

LINCOLN LORE

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EARLIEST CAMPAIGN BIOGRAPHY OF 1860

There has been much controversy over the question of which biography of Abraham Lincoln was the first published in book form. Although it has not been proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Wigwam Edition brought out by Rudd and Carleton deserves the distinction, it is accepted generally as the earliest campaign biography of 1860.

The earliest of the more comprehensive bibliographies of Lincolniana published in 1870, in which Andrew Boyd and C. H. Hart collaborated, mentions the Wigwam Edition but makes no special comment upon it. G. T. Ritchie, an assistant in the catalogue division of the Library of Congress, prepared a "List of Lincolniana" in 1903 in which he also lists the Wigwam Edition without comment. He does comment on the thirty-two page pamphlet by John Locke Scripps which he calls "The first published life of Abraham Lincoln."

Little attention seems to have been paid to the Wigwam Edition by early dealers of Lincolniana. In 1904 a copy sold at the Anderson Galleries in New York for fifty cents. Daniel H. Newhall issued a catalogue in 1905 and priced the Wigwam volume at \$1.25. In the same catalogue he placed a price of \$12.00 on the Scripps' pamphlet and called it "the first biography of Lincoln."

Another copy of the Wigwam Edition was listed by Newhall in 1906 for which he asked \$5.00 but it was bound in half morocco with the original covers bound in. In this catalogue Newhall called the book "a very scarce campaign life." A copy sold at auction in New York in 1906 for \$4.50.

It was Daniel Fish, in his Lincoln bibliography published in 1906, who was largely responsible for calling attention to the Wigwam Edition. This note accompanied the description of the book: "Probably the earliest biography in book or pamphlet form, the copyright entry being dated June 8, 1860."

By 1914 Mr. Newhall made this statement in a catalogue with refer-

ence to campaign biographies. "The Wigwam Edition long shared with Scripps' the distinction of being the first published life of Lincoln, although it is pretty well established now that Howard's antedates both."

The claim that the Scripps' book was the earliest began to be challenged by several writers. W. E. Barton thought it quite likely that "The Wigwam Edition" was off the press as soon as, if not sooner, than Scripps' "Life," and so stated in his discussion on *Abraham Lincoln and His Books* published in 1920.

By 1928 Newhall had come to the conclusion that the Wigwam Edition was "Perhaps the first life of Lincoln preceding Howard's by three weeks and Scripps' by a month." For the first time there seems to be an attempt to approach the actual date of publication.

Possibly Morris H. Briggs may be said to have been the first one to attack the problem seriously, and he prepared an article for *The Publishers' Weekly* of June 16, 1928, in which he compiled a list of the 1860 campaign biographies which included the following publishers: H. Dayton; Rudd and Carleton; Derby and Jackson; W. A. Townsend and Co.; Follett, Foster and Co.; Thayer and Eldridge; and Moore, Wilstatch, Keep and Co.

Basing his conclusions largely on an advertisement which appeared in the *Tribune* of May 26, 1860, Mr. Briggs concluded, "In all probability Rudd and Carleton issued the first published Lincoln life." Thus Mr. Briggs felt the Wigwam Edition should have the preference, with respect to date of publication.

The first exhaustive study of the sequence in point of time of the 1860 campaign lives of Lincoln was made in 1937 by Ernest J. Wesson who contributed an article to the "Papers in Illinois History and Transactions for the year 1937."

After a careful study of all the various claims put forth for primacy by other publishers, Mr. Wesson concluded: "Everything which I have

found lends support to the claim that the Wigwam Edition was indeed the 'first in the field.'"

Derby and Jackson had advertised Bartlett's *Life and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln* in the June 9, 1860, issue of *Harper's Weekly* and under the add caption, "Honest Old Abe," announced "First in the Field" and "An Army of Agents Wanted." Notwithstanding this statement, most students of Lincoln are in agreement with Mr. Wesson as to which book should receive the distinction of being first.

A compilation of the various issues of the Wigwam Edition was undertaken by Mr. Wesson, and he found five variants of the original or first edition. Since his list was published The Lincoln National Life Foundation has acquired three more variants not included in the Wesson compilation, and these are labeled *f*, *g*, and *h* in the extended list which follows:

ORIGINAL EDITION

The title page inscription follows: "The 'Wigwam Edition.' / (Rule) / The / Life, Speeches and Public Services / of / Abram Lincoln, / Together with a Sketch of the Life of / Hannibal Hamlin, / Republican Candidates for the Offices of President and Vice- / President of the United States. / (Publisher's device) / New York: / Rudd & Carleton, 130 Grand Street / (Brooks Building, Cor. of Broadway). / MDCCCLX."*

VARIANT ISSUES

- A. Advertisement on verso of page 117.
- B. Additional imprint, Portland, Maine, Bailey & Noyes.*
- C. Additional imprint, Boston, A. Williams & Co.*
- D. Additional imprint, Chicago, McNally & Co.
- E. Additional imprint, Providence, D. Kimball.
- F. Additional imprint, Boston, Brown & Taggard.*
- G. Additional imprint, Springfield, Mass., M. Bessey & Co.*
- H. Additional imprint, Lancaster, Pa., Elias Barr & Co.*

*Copies in the library of the Lincoln National Life Foundation.