Experience*, p. 199, estimate that 12 percent of women and 10 percent of children were in plural families.

<sup>30</sup> See Macfarlane, *Yours Sincerely*, pp. 79-81; Jeffrey, *Frontier Women*, pp. 171-72; Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?*, especially chap. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Cox Record, p. 32. See also Macfarlane, *Yours Sincerely*, p. 90; Jeffrey, *Frontier Women*, p. 169.

<sup>32</sup> Lobb and Derr, "Women in Utah," p. 350.

<sup>33</sup> Artemesia Snow to St. George Female Relief Society, quoted in Andrew Karl Larson, *Erastus Snow: The Life of a Missionary and Pioneer for the Early Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1971), pp. 747-48.

arrangement could cause for children is evident in one description of forms of address in a St. George household. The second wife's children called the first wife "Ma"; the first wife's children addressed the second wife as "aunt," but called the third wife by her given name.<sup>34</sup> Table 4 shows that these unfamiliar situations were common among family members in St. George.

Measuring person-years has shown what the static analyses of censuses will not necessarily indicate — the accumulation of polygamous experience in families over time. If a family was monogamous at census-time, it did not always stay that way; sooner or later most wives and at least half the children of St. George spent time in plural marriages. One study of plural marriage's impact has concluded that its "new social patterns were never thoroughly embedded in the culture," because "monogamy remained the preferred choice of the majority."<sup>35</sup> The data from St. George indicate otherwise, showing that polygamy was deeply rooted in the experience of the townspeople.

#### THE AGE PATTERN OF POLYGAMY

The first marriages of eighty-four men who later became polygamists are included in the St. George data set, in addition to 192 women whose first marriage was to a current or eventual polygamist.<sup>36</sup> Table 5 shows polygamists'

TABLE 5  
AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE OF POLYGAMISTS IN ST. GEORGE  
AND UTAH PIONEERS STUDY

	St. George Monogamists	St. George Polygamists	Utah Pioneers Polygamists
MEN			
Mean	24.4	23.7	23.9*
Std. Dev.	4.6	3.5	-----
Median	23.4	23.4	-----
N	181	84	374
Significance of difference	p > .05		
WOMEN			
Mean	20.0	21.0	21.6*
Std. Dev.	3.7	4.5	-----
Median	19.4	20.2	-----
N	199	192	945
Significance of difference	p < .05		

\* In families with three or fewer wives only.

SOURCE: Calculated from James E. Smith and Phillip R. Kunz, "Polygyny and Fertility in Nineteenth-Century America," *Population Studies* 30 (November 1976): 469.

<sup>34</sup> Macfarlane, *Yours Sincerely*, pp. 81, 90.

<sup>35</sup> Jeffrey, *Frontier Women*, p. 169.

<sup>36</sup> An additional four cases, or 1 percent of the total, had an unknown age at marriage and could not be estimated. See also Logue, "Belief and Behavior," Appendix A.

age at first marriage, compared with monogamous first marriages in St. George and with plural marriages from a study which sampled genealogies of Utah pioneers. The differences between St. George polygamists and the sample of pioneers are small; comparison with St. George monogamists, on the other hand, does suggest disparities. Polygamous men married slightly younger and women were a year older than in monogamous marriages. The difference between monogamous and polygamous men, however, is not statistically significant, and the medians for the groups are identical. The difference among St. George women, although it is statistically significant, is likewise modest. Women who married polygamists, though they were typically a year older than monogamous brides, were nonetheless younger than the average in any of the Eastern states shown in table 2.

Data on polygamists' ages when they married later wives indicate that plural marriage was concentrated in a narrow age range. Men in St. George typically waited until their late thirties to make a plural marriage, and most ended their marrying by their early forties (table 6). Only 20 percent of all eventual polygamists in St. George took a plural wife by thirty, and 75 percent of those who married three or fewer wives had all their marriages made by age

TABLE 6  
HUSBAND'S AGE AT SEQUENTIAL MARRIAGES, POLYGAMISTS IN ST. GEORGE  
AND UTAH PIONEERS SAMPLES

Wife Number	HUSBAND'S AGE	
	St. George	Utah Pioneers
ONE		
Mean	23.7	23.9
Median	23.4	-----
N	84	374
Two		
Mean	38.1	36.1
Median	37.3	-----
N	75	227
THREE		
Mean	40.9	43.3
Median	39.2	-----
N	41	147
FOUR		
Mean	43.9	-----
Median	42.2	-----
N	11	-----

SOURCE: Calculated from Smith and Kunz, "Polygyny and Fertility," p. 470.

forty-three; indeed, only two of the eleven men who took a fourth wife did so after age forty-six (these proportions are not shown in table 6). This is a more distinct clustering than in the analysis of Utah pioneers, where the age difference between second and third marriages was over twice as large as in St. George. It is clear that plural marriages in St. George were, as a rule, made in a husband's late thirties and were seldom made more than twice.

