

LINCOLN LORE

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STEPS THAT LED TO THE PROCLAMATION OF EMANCIPATION

New Year's Day, one thousand nine hundred and thirty-three, marked the seventeenth anniversary of the signing of the Proclamation of Emancipation. It seems timely to review in this issue of *Lincoln Lore* some of the most important steps which led to the consummation of this important document.

1861

May 25—General Butler pronounced the opinion that slaves should be treated as contraband of war.

May 30—Secretary Cameron affirmed the position taken by General Butler by authorizing him to "refrain from surrendering to alleged masters any persons who may come within your lines."

August 6—Congress passed an act authorizing President Lincoln to confiscate property used for insurrectionary purposes.

August 30—General Fremont proclaimed military emancipation in the state of Missouri, announcing that the slaves of all men who take up arms against the United States "are hereby declared free men."

September 11—Lincoln issued an order modifying the clause in the proclamation referring to the liberation of slaves.

November—Lincoln wrote with his own hand two separate bills, one of which he hoped would be adopted by the Legislature of Delaware. They provided for the gradual emancipation of slaves in the state through government compensation. The bills were never brought before the legislature.

December 3—In his annual message to Congress, Lincoln may have indicated for the first time in a public message his purpose to adopt some program of emancipation. He said, in discussing the act to confiscate property: "The Union must be preserved; and hence, all indispensable means must be employed."

1862

March 6—Lincoln sent a special message to the Senate and House of Representatives, recommending that the government ought to co-operate through a system of compensation with any state adopting "gradual emancipation," stating that it was to be preferred to "sudden emancipation." He repeats again in this message the statement, "The Union must be preserved; and hence, all indispensable means must be employed."

March 10—A conference was held at the White House with members of Congress from border slave states at which time the plan of compensated emancipation was discussed.

March 10—Both the House of Representatives and the Senate concurred

in Mr. Lincoln's recommendation encouraging gradual emancipation.

March 13—Congress passed an act prohibiting the use of government forces in returning fugitive slaves. This was in reality an amendment to the fugitive slave law.

April 3—The members of Congress passed an act for immediate emancipation of slaves in the District of Columbia with compensation to the owners.

April 16—Lincoln signed the act emancipating slaves in the District of Columbia, stating, "I am gratified that the two principles of compensation and colonization are both recognized and practically applied in the act."

May 9—General Hunter, commander of the department of the South, issued a military order declaring all persons in Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina "heretofore held as slaves are therefore declared forever free."

May 19—President Lincoln issued a proclamation making Hunter's order void and concludes that he alone must be responsible for issuing such orders in case it should "become a necessity indispensable to the maintenance of the government."

June 19—An act was approved by Congress "to secure freedom to all persons within the territories of the United States."

July 12—Border states delegation again urged to accept compensated emancipation but most of them replied with qualified refusal.

July 13—Lincoln is said to have first mentioned to members of his cabinet the emancipation of slaves by proclamation.

July 17—A new confiscation act affirmed that slaves of rebels captured or deserted by them or found in any place occupied by the Union arms should be deemed captives of war and forever free. This act also authorized the president to use negroes in the service of the army.

July 22—Lincoln read the first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet, but on the suggestion of Mr. Seward, in which the president concurred, it was laid aside for a more opportune time for pronouncement, preferably after some outstanding victory.

September 13—The president revealed to a Chicago delegation that he had had emancipation under consideration for months. He told them that "the subject is on my mind, by day and night, more than any other."

September 22—At the cabinet meeting on September 22 Lincoln referred to the reading of the first draft of the proclamation on July 22. According to Chase, Lincoln said, "Ever since then my mind has been much occupied with this subject, and I have thought, all

along, that the time for acting on it might probably come. I think the time has come now."

December 15—A resolution was adopted by the House of Representatives which heartily endorsed the proclamation of the president.

1863

January 1—The Proclamation of Emancipation which Abraham Lincoln had written with his own hand was signed by him on this day.

The introductory portion and the conclusion of the proclamation are herewith submitted:

A Proclamation

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to-wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any state, or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom."

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known that such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

Abraham Lincoln.

By the President: William H. Seward,
Secretary of State.