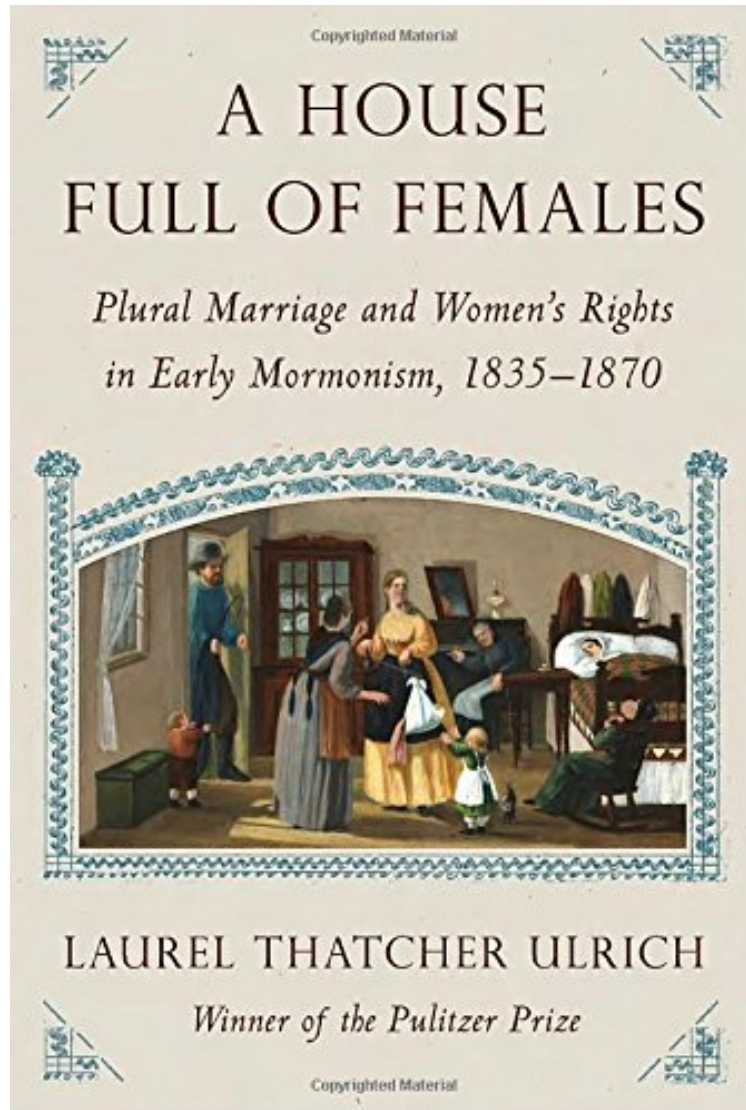


(Read now) A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870

A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

**Download PDF | ePub | DOC | audiobook | ebooks*



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#78431 in Books Knopf 2017-01-10 2017-01-10 Format: Deckle Edge Original language: English PDF # 1
9.60 x 1.61 x 6.68l, 1.25 #File Name: 0307594904512 pages Knopf | File size: 33.Mb

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich : A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870:

38 of 39 people found the following review helpful. This is a true history of American women, of Mormon women, of the US By PatMs Ulrich is the best in the world at assembling a picture of the lives of real people from diaries,

newspapers, pictures, quilts and whatever. The hype on this book is that women supported polygamy and gained voting rights. I don't see it that way. First, these were respectful women who often buried their feelings in a few words, or none at all. Ms Ulrich does a good job of telling us when women supported the practice and when they were despondent. Second, that shortchanges the book. This isn't a treatise on polygamy, it's a treasure trove of understanding of the western settlers' lives. How they organized westward movements, what they did all day, family relationships, nothing will teach you social history like this. Overlaid was my first introduction to the Mormon church, not just polygamy but the tenants of their faith, their mission trips, their organization, and their successes and failures. The book deepened my sense of gratitude to the strong women who made this country.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This is an interesting history book
By lehThe parts about the women and families was well written and interesting. Learned so much about American history I never knew. Religion was fairly portrayed without bias. Got a little bogged down in statistics at times.
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By Rick in NipomoWell written interesting story.

