

LINCOLN LORE

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A JUNE MEMORIAL DAY

A strange series of coincidences occurred during the interval between Lincoln's assassination and the memorial programs arranged, especially with respect to significant anniversary dates.

It will be recalled that the assassination occurred on Good Friday. The churches on Easter Sunday revealed in vivid contrast to the joyous festival anticipated, groups of weeping people. The day was called the saddest Easter of our history.

Upon the inauguration of Andrew Johnston, one of his first acts was to request the various religious bodies to gather on April 19, to observe with appropriate ceremonies the obsequies of Abraham Lincoln. This day fell on Patriots Day, the anniversary of the beginning of hostilities for American Liberty in 1776.

Later in preparing a proclamation for fasting and prayers in commemoration of Lincoln's death, Thursday, May 25 was selected. It was afterwards discovered, however, that this was Ascension Day in the church, so a postponement became necessary and June 1st was finally chosen as an appropriate day. Without doubt, the selection of this day had some influence on determining the time of our national Memorial Day which falls but two days earlier.

There will be exhibited in this issue of *Lincoln Lore*, official documents leading up to the observance of the Lincoln Memorial Day in 1865, which occurred on June 1.

Exhibit No. 1.

Funeral Announcement

The undersigned is directed to announce that the funeral ceremonies of the lamented Chief Magistrate will take place at the Executive Mansion, in this city, at 12 o'clock noon, Wednesday, the nineteenth inst. The various religious denominations throughout the country are invited to meet in their respective places of worship at the time, for the purpose of solemnizing the occasion by appropriate ceremonies.

W. Hunter

Acting Secretary of State
Washington, April 17, 1865.

Exhibit No. 2

Proclamation by the President

A Day of Fasting and Prayer

The 25th Day of May Appointed

Whereas, By my direction, the Acting Secretary of State, in a notice to the public on the 17th of April, requested the various religious denominations to assemble on the 19th of April, on the occasion of the obsequies of Abraham Lincoln, late President of the United States, and to observe the same with appropriate ceremonies; and

Whereas, Our country has become one great house of mourning, where the head of the family has been taken away; and believing that a special period should be assigned for again humbling ourselves before Almighty God, in order that the bereavement may be sanctified to the nation; now, therefore, in order to mitigate that grief on earth which can only be assuaged by communion with the Father in Heaven, and in compliance with the wishes of Senators and Representatives in Congress communicated to me by a resolution adopted at the National Capital, I Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, do hereby appoint Thursday, the 25th day of May, next, to be observed wherever in the United States the flag of the country may be respected, as a day of humiliation and mourning, and I recommend my fellow citizens then to assemble in their respective places of worship, there to unite in solemn service to Almighty God in memory of the good man who has been removed, so that all shall be occupied at the same time in the contemplation of his virtues, and sorrow for his sudden and violent end.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, the 25th day of April, in the Year of Our Lord, 1865, and of the Independence of the United States of America the 89th.

Andrew Johnson.

Exhibit No. 3

Proclamation Date Revision

Whereas, By my proclamation of the 25th instant, Thursday, the 25th day of May, was recommended as a day of special humiliation and prayer in consequence of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, late President of the United States, but whereas my attention has been called to the fact

that the day aforesaid is sacred to large numbers of Christians as one of rejoicing for the ascension of the Saviour: now, therefore, be it known that I, Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, do hereby suggest that the religious service recommended as aforesaid should be postponed until Thursday, the first day of June next.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this 29th day of April, in the year of our Lord 1865, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-ninth.

Andrew Johnson.

Harper's Weekly Tribute

A double page memorial drawing by Thomas Nast was used by *Harper's Weekly* in commemoration of this June Memorial Day. A description of it appearing in the issue of June 10, 1867, follows:

"Death and Victory"

"The first day of June was observed as a day of humiliation and prayer, in memory of the martyred President. In the midst of triumph Death, reigns. In the hour of jubilee our hearts bow before the remembrance that the death of the young and old, the good and the true, has secured the victory. This is evidently the thought which Mr. Nast has expressed in the large picture of this Number of the *Weekly*.

"Death sits awful upon his throne, while Victory kneels before him, the sword falling from his hands and the laurel laid away from his brow. The consciousness of his power has just been brought home to the family which reads the appalling news of the 15th of April, and to the emancipated slaves who hear that the King of Terrors has struck their earthly saviour. In a city street, below, the news of the great victory exalts every heart; but immediately, in the corresponding sketch, Death touches those hearts with startling sorrow. Death also binds in sympathy America and other lands.

"So grim he seemed on that fatal Saturday six weeks ago. So over our sunny festival the cold shadow fell. But to-day, that the moment of sorrow has passed and the bereavement has only strengthened and sobered us, let victory raise his head, resume his laurels, and say, in perfect faith: 'Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?'"