

original of an interesting letter which throws important light on the background of anti-Mormon sentiment in the 1850s.

THE STEPHEN POST COLLECTION

Max J. Evans*

The Historical Department of the Church has received a collection of the papers of Stephen Post, an early member of the Church and a member and leader of a variety of schismatic groups. Post was born in New York state in 1810. He joined the Church in 1835 and moved to Kirtland, where he became a member of the second quorum of Seventy. Beginning almost immediately to engage in missionary work, he defended the Church and answered its critics. In 1837 it was said that "His defence [sic] of Mormonism [sic] we suppose is the best which can be made."¹ His first mission for the Church sent him to Michigan in 1839. His second call, beginning in 1844, was to Pennsylvania and New York.

Included in the collection are twelve volumes of journals, kept from the day of his baptism until his death in 1879. Most of the journal entries give an account of Post's missionary travels and his religious activities. Post was in Pennsylvania when the Prophet Joseph Smith was killed. The following is his account of learning of the maryrdom:

July Sun 7th [1844] . . . The Country is now filled with reports about the Mormon war[.] The general belief is that Joseph Smith is killed[.] the reports are rather contradictory & so I do not make up my mind on them, one thing is certain there has been a great excitement at Nauvoo. . . .

[July] 28 . . . I have now received confirmatory news by the "Nauvoo Neighbor" of the disturbance there[.] Joseph & Hyrum Smiths [sic] were murdered in Carthage Jail June 27 P.M. . . .

After the Prophet's death, Post continued his mission in the East, and apparently moved his family there. Although he was aware of the move West under the leadership of Brig-

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¹*The Christian Palladium*, 1 August 1837, p. 110.

ham Young, Post remained in the East and refrained from aligning himself with any of those who claimed a right to the Presidency. In 1846, however, this entry appears in his journal:

[July] 14 . . . I received today four no's of the Voree Herald[.] I read them after I returned before I slept & the result is that I find much good evidence that James J Strang is appointed by the will of God to preside over his church as successor to Joseph Smith.

Post followed the Strangite movement until the mid 1850s. During a conference on Beaver Island in 1850 Strang was crowned a king in Zion. This is Post's account:

July 8[1850] This day is one long to be remembered[.] The grand feature of this day has been the crowning of a king in Zion & the electing of a grand council of 8 for the setting up of the kingdom of God on the earth[.] The scene was solemn & impressive[.] King James was hailed as king in Zion by one unanimous voice of the whole congregation[.] The day long looked for by prophets was declared at length to have arrived[.]

After becoming disillusioned with Strang, another attempt at reorganization was made; a meeting was held in Kirtland in October 1855:

Sun 7 Met in the temple 1/2 past 10 oclock [sic] [.] Brother Martin Harris was elected president of the Conference Stephen Post secretary. . . . It was not deemed expedient to organize but to pass some stringent resolutions & recommend another conference to meet next april[sic] [.]

P.M. Brs. Wm Smith & Daniels spoke during which I wrote some resolutions. . . . The following resolutions were received unanimously[:]

1st Resolved That the members of this conference have full confidence in the raising up and calling of Joseph Smith Jr. as translator, seer, & prophet, to lay the foundation of the church of Jesus Christ and move the cause of Zion for good in this generation. . . .

The following year, 11 April 1856, Post found "Kirtland apparently a land barren of faith as people without a shepherd [sic] [.]". Post's activities were also curtailed somewhat; for the following year-and-a-half only seven entries were made in his journal. But by 1857 he became a follower of another of those who claimed the right of the presidency: Sidney Rigdon.

Oct 25 [1857] I preached at Br Soules in Erie[.] preached P.M. on the order of the church & set forth the revelations shewing the appt. of S Rigdon as president of the church.

In Sept Wm Smith got up a revelation appointing me a printer to the church &c. he is now trying to organize as president in Kirtland Ohio[.]

In March 1856 S Rigdon sent me a rev. calling me to assist in sending forth the word of the Lord &c[.]

Included in the collection, in addition to the journals, are revelations sent to Post from Rigdon as his home in Friendship, New York. After Post moved a branch of the church to Attica, Marion County, Iowa in 1864, Rigdon continued to direct the church by the mails. Consequently the collection has what is probably one of the largest single collections of Sidney Rigdon's letters. More than 200 bear his signature. Other letters (some 200 more) are from Post's children, from Post to his wife, and to and from members and leaders of Rigdon's church, the Strangite Church, and the Reorganized Church. Included are letters to and from Joseph Smith, III. Other papers are certificates and receipts, revelations copied into bound volumes (arranged by sections, like the Doctrine and Covenants), and published works. Most of the published material come from other schismatic-Mormon groups, and includes pamphlets written by Post. Many of the published works are annotated.

The collection tells much about Rigdon and his religious beliefs. For example, Rigdon's church had apostles and a prophet. It had, in addition, female quorums of priesthood. Rigdon was a prophet and president of his church, and at one time, Post, his wife, Jane, and Rigdon's wife Phebe served as assistant presidents.

In 1876 Rigdon received a revelation which told Post to move his branch of the church from Iowa to Canada. In May, Post established a settlement at West Lynn, Manitoba. Two months later Sidney Rigdon died. Post held Rigdon's few followers together until his death in 1879. He was "the last important champion of Rigdon, and the wasting away of Rigdonite Mormonism really begins with Post's death . . ."²

Fortunately, the Post family preserved and maintained the papers of Stephen Post. They came to the Historian's Office

²Dale L. Morgan, "A Bibliography of the Churches of the Dispersion," *Western Humanities Review* 8:130 (Summer 1953).

from Stephen Post's grandson, Edward O. Post of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Two missionaries in the Minnesota-Manitoba Mission, Elder K. Van Duren of Salt Lake City, Utah, and Elder David E. Rowe of Fairbanks, Alaska, first contacted Mr. Post, and learning of the collection, notified the Historian's Office. Elder Van Duren and Elder Rowe, in connection with Mission President Carl M. King, procured the papers for the Historian's Office. The collection, which comprises about 2 1/2 cubic feet of papers, arrived in Salt Lake City in two shipments, in July and October 1971. This collection will most certainly add to our knowledge of one of the many nineteenth-century religious groups that followed the Prophet Joseph Smith.

PRESIDENT BUCHANAN RECEIVES A PROPOSAL FOR AN ANTI-MORMON CRUSADE, 1857

David A. Williams*

The author of the letter which is reproduced herein, Robert Tyler, was a son of John Tyler, tenth president of the United States. The Tyler family's American roots stretched back to the mid-seventeenth century when its first representatives settled in Virginia. President Tyler, first vice-president to succeed to the Presidency following the death of William H. Harrison in 1841, like his father attended William and Mary and sent his son there also. Educated in the classic manner, Robert subsequently studied law under the direction of Professor Beverly Tucker. He acted as private secretary to his father during his years in the White House, but thereafter his career was dominated by the law and his political interests.

Philadelphia became Robert Tyler's home toward the end of his father's term and it was there that he became a very active member of the Democratic Party, and a well-known friend and political ally of James Buchanan. The association between these two men, evidenced by numerous letters exchanged by them, began in the late 1840s and persisted through the Civil War, when Robert Tyler served in the Treasury Department of the Confederate Government. In an earlier

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