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These letters elaborate on how Eliza Avery Clark, daughter of Hyrum Don Carlos Clark, married into the Wilford Woodruff family. Note Wilford was a dear friend to Ezra T. Clark. Avery married Abraham Woodruff, Wilford's son and apostle, as Abraham's second wife. Avery only had one child through Abraham, after Abraham's death from smallpox. Abraham's first wife Helen also died from small pox, both in 1904.

18 Post-Manifest Polygamy

Eliza Avery Clark Woodruff Lambert

According to Avery's autobiography, written fifty years later, she remembered being impressed with Owen's "charming, magnetic personality . . . angelic as Mother often said afterward." Avery, who was tentatively promised to a young man named Fred Dixon, began comparing Fred and Owen, finding the latter more "handsome and intelligent, and thinking what a lucky girl his wife was." Avery's romantic young mind fantasized about what it would be like to be married to someone like Owen. It was thus a pleasant surprise when Owen later joined her family at home for an informal visit.

The Clark family assumed that Owen's visit concerned a possible church calling for Avery's father, Hyrum D. Clark. With these thoughts, the Clarks welcomed Owen into their Star Valley home. Hyrum drove Owen to his destination the following day, expecting to hear the specific purpose for Owen's visit. He was not expecting, however, Owen's awkward request for Avery's hand as a polygamous wife. According to Avery's autobiography, Hyrum later recounted the conversation to her, his shocked and tearful daughter:

I was just as shocked and surprised as you are Dot when I learned of this new Polygamy and I asked a lot of questions about it. . . . He [Owen] said that while he was speaking it was made known to him that the girl sitting before him would be his wife. . . . It was as if a voice had said the words. . . .

"Not being able to throw it off my mind, I've prayed about it, feeling that my impression is from the Lord. . . . Would you be willing for her to marry me in case she wanted to"? I said, "Not unless it can be sanctioned by the Church." Bro. W. pointed out how several of the brethren in high positions had been advised to take plural wives which justified his [Hyrum's] confidence in the matter.

After contemplation and prayer, Avery consented to Owen's proposal and, after four brief and secret meetings over a four-month period, Owen and Avery married in January 1901, probably on January 18. No official LDS Church document records the polygamous marriage or who performed it, although Hardy's Appendix II indicates that Elder Cowley officiated at the ceremony. This makes sense because, not only was he close to Owen, but also, according to Hardy, he was probably the "most frequently employed of the church's high leaders in performing polygamous marriages for his brethren."