From the author of *A Midwife's Tale*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the Bancroft Prize for History, and *The Age of Homespun*--a revelatory, nuanced, and deeply intimate look at the world of early Mormon women whose seemingly ordinary lives belied an astonishingly revolutionary spirit, drive, and determination. A stunning and sure-to-be controversial book that pieces together, through more than two dozen nineteenth-century diaries, letters, albums, minute-books, and quilts left by first-generation Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, the never-before-told story of the earliest days of the women of Mormon "plural marriage," whose right to vote in the state of Utah was given to them by a Mormon-dominated legislature as an outgrowth of polygamy in 1870, fifty years ahead of the vote nationally ratified by Congress, and who became political actors in spite of, or because of, their marital arrangements. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, writing of this small group of Mormon women who've previously been seen as mere names and dates, has brilliantly reconstructed these textured, complex lives to give us a fulsome portrait of who these women were and of their "sex radicalism"--the idea that a woman should choose when and with whom to bear children.

Excitement about Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *A HOUSE FULL OF FEMALES* Laurel Thatcher Ulrich is a historians historian. For more than three decades, she has dazzled her profession with archival discoveries, creative spark and an ability to see history where it once appeared there was none to be seen . . . In the best ways, *A House Full of Females* remains a work of traditional womens history, a straightforward exploration of womens lives and experiences on their own terms . . . The work of dedicated and imaginative historians like Ulrich allows us access to lost worlds. Beverly Gage, *The New York Times Book* As crucial as it is fascinating . . . Its no secret that history is full of people, often women, whose usually unpaid labor allowed famous men to make their marks on the world. Their stories dont always make it to the official record books, but historians like Ulrich make sure theyre not forgotten. Lily Rothman, *Time* Movingly portrays believers early struggles . . . Ulrich is a gifted historian whose works have forged new paths in womens studies. M.J. Andersen, *The Boston Globe* This empathetic account of the women of early Mormonism focusses on the doctrine of polygamy, first articulated by Joseph Smith in 1843. Ulrich, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, explores complex and contradictory responses to a practice seen by Mormons as answering a divine imperative to procreate; with many wives, a man could beget dozens of spirits of the faith. Ulrich describes the daily lives of these women in attentive detail, their sorrows (child-mortality levels were high), their stubborn strength, and their willingness to defy social norms. To the astonishment of the outside world, the same women who vigorously defended multiple marriages also fought forand wonfemale suffrage. *The New Yorker* O pioneers! Ulrich stitches together diaries, poems, meeting minutes, and quilt designs into a fascinating history of womens lives. Tough doesnt even begin to describe itthey drove wagons across the frozen Midwest, bore and buried children, spoke in tongues, farmed, and organized relief societies while the men traveled on missions. (They drank and danced too.) Christine Smallwood, *Harpers Magazine* A remarkable labor of love. Laurel Ulrich brings her readers inside Mormon life during the two formative generations of this distinctively American religious community. Her close and insightful reading of diaries and letters especially, in addition to a wealth of other records (including an extraordinary quilt), enable her to convey an appreciation of why Mormons committed to their faithnotwithstanding the persecution and privations they faced crossing the country and building their pioneer settlements. Ulrich even enables outsiders to understand how polygamy functioned and why Mormon women embraced and defended it against Victorian condemnation. *A House Full of Females* is the richest work on the social history of religion in a generation. Richard Brown, *University of Connecticut* The reader who opens *A House full of Females* is truly privileged to have Laurel Thatcher Ulrich as their guide into the circles of strong women who defended plural marriage before Utah voted to give the vote to women. Ulrich takes us inside early Mormon communities, house by house, arriving with her well-honed archival skills of reading between the lines of diaries preserved in bags stitched of drapery fabric and piecing together the scraps of correspondence left behind to interpret a past that is especially meaningful to her, carved as it was out of the West by her own forebears. A truly extraordinary read. Janet Polasky, author of *Revolutions without Borders* Pulitzer-winner Ulrich gives readers a day-to-day look at the hardships early Mormons endured as pioneers and religious outlaws but

also takes a broader view of longer-term changes in the religion . . . Impeccable scholarship and a fascinating topic.

