

LINCOLN LORE

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN—A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY (Continued from No. 254)

First Inaugural Year—1861

It is said that never before had there been so many people in Washington as on March 4, 1861, the day of President Lincoln's inauguration. The oath of office was administered by Chief Justice Robert E. Taney, the inaugural address was read, and the event which had been approached with so much foreboding passed into history with no hostile demonstration.

Before the November, 1860, election a secession movement was under way in the South. By the time Lincoln arrived in Washington a provisional government had been set up by seven of the slave states and called "The Confederate States of America." Fort Sumpter, located within the boundaries of the new Confederacy, became the focal point of interest. Here, on the morning of April 12, the first gun of the Civil War was fired, and the fort was reduced by the Confederate batteries.

On April 15, 1861, President Lincoln called for 75,000 militia and hostilities began. Four days later he ordered a blockade affecting southern ports, and on May 3 issued another appeal for volunteers. An extra session of Congress had also been called to cope with the emergency situation.

The first important battle of the war was fought at Bull Run on July 21, and it resulted in the routing of the Union forces. This defeat was followed by a proclamation issued on August 12, setting aside a day of "public prayer, humiliation, and fasting." Another early crisis in the war was the removal of two Confederate envoys from the British mail packet Trent. Through Lincoln's wise diplomacy a serious breach with England was averted and her neutrality assured.

Emancipation Year—1862

Very early in 1862 Lincoln began to take more initiative in the conduct of the civil strife and on January 15 Edward M. Stanton replaced Cameron as Secretary of War. For the first time the President himself used his power as Commander-in-Chief of the armies, and issued War Order Number One on January 27. Military operations became more favorable on both land and sea. The Monitor vanquished the Merrimac in March, and in April the army won an important battle at Shiloh with possibly a greater victory occurring that same month in the capture of New Orleans. The fall offensive brought the victory at Antietam but in the winter the horrible massacre of Union troops at Fredericksburg occurred.

Domestic affairs added to the burden of the Chief Executive. The day after he had issued a proclamation that the farewell address of Washington be read on February 22, Lincoln's son, Willie, died. While the President did not recover soon from this tragedy, the mental collapse of his wife, hastened by this shock, was even a greater trial.

Lincoln's original plan to save the Union was to buy the slaves from their owners and set them free. This proposal was called compensated emancipation. Two direct appeals to support this proposal were made by the President to delegates from the southern states, and one-half of the entire subject matter of his annual message to Congress comprised a detailed plan for putting the project in operation. Congress, however, refused to adopt his recommendation, and, with no prospect of his policy being accepted, he issued, on September 22, his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, its provisions to become effective on January 1, 1863.

Gettysburg Year—1863

The chief concern which confronted Lincoln in 1863 was the leadership of the troops: McClellan had been disappointing; Burnside was replaced by Hooker; Halleck's antagonism caused Hooker to resign; Mead replaced Hooker. About the time these generals were being shifted

the southern army entered Pennsylvania, and three days after Mead's appointment, he met Lee at Gettysburg July 1, 2, and 3 and defeated him. Lincoln felt that this battle, with proper generalship, should have closed the war.

What Lincoln said at Gettysburg in November will be remembered much longer than what Mead did there in July. The year 1863 will go down in the annals of history as productive of three important writings which Abraham Lincoln contributed to civilization: the final draft of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, the first Annual Thanksgiving Proclamation issued on October 3, and the Gettysburg Address on November 19. Freeing a whole race from bondage, establishing a great national holiday, and composing the most outstanding address of the century within a space of twelve months makes the year 1863 a memorable one in Lincoln's life.

Presidential Year—1864

With Vicksburg and the campaign in East Tennessee recalled, Lincoln made Ulysses S. Grant Lieutenant-General on February 29, 1864. He had already set in motion the draft of 500,000 men; later on he called for 500,000 volunteers, and proposed concluding the war as soon as it was physically possible.

The presidential year loomed up, however, as a real barrier to concerted military action. A restless and often rebellious Cabinet contained at least one ambitious candidate for President. Before the year closed, it was reorganized with Fessenden, Speed, and Usher succeeding Chase, Bates, and Blair.

The committee appointed at Chicago to arrange for the 1864 Convention, strange to say, did not call a Republican gathering but a Union convention. The delegates assembled at Baltimore on June 7 and nominated Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, for President and Andrew Johnson, a Democrat, for Vice-President. The results of the election on November 8 reveal that out of the 233 electoral votes Lincoln received 212, and General McClellan, the opposing candidate, received but 21.

In 1864 there seemed to be an unusual number of desertions, and an ever-increasing number of appeals for clemency from wives and mothers. It was at this time also that there was called to his attention the case of the Widow Bixby's loss, which caused him to write the letter of sympathy, delivered to her on Thanksgiving Day, 1864.

Second Inaugural Year—1865

When the year 1865 dawned it was clear that the end of hostilities was near. Overtures for peace had been made in 1864, but the Jacques-Gilmore mission and the Horace Greeley effort had both failed. Early in 1865 F. P. Blair succeeded in arranging a conference at Hampton Roads between three Confederate envoys and President Lincoln and Secretary Seward. The envoys talked about an armistice, but Lincoln demanded that all forces hostile to the Government should disband, and the interview ended without accomplishing the desired results. Two days later, upon his return to Washington, the President called his Cabinet together and again urged a bill providing for compensated emancipation, but his pleadings were ignored.

An English literary critic has called the Second Inaugural Address, delivered by Abraham Lincoln on March 4, 1865, the outstanding state paper of the Nineteenth Century. It sounded a new note in statesmanship. While promising victory to the North, it assured charity to all.

Before the month of March was over Grant began his final drive on the Confederate capital, and Sherman was marching to the sea. On April 4 Lincoln visited Richmond which had been evacuated two days before, and five days later—April 9, 1865—Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

On Good Friday, April 14, 1865, with plans for reconstruction already under way, Abraham Lincoln was struck down by an assassin. He died the following day at 7:22 a. m. without regaining consciousness.