

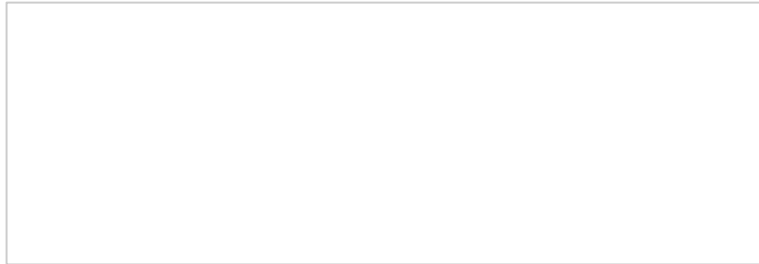
MORE THAN A FOOTNOTE

The Wives of Heber J. Grant:

Lucy Stringham Grant, Augusta Winters Grant, and Emily Wells Grant

by

Mary Jane Searle & Emily Meek



MORE THAN A FOOTNOTE *One Wife of Heber J. Grant*



Lucy Stringham Grant

April 29, 1858 –January 3, 1893



Hulda Augusta Winters Grant

June 1, 1951–July 7, 1856



Emily Wells Grant

April 22, 1857–May 25, 1908

Lucy Stringham Grant, Augusta Winters Grant, and Emily Wells Grant — three women whose lives, sacrifices, and individual stories have long been overshadowed by the man they married.

This presentation, by Mary Jane Searle and Emily Meek, restores their rightful place in the historical narrative of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

More than a Footnote

ERASED FROM THE RECORD

A 2004 Ensign biography of Heber J. Grant — the seventh President of the Church — told a charming anecdote about his wife without ever naming her. The omission is telling: Grant was a polygamist with three wives — Lucy Stringham, Augusta Winters, and Emily Wells — whose existence the article sidestepped entirely, presenting an idealized image divorced from historical reality.



PRESIDENT GRANT'S TEN DAUGHTERS. BACK ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: EDITH, DESSIE, RACHEL, FLORENCE, LUCY. FRONT ROW: MARY, EMILY, FRANCES, GRACE, ANNA. TAKEN ABOUT 35 YEARS AGO.

**A FATHER
WHO IS LOVED AND HONORED**

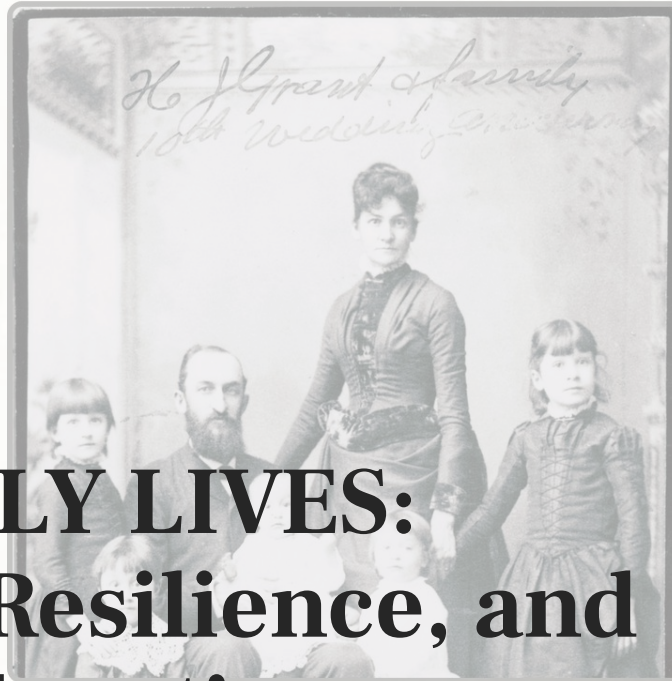
THE HISTORICAL PROBLEM

- In many records, Lucy, Augusta, and Emily are reduced to unnamed helpmeets, their identities overshadowed by their roles in a polygamous family structure.

