

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 456

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

January 3, 1938

SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

The year 1938, marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of three significant writings from Abraham Lincoln's pen, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Gettysburg Address, and the first annual national Thanksgiving Proclamation.

At this season of the year, emphasis should be placed on the Emancipation Proclamation because it was issued seventy-five years ago on January 1, 1863. This year especially, the proclamation finds a very appropriate atmosphere in which it may be interpreted, as the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Ordinance of 1787 is being observed nationally. It was in this ordinance that the institution of slavery was first restricted by a government edict.

Still another anniversary occurring this year is called to mind by the Emancipation Proclamation, inasmuch as one hundred and ten years ago, in 1828, Abraham Lincoln first observed the slave markets of New Orleans. This exerted a mighty influence in his attitude toward the slavery problem.

The attention being given to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution just now through the activities of the Sesquicentennial Commission also contributes to our emphasis on the Emancipation Proclamation which takes rank as one of the nation's most important documents. One commentator wrote about it in this manner:

"There is no other individual act performed by any person on this continent that can be compared with it. The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, were each the work of bodies of men. The Proclamation of Emancipation in this respect stands alone. The responsibility was wholly upon Lincoln; the glory is chiefly his. No one can now say whether the Declaration of Independence, or the Constitution of the United States, or the Proclamation of Emancipation was the highest, best gift to the country and to mankind."

It is of some importance to know just what became of the original manuscripts on such an important proclamation.

In October and November, 1863, the first Sanitary Fair was conducted in Chicago. It was the forerunner of many such exhibitions held throughout the country. The committee in charge wrote to President Lincoln asking if he would donate to the fair his Emancipation Proclamation manuscript of January 1, 1863. This he consented to do, although he was reluctant to part with it as the following letter of presentation reveals:

"Washington, Oct. 26, 1863

"Ladies Having in Charge The Northwestern Fair For The Sanitary Commission, Chicago, Ill.

"According to the request made in your behalf, the original draft of the Emancipation Proclamation is herewith inclosed. The formal words at the top and the conclusion, except the signature, you perceive, are not in my handwriting. They were written at the State Department, by whom I know not. The printed part was cut from a copy of the preliminary proclamation, and pasted on, merely to save writing. I had some desire to retain the paper; but if it shall contribute to the relief or comfort of the soldiers, that will be better.

"Your obedient servant,

"A. Lincoln."

The fair was opened with a speech by Thomas B. Bryan. When the Proclamation of Emancipation was put up for sale he purchased it for the Chicago Soldier's

Home at the price of \$3,000. He had the copy lithographed and sold the reprints for the benefit of the institution. Two of the copies were sent to President Lincoln who acknowledged their receipt in these words:

"Washington, January 18, 1864
"Thomas B. Bryan, Esq., Chicago, Ill.

"My dear Sir: I have received the two copies of the lithographed facsimile of the original draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, which you have had the kindness to send me, and in answer to your question, I have to say that although I have not examined it in detail, yet it impresses me favorably as being a faithful and correct copy.

"Yours truly,
"A. Lincoln".

This proclamation of January 1, 1863, which actually freed the slaves, was burned in the Chicago fire of 1871, and even the lithographed copies have also become quite scarce.

The ladies in charge of the Albany Army Relief Bazaar, held in the New York state capital city on January 4, 1864, upon hearing of the premium received for the original of the final proclamation, made overtures to secure the original copy of the preliminary proclamation which was issued on September 22, 1862. They were successful in securing this other document which set in motion the final consummation of the act. It was forwarded on January 4, 1864, to Mrs. Emily W. Barnes by F. W. Seward with the accompanying letter:

"Washington, January 4, 1864
"My dear Mrs. Barnes:

"I have the pleasure of sending you, with the president's permission, the original draft of his September proclamation. The body of it is in his own handwriting, the penciled additions in the hand of the secretary of state and the formal beginning and the ending in the hand of the chief clerk.

"Yours very sincerely,
"F. W. Seward.

"Mrs. Emily W. Barnes,
"Albany, N. Y."

This copy was sold to Gerrit Smith for \$1,100 who then presented it to the United States Sanitary Commission. It passed into the hands of the state of New York by an act of the legislature in 1865 and was ordered to be deposited in the State Library. \$1,000 was the consideration paid to the Commission by the state. With the burning of the proclamation of January 1, 1863, this copy of September 22, 1862 became invaluable.

The state of New York has taken seriously the preservation of this valuable document as the editor of Lincoln Lore can testify through personal observation. After being conducted through two massive doors in a manuscript vault—the entrance combination is known but to two persons—there appeared in the center of this subterranean vault, a steel chest set in a concrete base also made secure by having locked doors.

In this inner vault, which contains many documents of historical value to the state of New York, the editor of Lincoln Lore observed this priceless American document, the original copy of the Emancipation Proclamation in Lincoln's own hand. It was lying beside the original copy of George Washington's Farewell Address. Here, indeed is a treasure box, for the Emancipation Proclamation preserved therein paved the way for the freedom of 4,000,000 souls.