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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.

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Image #1 helen woodruffPhoto by C. R. Savage, courtesy of the Lambert and Woodruff familieswhat became known as the “Second Manifesto,” calling for a complete end to public and private polygamy. Some Latter-day Saints speculated that Owen’s death had spared him from church punishment, while others felt his death represented a punishment itself. Although the first Manifesto had enabled Utah to achieve statehood, national fears of lingering polygamy left Utah politicians powerless, as evidenced in the 1904 Smoot hearings. President Smith’s Second Manifesto solidly set the course for the LDS Church’s increased social status and political power in the United States and for the Latter-day Saints to become supportive, patriotic Americans.

The Abraham Owen Woodruff family story reflects national public dramas over post-Manifesto polygamy while also revealing private internal dramas. Viewing the relationship between Helen, Owen, and Avery offers an unusual, if not unique, opportunity to see how polygamous first wives dealt with insecurity and jealousy, how additional wives struggled to measure up and find their own place, and how the logistics of managing two families presented challenges for the polygamous husband, both financially and emotionally. The letters and autobiographical reminiscences that follow present three distinct individuals who desired to demonstrate their faith in God by following the counsel of LDS Church authorities to participate in an illegal but privately sanctioned relationship. Their trials and sorrows and the faith and courage that sustained them command our respect.