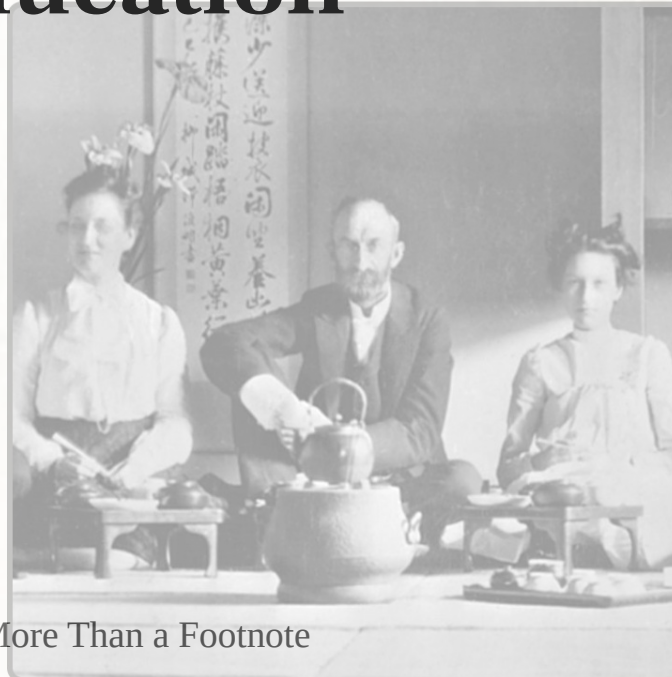
THE HISTORICAL OPPORTUNITY

- Primary sources — children's memoirs, Heber's journal entries, and letters between the wives and their husband — reveal women of depth, resilience, and faith.
- This article restores their rightful place in the historical narrative, honoring their individual strength, sacrifice, and faith.

EARLY LIVES: Poverty, Resilience, and Education



Grant was the first prophet born in Utah and the last to have practiced plural marriage.



More Than a Footnote

1. Lucy Stringham

- Born spring 1858, the fifth child of pioneer parents, she spent summers on Antelope Island. At thirteen, after her father died, she became the family's “principal support” by teaching school.
- Lucy Stringham lost her father at thirteen and became her family's main support through teaching, shaping her deep appreciation for the stability Heber would later provide.



2. Hulda Augusta Winters



- Born July 7, 1856 in Mount Pleasant, Utah, “Gusta” grew up in poverty. She earned a teaching degree from the University of Deseret in 1877 and became one of the highest-paid teachers in the Salt Lake Valley.
- Augusta Winters grew up in genuine poverty. Her family bartered for food, her mother taught school when she could, and her grandmother gradually sold heirlooms to help keep everyone fed. She earned her teaching degree in 1877 by saving money for school, attending until it ran out, and then returning to teaching — eventually becoming one of the highest-paid teachers in the Salt Lake Valley.

3. Emily Wells



- Born April 22, 1857, she was the daughter of former Salt Lake City mayor Daniel Wells and grew up in comfort. Known for her wit, intelligence, and social grace, she also graduated from the University of Deseret.
- Emily Wells, by contrast, grew up in comfort in Daniel Wells's home on Main and South Temple. She was known for her intelligence, wit, and empathy, and she learned piano by exchanging ironing for lessons.

BEING MARRIED TO HEBER JETTY GRANT



LUCY & HEBER

Lucy and Heber: A Marriage of Depth and Devotion

- Lucy Stringham and Heber J. Grant met as children in the Thirteenth Ward Sunday School and started courting before they married on November 1, 1877 in the St. George Temple — a rare choice at the time. They reached Santaquin by train and finished the trip in Heber's "white top."
- One night, Heber came home after midnight with heavy debt on his shoulders. Lucy was given the gift of tongues, blessed him, and said that he would live to pay off his debts, buy a lovely home, and preach in faraway lands. Though she was often sick after their first child was born, she stayed deeply devoted to her family and gathered the children at night to read *The Youth's Companion*, *Hans Brinker*, or the *Silver Skates*, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, and *Louisa May Alcott*.

