

# LINCOLN LORE

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## BOOK OF EXAMPLES IN ARITHMETIC

A page of an old arithmetic copybook made by Abraham Lincoln at the time he was attending school in Indiana contains what is believed to be the earliest signature extant of the President. The home-made tablet has been literally scattered to the winds until but a few of the mutilated pages can now be located. An attempt has been made to trace to the present owners the few sheets still in existence and to arrange them in the order in which they must have appeared in the original form.

A letter written by William Herndon on November 9, 1881 contains this paragraph: "I was collecting the facts of Mr. Lincoln's life in 1865-6 and went into Coles County, Illinois, to see his stepmother; found the motherly, good old lady, and took down her testimony, etc. as material of his life. During her examination she let drop in her conversation, the fact that Mr. Lincoln when a boy had two copybooks, in which he wrote down his sums worked out, and wrote out in his literary one what seemed strong, beautiful or good. We, the Lincoln family and myself, commenced the search and found the arithmetical book, but not the other; it is gone, and gone forever." The arithmetic book was made of plain paper, nine by twelve inches, and sewed together with a string on one of the longer edges.

It is claimed that when Mr. Herndon first saw the book there were "ten or twelve sheets of this rudely bound volume." The stepmother said that "originally it contained many more leaves but that the greater number had been lost or destroyed." There were probably as many as a hundred pages in the original book. There is a tradition that Thomas Johnston, a son of Lincoln's stepbrother, John D. Johnston, "sold part of it at least, page by page during the war." Of one fact we are certain, that Herndon took back with him to Springfield upon his return from his interview with Lincoln's stepmother all that was left of the book, and then the second scattering process began.

Mr. Herndon wrote to Mr. Charles H. Hart on July 22, 1866, "I have a leaf of Mr. Lincoln's old copybook made in 1824." Mr. Hart eventually acquired the leaf mentioned. Another page of the old copybook was presented by Herndon to the Soldiers' Memorial Association of Englewood, Illinois, on November 9, 1881. Isaac N. Arnold wrote his *Life of Abraham Lincoln* before 1884, and in a footnote on page twenty-five made this statement, "I have in my possession a few pages from his (Abraham Lincoln's) manuscript 'Book of Examples in Arithmetic.'" When the Lincoln Memorial Collection was exhibited at Chicago in 1886 and the manuscripts acquired were listed in a printed catalogue, three sheets of the sum book were mentioned. J. E. Remsburg, of Atchison, Kansas, also came into possession of two sheets which were noted in the *New York Times* for July 22, 1893.

It was Jesse W. Weik who apparently received the greater number of the pages distributed by Herndon. Weik states in his book published in 1922 that Herndon "turned several pages over to me." One writer claims that Weik received six sheets.

It would appear that direct from the hands of Herndon these copies were distributed: Hart, one; Soldiers' Memorial, one; Arnold, three or more; Lincoln Memorial Collection, three; Remsburg, two; Weik, six. This would make a maximum number of sixteen sheets. The Lincoln National Life Foundation has been unable to positively identify more than eight of these fragments, although photostat copies of most of these original pages of the copybook have been secured.

The leaves thus far discovered are noted by the name of the individual last known to be in possession of the sheet, and the manuscripts are arranged in order of their

appearance in the original book, as indicated by the order of subjects as they appear in both Pike's and Daboll's works.

1. Leland (a)—The leaf presented to Mr. Hart by Herndon bears the title, "Multiplication 1824." On the reverse side the caption is "Multiplication continued," and on both sides of the sheet appears the name of Abraham Lincoln in full. The one on the obverse side of the sheet is the earliest extant autograph of the President. Major Lambert and others were in possession of the sheet before it passed into the hands of Mr. Wilfred C. Leland, Jr.

2. Wells—The most often quoted page is one on which the caption is "Subtraction of Long Measure" and which contains at the bottom of the sheet "Abraham Lincoln his hand and pen he will be good but God knows when." The caption on the reverse is not legible. One authority claims there were three different sheets of the copybook that contained the above inscription which was copied from an old schoolbook doggerel. This page apparently passed from Mr. Herndon to Mr. Weik and then into the Gabriel Wells collection.

3. Barrett (a)—This mutilated fragment which is but one-half of a page contains not only the common expression "Abraham Lincoln his hand and pen" etc., but also a few lines beginning "Time what an Empty Vapor Tis." It is in the possession of Oliver R. Barrett.

4. Barrett (b)—The sheet now owned by Mr. Barrett was once in possession of James W. Keyes, and sold at auction with the Lincoln Memorial Collection in 1894. The caption on one page is "Compound Multiplication." On the reverse side of the sheet the first line is "To Exercise Multiplication," and at the bottom in printed form "ABRAHAM LINCOLN HIS BOOK." A written example on this page is worded similar to one in Daboll's arithmetic on page 52.

5. Brown University—"The Single Rule of Three" is the caption written out in a flourishing style at the top of the page, and on the reverse side are questions and answers about proportion. This sheet has been torn in two, so only half of the page is known to be preserved.

6. Chicago Historical Society—In some respects this page is one of the most valuable, as it shows definitely that Daboll's arithmetic was one of the source books of Lincoln. The caption is "Interest on Money" and on the other side "Discount March 1, 1826." Definitions and Rules are almost verbatim with the printed text of Daboll's arithmetic on page 135. This sheet was once in possession of I. N. Arnold.

7. Leland (b)—This sheet gives "Examples in Compound Interest" as a caption on one side. The writing on the other side is not known. It was once in possession of Major Lambert and sold at his famous Lincoln auction. Finally it came in possession of Henry Leland and then passed on to his son, Wilfred C. Leland, Jr.

8. Lambert—One fact which can be drawn from this sheet of Lincoln's copybook is that he was much farther advanced in his mathematical training as a boy than historians have stated. The sheet contains captions, "Simple Interest" and "Simple Interest Examples."

It is apparent that both Pike's and Daboll's arithmetic books were the original sources of the copybook, although there are but one or two instances where verbatim copies of the contents are made, and no instance where the exact illustration in examples in either of the two books are used. This observation allows one to conclude that the book was just an "exercise book" with examples arranged and presented by the teacher. It is in error to assume that the book was composed of "copied pages from Pike's arithmetic."