The compressed age-range of polygamous marriages was probably due to the action of countervailing forces on would-be polygamists. On the one hand, they undoubtedly felt the intense pressure by the church to take plural wives. Men who wanted to rise in the church, and to rise socially, needed to demonstrate, the sooner the better, their commitment to God's purposes by becoming polygamists. Moreover, since husbands' heavenly standing would depend in part on the size of their families, the sooner they expanded their families the better. On the other hand, there were equally effective forces delaying plural marriage. One has already been mentioned, the need to obtain approval for polygamy. Before demonstrating commitment to the church by taking plural wives, a man had to demonstrate the more basic forms of commitment, such as payment of tithing and participation in priesthood activities, which helped to qualify men for temple ordinances and then for plural marriage. Making oneself known as a faithful Mormon took time, especially in a period when Mormons were largely converts gathered from near and far. There was also an economic reason for waiting to marry again: supporting multiple households took money. The power of this incentive for delay is evident in the St. George data. Men who took a plural wife in their twenties were one-third wealthier than those who waited longer to marry plurally (\$2590 on average in the 1870 census versus \$1975). The late thirties were therefore the balance point between downward and upward pressures, when men who felt keenly their church's urging to form plural families had accumulated both the spiritual credit and material resources needed to become polygamists.

#### MARRIAGE AND PARENTAL AUTHORITY

Data on marriage-making suggest the degree to which parents in the past controlled the life-choices of their children. In New England, for example, analysts have found that parents regulated marriage by parceling out wealth to sons and "marrying off" daughters.<sup>37</sup> By controlling inheritances of their sons and the choices of their daughters, parents in early New England were able to influence when and whom their children married. This influence had largely disappeared, however, by the nineteenth century, when the "parental-run marriage system" became "participant-run."<sup>38</sup> In urban Philadelphia, on the

<sup>37</sup> Daniel Scott Smith, "Parental Power and Marriage Patterns: An Analysis of Historical Trends in Hingham, Massachusetts," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 35 (August 1973): 419-28; Philip J. Greven, Jr., *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), especially chaps. 4, 6, 8; Daniel Blake Smith, "Mortality and Family in the Colonial Chesapeake," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 8 (Winter 1978): 403-27.

<sup>38</sup> Smith, "Parental Power," p. 426. For evidence of a less rigid marriage structure developing earlier, see David Levine, "For Their Own Reasons": Individual Marriage Deci-

other hand, the nineteenth-century family still influenced marriage choices. Data from 1880 indicate that young adults in Philadelphia "did not feel prepared to marry until after they had discharged obligations to their family as well as accumulated some resources to support a family of their own."<sup>39</sup> The St. George data will likewise gauge the influence of family decisions versus other determinants of marriage.

The St. George data set includes 132 sons and 162 daughters who married from 1861 to 1880. Table 7 shows the timing and range of their marriages compared to first-married Philadelphians in 1880. The "period of preparation for adult responsibility" was clearly much shorter in St. George. Sons and daughters in St. George began marrying earlier and concentrated their marriages in a much narrower range than did Philadelphia residents. The age-range of the middle 80 percent was only half as large in St. George as in Philadelphia; 90 percent of St. George men who married were wed before twenty-eight and 90 percent of women by twenty-three, whereas both sexes in Philadelphia were into their thirties before reaching this point. Children of St. George families showed a pattern of marriage-timing that was clearly different from that of their Philadelphia peers.

TABLE 7

TIMING AND SPREAD OF MARRIAGES IN ST. GEORGE, 1861-1880  
AND PHILADELPHIA, 1880

	AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE	
	St. George	Philadelphia
<b>MEN</b>		
1st decile	19.6	21.2
Median	22.8	26.8
Spread*	7.9	17.1
N	132	-----
<b>WOMEN</b>		
1st decile	16.7	18.5
Median	18.9	25.0
Spread	6.3	11.7
N	162	-----

\* Range of the middle 80 percent of cases.