LUCY AND THE TRIAL OF PLURAL MARRIAGE

Lucy knew plural marriage was possible before marrying Heber; it was a condition of his proposal. But knowing it in the abstract and living it were very different things. As Heber later considered whom to marry, he turned to Lucy for advice and approval, and she accepted both Augusta and Emily.

"I believe I have done wrong in thinking so much of you in the past for the Lord tells us that we must not love anyone better than we love Him. . . . And it makes me smile to think that this flesh is so weak."

— Lucy S. Grant, November 1, 1884

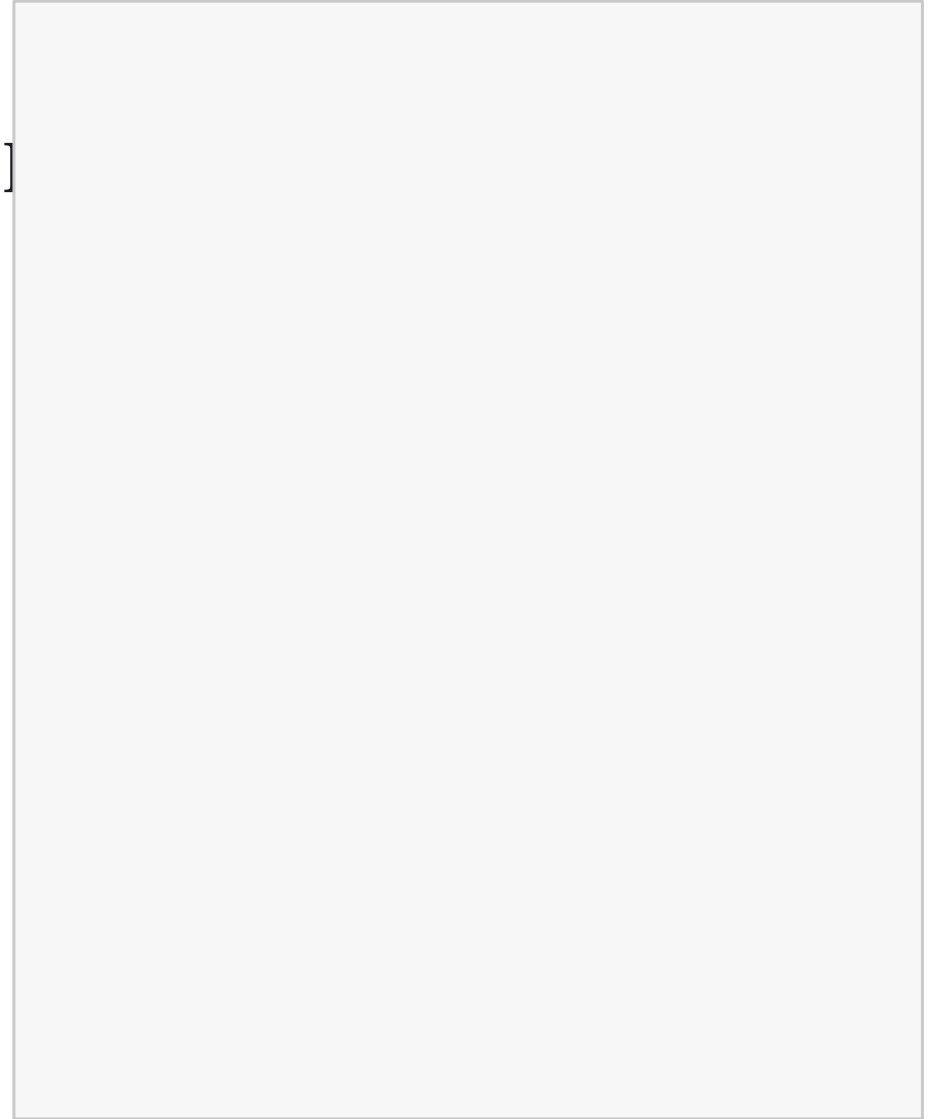
Lucy's letters reveal grief, jealousy, and shame at not being able to embrace the sisterly ideal plural marriage demanded. Historian Paula Harline notes that such feelings were common. Lucy wrote, "I feel that I am nothing without you and that I have so small a share in your future that the thought almost makes me wild sometimes."



