

Collection #
M 0917

**WILLIAM KELLER FAMILY
PAPERS, 1846–1950 (BULK 1846–1857)**

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 1 manuscript box, 1 photographs folder

COLLECTION
DATES: 1846–1950 (bulk 1846–1857)

PROVENANCE: Mrs. Henry A. Humphrey, Wichita, Kansas, January 1976; Julie Dalton / Bank of America, Wichita, KS, March 2001

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: SC 1402, Samuel Steele Letters

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1976.0110, 2001.0484

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William Keller, a potter, was born in Indiana on 23 May 1824. During the time period covered by this collection, William lived in Floyd County, Indiana in the towns of Galena and New Albany. His first marriage to Margaret Steele Keller ended upon her death on 4 April 1855. William then married his cousin Barbara Ann Fite on 8 April 1856. They had at least four children: Daniel W., Emily A., Margaret S., Charles L. While in New Albany Keller was the proprietor of New Albany Pottery, located at Upper 7th and Water Streets, where he manufactured water pipes, stoneware, flower pots, and other items. Along with W.H. Daniel, he also operated a lath and nail keg factory in New Albany.

William's brother Lewis Alexander Keller, a lawyer, wrote most of the letters in this collection. Lewis attended Indiana Asbury University (later DePauw University) in Greencastle, Indiana. Upon his expulsion in December 1853, he enrolled at Indiana University in Bloomington. Lewis was a strong supporter of Whig Party politics. In June 1855, he set up business with Robert Bell in Fairfield, Illinois, as a lawyer on the Wayne County judicial circuit. Lewis contracted typhoid fever in September 1856 and died shortly thereafter in Mt. Carmel, Illinois.

The parents of William Keller and Lewis Alexander Keller were likely Daniel Keller a potter from Huntingdon, Pennsylvania and Zeruah [Zerniah?] Starr. The couple married in Floyd County, Indiana, on 2 May 1823.

Other letters to William were written by his cousins, members of the Ramey family of Pennsylvania. These include Solomon F. Ramey (Dubuque, IA), David K. Ramey (Hollidaysburg, PA), Margaret Ramey (Sinking Valley and Altoona, PA), and Eliza Ramey (Sinking Valley, PA).

Sources:

Ancestry Library Edition. Available at: <http://www.ancestrylibrary.com>

Edmondson's New Albany Directory, 1875–1876, p. 101. General Collection: F534.N41 A18

Indiana University Register of Graduates, 1830–1897, p. 12.

Information in the collection

LDS Familysearch. Available at <http://www.familysearch.org>

Tri-State Trader, vol. 12, no. 17. p. 1

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection contains correspondence written to William Keller by members of the Ramey family of Pennsylvania and by William's brother Lewis Alexander Keller. The letters written to William Keller from all correspondents have been interspersed and placed in date order. A few other family documents are also in the collection as are photographs of Ramey family members.

Series 1: Keller family correspondence, 1846–1857; 1950 consists primarily of letters written to William Keller from his brother Lewis. Throughout his letters, Lewis provides observations on the weather, railroads, hunting and fishing, illness, death, religion, philosophy, bachelorhood, and marriage. Letters from Illinois describe the Illinois prairie. Lewis often writes to his brother about selling his interest in some property. He also frequently addresses topics of important historical and political significance. His letters provide insight into the major political debates leading up to the Civil War.

In his Indiana Asbury University letters written from 1848–53, Lewis discusses classes and studies, professors (such as W. C. Larrabee), students, enrollment, and recitations and debates in which he has participated. Events on and around campus included religious revivals, Masonic meetings, fairs, temperance meetings, and a visit by some phrenologists, mesmerists, and Otoe Indians. Lewis mentions the tensions extant between some of the students and faculty, including the expulsion of students for playing cards, swimming, and drinking. He describes his own expulsion in December 1853 under charges of participating in a riot, and writes heatedly about the president of the university, Reverend Lucien W. Berry. Several articles regarding these expulsions appeared in the *Putnam County Banner*.

Lewis supported Whig party politics and during his years at Indiana Asbury, he frequently wrote on topics such as the Fugitive Slave Bill, the Compromise of 1850, and the debate over U.S. intervention in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1852 Lewis traveled to the Whig convention in Indianapolis where he describes a speech given by Hungarian revolutionary Lajos "Louis" Kossuth during Kossuth's United States tour. Lewis also mentions his own tour of Indianapolis's Deaf and Dumb Asylum. Throughout these letters Lewis expresses his great admiration for Whig politicians Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and General Winfield Scott.

