

# LINCOLN LORE

No. 116

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

June 29, 1931

## LINCOLN LORE

BULLETIN OF  
THE LINCOLN  
HISTORICAL  
RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION



ENDOWED BY  
THE LINCOLN  
NATIONAL LIFE  
INSURANCE  
COMPANY

Dr. Louis A. Warren - - - Editor

### THE FIRST HESLER PORTRAIT

In the year 1857 Lincoln wrote on his birthday to Steele & Summers, attorneys of Paris, Illinois, that he was "going to Chicago, on the 21st Inst."



THE AWAKENED LINCOLN  
From a photograph by Alexander  
Hesler, taken at Chicago in Febru-  
ary, 1857. Moore No. 6.

"Awakened Lincoln." He had been "aroused as never before" by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and a new enthusiasm had been kindled within him which broke forth in masterful oratory.

The week in Chicago was concluded with an address by Lincoln at a Republican rally held in Metropolitan Hall. At this meeting it is said that "the utmost enthusiasm prevailed."

A few weeks after this meeting he received a letter from Charles D. Gillfillan of Minnesota, who had invited him to visit the territory for a series of addresses. He replied that he had "devoted the most of last year to politics," and it would be necessary to devote this year to his private affairs. The Illinois Central Railroad case and the Armstrong murder trial followed close on the heels of this resolution. The new enthusiasms with which Lincoln had approached politics also found expression in his legal practice.

It is doubtful if any Lincoln portrait has been the subject of so much controversy as the first Hesler print.

On my desk as I write are at least six copies of the original Hesler, all slightly different, due to retouching, but none of them having characteristics which would suggest that they were copies of untouched photographs taken from life.

In 1919 Daniel Fish came across a copy of what was supposed to be an original, and in correspondence with Robert Lincoln, learned that he too had the same likeness of his father on tintype.

The Fish portrait was said to have been given by Mrs. Lincoln to Mrs. Emmeline Fancher Price with the statement that it was taken from life sometime in 1855.

The letter written by Robert Lincoln to Mr. Fish about the tintype in his possession contains the following paragraph:

"I found in my files a letter dated Princeton, Illinois, July 29, 1885, from Mrs. A. H. Paddock, with which she kindly sent me a tintype of my father taken on July 4th, 1856, at Princeton, when my father was a guest at their house at a celebration of that day. She says that her husband prevailed upon my father to sit for this picture for her husband, and that she has preserved it ever since; that the day was exceedingly hot, but with wilted linen and hair wet with perspiration, which he combed with his fingers, Mr. Lincoln good-naturedly consented to sit."

This Princeton photograph as it is called has caused much confusion as many other copies have been distributed. A statement with one of these copies relates that the photograph was taken by the "father of W. R. Masters, a Princeton, Illinois, photographer on July 4, 1856."

The confusion in the identity of the Fish and Robert Lincoln copies caused Mr. Fish to write to H. W. Fay, then of DeKalb, Illinois; the reply dated December 7, 1919, was as follows:

"I knew Hesler well and from him I got a lot of inside history of Lincoln pictures. . . . Hesler's story is as follows: He told it to me time and again, and I had him write it out. In 1857 a Chicago lawyer visited Hesler's studio and said that the boys about

the court house wanted pictures of Lincoln and the attorney wanted to know that if Lincoln came in if Hesler would make a sitting and allow his friends to buy prints. Hesler consented and the negative was made. Hesler says in his statement now before me, 'His hair was plastered down smooth over his forehead. In conversing and studying his face I found it very interesting. I ran my fingers through his hair and made the negative.'"

Lincoln remarked that he did not know why the boys wanted such a homely face.

Joseph Medill claims to have been with Lincoln on the occasion of the taking of this picture, and he gives a slightly different story about the appearance of Lincoln's hair. He says that the photographer insisted on smoothing down Lincoln's hair, but that he (Lincoln) did not like the result and ran his fingers through it before the photograph was taken.

It is said also that after this picture became quite generally distributed during the campaign of 1860, Lincoln heard a boy on the street crying out, "Picture of Abraham Lincoln—twenty-five cents! Will look better when he gets his hair cut!"

The Lincoln Historical Research Foundation is fortunate in possessing a print made from the original negative by Hesler and purchased from Hesler by J. H. Dille, who was chosen to paint a campaign banner containing the likenesses of Lincoln, Hamilton, and Lane. This painting now hangs in the Court House at Goshen, Indiana. The Hesler portrait was the one from which Dille copied his Lincoln portrait. The original print used by Dille was recently secured from his son, Ralph Dille.

The awakened Lincoln is the Lincoln who has already delivered the anti-Nebraska speech at Springfield, the Missouri Compromise speech at Peoria, the Lost Speech at Bloomington, and the Dred Scott speech at Springfield.

It is the Lincoln who defended Duff Armstrong and was retained by the Illinois Central Railroad and the McCormick Reaper interests in two suits that have gone down in history.

It is the Lincoln who is now awake to both the legal and political possibilities awaiting him.