Heber and Lucy Grant and family on their tenth wedding anniversary, 1887

AUGUSTA: FROM STRANGER TO BELOVED

In the fall of 1883, Heber Grant sent Augusta Winters a letter and a blanket, then later drew her name from a hat as he sought God's guidance. They married on May 26, 1884 in the Salt Lake Endowment House, but anti-polygamy laws kept Augusta from living openly with him or taking his name. She said it all seemed "so unreal," like "a dream after all." Heber later visited her in New York, and they ended the journey together at Niagara Falls.



EMILY: A CHILDHOOD LOVE, RELUCTANTLY WON

Growing up as neighbors in downtown Salt Lake City, Emily Wells and Heber Grant were best friends from childhood. In 1877 Heber abruptly stopped courting her and married Lucy Stringham instead, because Emily had vowed never to enter plural marriage — and both knew a childhood blessing from Eliza Snow Smith Young had foretold Heber would be an Apostle and practice polygamy. Over the next seven years, Emily rejected twelve marriage proposals, including one from Orson F. Whitney, still mourning Heber.

Heber later began visiting Emily again and proposed during a carriage ride, but she rebuked him for leaving his family in Tooele. He proposed again on October 3, 1883, she declined, and he turned to Augusta Winters. Emily then prayerfully studied plural marriage and told Whitney bluntly that if she ever entered it, she would marry Heber Grant. Hearing that, Heber proposed a third time, and they were sealed on May 27, 1884 — one day after Augusta

LIFE ON THE UNDERGROUND: EMILY IN EXILE

"I have got everything in [life] now that I want except you."

Emily Wells Grant, letter from Manassa, Colorado

- When Emily celebrated her first wedding anniversary, she was expecting her first baby and getting ready to sail to England. Her father, Daniel Wells, invited her to stay in the mission home in Liverpool while he served as European mission president.
- Her daughter, Martha Deseret Grant — called “Dessie” — was born there, and Emily and her baby stayed for twenty months. Emily loved the English countryside, historic sites, missionaries, and trips with her father.
- After her father’s release, Emily still could not return to Utah because Heber risked arrest. She hid in her mother’s Salt Lake home for five years, until US Marshals spotted her at her father’s 75th birthday party in November 1889.
- After that, Emily moved to Manassa, Colorado, a common exile for plural wives. Heber bought her a two-room house, hired a chore boy, and gave her a horse and buggy.
- Emily and Heber wrote under strict rules she set: handwritten letters only, no arguing, and always write on the twenty-seventh of the month. After the 1890 Manifesto, she was happy at first, but crushed when exile continued.
- She wrote, “I hope it won't be long before I have some kind of change or I am afraid I'll do something desperate... I love you devotedly but my heart is nearly breaking.” She then wrote a 16-page angry letter, burned it, and after 16 months in Manassa finally returned to Salt Lake.

FACING REALITIES OF LIFE

More Than a Footnote

AUGUSTA'S UNDERGROUND: HIDING, HOPE,

- In spring 1888, after five years of marriage, Augusta finally became pregnant. She went underground and lived in Provo, staying inside during the day and going out only at night.
- She longed to visit her own sister, but could not. As she wrote, staying outside in the dark “nearly breaks my heart.”
- After Mary was born, Augusta stayed underground and later moved east under the name Mrs. A. W. Bennett. In New York City, she finally had more freedom and a fuller social life.
- Heber bought tickets for plays, concerts, organ recitals, oratorios, and musicals. He also made sure Utah visitors kept her company, and Augusta thrived as she befriended music students and raised Mary.
- When Heber visited, he arrived with gifts and affection. Even so, Augusta still struggled to feel loved and needed.



