

LINCOLN LORE

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PHOTOGRAPHS OF LINCOLN AS PRESIDENT

Abraham Lincoln has been called a much photographed man, and, when one views a rather complete collection of original Lincoln portraits, it appears as if this conclusion must be true.

When one approaches a study of the presidential years he will observe that there was usually some occasion of current interest which caused Lincoln to have additional pictures made. It will be convenient to group the different sittings which were arranged for Mr. Lincoln in the successive years of his administrations as president.

While there is much difference of opinion as to when some of the pictures were taken and who actually took the pictures the following summary will at least give a working basis for studying the most important sittings arranged for Mr. Lincoln. Pictures taken on the battlefield, at public gatherings, and by itinerant photographers who visited the White House for the purpose of photographing the president are not included in this plan.

First Inaugural Sitting—Brady 1861

In Harper's Weekly for April 27, 1861, there appears a photograph of Abraham Lincoln by Brady (Meserve 69) with the accompanying inscription: "We publish herewith, from a photograph just taken expressly for this paper, a portrait of the President. It is the first accurate portrait that has been published of him since he began to grow a beard."

While some very good photographs were available at this time showing Lincoln with a beard, this portrait by Brady may have been the first one taken after Lincoln's inauguration. It is very natural that after his installation he would be urged to have a photograph taken, and he visited Brady's photograph gallery to satisfy the demand.

At least four other views also (Meserve 68, 70, 71, 72) were taken at this sitting and all of them show Lincoln seated in a chair with his position changed but slightly. His tall hat is on the table beside him.

War President Sitting—Brady 1861

The fact that no good portrait of President Lincoln standing was available may have been responsible for another visit to Brady's Studio possibly about the time martial law was declared on May 10, 1861, when a full-length portrait was taken (Meserve 38). The atmosphere of the former Lincoln photographs by Brady is evident in the other views taken at this time, especially in the three views of

Lincoln seated (Meserve 63, 64, 65). The same table is used and Lincoln's hat is visible upon it but he is facing in the opposite direction. Three close-up pictures of the President were also taken on this visit to the photographer (Meserve 62, 66, 67).

During Lincoln's first visit to Brady shortly after his inauguration the photographer changed his distinguished guest's position but little in the five views which he took, but on this second engagement he took much more liberty with the President and moved him about in several different positions and in one instance attempted to place Lincoln in a unique dramatic pose (Meserve 64).

First Emancipation Sitting—Brady 1862

A series of photographs which seem to have been taken late in 1862, probably suggested by the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, were evidently made in the Brady gallery. There are three views of Lincoln seated (Meserve 73, 74, 75), one three-quarter length (Meserve 76), and two bust in profiles (Meserve 77, 107).

Second Emancipation Sitting—Gardner 1863

While Brady was away at the front, Gardner, who was his associate, became Lincoln's photographer in Washington. The signing of the Emancipation Proclamation caused another urgent appeal for photographs of the President. January 24, 1863, has been named as the date on which this "Emancipation" series appointment was made.

It appears as if seven views of Lincoln, all seated, were taken at this time: two with his hands folded and a closed book on the table beside him (Meserve 49, 50); four with Lincoln holding a manuscript in one hand and one arm resting on a book on the table (Meserve 51, 52, 53, 54); and one in which Lincoln is leaning against the table with his right elbow resting on a closed book (Meserve 55).

Secretaries Sitting—Gardner 1863

On November 8, 1863, Lincoln was accompanied to Brady's gallery by his two secretaries, Nicolay and Hay, and they appear with him in a group picture (Meserve 56). There was one other view, a profile facing left, taken of Lincoln at this time (Meserve 61).

Gettysburg Sitting—Gardner 1863

Noah Brooks claims that he accompanied Lincoln to Gardner's Gallery on November 15, 1863, just four days before the Gettysburg Address was de-

livered and that Lincoln had Everett's speech with him at the time. Brooks calls attention to the fact that the manuscript can be observed lying on the table by Lincoln's side in the two photographs showing Lincoln seated by a table (Meserve 57, 58). One close up portrait, front view, (Meserve 59), (later copyrighted by Rice) and one with his head slightly turned (Meserve 60) were also taken.

Profile Sitting—Brady 1864

The four photographs taken of Lincoln in profile by Brady reveal a departure from Lincoln's usual custom of parting his hair on the left side of his head. The first pictures of him with his hair parted on the right side give evidence that his hair had been dampened to make it lie down. The first portraits recording this change are the four famous bust profiles of Lincoln by Brady (Meserve 81, 82, 83, 84).

Father and Son Sitting—Brady 1864

According to Robert Lincoln on one occasion Thomas or "Tad," Mr. Lincoln's youngest son, accompanied his father to the photograph gallery, and while Mr. Lincoln was showing "Tad" some of the pictures of noted people in the Brady album, they were asked to hold their positions until a photograph was made (Meserve 39, 40, 41).

At this sitting a portrait of Mr. Lincoln was taken which has become the most famous of all the Lincoln pictures (Meserve 85) and is known as "The Brady Lincoln."

Carpenter Sitting—Brady 1864

When Carpenter was beginning his study for his famous painting of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation he says that he accompanied Mr. Lincoln to Brady's gallery on February 9, 1864, for the purpose of getting a sitting of Mr. Lincoln to assist him in his work on the painting. Three views of Lincoln seated were taken (Meserve 86, 87, 108). There is a possibility that this visit may have been at the same time as the occasion when the portrait of the father and son were taken.

Victory Sitting—Brady 1865

The end of the war brought about by the victory of the Union troops was the incentive that caused the last series of pictures to be taken of Abraham Lincoln. At this time also Mr. Lincoln's youngest son "Tad" was with his father and two of the prints were taken with "Tad" (Meserve 95, 96). Three others show Lincoln seated (Meserve 97, 98, 99). There is also a bust (Meserve 94), but the best loved photograph of the group is the bust taken close up (Meserve 100).