Publishers Weekly
About the Author
LAUREL THATCHER ULRICH was born in Sugar City, Idaho. She holds degrees from the University of New Hampshire, University of Utah, and Simmons College. She is 300th Anniversary University Professor at Harvard University and past president of the American Historical Association. As a MacArthur Fellow, Ulrich worked on the PBS documentary based on *A Midwife's Tale*. Her work is also featured on an award-winning website called dohistory.org. She is immediate past president of the Mormon History Association. She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Wonder on wonder strikes my sense
Ohio, Connecticut, and Maine, 1836
1838
Walking toward Kirtland, Ohio, in late November 1836, Wilford Woodruff caught sight of the temple standing on a bluff above the flats. When he left Kirtland two years before, the temple had been only a dream. Now it rose before him, more magnificent, he thought, than Kings ever saw or Princes ever Knew. His excitement grew as he entered the village. In 1834, the little band of Latter-day Saints in Ohio had been poor and despised by their neighbors. Now there were signs of progress everywhere. He and his companion, a Kentuckian named Abraham Smoot, lost no time in touring the temple, from the light-filled assembly rooms on the lower levels to the offices in the attic, where Joseph Smith kept the Egyptian mummies and fragments of papyri that he said contained the writings of the Biblical Abraham. Wonder on wonder strikes my sense to look into the Casket of the great work of Israels God in these last Days, Wilford wrote.

For a newly settled town in Ohios Western Reserve, the building was indeed impressive. Sited on the highest point of land in the region, it had a soaring sanctuary on each of its main floors and a polychrome tower reaching to the sky. Some said that on a clear day visitors to the tower could see across Lake Erie to Canada. Color added to the buildings glory. The roof was a deep brick red, the exterior walls a glistening gray-blue created by grinding broken glass and cobalt-glazed ceramics into the stucco, then painting lines to simulate stonework. Two olive-green doors opened into the interior. A model of Yankee ingenuity and rural pretension, the temple had Greek pilasters and Gothic windows, ascending pulpits on both ends of the major rooms, movable seats in the pews, and adjustable curtains operated by pulleys to subdivide the spaces. Red velvet drapery ornamented the pulpits.

Latter-day Saints believed God, speaking through Joseph Smith, had commanded them to build the temple. Smiths revelation called it a house a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God. At its dedication in March 1836, some heard the sound of a mighty wind as a pillar of light descended. Others saw angels soaring through the windows to settle on the high pulpits. It was a house of glory built by common folk. Bolstered by contributions gathered by missionaries like Wilford, its construction provided work for common laborers as well as for skilled carpenters like Brigham Young. God may have prescribed the dimensions of the building, but human beings quarried the stone, planed the planks, stitched the draperies, and constructed the window mullions and sashes, using carpenters manuals and Smiths visions for their guide.

On his first Sunday back in the town, Wilford stood in one of the pulpits and reported on his mission. He took as his text a passage in Isaiah about Gods power to graft into the House of Israel even the son of the stranger. Wilford was talking about the men and women he had baptized in Kentucky and Tennessee. He was also talking about himself. The scripture promised, Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

Like many New Englanders of his generation, Wilford had migrated west in search of new opportunities. Now, nearly thirty, he had neither a wife nor a home of his own, but in Kirtland he had a place of honor in Gods house. Soon, though he did not yet know it, he would find a wife a resolute New Englander named Phebe Carter. Together they would begin a journey that would take them to their old homes in Connecticut and Maine and then to the Fox Islands, off the Atlantic coast, to gather others relatives and strangers into a faith that promised wonders on wonders.

The First Book of Willford
Born in Connecticut in 1807, Wilford was the youngest of Aphek and Beulah Woodruffs three children, all boys. When he was just a year old, his mother died in the midst of a spotted-fever epidemic that also claimed his grandfather. When Wilford was not yet three, his father married Azubah Hart, who gave birth to six more children, five boys and a girl. Azubahs boys were haunted by death. Julius died shortly after birth, Franklin at three months; Newton drowned at two. Sixteen-year-old Philo fell ill after dreaming that there would soon be a funeral in the family. His death provoked Wilford, who was then twenty, to consider his own spiritual state. He asked a local Baptist preacher to baptize him by immersion, but he did not join any church.

