

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN AND THE UNITED STATES SANITARY COMMISSION

In the summer of 1780, the women of Philadelphia were aroused to the needs of the poor American soldiers which could not be met by the Commissary Department of the Army. They organized the Soldiers Relief which contributed much to the comfort of those who fought for our independence.

The Red Cross of the Civil War period was known as the Sanitary Commission. It was officered by those who received no salary for their services and who often paid their own traveling expenses as they moved about from place to place in their work. It was largely directed by the women of the country.

It was claimed that the Commission worked with Five Hands which are designated as follows:

1. "It distributes supplies."
2. "It inspects camps and field hospitals by medical men."
3. "It inspects general hospitals by the same agents."
4. "It organizes special relief with all its agencies, in all its departments."
5. "It keeps an accurate Hospital Directory so that the situation and condition of 500,000 soldiers may be known to their friends throughout the country."

The Sanitary Commission not only worked with five hands but it also earned most of the funds with which to carry on the work. Its chief source of income was Sanitary Fairs which it conducted through the entire North. While fairs as a means of raising money for charity and worthy enterprises was not an innovation, they were highly specialized during the period they were operated by the Commission.

Lincoln was intensely interested in this branch of civilian service and presented many autograph writings to be sold at these fairs. The full extent to which he contributed to the many exhibitions throughout the country will never be known. Just recently the editor of *Lincoln Lore* discovered two instances of Lincoln's generosity which add to Lincolniana two more autograph photographs and an autograph letter not found in the published works.

The Brooklyn Sanitary Fair held in February and March, 1864, published a daily paper called "The Drum-Beat." In the issue for March 5, this notice is carried:

"It appears that the President of the United States has kindly shown an active interest in our Fair. Rev. Mr. Woodruff, of the Hanson Place M. E. Church in this city, during an interview with President Lincoln on Wednesday, obtained an autograph letter to the New England Kitchen, which was handsomely announced yesterday at the dinner-table of the Kitchen, by Mr. Murray, and instantly sold for one hundred dollars to C. H. Mallory, Esq., of Mystic Bridge, Connecticut." This letter presented by Lincoln is printed here for the first time since its early publication in *The Drum-Beat*:

"Executive Mansion, March 2, 1864.

"To the New-England Kitchen, connected with the Brooklyn Sanitary Fair:

"It is represented to me that my autograph, appended to this note, may somewhat augment, through the means you are so patriotically employing, the contributions for the benefit of our gallant and suffering soldiers, and for such an object I am glad to give it.

"Yours, truly, A. Lincoln."

The Lincoln National Life Foundation has recently come into possession of two autograph photographs of Abraham Lincoln which he presented along with four others to be sold at the Tazewell County Fair in Illinois. This was in October, 1864.

Some of the more important contributions which Lincoln made were the original manuscripts of his most valuable state papers and copies of his Gettysburg Address. The first Sanitary Fair at Chicago was conducted in October and November, 1863, and the committee wrote to the President asking him to send the original draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to be sold. It was purchased by Thomas B. Bryan for \$3,000. This copy was burned in the Chicago fire of 1871.

Lincoln received in return for his donation a watch, presented to the donor whose contributions brought in the most money and he replied with this word of thanks.

"Executive Mansion,
"Washington, December 17, 1863.

"My Dear Sir

"I have received from the Sanitary Commission of Chicago, the watch which you placed at their disposal, and I take the liberty of conveying to you my high appreciation of your humanity and generosity, of which I have unexpectedly become the beneficiary.

"I am very truly yours,

"James H. Hoes, Esq.

A. Lincoln."

The ladies in charge of the Army Relief Bazaar at Albany, New York, made an overture to Lincoln for his preliminary copy of the Proclamation Emancipation and it too was forwarded and sold to Jerret Smith for \$1,100, which sum found its way into the treasury of the United States Sanitary Commission. This copy is preserved by the state of New York.

Several original copies of the Gettysburg Address in Lincoln's own hand were prepared by the President and at least two went to Sanitary Fairs. One went to Mrs. Hamilton Fish, along with Everett's address for the New York Sanitary Fair of March, 1864. Another was placed in an autograph book and it was sold at the Baltimore fair in 1864.

Lincoln had an opportunity to visit the Sanitary Fair in Washington in 1864 and it was one of the few instances where he attended a public gathering during the time he was president. On this occasion he delivered a brief speech which gave his reaction to the fairs as well as his appreciation of the women in America who sponsored the work of the Sanitary Commission.

"In this extraordinary war extraordinary developments have manifested themselves such as have not been seen in former wars; and among these manifestations nothing has been more remarkable than these fairs for the relief of suffering soldiers and their families, and the chief agents in these fairs are the women of America. I am not accustomed to the use of the language of eulogy; I have never studied the art of paying compliments to women; but I must say that if all that has been said by orators and poets since the creation of the world in praise of women were applied to the women of America, it would not do them justice for their conduct during the war. I will close by saying, God bless the women of America."