

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN AND EVERETT

Edward Everett died on the morning of January 15, 1865, seventy-five years ago today. Although running in the political campaign of 1860 as Vice-presidential candidate on a ticket in opposition to Lincoln, Everett's last official act was the casting of his electoral vote for President Lincoln following the landslide of 1864.

Everett and Lincoln present one of the most striking contrasts in American public life. Everett was born in the environs of cultural Boston; Lincoln came from the wilderness of a frontier civilization. The former was the son of an educated clergyman; the latter was a child of an unlettered pioneer. Two years after Abraham Lincoln was born, Edward Everett graduated from Harvard; Lincoln was never in a university until he was a man grown and then he was a visitor.

When Everett was nineteen he became pastor of a Unitarian church at Boston, and three years later he preached a remarkable sermon in the House of Representatives at Washington, D. C. When Lincoln was nineteen he was working as a boatman on a flatboat enroute to New Orleans and three years later made another trip to the same port.

In 1814 Everett was a tutor in Latin at Harvard. Lincoln, in commenting about school conditions in the Indiana country where he grew up, wrote: "If a straggler supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighborhood he was looked upon as a wizard."

After serving as a Latin tutor, Everett was appointed to a Harvard professorship in Greek and went to Europe for a four year course in preparation for this task. Lincoln humbly admitted to a friend that he had no European acquaintances. In 1846 Edward Everett became the president of Harvard University.

The political achievements of Everett and Lincoln preceding the election of 1860 offer a vivid contrast indeed. It must be recognized that Everett was fifteen years older than Lincoln, but Lincoln entered politics when he was twenty-five and Everett did not start his political career until he was thirty.

Everett was elected to Congress as a representative from Massachusetts in 1824 and continued in this capacity for ten years. At the close of his congressional career, he was elected governor of Massachusetts in 1835 and served in the same capacity during the two succeeding terms. Everett was given a portfolio as minister to England in 1840; in 1850 he became Secretary of State; and in 1853 he was elected to the United States Senate. As Vice-presidential nominee on the Constitution Union ticket in 1860, he reached the height of an enviable political career.

Compared with Everett's long and impressive record, Lincoln's four terms in the Illinois legislature and one as a representative in Congress seem insignificant. One can well understand the public mind when it wondered if a mistake had not been made in the nomination of Lincoln for the Presidency with so many illustrious men opposing him on the other three rival tickets.

Everett was not favorably impressed with Lincoln, the President-elect, after having read some of Lincoln's informal remarks to the public as he approached Washington for the inauguration. This fact Everett noted in his diary:

"These speeches thus far have been of the most ordinary kind, destitute of everything, not merely of felicity and grace, but of common pertinence. He is evidently a person of very inferior cast of character, wholly unequal to the crisis."

His attitude changed, however, as soon as he came to know Lincoln personally, and he spoke about his "intellectual capacities" and how "his kindly and playful spirit

mingles its sweetness with the austere cup of public duty." After a formal dinner at the home of Mr. Wills at Gettysburg, Everett said, "In gentlemanly appearance, manners, and conversation, the President was the peer of any man at the table."

With Lincoln's election to the Presidency in 1860, Everett soon came in direct contact with him, and in 1862 the following letter of introduction dated September 24, was given to Everett by Lincoln:

"Whom it May Concern: Hon. Edward Everett goes to Europe shortly. His reputation and the present condition of our country are such that his visit there is sure to attract notice, and may be misconstrued. I therefore think fit to say that he bears no mission from this government; and yet no gentleman is better able to correct misunderstandings in the minds of foreigners in regard to American affairs.

"While I commend him to the consideration of those whom he may meet, I am quite conscious that he could better introduce me than I him in Europe."

We most often, however, associate Lincoln and Everett as orators rather than politicians. We have already observed Everett's success as a minister, and as a statesman he seems to excel all of his contemporaries. His famous oration on Washington was delivered 122 times over a period of three years and netted the Mt. Vernon memorial committee \$58,000. The receipts of lectures Everett delivered on different subjects totaled \$90,000. Lincoln was invited to speak at Cooper Institute in New York and received an honorarium of \$200 out of which he was obliged to pay his expenses. As far as we know, this was his only fee for public speaking.

The climax of Everett's oratorical career was realized at Gettysburg. As the most eloquent speaker in America, he was chosen for this important address.

That Lincoln was greatly impressed by Everett's address cannot be doubted. The following day in a message to Everett he wrote: "Of course I knew Mr. Everett would not fail, and, yet while the whole discourse was eminently satisfactory, and will be of great value, there were passages in it which transcended my expectations. The point made against the theory of the general government being only an agency whose principals are the states, was new to me, and, as I think, is one of the best arguments for the national supremacy. The tribute to our noble women for their angel ministering to the suffering soldiers surpasses in its way, as do the subjects of it, whatever has gone before."

As late as January 24, 1865, Lincoln again referred to Everett's compliment to women in a reply which he made to a visiting committee:

"So much has been said about Gettysburg, and so well, that for me to attempt to say more may perhaps only serve to weaken the force of that which has already been said. A most graceful and eloquent tribute was paid to the patriotism and self-denying labors of the American ladies, on the occasion of the consecration of the national cemetery at Gettysburg, by our illustrious friend, Edward Everett, now, alas! departed from earth. His life was a truly great one, and I think the greatest part of it was that which crowned its closing years."

Part of a eulogy to Edward Everett appearing in *Harper's Weekly* for January 28, 1865, follows:

"A brilliant collegian; a fascinating young clergyman; a conspicuous public man, Representative, Governor, Ambassador, Senator, Secretary of State; an accomplished scholar and President of the University of Cambridge; a persuasive and polished orator . . . , a copious, learned, dignified, delightful, and even humorous author . . . cold, cautious, exact, punctual, proper, but gentle, courteous, courtly, and serene."