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Notes and Comments

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Notes and Comments

THE FREDERICK KESLER COLLECTION

During the past several months, a number of important manuscript collections have been acquired by the Special Collections Division of the J. Willard Marriott Library of the University of Utah.

One of the most significant for the student of Mormon history is that of Frederick Kesler, a resident of Augusta, Iowa, when the Mormons arrived at Nauvoo, a millwright who built mills for the Mormons from Iowa and Nebraska to Utah, a major in the Nauvoo Legion, and for forty-three years a bishop of the Sixteenth Ward in Salt Lake City.

The Kesler Collection consists of fifteen day books and account books dating from 1840; missionary journals of the 1840s; twelve diaries dating from 11 April 1857 to 12 June 1899; correspondence (1837-1897) and photographs of family and close associates—including Joseph Smith and Brigham Young; and considerable memorabilia of Frederick Kesler and family. Also in the collection are numerous pamphlets, broadsides, and other printed material, some of which may be unique.

A few more of the more unusual items are two different invitations to the "Pic-Nic Party at Big Cottonwood Canyon" (24 July 1857); a revelation of Orson Hyde in Nauvoo directed against James J. Strang (1846); a revelation of John Taylor (13 October 1882); General Joseph Smith's *Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States* (Nauvoo, 1844); an address of Brigham Young, "A Series of Instructions and Remarks . . . at a Special Council" (24 March 1858); and *Fast Day Proclamation* (1889).

Of all the items in the Kesler Collection, however, the prize has to be a manuscript page of the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 14) in the handwriting of David Whitmer. In a signed statement, Bishop Kesler relates how he acquired the document. It was removed from the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House in 1882 by Lewis Bidamon, second husband of Emma Smith, and presented to Joseph Summerhays on 3 October 1884. Some time later the manuscript was obtained from Summerhays by Kesler. It remained in his possession and then in his heirs' possession until it was given to the University of Utah Library. (For further details on the manuscript of the Book of Mormon, see Dean C. Jessee, "The original Book of Mormon Manuscript," *BYU Studies* [Spring 1970].)

When the library acquired the Kesler Collection, the manuscript page was photographed and then carried to the W. J. Barrow Laboratory in Richmond, Virginia, for deacidification and lamination. Photocopies are available in the Special Collections of the Library.

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