

LINCOLN LORE

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HELPS FOR IDENTIFYING LINCOLN PICTURES

There is no phase of Lincolniana where there continually appear such glaring errors in description as in the citations accompanying the reproductions of original Lincoln portraits. This fact can be illustrated by a book of Lincoln pictures which came from the press in 1939, released by one of America's outstanding publishers: two of the pictures of Lincoln are in reverse; the dates on which eight of them were taken are incorrect; and there are eight Lincoln pictures about which the general information is in error.

In magazine and newspaper illustrations which use Lincoln pictures, one seldom finds any considerable number of studies which have correct citations. Contemporary lithographs fall into the same errors as those noted in illustrative material.

The discrepancies in reproducing Lincoln portraits are not wholly confined to engravings, lithographs, etchings, etc., but may often be observed in bronze. One of the most noticeable errors is found on the heroic bronze statue in front of the State Capitol at Springfield, Illinois, which shows a smooth-faced Lincoln standing before a great slab bearing the Farewell Address. It is well known that when Lincoln made that address, he was wearing a beard.

Errors in Lincoln's appearance at certain times in his life also creep into the make-up rooms of the legitimate stage and movie colony. Massey, in his interpretation of Abraham Lincoln in Illinois at the time of the Farewell Address to the people of Springfield, completely fails to visualize Lincoln in his make-up, as he wears but a few chin whiskers and abbreviated sideburns when actually Lincoln was wearing the heaviest beard of his career.

The Mole

A blemish on Lincoln's face in the form of a mole has not only been the most distinguishing mark in establishing the genuineness of a Lincoln photograph, but its absence on spurious portraits has been the most damaging evidence against them. Of this fact we are certain, that the mole was on the right side of Lincoln's face about midway on the heavy line reaching from the side of the nose to the corner of the mouth. There is no excuse for the great number of pictures of Lincoln which are shown in reverse, if this location of the mole is kept in mind.

Strange to say the earliest portrait of Abraham Lincoln made in 1846 is almost without exception shown in reverse position. At this early date the mole was not as conspicuous as in later years, and it cannot be used as an outstanding identification mark, but the way Lincoln has his vest buttoned establishes definitely his right side from his left side.

The Beardless Lincoln

All Lincoln pictures can be divided into two classes, beardless and bearded studies. The President-elect started to grow a beard immediately after his election on the first Tuesday in November 1860. This day serves as the most important division date in grouping the pictures, as it sets apart two easily identified groups. Photography was first introduced into the western country in 1840, and Lincoln was dead by April 15, 1865, making an interval of twenty-five years during which the pictures must have

been taken. As Lincoln was thirty years old at the time photography was invented, it is evident there can be no photographs of him before that time. The period of the beardless pictures extends from 1846 to November 6, 1860, and the period of bearded pictures from November 25, 1860, to April 15, 1865.

Frederick Hill Meserve has listed 116 different original Lincoln portraits, thirty-nine of which show Lincoln with a smooth face. Two groupings of these pictures are possible: those taken previous to and during the Lincoln-Douglas Debates; and those taken of Lincoln as a nominee for the Presidency.

Collar and Tie Combinations

The most helpful way of distinguishing between the two separate smooth-faced groups is by a close observation of Lincoln's neckwear. In the earliest portraits of the Lincoln-Douglas Debate period, Lincoln is usually wearing a collar with a stock-like effect and a very long, full bow tie. The pictures of the Presidential nominee show him with a rolling collar where the points are distinguishable and the tie much more abbreviated, the bow seldom extending much beyond the wings of the collar. As President-elect, Lincoln wore a high, stiff, overlapping collar and continued to wear it for about a year, when he adopted a more comfortable low, stiff collar which style he continued to wear until his death.

The Beard

It is possible to divide the pictures showing Lincoln with a beard into two general divisions. Just before Lincoln left Springfield for Washington for the inauguration, he was wearing the heaviest beard of his entire life, and at the time of his inauguration he was still wearing a full beard slightly trimmed. The Washington barbers, however, soon cropped off most of the generous growth of whiskers, so that at the time of his death he was wearing the lightest beard of his career with the exception of the few days after he first began to let it grow.

With the time of the First Inaugural as a dividing line, we have what may be termed the "President-elect pictures" and the "Chief Executive pictures," identified largely by the fullness of Lincoln's beard.

Hair Parting

The portraits of Lincoln as the Chief Executive may be further divided by observing on which side of his head he has parted his hair. Three distinct periods during his administration are designated by this matter of hair arrangement. All pictures of Abraham Lincoln up to February 9, 1864, show him with his hair parted on the left side of his head, and those taken on the above date portray him with his hair parted on the right side. Other portraits made later in 1864 show the hair still parted on the right side, but those taken in 1865 show a slight part now back again on the left side.

These observations would allow one to conclude that the pictures of Lincoln as Chief Executive can be divided into three periods: inauguration to Gettysburg, hair distinctly parted on left; 1864, hair parted on right; 1865, hair indistinctly parted on left.

LINCOLN PICTURE IDENTIFICATION CHART

| Date | Beard | Hair Parting | Collar |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| 1846— | Beardless | Left side | Stock-like* |
| 1859—Nov. 6 1860 | Beardless | Left side | Low soft rolling |
| Nov. 25 1860—Mar. 4 1861 | Heavy beard | Left side | High stiff overlapping |
| Mar. 5 1861—Feb. 2 1862 | Heavy beard | Left side | High stiff overlapping |
| Feb. 3 1862—Feb. 8 1864 | Light beard | Left side | Low stiff overlapping |
| Feb. 9 1864—Dec. 31 1864 | Light beard | Right side | Low stiff overlapping |
| Jan. 1 1865—Apr. 14 1865 | Very light beard | Left side | Low stiff overlapping |

*Note—With this type of collar Lincoln wore a stock tie or a very large bow tie, and at the close of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates he was wearing a small bow tie with low soft rolling collar.