

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN'S LAST WRITING

The discovery of a check made out to Abraham Lincoln on April 13, 1865, and its acquisition by the Lincoln National Life Foundation, has raised again the question about the number of documents the President is supposed to have signed on the day of his assassination. The endorsement on the back of the check, "A. Lincoln," was probably made April 14, 1865, as the check was dated in Philadelphia the day before.

The President's activities during the final twenty-four hours of his life are very well known and many of the memorandums and signatures he wrote on April 14, have been preserved. The newly discovered check adds one more Lincoln writing to the valuable collection of autographs inscribed on the fatal Good Friday, 1865.

Price

The check mentioned above is drawn on the Western Bank of Philadelphia for \$500 by Eli K. Price, and evidently deposited at The First National Bank of Washington. It is check No. 8331 and is made payable to A. Lincoln or order. On the back is the single endorsement, "A. Lincoln."

There is no way of discovering what time Lincoln signed the check but likely it was on his desk in the Friday morning mail. Because of its personal nature it would undoubtedly have been placed by his secretary on top of the other correspondence demanding his attention and may have been the earliest writing of the day.

Eli Kirk Price was a Philadelphia lawyer, admitted to the bar in 1822. He was known as the outstanding real estate lawyer of the city and was active in practice for sixty years. He was prominent in philosophical and historical circles but had little to do with politics. It is not known what this payment of \$500 to Abraham Lincoln represented, but it opens an interesting field of inquiry.

Seward

Due to the illness of Secretary Seward, his son, Frederick W. Seward was acting Secretary of State during his father's absence from the office. On the morning of April 14, he received this note from the President: "Please call a Cabinet meeting at eleven o'clock today. General Grant will be with us."

Grant

Lincoln had made an appointment to meet Gen. Grant at 9 a. m. on the morning of April 14, but sent a note changing the hour to eleven as the following memorandum indicates: "Please call at 11 a. m. today instead of nine as agreed last evening."

Van Alen

One of the letters received by Lincoln during the last few days of his life is said to have come from Gen. Van Alen. He wrote the President, for the sake of his friends and the nation, to guard his life and not expose it to assassination. Lincoln is supposed to have replied to the letter the very day on which he was assassinated.

Kellogg

A visit by Richard Yates and William P. Kellogg, of Illinois, resulted in steps being taken to make Kellogg

collector of the port of New Orleans. Papers were prepared by Lincoln and signed, looking to the appointment.

Wallace

A letter from W. H. Wallace suggesting the appointment of Milton Kelley, as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Idaho, received this endorsement on April 14: "If it is definitely concluded to accept Judge Parks resignation, as I understand it is, let this within appointment be made."

Clemency Petitioners

A large number of pardons were granted by Lincoln on the last day of his life. A deserter was pardoned, Thomas Geary was ordered discharged, and a condemned Confederate prisoner was released. Sen. Henderson appealed for George Vaughn, Gen. Criswell spoke for a Southern soldier, and Rev. Herron wrote about George S. Herron. Their pleadings were heard and the prisoners were pardoned.

Saunders

The following lines were penned by Lincoln on a commission: "Rather a lengthy commission, bestowing upon Mr. Alvin Saunders, the official authority of Governor of the Territory of Nebraska."

Stewart

During a conversation with Colfax and Ashmun, Lincoln received the cards of Sen. William M. Stewart, of Nevada, and Judge Niles Searles, of New York. A note was sent down to the guests which is said to have contained this message: "I am engaged to go to the theatre with Mrs. Lincoln. It is the kind of an engagement I never break. Come with your friend tomorrow at ten, and I shall be glad to see you."

Rollins

Congressman E. W. Rollins, of New Hampshire, reached the White House late in the afternoon of April 14, just as Mr. Lincoln was leaving his office. The President turned to greet Rollins who handed him a communication from Gov. Filmore. Lincoln wrote on the back of this petition the following: "Hon. Secretary of War, please see and hear Hon. Rollins and oblige him if you consistently can."

Two Southerners

Some time during the day, Lincoln was approached by two men who wanted passes for Richmond. Lincoln picked up a card and made this notation: "No pass is necessary now to authorize any one to go to and return from Petersburg and Richmond. People go and return as they did before the war."

Ashmun

A memorandum handed Mr. George Ashmun has usually been regarded as Lincoln's last writing. It was written on a card just as Lincoln was entering the carriage which was to convey him and Mrs. Lincoln to the theatre: "Allow Mr. Ashmun and friend to come in at 9 a. m. tomorrow."