SOURCE: John Modell, Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr., and Theodore Hershberg, "Social Change and Transitions to Adulthood in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Family History* 1 (Autumn 1976): 14.

sions and Family Life," *Journal of Family History* 7 (Fall 1982): 255-64; James M. Gallman, "Determinants of Age at Marriage in Colonial Perquimans County, North Carolina," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 39 (January 1982): 176-91.

<sup>39</sup> John Modell, Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr., and Theodore Hershberg, "Social Change and Transitions to Adulthood in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Family History* 1 (Autumn 1976): 18. For an argument that parental control continued in nineteenth-century rural America as well, see James A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 35 (January 1978): 3-32.

The difference between marriage in Philadelphia and St. George was not simply an urban-rural disparity. As noted at the beginning of this section, parents also influenced marriage in pre-industrial societies, but by handing down wealth to their offspring rather than by presiding over an economic preparation for marriage. Marriage in pre-industrial cultures is thus thought to have been tied to paternal mortality — the earlier fathers died, the earlier their children inherited and could marry.<sup>40</sup> Table 8, however, shows St. George sons' and daughters' marriage ages categorized by whether marriage preceded or followed a parent's death and reveals no pattern in the data. The death of a parent did not "trigger" a marriage; nor, on the other hand, did it substantially delay marriage. In one English parish, for example, a father's death *delayed* marriage, probably because the children were needed to help care for the family.<sup>41</sup> In St. George, however, it is apparent that neither parent's death had an appreciable impact on marriage age. This stability of marriage-timing points to an important social function of plural marriage. Polygamy insured that substitute family care, by "aunts" and half-brothers and half-sisters, was readily available when a parent died. Table 4 has shown that half of the children in St. George had access to such care, which thus reduced the impact of orphanhood in the town.

Nor did birth order affect marriage in St. George. In societies where parents allocate their wealth before their death to establish their children in marriage, there are differences in marriage ages among earlier-born children and later ones, since earlier children benefit from their access to a previously undivided estate and can thus marry younger.<sup>42</sup> Table 9 indicates, however, that

TABLE 8  
MARRIAGES OF ST. GEORGE CHILDREN BY WHETHER PARENTS  
WERE ALIVE OR DECEASED

	AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE			
	Father Living	Father Dead	Mother Living	Mother Dead
SONS				
Mean	23.2	23.7	23.1	23.9
Std. Dev.	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.0
N	123	9	112	20
DAUGHTERS				
Mean	19.4	20.0	19.5	18.7
Std. Dev.	2.8	2.3	2.8	2.5
N	151	11	145	17

<sup>40</sup> See G. Ohlin, "Mortality, Marriage, and Growth in Pre-Industrial Populations," *Population Studies* 14 (March 1961): 190-97. In a colonial Virginia parish, men married nearly four years earlier when the father had died. D. B. Smith, "Mortality and Family." See also D. S. Smith, "Parental Power."

<sup>41</sup> Levine, "For Their Own Reasons."

<sup>42</sup> In seventeenth-century Andover, first sons married three years younger than second sons and two years younger than last sons. In early Hingham, Massachusetts, first sons mar-

TABLE 9

## MARRIAGE AGE BY BIRTH ORDER, CHILDREN OF ST. GEORGE PARENTS

	AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE		
	First-born	Second-born	Later-born
SONS			
Mean	23.4	23.1	23.1
Std. Dev.	2.8	3.0	2.9
N	59	37	36
DAUGHTERS			
Mean	19.5	19.3	19.3
Std. Dev.	2.7	2.5	3.0
N	75	40	46

NOTE: Birth order refers to survivors to adulthood — e.g., first-born sons are first *surviving* sons.

birth order made virtually no difference in marriage ages of either sons or daughters in St. George.