After a short stint at the Farmington Academy (his family could not afford more), he moved with his older brother Azmon to a farm in upstate New York. When Mormon missionaries came through in 1833, both accepted baptism. In 1834, Wilford, the more zealous convert, headed to Ohio to meet Joseph Smith. There he joined Zions Camp, a quasi-military expedition sent to relieve Mormon settlers in Jackson County, Missouri, who had been driven from their homes. From there, he accepted a call to serve as a missionary in Tennessee and Kentucky. During his two years in the backcountry, he supported himself by selling subscriptions to the Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate, performing day labor, and accepting food, lodging, and cash donations from church members and strangers.

One of Joseph Smiths revelations assured newly called missionaries that whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture. Wilford took those words seriously. He learned to preach, and he learned to keep a diary, labeling his four-by-six leather-bound journal *The First Book of Willford*. At first, he wrote in a loose, almost unformed scrawl, taking rough notes that he later transcribed, first in

cursive, then in a kind of Roman print that appeared to imitate type. To make it easier to find things, he began setting off certain entries with special symbols or borders, using the calligraphy skills he had acquired during his short time at school. Thanks to his end-of-year summaries, we know that during his two-year mission he traveled 6,557 miles, held 153 meetings, participated in four debates, baptized twenty-seven persons, blessed nineteen children, healed four persons, and escaped from three mobs. The mobs were an affirmation of his calling. Hadnt the ancient apostles also suffered opposition? At a place he called Bloody [Creek?], Kentucky, he gave a full page to a dream or vision of the sun going dark and the moon turned to blood and the horizon covered with burning cities, as prophesied in scripture. He then saw the resurrection of Jesus and witnessed the joy of members of the Church of the First Born clothed in white. Words were not enough to describe such an experience. He ornamented his page with tiny sketches of the things he had seen. When he returned to Kirtland late in 1836, he expected even more powerful manifestations of Gods presence. He enrolled in something called the School of the Prophets, an adult-education program for Mormon preachers, where he learned a smattering of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. Between January and May 1837, he attended evening meetings of the Quorum of Seventies, a group of men with special callings to preach. He participated in private feasts, during which food was distributed to the poor, and in blessing meetings, where Joseph Smiths father, who had been called as church patriarch, laid his hands on the heads of members to offer consolation, affirmation of lineage in the House of Israel, and the promise of future redemption. When Father Smith blessed Abraham Smoot, Wilford served as scribe, taking down the blessing in his neat Roman hand. For Wilford, the most important gatherings occurred within the temple. Here he could listen to Joseph Smith and the Apostles speak and participate in holy rituals. The Prophet had already adopted the Christian practice of washing feet, but in 1836 he reached backward to the book of Exodus, building on a passage that described Moses bringing Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation for a special washing and anointing that allowed them to minister as priests. On April 4, 1837, Wilford and twenty-two other men gathered at a private home and washed themselves with clean water perfumes before repairing to the temple for an anointing. Although the Old Testament recipe called for myrrh, sweet cinnamon, calamus, and cassia, the Saints made do with cinnamon. After the anointing, Wilford joined two other men in a veiled space in the temple. They knelt in prayer and, in Wilfords words, vowed that we would not give sleep to our eyes neither take food until we received a blessing from God by the outpourings of his spirit upon us if it was until the end of three days. Alternately praying and contending with a fatigue they associated with Satan, they continued through the night. Then, having gained a good degree of victory over the Devil, they left the temple, to return that evening for another round. In contrast to the elaborate vision he had recorded in Kentucky, Wilford measured the success of this experience not by a visual manifestation, but by the peace he felt: The spirit of God sat upon us we were satisfied with our blessing. Years later, a church leader who had been in Kirtland said that, when Joseph Smith introduced the ritual of washing and anointing to male leaders, some women got right huffy about it, feeling that they had been left out. If so, they neglected to record their complaints. Their memoirs recall spiritual manifestations, such as an outpouring of glossolalia or speaking in tongues. Some heard an invisible choir during services in the temple. One young mother claimed that her six-month-old baby slept quietly through the seven-hour dedication ceremony, then joined the crowd in shouting Hosanna! The completion of the temple nevertheless marked a subtle transition in Latter-day Saint worship, which had previously focused on small gatherings in homes. In Kirtland, Elizabeth Ann and Newel Whitney often hosted Feasts for the Poor, like the ones Wilford attended, occasions when guests fasted for two meals, then brought butter, bread, or other foods to share with the needy. When held in the temple, fast days like these took on a more formal quality. On March 23, 1837, Wilford arrived early and retired to a veiled area with several other elders for prayer. As the crowd gathered, he emerged into the main space, where, at the invitation of the Prophets father, he read a passage from the Book of Mormon while the congregation stood. Then the curtains dropped, dividing the room into four parts the females occupied two parts the males the others. Male leaders presided in each of the divisions as people engaged in singing, exhortation, prayer. Some had a tongue, others an interpretation, all was in order. The reference to order is significant. Joseph Smith had been shocked when he first arrived in Kirtland by the extremes of enthusiasm that greeted him. The temple became a setting for encouraging and at the same time containing ecstatic expression. With the room divided, four times as many people had an opportunity to participate, but the presence of a member of the presidency in each group prevented things from getting out of hand. Wilford explained that, after the separate meetings, the Veils were all rolled up together which brought the whole Congregation in full view of each other and while the presence of the Lord filled the house the congregation of the Saints fell upon their knees all as one man vocally poured forth rejoicing, supplication Prayer, before the God of Israel. Presumably, the phrase one man included women, though we cannot be sure. Movable seats in the pews allowed people to face pulpits on either the east or the west side, as required. The pulpits themselves ascended in four levels, with three stations in each. Those on the west held the presidencies of the Melchizedek or the higher priesthood; those on the east, the Aaronic, or lesser. With eight presidencies and twenty-four men involved, authority was both widely distributed and hierarchically ordered. Joseph Smith and his two counselors commanded the top tier in the Melchizedek pulpit. While Wilford filled his diary with details about temple worship, something else was happening unnoticed. In early April, he set off a blank space with a distinct border and reported dryly, My first acquaintance with miss Phebe W. Carter was on the evening of the 28th of

