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## Route Traveled by Lehi and His Company

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**Abstract:** All American editions of the Book of Mormon after 1882 contain a notation, written possibly by Frederick G. Williams, which identifies the location of the landing place of Lehi's company. It is not properly verified as to authenticity and should be avoided.

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It must be remembered that geography as a science, like chronology and other branches of education, was not understood nor taught after the manner or by the methods of the moderns. It could not be amongst those peoples who were not acquainted with the size and form of the earth, as was the case with most of the nations of antiquity, though not with the Nephites. Their seers and prophets appear to have received divine light on this subject.

The First Presidency have often been asked to prepare some suggestive map illustrative of Nephite geography, but have never consented to do so. Nor are we acquainted with any of the Twelve Apostles who would undertake such a task. The reason is, that without further information they are not prepared even to suggest. The word of the Lord or the translation of other ancient records is required to clear up many points now so obscure that, as we have said, no two original investigators agree with regard to them. When, as is the case, one student places a certain city at the Isthmus of Panama, a second in Venezuela, and a third in Guiana or northern Brazil, it is obvious that suggestive maps prepared by these brethren would confuse instead of enlighten; and they cannot be thus far apart in this one important point without relative positions being also widely separate.

For these reasons we have strong objections to the introduction of maps and their circulation among our people which profess to give the location of the Nephite cities and settlements. As we have said, they have a tendency to mislead, instead of enlighten, and they give rise to discussions which will lead to division of sentiment and be very unprofitable. We see no necessity for maps of the character, because, at least, much would be left to the imagination of those who prepare them; and we hope that there will be no attempt made to introduce them or give them general circulation. Of course, there can be no harm result from the study of the geography of this continent at the time it was settled by the Nephites, drawing all the information possible from the record which has been translated for our benefit. But beyond this we do not think it necessary, at the present time, to go, because it is plain to be seen, we think, that evils may result therefrom.

#### ROUTE TRAVELED BY LEHI AND HIS COMPANY

The *Compendium*, a little book by Franklin D. Richards and James A. Little, was originally published in England, 1857. This edition makes no reference to the route fol-

lowed by Lehi and his company. All American editions, however, beginning with 1882, contain the following:

"*Lehi's Travels—Revelation to Joseph the Seer.* The course that Lehi and his company traveled from Jerusalem to the place of their destination:

"They traveled nearly a south, southeast direction until they came to the nineteenth degree of north latitude; then, nearly east to the Sea of Arabia, then sailed in a southeast direction, and landed on the continent of South America, in Chili, thirty degrees south latitude."

This statement has gained wide acceptance throughout the Church, and has even been copied by various writers. Its authenticity, however, is subject to grave doubt, as witness the following:

The only known source of authority upon which it rests is a single sheet of manuscript presented to the Church Historian's office, in 1864, by Ezra G. Williams, son of Frederick G. Williams, at one time counselor to Joseph Smith in the First Presidency. On one page of the manuscript are some supposedly Book of Mormon characters, and on the other a faulty copy of the revelation printed as section seven of the Doctrine and Covenants, together with the statement that appears in the *Compendium*, with the exception that it lays no claim to being a revelation, neither does it mention the name of the Prophet as its author. Thus the following caption, as it appears in the *Compendium*, "*Lehi's Travels—Revelation to Joseph the Seer*," is not present in the original manuscript.

In summary, the most that can be said with certainty of the manuscript statement is that it bears good evidence of having been written by the hand of Frederick G. Williams. He himself, however, gives no indication of the identity of its author; neither does he claim it to be of divine origin.

The Church has issued no information concerning the route followed by Lehi and his company. Until this is done, teachers of the Gospel Doctrine department should refrain from expressing definite opinions.

FREDERICK J. PACK.

Chairman Gospel Doctrine Committee.

(Note. The present associate editor of *The Instructor* was one day in the office of the late President Joseph F. Smith when some brethren were asking him to approve a map showing the exact landing place of Lehi and his company. President Smith declined to officially approve of the map, saying that the Lord had not yet revealed it, and that if it were officially approved and afterwards found to be in error, it would affect the faith of the people.—*Asst. Editor.*)