There was thus no community-wide control of marriage by controlling inheritance, but it is also necessary to look at social and economic groups within St. George to see if family control differed by status. Three variables are usable for this test. Wealth and occupation as reported in 1870 are the best available measures of economic standing in the town. Occupations are divided into two broad groups for this analysis. Professionals and farmers, the highest categories in the Philadelphia Social History Project's occupation ladder,<sup>43</sup> are one group, and artisans and laborers, the lower occupations on the ladder, are the other group. A measure of social and ecclesiastical standing is marriage status: by taking plural wives, some men had demonstrated both their commitment to the church and their eligibility for advancement in this life and the next. Each child who married is thus assigned the wealth, occupation, and marriage status of his or her father; the effects of these variables on age at marriage are shown in Table 10. There was clearly no influence of either wealth or parents' marriage type on their children's age at marriage. Indeed, the only effect that is not statistically trivial is the delay in marriage for artisans' and laborers' sons. Even this delay was not long; artisans' and laborers' sons typically married at twenty-four, younger than men in any of the Eastern states listed in table 2. The data in table 10 reaffirm the absence of conventional pre-industrial forms of control of marriage-making. Parents did not, or could not, influence their

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ried brides from wealthier families than did later sons. See Greven, *Four Generations*, p. 37; Smith, "Parental Power." For a view of inheritance and birth-order chances in modern settings, see E. R. Brennan, A. V. James, and W. T. Morrill, "Inheritance, Demographic Structure, and Marriage: A Cross-Cultural Perspective," *Journal of Family History* 7 (Fall 1982): 288-98.

<sup>43</sup> See Theodore Hershberg and Robert Dockhorn, "Occupational Classification," *Historical Methods Newsletter* 9 (March-June 1976): 59-98. Fathers not present in St. George in 1870 were assigned their 1880 occupation instead.

TABLE 10  
SOCIOECONOMIC VARIABLES AND AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE,  
CHILDREN OF ST. GEORGE PARENTS

MEN			
A. Father's total wealth, 1870			
Pearson's R, wealth and marriage age		-.15	
Significance		p>.05	
	Professional or farmer		Artisan or laborer
B. Father's occupation, 1870			
Mean age at marriage	22.6		24.0
Std. Dev.	2.6		3.1
N	70		58
Significance of difference		p<.05	
	Monogamous		Polygamous
C. Father's marriage type			
Mean age at marriage	23.5		22.9
Std. Dev.	3.0		2.7
N	70		62
Significance of difference		p>.05	
WOMEN			
A. Father's total wealth, 1870			
Pearson's R, wealth and marriage age		.06	
Significance		p>.05	
	Professional or farmer		Artisan or laborer
B. Father's occupation, 1870			
Mean age at marriage	19.3		19.6
Std. Dev.	2.3		3.3
N	89		69
Significance of difference		p>.05	
	Monogamous		Polygamous
C. Father's marriage type			
Mean age at marriage	19.3		19.5
Std. Dev.	2.7		2.8
N	69		93
Significance of difference		p>.05	

children's marriage by the usual economic calculus; inheritance or other economic contributions played no consistently critical part in the marriage pattern. Reasons for this lack of family influence will be offered after a discussion of opportunities for starting households in St. George.

#### MARRIAGE AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

St. George was a farming community running out of farm land. Washington County had fewer than two people per square mile, but most of its terrain was wasteland. Only the lowlands within reach of the few streams were usable for farming. Over 40 percent of St. George's households were headed by farmers in 1870; to maintain its character under high fertility,<sup>44</sup> St. George needed either to accommodate more farmers or to export its "surplus" children who came of age. Its capacity for more farmers was clearly limited. Constrained by the need to irrigate their land, St. George residents made their farms small. Average farm size in Washington County in 1880 was 38 acres, second-smallest in Utah and among the smallest in the United States.<sup>45</sup> In comparison, thirty acres seems to have been the *minimum* farm size to support a family in colonial Andover, Massachusetts, a town that likewise had a farm land crisis; practically all probated estates in Andover were thirty acres or more.<sup>46</sup> However, 45 percent of farms in Washington County were *under twenty* acres.<sup>47</sup> Nor was there much potential farm land around St. George. Unimproved farm land amounted to about eleven acres per farmer, which was one-third the unimproved acreage available to farmers in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, the two most densely populated states in the nation.<sup>48</sup>

Rather than subdivide its farms, Andover exported its sons. By the eighteenth century, more than half of Andover's sons eventually left the town after marriage, compared with less than a fourth in the seventeenth century.<sup>49</sup> All evidence indicates that St. George's land crisis was worse than Andover's, so it

<sup>44</sup> On St. George's fertility, see Logue, "Belief and Behavior," chap. 4.