Jan. 1837 at which time I was introduced to her at Elder Millikens by the politeness of Elder M. Holmes. After two half months acquaintance we were joined in matrimony. In the midst of religious ecstasy, he had found a wife. to leave my paternal roof Phebe Carter was born in Scarborough, Maine, a coastal town just south of Portland, on March 8, 1807. She was just seven days younger than Wilford and, at the age of thirty, a true peer, having embraced the Latter-day Saint gospel wholeheartedly and on her own. Unlike him, she had grown up in a house full of females. When Mormon missionaries came through Scarborough in 1834, Phebes younger sisters Rhoda, Shuah, and Mary, all in their twenties, were still at home, and the one married sister, Sarah Foss, lived nearby. In the minority were the three brothers, Ezra, Fabyan, and Ilus. Like many young women of her generation, Phebe worked off and on as a teacher and a dressmaker. In a period when an increasing number of women remained single, she must have wondered whether it would be her lot to live and die in the big house where she had been born. Almost as soon as she was baptized, she contemplated moving to Kirtland. In Mormonism, the concept of gathering was central. Believing that the second coming of Jesus was imminent, missionaries taught that newly baptized members had a duty to migrate to the Mormon Zion to become the first laborers in this last kingdom. Although hundreds of New England women left home to work in nearby textile mills or teach in a rural school, very few set off alone to join a religious community seven hundred miles away. Phebes family opposed her plan, and when it came time to leave, she was too overcome with emotion to say goodbye in person. Instead, she composed a letter for them to read once she was out of sight. That the letter survived suggests that her family cherished it. Written in a neat and legible hand on two long sheets of cream-colored paper, it displayed a better-than-average education, a mastery of religious rhetoric, and significantly less sentimentality than Wilfords writing. Beloved Parents, she began, I am now about to leave my parent paternal roof for a while but I know not how long but not without grateful feelings for the kindness which I have received from my infancy until the present time. There are no protestations of love in this opening, just a straightforward statement of the situation. She appreciated all her parents had done for her, but wanted them to know that it was time for them to part. Providence had willed it thus. That she changed parental to paternal roof surely reflects an inbred sense that houses belonged to fathers. It may also hint at her meticulousness and her bookishness. Although the phrase paternal roof was common in both fiction and poetry between 1800 and 1840, the term parental roof was seldom used before the twentieth century. To Phebe it probably didnt have quite the right ring.