

LINCOLN LORE

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THE POSTURE OF LINCOLN

The height of Lincoln and the size of his head, his hands, and his feet are questions which are discussed periodically with the appearance of each new feature article on any one of the above subjects. Not long ago a columnist made the statement that George Washington was the tallest of our presidents and that Lincoln's hat size was six and seven-eighths.

Stature

The names of Washington and Lincoln are associated more often than the names of other presidents, and many debates have taken place on the subject of their respective contributions to the United States of America. There should be no difference of opinion, however, as to which one was the taller of the two, as Lincoln easily wins this crown.

Henry Cabot Lodge in his *Life of Washington* quotes a letter written by David Ackerson, of Alexandria, Virginia, in which Ackerson states that Washington's exact height was six feet, two inches in his boots. George Mercer, a close friend of Washington, claimed that he was "six feet, two inches in his stockings." There seems to be no description of Washington available which places his height at more than six feet, two inches.

Those contemporary with Abraham Lincoln who have written about him have consistently used six feet, four inches as his height. While some of his friends claim he was six feet four in his stocking feet, the claim has never been made that he was more than six feet four.

Five months before Lincoln was nominated for the presidency he was invited to prepare an autobiographical sketch. In the concluding paragraph he said, "If any personal description of me is thought desirable, it may be said I am, in height, six feet four inches, nearly, lean in flesh weighing on an average of one hundred and eighty pounds."

From the statements about Washington and Lincoln both before us, it is evident that the railsplitter was two inches taller than the father of the country.

Washington and Lincoln both changed very much in their physical appearance during the years; Washington grew heavier and Lincoln lost weight. When Washington took his seat in the House of Burgesses in 1759 at twenty-seven years of age, he is said to have weighed 175 pounds, but at forty years of age, he weighed 210 pounds. Herndon claimed that when Lincoln first came to Illinois at twenty-one years of age he must have weighed over two hundred pounds. By the time he was fifty his weight was reduced to 180 pounds and during the next five years he is said to have lost twenty pounds.

Head

The size of Lincoln's head never came in for much discussion until the late Senator Beveridge measured a hat in Chicago said to have been worn by Lincoln and claimed that the size was but six and seven-eighths. This conclusion by Beveridge as to the size of the hat Lincoln wore was given further circulation by other writers.

Robert H. Hitt was one of the official stenographers during the Lincoln and Douglas debates. He had this to say about Lincoln's hat, "Yes, I remember that Mr. Lincoln's hat was very large. He was a man of large head, and the style at that time was to wear high and full crown silk hats. The one he wore towards the last of his life looks enormous as compared with the hats seen now days." Evidently Hitt was not under the impression that Lincoln's head was exceedingly small.

Nicolay, one of Lincoln's secretaries, in describing Lincoln's head, said it was "large with a high crown of skull"; and another contemporary said, "His forehead is high and full and swings out grandly."

Lamon, a close friend of Lincoln, who had access to the notes gathered by William Herndon, had this to say about Lincoln's head, "His head was long and tall from the base of the brain and the eyebrow, his forehead high and

narrow, but inclining backward as it rose. The diameter of his head from ear to ear was six and one-half inches and from front to back eight inches. The size of his hat was seven and one-eighth."

Henry C. Whitney in his reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln states, "His head was high, but not large; his forehead was broad at the base, but retreated, indicating marked perceptive qualities, but not great reflective ones and in this phrenology is sadly at fault. He wore a hat measuring seven and one-eighth."

The hat which Lincoln is said to have worn on the last day of his life was in the Oldroyd Collection at Washington some years ago. One who examined the hat at that time had this to say about it, "I tried it on recently and found it very heavy and cumbersome. It fitted me loosely, and was a good 7¼ in size. In addition to the heavy black band around it, there was another tiny band with a dainty buckle. This hat is in a remarkable state of preservation, and the maker's name on the lining inside shows it to have been manufactured by J. Y. Davis, of Washington, D. C."

Hands

There has never been very much discussion over the size of Lincoln's hands, as we are fortunate in having casts of both the right and left hands made at Springfield, Illinois, the day after he was nominated for the presidency. The cast of the left hand is an excellent one, but the right hand was very much swollen, due to the congratulatory hand shaking which Lincoln had received during the day on account of his nomination.

While the left hand is closed normally, Volk advised Lincoln to secure something to hold in his right hand, so he cut off about five inches of his wife's broom stick which he clenched. His hands measure ten inches in circumference following the glove fitters process of determining size.

Feet

In 1891 Dr. P. Kahler of New York published a small book on "Dress and Care of the Feet." In this book he presented drawings of both of Lincoln's feet showing the various measurements necessarily used for fitting. The right foot was twelve and one-quarter inches long and the left foot twelve inches. Lincoln's signature and the date December 13, 1864, appear on the diagram, evidently written by Lincoln.

Dr. Kahler made the following comments with reference to his contact with Lincoln:

"Abraham Lincoln was six feet and four inches in height, and had a very large foot. He knew the importance of proper clothing for the foot, and hearing Dr. P. Kahler, he sent for him and procured a pair of shoes made upon the Kahler last.

"At a recent session of the Health Association the original model of Mr. Lincoln's foot as drawn by Dr. Kahler was exhibited. Visitors to the establishment of P. Kahler & Sons, 813-815 Broadway, can see the original order given by Mr. Lincoln for the admission of Dr. Kahler to the White House in Washington, and the drawing of Mr. Lincoln's foot made from life by Dr. Kahler, from which his shoes were made."

Many years ago a newspaper in Lynn, Massachusetts, published an article in which it was claimed that the boots Lincoln wore at the time of his assassination were in that city, having come into possession of the owner through William Clark who occupied the room where Lincoln was taken after his assassination. This brief description of the boots was given:

"The boots are old-fashioned, long-legged affairs, with square toes. They are much narrower than one would suppose a man his height would wear. The upper part of the legs are made of a heavy reddish-brown leather, but the rest of the foot is of a fine black material. They show considerable wear, although not worn at any part."