<sup>45</sup> Counties outside Utah that had smaller farms than Washington, according to the 1880 census, were either urban areas or places that were unsuited for agriculture as indicated by a small number of farms.

<sup>46</sup> Greven, *Four Generations*, p. 224.

<sup>47</sup> Irrigation did increase the productivity of land in Utah, and one description of Utah agriculture concludes that twenty irrigated acres could support a family. See Leonard J. Arrington and Dean May, "'A Different Mode of Life': Irrigation and Society in Nineteenth Century Utah," *Agricultural History* 49 (January 1975): 3-20. In St. George, however, frequent floods on the only substantial stream eliminated most of irrigation's benefits; the food shortages in the town were grim evidence. For a fuller discussion of famine in St. George, see Logue, "Belief and Behavior," chap. 5.

<sup>48</sup> This estimate of potential farm land per farmer is a modified version of a calculation reported by Dean May in "The Making of Saints: The Mormon Town as a Setting for the Study of Cultural Change," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 45 (Winter 1977): 75-92. Using an estimate of landowners and the 1880 census, May estimated 14.5 acres of improved land and three acres unimproved per landowner in Kane County. The St. George estimate uses farmers only, who were less than one-fourth of households, instead of May's two-thirds estimate. Computed by May's method, unimproved acreage in Washington County would have been 4.5 instead of 11.

<sup>49</sup> Greven, *Four Generations*, p. 212.

would not be surprising to find a larger outflow of sons than in Andover. However, 53 percent of the 132 sons who married from 1861 to 1880 took up residence in St. George at least long enough to begin raising children. Although 47 percent is a *minimum* out-migration figure, since some of these sons left later, the other 53 percent did find an initial opportunity in the town, demonstrated by their setting up a household there.<sup>50</sup> Daughters were also as likely to live in the town as to move elsewhere after marriage. Of the 162 daughters married in the period, 48 percent remained in St. George. About half of the non-migrants of each sex married a fellow resident of St. George. Similar figures were found regarding endogamy in Andover and Hingham, another early Massachusetts town.<sup>51</sup> Children raised in St. George thus had some hope of marrying a fellow resident if they chose.

That the town did not more often export its sons and daughters in the face of an extreme farm land shortage indicates a different solution to population pressure than in Andover. St. George's solution was to accommodate more non-farmers. Between 1870 and 1880 the number of farmers in St. George declined slightly. The number of skilled workers rose slightly at the same time, but the most significant change occurred in households headed by unskilled workers, which increased from 18 to 57. Unskilled workers, four-fifths of whom simply called themselves "laborers" when asked by the census-taker, were the younger household heads of St. George: their median age was thirty-one in 1880, whereas the medians for farmers and skilled workers were near fifty. An unskilled laborer did a variety of jobs, hauling wood or produce to the silver mines twenty miles away, working around the temple, or spending "the greater part of his time in the surrounding settlements going from one place to another, wherever he could get a job to work."<sup>52</sup> Having started a family on the earnings from this kind of work, a laborer could hope for a more secure place in the town, perhaps even a farm. The median age of farmers in St. George did not change from 1870 to 1880, which meant that new young farmers partially offset the aging of current farmers (death and out-migration of older farmers offset it as well). St. George was thus able to compensate for its shortage of farm land and to offer opportunities for generational continuity in a changing economic context.

#### THE STRUCTURE OF MARRIAGE-MAKING

In contrast to the assumed practice in pre-industrial societies, we have seen that families in St. George did not regularly control their children's marriage-making to conserve familial resources; neither orphanhood nor position in the family nor the family's economic standing made an important difference in

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<sup>50</sup> Establishing a household was the standard practice after marriage in St. George. Only seven of the town's 179 households in 1870 contained married children, as did eight of the 242 households in 1880.

<sup>51</sup> Greven, *Four Generations*, p. 210; Smith, "Parental Power."

<sup>52</sup> Life Sketch of George Frederick Jarvis, typescript, Brigham Young University Library, p. 5. See also Memories of George W. Fawcett, typescript, Library-Archives, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

children's marriage ages. But neither did St. George marriages conform to the marriage pattern in a contemporary commercial city in which starting a family was less dependent on access to inheritance than on a son's or daughter's own accumulated wealth. St. George children married earlier and in a more tightly defined age span than did Philadelphians, indicating that a waiting period for marriage was unimportant. But the absence of consistent societal determinants does not finally support the contention that individuals in the past married "for their own reasons";<sup>53</sup> there were other, more effective determinants of marriage.

