

# LINCOLN LORE

No. 119

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

July 20, 1931

## LINCOLN LORE

BULLETIN OF  
THE LINCOLN  
HISTORICAL  
RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION



ENDOWED BY  
THE LINCOLN  
NATIONAL LIFE  
INSURANCE  
COMPANY

Dr. Louis A. Warren - - - Editor

### THE LINCOLN OF THE DEBATES

No period of Lincoln's life brought him before so many large and enthusiastic groups as the late summer and early fall of 1858 when he debated with Douglas. It is the Lincoln of the debates who was remembered by the people of the West.



THE CONTROVERSIAL  
LINCOLN

From a photograph made by  
S. M. Fasset, Taken at Chicago,  
Ill., in 1858, Moserve No. 8.

and it is evident that both Lincoln and Douglas were much photographed during this period.

Of all these attempts to produce a satisfactory picture of the president, Mrs. Lincoln at least thought a Chicago photographer was the most successful. Several authorities quote her as saying that it was the best likeness she had ever seen of her husband.

It is this photograph taken at Chicago that has been chosen to represent Lincoln, the debator, although the data about it does not appear to be as reliable as that concerning some of the other pictures of this period.

In the first place it is not known definitely whether the sitting occurred just before, during, or after the debates. There has also been some question as to the identity of the Chicago photographer who took the picture.

After studying some of the other portraits which can be placed at fixed

periods during the year 1858, it appears that this one was taken just previous to the contest.

Lincoln was in Chicago several times during the year, arriving there first as early as February 18. Nothing happened at this time, however, which would seem to offer an incentive for picture taking, and his visit was undoubtedly very brief.

On Friday, July 9, Stephen A. Douglas addressed a large crowd at Chicago, speaking from the balcony of the Fremont Hotel. Lincoln was in the city attending court and sat near-by the speaker. It was estimated that about 25,000 people heard Douglas and after his address there were many calls for Lincoln to answer him.

The evening following, Lincoln replied to Douglas from the same balcony, and the Chicago Press says that while the audience was not as large the enthusiasm was about four times as great.

After returning from Chicago Lincoln wrote to Gustave Koerner and gave him his reaction towards the Douglas meeting. The letter in part follows:

Springfield, July 15, 1858.

Hon. G. Koerner:

... I have just returned from Chicago. Douglas took nothing by his motion there—in fact, by his rampant endorsement of the Dred Scott decision he drove back a few Republicans who were favorably inclined towards him. His tactic just now, in part is, to make it appear that he is having a triumphal entry into, and march through the country; but it is all as bombastic and hollow as Napoleon's bulletins sent back from his campaign in Russia. I was present at his reception in Chicago, and it was certainly very large and imposing; but judging from the opinions of others better acquainted with faces there, and by the strong call for me to speak, when he closed, I really believe we could have voted him down in that very crowd.

Our meeting, twenty-four hours after, called only twelve hours before it came together and got up without trumpetry, was really as large and five times as enthusiastic.

I write this for your private eye, to

assure you that there is no solid shot in these bombastic parades of his.

Yours very truly,

A. Lincoln

The importance of Lincoln's speech and the enthusiasm with which it was greeted would certainly cause a demand on Lincoln for his portrait. The fact that he remained in the city for three or four days following the speech would leave ample time for an appointment with the photographer and it was probably at this time that there was made the most famous of the pictures of Lincoln as a debator.

While it would appear that the picture was taken some time between July 9 and July 14, Lincoln was back in Chicago again on July 24. On this visit he challenged Douglas to a series of debates and there is a vague possibility that the sitting with the photographer was not arranged until this time. That the photograph was directly associated with the events which led to the series of debates is most likely correct.

It has been the general opinion that this famous photograph was taken by Hesler, but later investigation seems to support the claim that it was the work of Fasset.

The Lincoln Historical Research Foundation has in its collection one of the prints from the original negative which supports the Fasset origin. It recently acquired this photograph along with an original copy of the first Hesler photograph from a man whose father purchased the prints in Chicago in 1860, from the two Chicago photographers.

On the back of this Fasset print, evidently written by the purchaser, is the name Cook and Fasset, Chicago. Ida M. Tarbell, in her book on the early life of Abraham Lincoln, says that this photograph was made by S. M. Fasset of Chicago at the solicitation of D. B. Cook.

No less than ten pictures of Lincoln are now available which were taken in the year 1858 and closely associated with the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Photographers at Beardstown, Macomb, Monmouth, Pittsfield and Springfield had the distinguished debator in their studios but none of their attempts to present a likeness of Lincoln seem to have met with as much favor as the one by Fasset of Chicago.