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LINCOLN BIBLIOGRAPHERS

With the passing away of Joseph Benjamin Oakleaf on Monday, June 2, the fellowship of Lincoln admirers lost the dean of its bibliographers. For several years he was the only one, surviving, of the original "Big Five" collectors of Lincolniana. The other members of this group were William H. Lambert, Judd Stewart, Charles W. McLellan, and Daniel Fish.

While Mr. Oakleaf's collection of Lincoln items was one of the really great libraries on this subject in America, he will be remembered especially for his contribution to Lincoln bibliography. This number of *Lincoln Lore* is dedicated to the laborious efforts which he and his predecessors put forth in this field.

William V. Spencer

The president had been dead less than five months when the first Lincoln bibliography appeared under the caption "Lincolniana."

This compilation, by William V. Spencer, contained thirty-eight discourses and comments on the life and character of Abraham Lincoln which had not up to that time been published in pamphlet or book form.

The preface, dated in Boston, September 9, 1865, presents in the opening sentence a sentiment that might be called the criterion of the Lincoln collector, "Whatever relates to our Martyr-President possesses undying interest." This work of 346 pages contains, besides the discourses, an Appendix with 228 abbreviated titles of Lincoln items which were then in the author's library. This list served as a basis for all subsequent bibliographies.

John Russell Bartlett

In 1886, John Russell Bartlett published a stupendous bibliography, "The literature of the rebellion", containing 6,073 items besides the 300 sermons, orations, and poems on Abraham Lincoln. One section gives the "Proceedings of cities, towns, and public bodies on the occasion of the death of Abraham Lincoln." And still another section lists a large number of miscellaneous Lincoln items.

These two early compilations, published so soon after the assassination of Lincoln, were largely responsible for conserving the titles of a great number of publications about Abraham Lincoln which came from the press at that time.

Charles H. Hart

The first approach to the task of listing Lincoln books with complete and adequate description of each book was made some time before 1870 by Charles H. Hart. Besides printing the titles in full, wherever it was possible he noted the number of copies published in each edition, and in the sermonic literature copies of the text used by the minister.

His efforts were, however, restricted to "A catalogue of all sermons, eulogies, etc.", delivered at the time of Lincoln's death. His list contained 400 titles. Publication of Mr. Hart's work was made possible by Andrew Boyd who supplemented the Hart list with a compilation of an equal number of titles from his own collection.

Andrew Boyd

Mr. Boyd, in the last paragraph of the preface of his book published in 1870, makes this statement: "Mr. Charles H. Hart at one time contemplated issuing a bibliography of books published on the occasion of Mr. Lincoln's death and had taken pains to give the text and number of copies printed. Upon learning his willingness to transfer this information to me, I threw out such titles in my list as he mentioned in his and gave them a place in my book."

To this large compilation by Mr. Hart and his own supplemental list of 400 titles Mr. Boyd added a list of 250 portraits and engravings made prior to 1870, about 50 caricature prints, over 100 medals, and brief sketches of the monuments which had been erected to Lincoln. This was the first comprehensive bibliography.

George Thomas Richie

"A list of Lincolniana in the Library of Congress" compiled by an assistant in the catalogue division, Mr. George Thomas Richie appeared in 1903. In the preface of his work Mr. Richie says, "The list is mainly an inventory of books and pamphlets on Abraham Lincoln as they stand on the shelves in the biographical section of the library." The author further observes that the work is intended to serve as an inventory or check list.

Three years later a revised edition of this work was published with a supplement which added about 125 new titles.

William H. Smith, Jr.

A priced Lincoln bibliography was introduced in the year 1906 by William H. Smith, Jr., who attempted not only to give the number of copies published under each title, but the prices at which they had been sold.

Mr. Smith informed the reader that "The prices here given are actual prices fetched at auction, by far the larger part of them during the past year."

Daniel Fish

The year 1906 seems to have offered some special inducement to Lincoln bibliographers. Not only were the Richie and Smith publications released that year, but Daniel Fish also brought out his revised publication. In the year 1900 Mr. Fish published his first bibliography which he called "Lincoln Literature". It was the first successful attempt to deal exclusively with books and pamphlets relating to Lincoln. In the preface of this work he states that "It embraces only such of those as pertain wholly or chiefly to the man, his acts and utterances, his character and services, his life and death".

It was at the invitation of the Francis B. Tandy Company that he prepared a revised and enlarged catalogue of his 1900 edition. This last attempt of Mr. Fish gave to Lincoln collectors the first numbered Lincoln bibliography which contained 1,080 items. This publication at that time was the most complete of any that had been issued, and has taken its place as the standard bibliography of early Lincolniana.

Joseph Benjamin Oakleaf

For nearly twenty years after the Daniel Fish bibliography was published there was no book available to collectors, librarians, and book dealers who desired lists of Lincoln literature which was appearing from time to time. It was Mr. Oakleaf who set about the laborious task of listing the great number of new Lincoln titles which had appeared during the centennial year 1909 and the years following. In 1925 a bibliography was published by Mr. Oakleaf which followed the same general plan of the Fish publication and served as a very worthy supplement to the earlier book. The efforts put forth by Mr. Oakleaf resulted in his discovering 1,576 items not appearing in the former work.

Mr. Oakleaf had a far more difficult task than any of his predecessors, due to the greater number of titles to record and the added responsibility of not duplicating the Fish items. As long as men collect literature about Abraham Lincoln they will be under deep obligation to Joseph Benjamin Oakleaf.