The clustering of marriages of St. George children compared with Philadelphia is initial evidence against a non-determined marriage age. This concentration of marriage becomes clearer when the children are compared to their parents and to other American groups whose marriages were in a narrow age-range. Table 11 shows the proportion of all marriages that occurred at the peak three ages among St. George parents and children and among three early American populations whose marrying has been termed "concentrated."<sup>54</sup> St. George children clearly stand out from almost all the other groups; only the North Carolina men show a comparable clustering. Figure 1 compares the two most concentrated groups, the St. George children and the North Carolina sample, showing the percentage of all marriages occurring at each year of age. The magnitude of the peak year is almost the same for men in the two groups, but the St. George group shows a clear climb and descent, whereas the Perquimans County line fluctuates between smaller peaks and indeed rises at the end of the twenties. St. George women show a higher and more domi-

TABLE 11  
COMPARATIVE CLUSTERING OF MARRIAGE AGES

	PEAK 3 YEARS AS % OF ALL MARRIAGES	
	Men	Women
St. George in migrant parents	32.0	39.4
St. George children	46.9	50.6
Hampton, N.H., born before 1720	34.2	37.2
Perquimans County, N.C., born before 1741	45.9	43.3
Middle-Atlantic Quakers, 18th century	34.7	32.3

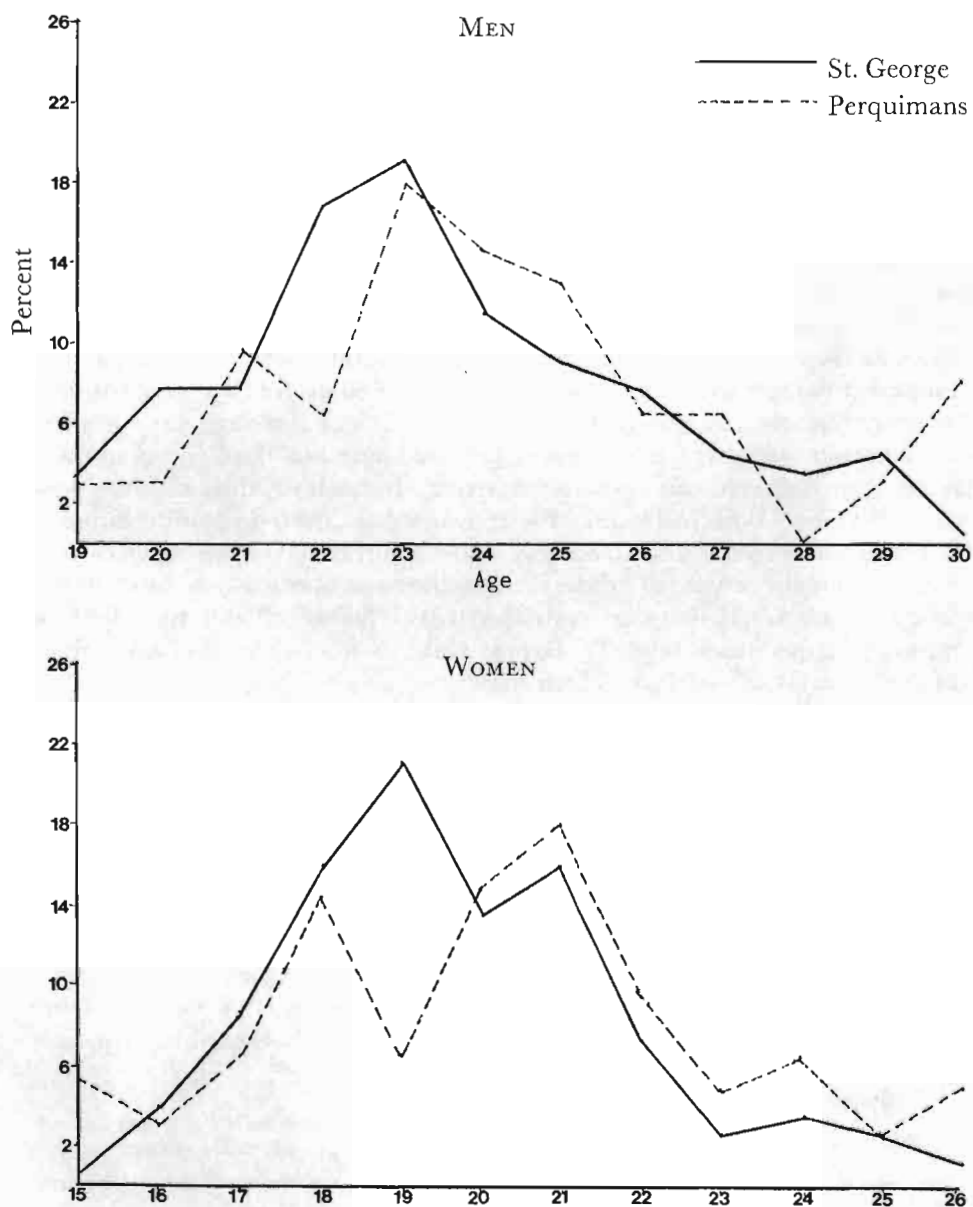
SOURCES: Calculated from James Matthew Gallman, "Relative Ages of Colonial Marriages," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 14 (Spring 1984): 614-15; calculated from Robert V. Wells, "Quaker Marriage Patterns in a Colonial Perspective," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 29 (July 1972): 418.

