

LINCOLN LORE

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TWO NOTABLE OCTOGENARIAN LINCOLN AUTHORS

A letter dated May 20, 1949, and its enclosure has just reached the desk of the editor of this bulletin and the contents have caused him to immediately lay aside the current number of Lincoln Lore, already prepared, and replace it with this deserving although totally inadequate tribute to two octogenarian Lincoln authors, F. Lauriston Bullard and Rufus Rockwell Wilson.

A copy of a paragraph from the contents of Mr. Wilson's letter, mentioned above, follows:

"My doctors advise me that I must go under reduced pressure for the rest of my days and it is therefore probably that the first volume of *Letters to Lincoln* will not be ready for distribution before the first weeks of 1950."

The enclosure attached to the letter was a preliminary advertisement of volume one, *Letters to Lincoln*, with the information that the introduction is by F. Lauriston Bullard. Here is the announcement of a book whose author is 84 years old and the writer of the introduction is 83 years old. Apparently these two men refuse to become either drones or dotards.

The elder of the two men, Mr. Wilson, was born just one month to the day before Abraham Lincoln's death so in reality he is a contemporary of the President. Mr. Bullard missed by less than one year having been born while the President lived.

Mr. Wilson is better known to the fraternity, primarily, as an editor and compiler and as such is a most voluminous and worthy contributor to *Lincolniana*. On the other hand, Mr. Bullard is a composer and his many years as chief editorial writer on the *Boston Herald* admirably prepared him for this role. He is still gaining distinction for his outstanding monographs on important phases of the Lincoln story.

Both of these authors tried their hand at writing Lincoln books more than a quarter of a century ago. Mr. Wilson brought out *Lincoln in Caricature* in 1903 and twelve years later Mr. Bullard published his *Tad and His Father*. During the thirties Mr. Wilson produced *What Lincoln Read* and *Lincoln in Portraiture*, while Mr. Bullard contributed some significant articles to important magazines.

The most remarkable accomplishment achieved by these two unusual and energetic octogenarians is that the bulk of their productions have been created as they approached or passed the age of eighty. Mr. Bullard's *A Few Appropriate Remarks* was printed when he was 78, followed at 79 by *The Diary of a Public Man* and the

year he became 80 *Abraham Lincoln and the Widow Bixby* was produced. Mr. Bullard's more notable monographs in the form of editorials and magazine articles are still appearing as he passes the 84th anniversary of his birth.

As a Pulitzer prize winner in the editorial field it was not surprising to find each February 12 an outstanding Lincoln editorial by Mr. Bullard appearing in the *Boston Herald*. Twice during the past seven years his editorials have won first place, and once second place, in the nation-wide competition for the most timely Lincoln editorial appearing in American newspapers on February 12. These have all been written since he was 77 years old. During the same period his Lincoln magazine contributions have always been strong contenders for first honors in competition among outstanding historians of the nation. In 1941 he was awarded a diploma of honor by Lincoln Memorial University for "distinguished contributions to the study of Abraham Lincoln." For many years he has been an active and helpful member of the Advisory Group of the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

Mr. Wilson did not begin his intensive Lincoln publishing plans until he was 77 years old when he brought out *Lincoln Among His Friends*. The Ross reprint came two years later and at 80 years of age came *Intimate Memories of Lincoln*; the first of the three books contained 506 pages and the latter 629 pages. As if one book of 629 pages was not enough to celebrate his eightieth birth year he brought out in 1945 a second book of 309 pages. It carried the same title as his first Lincoln venture published 42 years before, *Lincoln in Caricature*, although the

latter book was a greatly enlarged compilation and fully annotated.

The climax of all of Mr. Wilson's publishing efforts, thus far, was the appearance in 1947 of the first volume of his *Uncollected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 655 pages, which is the first of a series of volumes which include all the writings of Abraham Lincoln not appearing in the Nicolay & Hay Works, and now when he has reached the age of eighty-four he has brought out this year the second volume in this series. It is a book of 693 pages.

The enclosure in the letter received from Mr. Wilson just this past week, noting the title *Letters to Lincoln* with introduction by Mr. Bullard, is volume one of a series. It is indeed a tribute to the industry of a man eighty-four years old who not only has before him several volumes on one Lincoln subject, to start another series of equally important compilations. It is also commendable and timely that our two octogenarian Lincoln authors are collaborating in this most recently announced publication.

It is too late! Ah, nothing is too late
Till the tired heart shall cease to palpitate.
Cato learned Greek at eighty; Sophocles
Wrote his grand Oedipus, and Simonides
Bore off the prize of verse from his compeers,
When each had numbered more than fourscore years,
And Theophrastus, at fourscore and ten,
Had but begun his Characters of Men.
Chaucer, at Woodstock with the nightingales,
At sixty wrote the Canterbury Tales;
Goethe at Weimar, toiling to the last,
Completed Faust when eighty years were past.
These are indeed exceptions; but they show
How far the gulf-stream of our youth may flow . . .
For age is opportunity no less
Than youth itself, though in another dress,
And as the evening twilight fades away
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.

"Poem for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Class of 1825 in Bowdoin College" by Longfellow.