After his expulsion from Indiana Asbury, Lewis attended Indiana University. His letters from Indiana University cover the period from 1854–55 and record his experiences there. He describes tensions between the junior and senior classes over commencement performances and university president Reverend William Mitchel Daily's intervention. He also mentions the 1853 *Vincennes University v. Indiana* legislation. Lewis writes about debates on the Maine Liquor Law and the proposed Indiana prohibitory liquor law. He asserts his opposition to the Democratic Party platform and the Kansas-Nebraska bill, claiming it violates the Missouri Compromise. Other topics include his condolences on the death of William's wife, Margaret, and a description of a trip to Indian Springs and its healing waters.

Lewis relocated to Illinois in June 1855 to practice law and corresponded from Fairfield, Salem, and Mount Carmel, Illinois. He describes cases argued and his involvement in land speculation. During the 1856 presidential election, Lewis campaigned and stumped for former President Millard Fillmore and the Know-Nothing Party, speaking out against the "Free Kansas" motto of the Republican Party.

Lewis wrote his last letter to William from Illinois on 13 October 1856 mentioning his debilitated condition due to typhoid fever. He died soon thereafter. There are a few letters written to William Keller after the death of his brother, including one from Indiana University president William Mitchel Daily.

Other letters in the series were written to William Keller from his cousins Solomon F. Ramey, David K. Ramey, Margaret Ramey, and Eliza Ramey. The letters primarily relate news about the marriages, illnesses, deaths, and lives of Ramey family members. Mentioned are familial tensions due to the intermarriage among cousins. Lastly, there is

one letter dated 1950 from Mabel Parsons (Mrs. Holden Dee Parsons) to Margaret Humphrey regarding the above correspondence and genealogical research. Apparently, the women were the grandchildren of William Keller.

Series 2: Keller family documents and photographs, 1853–1944 contains a Philological Literary Society certificate presented to Lewis Keller, information on William’s settling of Lewis’s accounts and funeral expenses, and some miscellaneous tax documents, deed information, and other genealogical sources. Four cartes de visite of the Ramey family are also in this series.

Series 3: Other correspondence, 1852–1882 contains a few letters of uncertain relation to the Keller family, including a letter written in German to Heinrich Gentner, two letters to Henrietta O’Bannon Blinco (addressed to Lewisport, Kentucky and Rockport, Indiana), and a letter from M. F. Anderson.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Keller family correspondence, 1846–1857; 1950

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Correspondence, 14 May 1846–27 Dec. 1848	Box 1, Folder 1
Correspondence, 29 Apr. 1849–29 May 1851	Box 1, Folder 2
Correspondence, 14 Nov. 1851–27 June 1852	Box 1, Folder 3
Correspondence, 4 Nov. 1852–30 June 1853	Box 1, Folder 4
Correspondence, 21 July 1853–28 Mar. 1854	Box 1, Folder 5
Correspondence, 21 May–10 Dec. 1854	Box 1, Folder 6
Correspondence, 25 Dec. 1854–29 Aug. 1855	Box 1, Folder 7
Correspondence, 24 Sept. 1855–5 Sept. 1856	Box 1, Folder 8
Correspondence, 17 Sept. 1856–16 Mar. 1857	Box 1, Folder 9
Correspondence of William Keller’s descendants, 16 April 1950	Box 1, Folder 10

Series 2: Keller family documents and photographs, 1853–1944

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Philological Literary Society certificate for Lewis A. Keller, 1853	Box 1, Folder 11
Receipts for funeral expenses and settling of Lewis A. Keller’s debts, Nov. 1856–Aug. 1857	Box 1, Folder 12
County tax document for Zuriiah Keller, 11 March 1858	Box 1, Folder 13

Ramey family photographs, ca. 1860s [4 cartes de visite]	Photographs: Folder 1
Keller deed information from Floyd Co., Indiana, recorder's office, 1939; 1944	Box 1, Folder 14
List of genealogical sources, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 15

Series 3: Other correspondence, 1852–1882

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Letter to Heinrich Gentner, Philadelphia, PA, 1852 [in German]	CONTAINER Box 1, Folder 16
Letters to Henrietta O'Bannon Blinco, 1852; 1886	Box 1, Folder 17
Letter from M. F. Anderson, 1882	Box 1, Folder 18

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0917).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.