<sup>53</sup> See Levine, "For Their Own Reasons."

<sup>54</sup> Marriage in the New Hampshire and North Carolina groups shown in the table was characterized by a "fairly tight concentration of cases in a limited range of marriage ages." James Matthew Gallman, "Relative Ages of Colonial Marriages," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 14 (Spring 1984): 616n. Marriages of Middle-Atlantic Quakers "were concentrated in just a few years." Robert V. Wells, "Quaker Marriage Patterns in a Colonial Perspective," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 29 (July 1972): 417.

FIGURE 1

PERCENT OF TOTAL MARRIAGES BY AGE, ST. GEORGE CHILDREN  
AND PERQUIMANS COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA



SOURCE: Calculated from James Matthew Gallman, "Relative Ages of Colonial Marriages," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 14 (Spring 1984): 615.

nant peak year of marriage, reflecting the clustering of more than half their marriages in a three-year span. The structure of St. George marriage-making is not in inheritance practices or socioeconomic position, but in this extraordinary uniformity of marriage age for each sex. Much more than their parents had done, St. George children made for themselves a "time of marriage." Men married in the first half of the twenties and women wed between eighteen and twenty.

Analysts of early American populations that had clustered marriage ages have attributed their findings to "custom,"<sup>55</sup> but there was no custom for the structure of marriage in St. George. In-migrant parents came from a number of cultures that probably had a variety of marriage practices. Although St. George parents' marriage frequency resembled the early American groups, their ages showed much more variation than those of their children.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the experience of St. George children differed from their parents' circumstances in two ways that undoubtedly affected their marriage-making. First, St. George children were among the first generation to be born and raised Mormons, whereas their parents had been converted to Mormonism. One-third of the immigrant parents with church records were married *before* they were baptized as Mormons; the church's doctrine on the urgency of marriage did not affect their decision to marry, and some of the remaining two-thirds no doubt also made their marriage plans before converting. In contrast, their children were overwhelmingly born in Utah and were exposed to Mormon culture throughout their unmarried years. In Sunday school and regular worship services, they were continually instructed in Mormon doctrine and obedience to the church.<sup>57</sup> The church's admonitions on marriage in the 1860s and later were likewise directed at this generation. St. George children were thus carefully trained in the centrality of marriage in their lives.

The second key difference between parents and their children was in the composition of their marriage markets. Many of the older generation had found their first spouses in the Eastern states or in Europe, where there were no widespread imbalances in the sex ratio to constrain their marriage choices. In Utah in the 1860s and later, there was likewise no serious sex ratio bias,<sup>58</sup> but the rules of the market had changed. Unmarried men did not now compete solely with other single men for wives; married men seeking plural wives were also part of the competition. As a result, in St. George, where there was no numerical imbalance in the marriage market,<sup>59</sup> there was in reality a "shortage" of women caused by competition from married men. This competition was, to be sure, somewhat lessened by immigration. Polygamists frequently

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<sup>55</sup> Gallman, "Relative Ages"; Wells, "Quaker Marriage."

