

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN'S LAW LIBRARY

Those who are interested in studying the sources which contributed to Abraham Lincoln's intellectual advancement cannot overlook the books which found a place in his law library. Miscellaneous publications which Lincoln read and the books which the Lincoln family took out of the Library of Congress during their Washington residence already have been tabulated in former issues of Lincoln Lore. (Numbers 129, 167.)

It will never be possible to make a complete list of law books to which Abraham Lincoln had access, as very often there was an agreement between practicing attorneys that in the acquisition of reference books they would acquire volumes which would supplement the purchases of each other, and would depend on pooling their libraries as it were.

The well known collector Oliver Barrett states, "I think it is certain that the firm Lincoln & Herndon had the State Reports of every state in the Union in their library or readily accessible."

It is well known that Lincoln used the State Law Library in Illinois, and while serving a term in Congress he undoubtedly was a frequent visitor in the Congressional Library. The libraries of his lawyer friends on the circuit were most certainly open to him, and in some of the more important cases he tried in Chicago there would be available some of the books more difficult to obtain.

Some students may object to the listing of the complete collection of Lincoln and Herndon law books which W. E. Barton acquired from a Springfield bookdealer, H. E. Barker. They are included here and marked by an asterisk, so that one may use his own judgment as to how many of them might have been used by Abraham Lincoln. They were originally acquired from the family of Herndon's law partner, Alfred Orendorff, by H. E. Barker, and are now in the Chicago University Lincoln collection.

Lincoln's rapid advancement in the legal profession, after having come to the practice of law largely through his own efforts, encouraged many young men to interview him with respect to their own ambitions to enter the profession. To one young man he said, "If you are absolutely determined to make a lawyer of yourself, the thing is more than half done already."

There are certain books which Lincoln emphasized above others in the preparation for law, and he invariably recommended them to young students. This list might be considered as

fundamental in Lincoln's own legal training: Blackstone's *Commentaries*, Chitty's *Pleadings*, Greenleaf's *Evidence*, and Story's *Equity*, and *Equity Pleading*.

There seems to be very good evidence that the *Revised Statutes of Indiana* was the first law book to which Lincoln had access, and the original copy is now in the hands of one of the most ardent lawyer collectors, William H. Townsend.

Nearly every phase of Lincolniana has its joker, and in the law library it is the story of how he acquired the volume of Blackstone. The discovery of the book in the bottom of a barrel of rubbish is a story familiar to all. The Howell biography which Lincoln read and corrected states, "He bought an old copy of Blackstone one day, at auction, in Springfield."

This compilation of law books has been made possible by the generous assistance offered by the personnel in the Chicago University Lincoln collection, the University of Pennsylvania Library, and also by information furnished by Oliver R. Barrett of Chicago, and H. E. Barker of Los Angeles.

Law Library

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*Books in Lincoln library at Chicago University.