

Moses Kimball

Holograph Travel Narrative Letter and other Writings, 1834-35

(Connecticut, New York, Ohio: 1834-35)

\$2000



A small archive consisting of one two-page narrative letter and 10 loose sheets (about 20 holograph pages) of miscellaneous writings by Moses Kimball, including one page with pen & ink illustrations. Modest toning and a few tiny tears, three manuscript sheets are partially split at the folds, including one with a neat Japanese paper tape repair, about very good overall.

Born in Connecticut in 1741, Moses Kimball served in the Revolutionary War as a soldier under Brigadier General Samuel McClellan (1781-82). A devout Universalist, he taught navigation and civil engineering, and was a prosperous land owner in Norwich, Connecticut. The letter and miscellaneous writings of poetry and short sermons retained here date from the last two years of his life, when he left Connecticut to live with a grandson in Norwalk, Ohio.

In the letter written to a friend in Connecticut, Kimball describes in detail his 15-day journey undertaken in May, 1835 from Poquetanuck to Norwalk: He left via sloop for Albany, then traveled along the Erie Canal, and completed the last leg of the trip by steamer on Lake Erie. In his verse and short sermons he lays out his strong Universalist beliefs and philosophy of life. He died happy at the age of 93 in December, 1835, just a few weeks after his arrival in Norwalk.

A few extracts from the letter, together with a sample of his verse, follows:

1. Narrative letter. ALS. Small quarto. 2pp. Norwalk, October 14th, 1835. Addressed to John Harkness at Preston, Connecticut:

“My good friend, having an opportunity to give you some account of my journey to this place, I gladly embrace it. It is a beautiful country suitable for farming, a rich soil ... We have an academy of learning for young gentlemen with 108 scholars and another for young ladies with 98 female scholars ... We left Poquetanuck the 11 day of May & arrived at my Grandson Moses Kimball’s the 25 of May. We went in a sloop ... to Albany, there I saw great improvements ... They have made an Island in the river half a mile long ... forming a basin between that & the main land with draw bridges at each end. There we left the sloop and entered on board a canal boat and past on our way drawn by horses day and night. Thus we past on up to Little Falls ... and so on to Fort Stanwix ... there at the height of land we left the Mohawk River and past a flat level country for 60 or 70 miles without a lock. The country all low and intersected with drowned land ... and all along this wet country where the land rose a little ... there would be some inhabitants settled with a bridge or two over the canal ... when we got to Lake Erie at Buffalo, we left the canal boat and got into a steam boat, the largest vessel that I ever saw ... this boat that cost thirty-five thousand dollars my grandson Moses owns one-tenth part ... When we came over the lake ... there were seven hundred passengers in her ... So you see it is no wonder she earns money ...”

2. Miscellaneous Verses and Short Sermons, 1834-35:

10 octavo sheets/about 20 holograph pages, including one page with pen & ink illustrations. The following is quoted from a poem written by Kimball on his ninety-third birthday, "May 17, A.D. 1834":

*This day my years are Ninety-three
The time is past & gone from me
Brought into being here to stay
To wait for time to pass away*

...

*And when my earthly body dies
To God my spirit will arise
And live with him and there remain
Till Souls to bodies join again ...*

A compelling and historically important small archive of writings that also serve as a testament to Kimball's remarkable physical health and mental acuity.

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