

LINCOLN LORE

No. 121

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

August 3, 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 BRADY PORTRAIT

During the month of October, 1859, at the suggestion of Joseph H. Richards, J. M. Pettingill and S. W. Tubbs, James A. Briggs wrote to Abraham Lincoln requesting him to deliver a lecture in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn.



THE ELOQUENT LINCOLN

From a photograph by Matthew Brady. Taken at New York, February 27, 1860. Meserve No. 19.

After some correspondence as to an available date, Mr. Lincoln wrote to Mr. Briggs on November 13, 1859, that he would "be on hand" and would notify him of the exact date "in due time." He had also decided that he would make "a political speech of it."

The evening of February 27 was generally agreed upon and when Lincoln arrived in New York he was taken by the reception committee to the photographer, Matthew Brady, where the Cooper Institute portraits were made.

It is evident that other New York photographers were anxious for a sitting as we find Lincoln writing to Beers and Mansfield on March 14, after he had returned to Springfield, as follows:

Springfield, Illinois,

March 14, 1860.

Mess. Beers and Mansfield:

Your request to take a photographic likeness of me, while in your city, was duly received; but at a time when my arrangements were so made that I could not call upon you before leaving. I would have written sooner,

but the matter passed out of my mind; and is now recalled by the sight of your note. I beg you will believe me guilty of no intentional disrespect.

Very respectfully,

A. Lincoln.

While Lincoln may not have placed much significance on the taking of his photograph by Brady, it was the first of many famous sittings before this photographer and served as an introduction to him.

It occurred to the editor of Lincoln Lore that he might get first hand information as to how Lincoln looked on the day the portrait was taken as there resides in Fort Wayne one who was present at Cooper Institute on that day. I was not surprised when I called the park commissioner's office at City Hall, that the chairman of the commission, Col. D. N. Foster, was at his desk, although the temperature at the time registered over a hundred degrees and the Colonel is only ten years less than a hundred years old.

I said, "Give me a sentence on Lincoln's appearance with reference to his dress on the evening you heard him at Cooper Institute."

He said: "I would say that his clothes were cut somewhat in contrast to the prevailing style in New York and hung on him rather loosely."

This description is in agreement with that of the late George Haven Putnam, whose father had secured a seat for him on the platform. He said that "on the long, ungainly figure hung clothes that while new for the trip were evidently the work of an unskilled tailor."

It would appear that the tailors who made Lincoln's clothes should bear part of the responsibility for the garments which "seemed to hang on him," although it must be admitted that his form was difficult to fit.

It is very doubtful if Lincoln realized the significance of the Cooper Institute address as is revealed in a letter written to his wife from Exeter, New Hampshire, on March 4th, where he had gone to visit his son, immediately after the ceremonies at New York.

"I have been unable to escape this toil. If I had foreseen it, I think I would not have come East at all. The speech at New York, being within my calculation before I started, went off passably well and gave me no trouble whatever. The difficulty was to make nine others, before audiences who had already seen all my ideas in print."

Lincoln's troubles over the Cooper Institute address did not cease with

his arrival home and he wrote not only a letter of apology to a photographer in New York, he had not been able to accommodate; but he had to answer the charge of receiving money for a lecture, which was a great offense as viewed by one man in the audience that evening, who learned that Lincoln had been paid for the address.

The opposition newspapers took occasion to feature this fact and by this time Lincoln must have been convinced that his Cooper Institute experience was a bad move. His state of mind is displayed in the following excerpt from a letter written to C. F. McNeil.

Springfield, April 6, 1860.

C. F. McNeil

Dear Sir:

Reaching home yesterday, I found yours of the 23rd March, inclosing a slip from "The Middleport Press." It is not true that I ever charged anything for a political speech in my life; but this much is true: Last October, I was requested by letter to deliver some sort of a speech in Mr. Beecher's church, in Brooklyn—two hundred dollars being offered in the first letter. I wrote that I could do it in February, provided they would take a political speech if I could find time to get up no other. They agreed; and subsequently I informed them the speech would have to be a political one. When I reached New York, I for the first time learned that the place was changed to "Cooper Institute."

I made the speech and left for New Hampshire, where I have a son at school, neither asking for pay, nor having any offered me. Three days after a check for two hundred dollars was sent to me at New Hampshire; and I took it, and did not know it was wrong. My understanding now is—though I knew nothing of it at the time—that they did charge for admittance to the Cooper Institute, and that they took in more than twice two hundred dollars....

A. Lincoln.

It has been said that Lincoln remarked on several occasions that it was the Cooper Institute picture which made him president. Regardless of what part the picture may have played in his election the address was undoubtedly a tremendous factor in both his nomination and election.