

# LINCOLN LORE

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## FACES AND FACSIMILES

A major contribution to illustrative Lincolniana has been made by a Hungarian editor, Stefan Lorant, who is referred to as the "Father of Modern Picture Journalism." A large compilation of photographs and manuscripts which have been inaccessible to all but a comparatively small number of Lincoln admirers is now available to the masses, and many people for the first time will get a good idea of how Lincoln really looked and how beautifully and intelligently he wrote.

The title of Lorant's book, *Lincoln, His Life in Photographs* is a true index of its contents. The pictures of Lincoln are supplemented with photographs of his relatives and contemporaries and also prints of buildings associated with his life story. Incidents relating to his assassination and the subsequent trail of the conspirators is an added feature.

Possibly for the first time there has been brought together by Mr. Lorant a considerable number of Lincoln's writings in facsimile. The selections apparently have been chosen with these factors in mind: chronological sequence, and human interest appeal, literary excellency and historical importance. The document section is a fine illustration of what may some day be done with the vast amount of important writings of the President, now available for reproductions from the originals.

The enlargements of about thirty of the best Lincoln photographs comprise the most impressive section of the book. Many of the portraits formerly  $2\frac{1}{2} \times 4$ , may now be observed four times their original size and strange to say, in some instances a new Lincoln seems to come forth by this enlargement process.

Possibly the least impressive part of the book is the biography of Lincoln which utilizes about twenty pages dispersed at intervals between full page illustrations. While the 10,000 word story is largely based on facts, lack of orientation is evident as well as the author's failure to understand some of the provincial atmosphere surrounding Lincoln during his early years. The ancestral background also clings to some of the old folklore discarded by many modern historians.

This new book should be especially valuable to editors who have occasion to reproduce Lincoln photographs. The citations used by Lorant under the original portraits of Abraham Lincoln are as historically correct as modern research can make them. There should now be no excuse for the constant appearance in books, magazines and the press of erroneous statements associated with pictures of the martyred President.

Ida M. Tarbell might be called the pioneer searcher in the field of original Lincoln photographs and in the several biographical studies which she made for the McClure Co., some of which were profusely illustrated, many of the original Lincoln photographs, now familiar to all, were first displayed.

The publishers of *Lincoln, His Life in Photographs*, have done a very fine piece of work in producing this

interesting book, but some of the claims they make for it are greatly exaggerated. It is by no means "the first of its kind" nor the "first complete bibliography of Lincoln pictures." It is not even "the first chronological numbering of the pictures" as alleged.

Another photographic life of Abraham Lincoln which had a rather wide circulation for its day was collected by Edward Bailey Eaton with Francis Trevelyan Miller as its author. It contained most of the pictures published in the Meserve compilation.

As early as 1911 Frederick H. Meserve brought out his edition, limited to 100 copies, of original portraits of Abraham Lincoln and further extended the compilation in a still more limited edition with a large number of original portraits of members of the Lincoln family, contemporaries, and pictures of buildings and historical incidents. He also has supplemented these original pictures with two privately printed illustrated booklets, each containing eight newly discovered prints.

A book very much like the Lorant book in its general purpose was published in 1939 by Little, Brown and Company, so it does not appear that the claim of primacy in the field of Lincoln illustrative books could be claimed by the publishers of Lorant's excellent compilation.

There have been numerous bibliographies of Lincoln pictures, many of them much more complete than the Lorant work. Oldroyd compiled one hundred photographs of Lincoln which were published on a large broadside. Meserve, Eaton, and later on Rufus Wilson, made bibliographies of Lincoln pictures, but it was Winfred P. Truesdell who made the most ambitious attempt to list, not only original photographs of Lincoln, but also all lithographs, engravings, wood cuts, etchings, etc. of the President.

The publishers are also in error wherein they emphasize that the appendix of the Lorant book contains the "first chronological numbering." The Meserve collection was arranged chronologically on the best information then available about the dates of the pictures, and in 1938 *Lincoln Lore* gave an accurate chronological list of 108 Lincoln photographs. Previous to this, *Lincoln Lore* published a comparative list of the Oldroyd, Miller and Meserve prints.

It is unlikely that Lincoln students will be willing to give up the Meserve enumeration which has been used as the basic key in the larger Truesdell work, and although the Lorant numbers follow a more accurate chronological order it would likely add to confusion to feature a competitive list of numbers for the same prints.

One other claim made by the publishers is also exaggerated when they emphasize the number of new Lincoln prints "never before listed." Only one is new to Lincoln students and Mr. Lorant should receive every Lincoln student's thanks for the discovery of the magnificent full length portrait of Lincoln which he brought to light. The book is altogether worth-while even if it does not fully come up to some of the claims made for it.