

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 676

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

March 23, 1942

OAKLEAF LINCOLNIANA TO INDIANA UNIVERSITY

It was with much satisfaction that Lincoln students recently learned of the acquisition of the Oakleaf Collection of Lincolniana by Indiana University. The Library should find a very appropriate home in this school of learning, so close to where Abraham Lincoln spent fourteen formative years of his life, and should give a new emphasis to the study of that period so important if one is to understand the growth and achievements of the Emancipator.

The Oakleaf Lincolniana is the last one of what was known as "The Big Five" collections, assembled by Daniel Fish, William H. Lambert, Judd Stuart, Charles McClellan and J. B. Oakleaf. The Fish Collection is in possession of the Lincoln National Life Foundation. The Lambert Library was disposed of at auction. Huntington Library acquired the Stuart Lincolniana, and the excellent collection gathered by Charles McClellan went to Brown University.

On February 12, 1934 the Associated Press carried a news item originating in Springfield, Illinois, in which Mr. Paul Angle, of the State Historical Library, named "The Big Five" collectors of the modern day. He mentioned the collection of Governor Horner, the Oakleaf Lincolniana, the Illinois State Historical Library, the Lincoln National Life Foundation, and Brown University, and commented that three of the five were then in Illinois. Since then the Horner and Illinois State Historical Library Collections have been combined, reducing the list to four. The Oakleaf Collection having come to Indiana, two of the four collections are now located in this state, one in Illinois, and one in Rhode Island. Of the original "Big Five" collections, four of which were kept intact, two are in Indiana, one in Rhode Island and one in California. One of the Indiana collections is located in the southern part of the state at Bloomington and the other in the northern section at Fort Wayne.

In some respects the two collectors, Fish and Oakleaf, had more in common than any of the others because both of them became bibliographers as well as collectors. Daniel Fish published what might be called the first exhaustive bibliography in 1906.

July 28, 1920, shortly after the death of Stuart, Mr. Oakleaf wrote to Daniel Fish, "Now, you and I are the only ones left of 'The Big Five.' I don't want to lose sight of you, and I hope you won't forget me."

After the death of Judge Fish the mantle of bibliography seemed to fall on the shoulders of Judge Oakleaf and in 1925 he brought out a publication not only supplementing the Fish work, but supplying new titles published between 1905 and 1925. The Oakleaf bibliography limited to 102 copies is now one of the rare items in Lincolniana. It is rather a strange coincidence that both of these collections which formed the basis of the two exhaustive Lincoln bibliographies should finally be housed in Indiana, as one collection was originally gathered in Minnesota and the other in Illinois.

Judge Oakleaf was contemplating another bibliography at the time of his death and in a letter to the editor of *Lincoln Lore* on January 21, 1929, he stated, "I am working hard on my new bibliography. That is of more interest

to people than anything I could write excepting that I must get up a book Lincoln and the Bridge Case."

Mr. Oakleaf's interest in Lincolniana began in what might be designated as the year of the Lincoln Literature Revival, 1889. It was at this time that the Nicolay and Hay *Life of Lincoln* was being published in the *Century Magazine* which caused the largest number of books to be written since the avalanche of Lincoln's funeral sermons which came from the press in 1865.

Although Judge Oakleaf was the youngest of "The Big Five" collectors, inasmuch as he survived the others, his library of books and pamphlets grew to larger proportions than any of his contemporaries. He confined himself almost exclusively to books and pamphlets and since he was anticipating the preparing of a bibliography he constantly had in mind the Lincoln numbers which were lacking on his shelves. With the exception of Judge Fish the other members of "The Big Five" were also interested in gathering pictures, medals, manuscripts, etc., but Judge Oakleaf emphasized Lincoln literature.

One of the features of the Oakleaf collection was the binding of pamphlets. Possibly this plan was encouraged by Judge Oakleaf after having secured many pieces from the Lambert collection which were uniformly bound in three-quarter morocco. The covers of the original pamphlet were bound in and enough blank pages supplied to make the rebound pamphlet thick enough so that titles and authors could be printed horizontally on the back strip of the pamphlet increased to book size.

Possibly Judge Oakleaf was the first collector to rent an apartment for his Lincoln books and pamphlets, it consisted of four rooms. During the latter part of his life he thoroughly enjoyed showing the great collection, so well displayed, to his many Lincoln friends.

On June 2, 1930 Judge Oakleaf passed away at his office and the last one of "The Big Five" collectors was gone. The collection became the property of heirs, and his son, J. L. Oakleaf, for some years had the collection on display at the Oakleaf home, but more recently it was put in storage.

The son attempted to carry out his father's wish with reference to the collection that it be kept intact, and although many opportunities were available to dispose of it through the regular trade channels open for the distributions of libraries, it was not until a purchaser was found whom it was felt would have been acceptable to Judge Oakleaf that it finally changed hands.

Dr. Herman B. Wells, President of Indiana University, chose February 12 as the day on which to announce the purchase of the collection from the heirs of Judge Oakleaf. The acquisition of the Library was made possible through special contributions to Indiana University Foundation by George A. Ball of Muncie, Indiana, William G. Irwin of Columbus, Indiana, and Frank L. Jones, of New York.

The Oakleaf Library which consists of some 8000 books will be housed in a room to be set apart as the Lincoln Room of the University Library and a specially appointed curator will have charge of this new Lincoln memorial.