

# LINCOLN LORE

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## STEREOSCOPIC PICTURES OF LINCOLN

There is a new interest being created in stereoscopic pictures due in part to the availability of thirty-five millimeter color film and more recently to certain important scientific discoveries in the control of light waves. This rather primitive but interesting method of giving depth to pictures of three dimensional objects has tremendous possibilities in the development of the moving pictures of the future.

It would be out of place here to give a scientific discussion of the process by which this sense of depth is experienced when one views in a stereoscope, companion pictures which are made by recognizing certain geometric considerations. The stereoscopic process can best be understood by observing a camera with two lenses or two complete cameras built into one. The lenses are at a distance apart equal to the separation of the pupils of the eyes. The exposures are made simultaneously so that in reality two photographs of exactly the same setting are made. While the position of the subject is unchanged, the negatives record two slightly different views because the viewpoints of the lenses are not the same.

Stereoscopic pictures were very popular at the time Lincoln was serving as President, and many of the photographs made of him were taken with the stereoscopic camera. This meant the photographer secured two different negatives of the President at one sitting.

The casual observer would not detect the difference between two stereoscopic prints made from two negatives. Yet there must be a difference to serve the purpose for which they were made. On close observation it is not difficult to point out these variations, and, although very slight, they do serve as positive signs for identification of new portraits. It is in careful scrutiny of these supposedly identical portraits that the Lincoln National Life Foundation has discovered several heretofore unidentified original prints.

There were at least four instances when Lincoln sat before a stereoscopic camera: twice in the Brady gallery, once for Gardner, and once for Walker.

### *Brady (a)*

Apparently the earliest attempt which was made to photograph Abraham Lincoln with a stereoscopic camera was made by Matthew Brady in Washington shortly after the President-elect arrived in the city and before his inauguration. None of the five views taken at this time and shown in the Meserve classification of Lincoln prints are companion stereoscopic pictures, yet in the Foundation library there is a stereoscopic picture of Meserve No. 71 in this series with its companion portrait which does not appear in Meserve's arrangement. The Foundation has also acquired an original copy of this variant of No. 71 mounted in the regular carte-de-visite size.

If No. 71 and the companion variant were taken with a stereoscopic camera, then it would appear that the other four studies would have their counterparts also. This would make ten different pictures in this series instead of the original five. Inasmuch as only one of these companion pictures have been discovered, evidently there are four more as yet unavailable.

### *Brady (b)*

Another series of well known Lincoln portraits was taken by Brady presumably in 1863, and they were evidently made with a stereoscopic camera. The pictures in this series thus far discovered are numbered by Meserve as 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 107, and 115. This series may eventually prove more fruitful in furnishing new Lincoln portraits than any other.

Through the kindness of Dr. Robert K. Harvey, a member of the Stereoscopic Society, the Foundation has received a stereoscopic card published by E. & H. T. Anthony and Company, New York, who used many of the Brady negatives and were sometimes referred to as Brady's New York representatives. The card bears the inscription, "Prominent Portraits No. 2968. Hon. Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States."

There is so little difference in the prints used in this pair, that one wonders that so slight a variation would serve the purpose of giving the subject the proper depth. This card seems to contain Meserve No. 115 and a variant, although Meserve No. 75 would appear to have about the proper variation to be included as a companion portrait.

We are sure that numbers 73 and 74 are companion pictures, and it now appears that there is a possibility of discovering at least six new prints in this series.

### *Gardner*

The most interesting stereoscopic study in the library of the Lincoln National Life Foundation is a combination of Meserve numbers 49 and 50 which appears on a stereoscopic card. The Foundation also has two separately mounted photographs of the same two exposures photographed by Mr. Lincoln. Inasmuch as these two autographed copies were sent to the same individual, it appears as if the photographer, upon receiving an order for a dozen prints, would take six of the double negatives and fill the order with six prints from each negative. They were so nearly alike that the purchaser would never know his pictures were made from two different negatives.

The largest number of stereoscopic prints thus far identified which were made at one time were taken by Gardner on August 9, 1863, two of which have just been mentioned. The Meserve classification in this series notes nine different portraits: numbers 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 105, and 114. These portraits represent at least seven different exposures with three groups of stereoscopic prints already identified, i.e. numbers 49 and 50, 51 and 52, and 114 and one print in the Brown University collection not recorded by Meserve. There is a possibility of discovering four new pictures of Lincoln in this series, if a stereoscopic camera was used in every instance and prints made from the negatives.

Those who have felt that all of the original prints of Abraham Lincoln have been discovered now have a new field of effort open to them, as there is a probability that fifteen more variants or companion prints of these stereoscopic portraits already identified may yet be found. There is also the possibility that some of Lincoln's other settings were before a stereoscopic camera.

### *Walker*

Possibly the best known of the stereoscopic pictures of Lincoln was made by Thomas Walker in Washington late in 1864. A copy of the card bearing these companion pictures is in the Library of Congress, and one copy by the Keystone View Company and another without imprint are in the Foundation collection.

Two prints by Walker are listed by Meserve as numbers 91 and 92. Number 92 is one of the stereoscope prints in this pair and somewhere one may be able to find a companion print for No. 91.

See Lincoln Lore's 452 and 459.