Augusta's and Emily's experiences on the underground were distinct from most polygamous wives. Due to Heber's wealth, both women were able to leave Utah during the worst of the US Marshal raids — a luxury few plural wives could enjoy.

LUCY'S ILLNESS AND DEATH: AUGUSTA STEEN



Heber J. Grant and his family, 1892

- Lucy's health worsened after her son Heber Stringham Grant was born on December 12, 1888. By 1891, she was often on the couch, and she tried electric therapy, special diets, and surgery, but nothing helped.
- By late 1892, Lucy was in severe pain and taking morphine morning and night. She could no longer keep food down, and she began praying for death as a release.
- On January 3, 1893, Lucy asked Heber to send for the children. She kissed each one goodbye, received a final blessing, and died at 5:30 p.m. at age 34.
- At the funeral, Emily learned that Lucy had said Augusta should raise her children. Emily expected Heber to move her in, but he chose Augusta instead.
- Augusta became surrogate mother to Lucy's four daughters and sick son, plus three of her sister's children — nine children in all. She called it a "sweet privilege," and she cared for them on just \$75 a month during the Panic of 1893, when the Grants were bankrupt.



JAPAN AND EUROPE: New Worlds for Augusta and Emily

- In 1901, Heber was called as mission president in Japan and took Augusta and their daughter Mary. Japan was a culture shock for Augusta, who wrote about creatures with "a thousand legs," immense spiders, constant humidity, mold, and rats." After 14 months, the Grants returned home.



- In 1903, Heber was called to preside over the European mission. Emily was devastated by another long separation, but Heber surprised her by saying that she and the children would go with him.
- In Europe, Emily lived with Heber in the same home for the first time in 18 years of marriage. She visited abbeys, cathedrals, art galleries, parks, and seaside resorts from Scandinavia to Italy, and said she "wished these years could go on forever." They returned home at the end of 1906.

Illustration: Christy Archman, "The Church of San Marco (St. Mark's Cathedral) in Venice, Italy, 1906."

Illus. 12-4. Heber and Emily in front of St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice, Italy, in 1906.

s Death and Augusta's Long Devotion



Heber J. Grant and family when he was president of the European Mission in 1905

- Emily came home from England in excellent health, but by spring 1907 she was diagnosed with stomach cancer. Heber built her a new house to give her something to look forward to, and she moved in January 1908. Her mother died on May 13, 1908, and Emily died 12 days later on May 25, 1908, at age 51, surrounded by her daughters and husband.
- After Emily's death, Augusta's marriage became monogamous. She kept raising Lucy's children, her sister's children, an adopted boy, and her own daughter Mary. In her later years, she spent every Thursday in the temple.
- As they grew older, Augusta and Heber grew closer. In 1937, Heber wrote that they "took more pleasure in each other's society" and hoped to die on the same day. Heber died on May 14, 1945, and Augusta died six years later on June 1, 1951.

RESTORING THEIR PLACE IN HISTORY

Lucy

Lucy wrestled with the spiritual and emotional demands of polygamy while remaining a devoted family figure despite the illness that claimed her at thirty-four. H

Augusta

Augusta was a scholar and a woman of faith. After infertility, secrecy, and loss, she embraced children not her own with grace and quiet devotion.

Emily

Emily was vivacious and passionate, shaped by love and its heartbreak. She faced exile, separation, and illness with determination and an undiminished spirit.

CONCLUSION

Lucy Stringham, Emily Wells, and Augusta Winters were more than footnotes in the biography of the man they married. Their lives illuminate the realities of polygamy, faith, and womanhood in Utah history.

They were far more than dutiful wives and mothers. Their letters and diaries reveal lives of resilience, agency, and depth — women who endured loss, claimed opportunity, and left a richer story than the roles assigned to them.



President Heber J. Grant and his wife, Augusta, 1942

"Thank God that I have wives with faith in the gospel and who desire to do all they can to aide me in my endeavors to perform the duties of life devolving upon me."

— Heber J. Grant, Journal, June 26, 1887

