

# LINCOLN LORE

No. 89

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

December 22, 1930

## LINCOLN LORE

BULLETIN OF  
THE LINCOLN  
HISTORICAL  
RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION



ENDOWED BY  
THE LINCOLN  
NATIONAL LIFE  
INSURANCE  
COMPANY

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### NECROLOGY

The year 1830 was designated by Lincoln's contemporaries in the Sangamon country as the winter of deep snow. The centennial occurrence of this anniversary will be remembered by students as the year of deep sorrow.

During the year 1930 four figures who have stood foremost in the ranks of Lincoln biographers and collectors have been quietly withdrawn by the sceptre which halts the pen and silences the voice.

Joseph Benjamin Oakleaf, Jesse William Weik, Osborn Hamiline Oldroyd, and William Eleazar Barton have contributed as much within their scope of interest as any four men who have worked in their respective fields. All were born while Lincoln lived and all have passed away during the past year.

It is altogether fitting that this number of Lincoln Lore be dedicated to the memory of these noted men who contributed so much to our understanding of the Emancipator.

#### *Joseph Benjamin Oakleaf*

J. B. Oakleaf was born at Moline, Illinois, on October 1, 1858; his parents, Benjamin P. and Mary Oakleaf having come from Sweden to Moline in 1854. The family moved to Kansas in 1869 where young Oakleaf after a public school education entered the mercantile business.

In 1877 he completed a business course in Ballies Commercial College at Keokuk, Iowa, and then returned to Moline. Here he studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1886. That year he became interested in the Life of Lincoln by Nicholay and Hay, appearing in serial form in the Century magazine and began to collect other items about Lincoln.

Mr. Oakleaf was best known in the field of Lincolniana as a bibliographer. The publication of his massive volume in 1925 confirmed his reputation as the authority on current Lincoln literature. At the time of his death he was at work on an enlarged edition of "Lincoln, a Bibliography."

Aside from his bibliography, Mr. Oakleaf published but few other items about the Emancipator. He was primarily not an author but a compiler.

He was also known as a collector of Lincolniana and was the last surviving member of what was known as the "Big Five" group. It consisted of

Daniel Fish, William H. Lambert, Charles W. McLellan, Judd Stewart, and the subject of this sketch. Mr. Oakleaf, by reason of the great number of additions to Lincolniana during the past few years, had been able to acquire a greater number of titles than his former associates had brought together.

On June 2, 1930, Mr. Oakleaf went to his office as usual and was stricken while conferring with his son who was associated with him as a legal partner.

#### *Jesse M. Weik*

The birthday of Jesse M. Weik was August 23, 1867. He was born in Greencastle, Indiana, where he lived most of his life. He graduated from DePauw University in 1875. For several years he was located at Springfield, Illinois, as special pension examiner.

While at Springfield he made the acquaintance of William H. Herndon and it was this contact that was responsible for his interest in Abraham Lincoln.

He collaborated with Mr. Herndon in the publishing of the latter's famous "Lincoln" and it appeared as a production of the co-authors, Herndon and Weik. In 1922 he published a book entitled: "The Real Lincoln," which discussed some of the disputed questions in Lincoln history. He was also the author of "The History of the Republican Party" and "A History of Putnam County."

Mr. Weik is more likely to be remembered, however, as a collector of source material on the life of Abraham Lincoln. Upon the death of Mr. Herndon the manuscripts of Lincoln's law partner came into his hands. He continued to add to this valuable compilation of Lincoln documents until the Weik archives became known as the outstanding collection of Lincoln manuscripts in America.

The death of Mr. Weik occurred at Larchmont, New York, on August 17, 1931, after an illness of several months.

#### *Osborne H. Oldroyd*

The dean of Lincoln collectors, Osborne H. Oldroyd was born near Mt. Vernon, Ohio, on July 31, 1842. The first seven years of his life were spent in Wayne county, Ohio, and later he attended the common schools of Knox county.

He opened a news-stand in Mt. Vernon in 1860. In a bundle of newspapers he found a Lincoln biography known as the Wigwam edition, a Republican Campaign Handbook of 1860.

This book was the nucleus around which he built his wonderful Lincoln collection.

Oldroyd enlisted in the Civil War in 1861 and served continuously until 1865, when he was honorably discharged with the rank of captain.

In 1883 he took up his residence in the Lincoln Homestead in Springfield, Illinois, which was at that time unoc-

cupied and began a very intensive search after Lincoln items. In 1887 he induced Robert T. Lincoln to present the Lincoln Homestead to the state of Illinois. Mr. Oldroyd was appointed as custodian and remained there until 1893 when he removed his collections of Lincolniana to Washington, D. C., at the request of the Memorial Association of the District of Columbia.

The climax of Mr. Oldroyd's ambition as a collector of Lincoln items was attained when the United States government purchased the collection which he had been exhibiting so many years in the house where Lincoln died. The deal was closed on August 30, 1926, the appropriation for its purchase amounting to \$50,000. This transaction was made on August 30, 1926.

Mr. Oldroyd was the author of many Lincoln books and pamphlets which have had wide circulation.

The death of Mr. Oldroyd occurred at Washington on the night of October 8, 1930, due to the infirmities of old age.

#### *Dr. W. E. Barton*

The son of a country physician, Dr. Barton was born in Sublette, Illinois, June 28, 1861. In 1888 he received his master's degree from Berea College, Kentucky, and two years later graduated from the Oberlin Theological Seminary. His outstanding ministry was with the Oak Park (Ill.) Congregational Church which he served for 25 years.

Dr. Barton's early writings were of a religious nature and his parables written under the title of *Safed the Sage* were read widely.

Regardless of the important place he occupied in the history of the congregational brotherhood by whom he was often honored with important offices, his contributions to Lincolniana will more likely cause his name to be remembered.

His first Lincoln book, "The Soul of Abraham Lincoln" came from the press in 1918, and it served as a transition theme from the field of theology to the field of biography. After this his works on Lincoln appeared periodically up until the time of his death.

His two volume life of Lincoln has taken its place alongside the foremost biographies of the Emancipator, although it was his Lincoln monographs and magazine contributions on subjects of human interest which contributed most to his fame.

He was often heard on the lecture platform and was a pleasing speaker. During the past few years he had assembled a large collection of Lincolniana which was featured by many of the original books from Lincoln's personal library.

Dr. Barton died of pneumonia in New York, December 7, 1930, after an illness of about two months.