

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN'S ADMIRATION FOR LITTLE GIRLS

Disappointed that all four of his children happened to be boys, Abraham Lincoln on many occasions revealed his love and admiration for little girls. In its series of Lincoln Historical Paintings by famous American artists, the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company commissioned J. C. Leyendecker to do a painting that would visualize the friendliness of Lincoln for children.

The painting will be dedicated to little girls Lincoln is known to have greeted. Their names will be inscribed on an honor roll and attached to the painting. Maiden names will be used and a reference made to the city where they were greeted by Lincoln. The Lincoln National Life Foundation will be pleased to receive names of persons living or departed who should be honored in this way. Over fifty names have already been enrolled.

The Trunk

One of the most familiar stories of Lincoln's friendliness was told more than fifty years ago by a woman in Springfield, Illinois, who had been especially favored by Lincoln when she was but a child:

"The hour of the train approached, the hackman, through some neglect, failed to call for my trunk. As the minutes went on, I realized, in a panic of grief, that I should miss the train. I was standing by the gate, my hat and gloves on, sobbing as if my heart would break, when Mr. Lincoln came by.

"Why, what's the matter?" he asked, and I poured out all my story.

"How big's the trunk? There's still time, if it isn't too big." And he pushed through the gate and up to the door. My mother and I took him up to my room, where my little old-fashioned trunk stood, locked and tied. "Oh, ho," he cried, "wipe your eyes and come on quick." And before I knew what he was going to do, he had shouldered the trunk, was down-stairs, and striding out of the yard. Down the street he went, fast as his long legs could carry him, I trotting behind, drying my tears as I went. We reached the station in time. Mr. Lincoln put me on the train, kissed me good-bye, and told me to have a good time. It was just like him."

Circus Day

"It was on circus day that Lincoln really became a king for the children of the neighborhood. It was his delight to seek out the boys and girls whose parents were in reduced circumstances and who were unable to purchase tickets. With his own children and a crowd from the neighbors, Lincoln would start out for the white tents.

He would hold up the smaller children so that they could get a good view of the animals and other attractions. Lincoln was always tender and considerate and was fairly idolized by all the children." Oliva Leidig, Springfield, Illinois.

Growing a Beard

Grace Bedell, a small girl born in Westfield, New York, wrote a letter to Mr. Lincoln on October 15, 1860, from which the following excerpts are taken:

". . . I am a little girl, eleven years old . . . have you any little girls about as large as I am . . . If you will let your whiskers grow . . . you would look a great deal better for your face is so thin . . . I must not write any more answer this letter right off.

"Good Bye

"Grace Bedell."

Lincoln answered the letter "right off" on October 19, to be exact, and here are some excerpts from his reply: "My dear Little Miss — Your very agreeable letter of the 16th is received — I regret the necessity of saying I have no daughter . . . as to the whiskers, having never worn any, do you not think people would call it a piece of silly affectation if I were to begin now?"

"Your very sincere well-wisher

"A. Lincoln."

The sequel to little Grace Bedell's correspondence occurred when Lincoln passed through Westfield bound for the inauguration at Washington. When the train stopped, Mr. Lincoln said, "I have a little correspondent in this place, and if she is

present will she please come forward?"

Grace came forward and Mr. Lincoln said, "You see, I let these whiskers grow for you, Grace."

By the Fireside

Milton Sailor, a resident of Farmington told his son, J. G. Sailor, this story relating to Lincoln's visit in 1861 to bid his stepmother good-bye.

"The room was full to overflowing and as Lincoln sat in front of the fire-place conversing with those around him, a little girl of about six years of age tried to crowd through to see the great man everybody was talking about. Mr. Lincoln noticed her and said: 'Gentlemen, please make way for that little girl and let her come to the fire.' He took her up on his knee and held her while he visited with Mrs. Lincoln and her neighbors for an hour or so. When the little girl went home she related her experience and wanted to know of her mother if Mr. Lincoln was the Christ."



Flowers for The President—By J. C. Leyendecker