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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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the period 1899–1904, covering the five years of Helen and Owen's marriage and the three years of Owen and Avery's polygamous marriage. Transcribed and historically documented here, these letters place the Woodruffs' marital experience in Utah's turn-of-the-century context with particular emphasis on religion, culture, and politics. In addition, a few of Owen's journal entries; excerpts from Avery's 1952 autobiography; journal entries by Alonzo Taylor, an LDS missionary who cared for Helen at the time of her death; and recollections of Kate Spilsbury, who cared for Helen and Owen's baby when Helen became ill, supply further perspectives on the day-to-day logistics of the Woodruffs' relationships and the joys and sorrows they produced. The Woodruff Collection also adds a significant personal and familial perspective to Mormon culture and social history. For example, most previous books about late nineteenth-century polygamy, such as Annie Clark Tanner's A Mormon Mother and Ida Hunt Udall's Mormon Odyssey, are based on journals and other autobiographical writings edited by succeeding generations to display their ancestors as both heroes and victims. Written as public reminiscences, these accounts reflect a certain bias in their retrospective public transmissions.

Antithetically, because the Woodruffs' letters are immediate and relatively unmediated in articulating their struggles with their polygamous marriage, with their absences from each other, and with their sometimes wavering self-confidence, they represent a private account of a public issue, one that developed during the LDS Church's transition from isolation to integration into mainstream American culture, which celebrated monogamy. Perhaps most importantly, while generalizations can be made from this collection as a significant case study of post-Manifesto life in the polygamy "underground" set against the backdrop of such historical events as the Smoot Senate hearings, this analysis focuses most specifically on how the Woodruffs' commitment to plural marriage as a fundamental religious principle complicated and disrupted their personal lives and relationships.

Abraham Owen Woodruff

Abraham Owen Woodruff, born November 23, 1872, in Salt Lake City, was raised in a polygamous family. His mother, Emma Smith, became the third wife of Wilford Woodruff in 1853 and had eight children, Owen being the youngest son. Each of Woodruff's four wives produced a large family, but even with so many siblings, Owen captured much of his aging father's attention and support. Raised in a primitive log house built by his father in 1847, Owen grew to manhood learning and performing the labors of farm life. Like his father, he loved outdoor activities, especially fishing and hunting. A young and enterprising Owen attempted to earn