<sup>56</sup> The standard deviations of immigrant parents' marriage ages are 4.6 for men and 4.5 for women; for children, the standard deviations are 2.9 for men and 2.7 for women.

<sup>57</sup> For reports of Sunday school instruction in St. George, see Walker Diary, entries after April 1873, *passim*.

<sup>58</sup> See Smith and Kunz, "Polygyny and Fertility."

<sup>59</sup> Unmarried person-years lived by men between nineteen and twenty and by women between sixteen and seventeen, just before large proportions began to marry, were 181.5 and 192.9, respectively.

took foreign brides; nearly half the brides in St. George plural marriages were born abroad, whereas less than a quarter of monogamous wives were immigrants. But immigration did not supply all the brides for polygamists, and it could not prevent a marriage "squeeze." A squeeze tends to reduce both the mean and the variation in marriage age for the minority sex, because they are in greater demand as spouses.<sup>60</sup> As long as polygamy continued, a squeeze against men was a key feature of the St. George marriage market.

Children of St. George residents were thus under two kinds of pressure, one cultural and one circumstantial, to marry soon after maturity. They responded, as we have seen, with a remarkable clustering of marriage in a short age-span. This phenomenon crowded out the effects of every traditional influence on marriage-making. The church stood directly behind both kinds of pressure in its advocacy of marriage in general and plural marriage in particular. Indeed, although marriage elsewhere had become "participant-run," in St. George it was neither participant-run nor family-run, but instead church-run. The Mormon church had imposed a structure on marriage-making, one more comprehensive and effective than any its families could produce.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The people of St. George readily accepted the new meanings for marriage proposed by their belief system. The generation that came to the town as parents listened to their church's promises that plural marriage was the means to higher status on earth and in the afterlife, and they responded by making polygamy the keystone of their social structure. Excluding those families where the husband was probably ineligible for polygamy because of his inactivity in the church, over a third of all husbands' time, nearly three-quarters of all woman-years, and well over half of all child-years were spent in polygamy before 1880. Polygamy was therefore far from the marginal practice that previous studies have described. The participation of men was probably limited chiefly by the effective shortage of women; for wives and children, unfamiliar household rules and family relationships were the rule and not the exception. Perhaps St. George was unusual in this predominance of polygamy, but until other Mormon communities are studied with similar methods, any polygamous figures for the whole Mormon region should be viewed skeptically.<sup>61</sup>

For the second generation in St. George, those raised in Mormon households rather than converted as adults, first marriage also had a new meaning. Marriage was still an economic event, insofar as sons and daughters left their

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<sup>60</sup> See Robert Schoen, "Measuring the Tightness of a Marriage Squeeze," *Demography* 20 (February 1983): 61-78.

<sup>61</sup> Lowell C. Bennion is conducting a study that links census households in 1880 with family group sheets to arrive at polygamy incidence figures for a sample of Utah towns; he is calculating polygamy's incidence for women and children as well as husbands. Preliminary findings show that although St. George's incidence was above average, it was by no means unique. Bennion presented a preliminary report at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, Provo, Utah, May 1984. See Lowell "Ben" Bennion, "The Incidence of Mormon Polygamy in 1880: 'Dixie' versus Davis Stake," in this volume of the *Journal of Mormon History*.

parents for their own households. Its timing, however, was not determined by the accumulation of a critical mass of resources under the family's watchful eye. Marriage-making was a religious act, supervised by the church; it was indeed a member's sacred duty to marry at maturity. Faced with this obligation and with competition from married men for brides, men and women of the second generation made their decisions promptly. But marriage was not simply submission to the church; it was instead a decisive step toward controlling one's own fate. Men and women who married and had their bond sealed for eternity were eligible for higher offices in this life and for heaven's higher kingdoms in the next life. Marriage was also the first step toward the large family over which the husband and wife could rule through eternity.

Both generations, by heeding their leaders' urgings on marriage, could simultaneously benefit themselves and the church. The data in this essay have shown that the church was remarkably successful in penetrating family life to influence the critical decision to marry. Mormon leaders and their theology instructed members to marry, and marry they did, creating a sharply defined time of marriage in St. George.