

LINCOLN LORE

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SCHOOLS OF LINCOLN AUTHORS

There has been throughout the years, since the earliest Lincoln book came from the press, a continually changing viewpoint from which various schools of authors have observed the life and works of the sixteenth President of the United States. While it is impossible to draw any clearly defined line of demarcation, which will identify even a few of the authors of Lincoln books as belonging to certain groups, we are able to show an evolutionary process in an attempt to eventually present to civilization a sympathetic and just word portrait of the most remarkable character of the new world.

The chronological sequence of the periods, where the writings of certain groups predominated, is more easily determined than the eligibility of the writers to qualify for membership in the selected divisions. Of course, there is some overlapping in time and personnel in both of these attempts to seek out a more intelligent understanding of the changing aspects of Lincoln literature.

Political figures in American History, about whom very much has been published, have attracted literary groups of about the same type as those who have written about Lincoln. First there were the *Journalists*, who wrote the political campaign biographies, then followed historical narratives by *Associates*, and after they had passed from the scene, *Compilers* would begin to gather reminiscences of those still living who remembered the historical figure. If the subject of the biography achieved fame, the *Analysts* would soon be trying to account for his genius and finally he would fall in the hands of the *Social Scientists*, who, by the use of documentary sources, would attempt to preserve what might be of permanent biographical value to pass on to other generations.

While there may be other schools of authors such as eulogists, writers of fiction, poets, and playwrights, who discuss historical figures, the five mentioned usually follow one another in the sequence already shown. With respect to the time element in the periods when the biographies of Lincoln were written, the *Journalists* were in the ascendancy for the decade 1860-1869. The *Associates* were the producers for the next twenty years, from 1870-1890. The *Compilers* were busy for a quarter of a century or until sometime after the Lincoln centennial in 1809. With Lincoln's fame assured, the *Analysts* began contributing their interpretations of the "man for the ages," and now the *Analysts* make room for the students of social science or *Social Scientists*.

Journalists

Quite naturally newspaper men or professional writers comprised the first group of Lincoln authors. Their primary interest was the preparing of such campaign biographies in 1860 and 1864 which would contribute to Lincoln's election.

Possibly John Locke Scripps should be called the dean of the school of journalists who wrote about Abraham Lincoln during the sixties. He was the managing editor of the *Chicago Press and Tribune*. Mr. Lincoln prepared for Mr. Scripps an autobiography, written in the third person, which is the basic study of all Lincoln biography.

The Washington correspondent of the *New York Independent and Evening Post*, D. W. Bartlett, should be included in this group of journalists, along with Joseph H. Barrett, whose name is often confused with Bartlett's. Barrett was with the *Cincinnati Gazette*. Another Ohio newspaper man, William Dean Howells, editorial writer of the *Ohio State Journal*, at Columbus, made an early contribution to Lincoln biography.

Two other journalists, more prominent than those already mentioned, contributed biographies of Lincoln in 1864. H. J. Raymond, brilliant editor of the *New York Times*, and J. G. Holland, famous editor of the *Springfield Republican*.

Associates

Following Lincoln's martyrdom, several men who had

been closely associated with Lincoln, began to gather information anticipating a biography of the President. There were two different groups, one consisting of lawyers who had been closely associated with Lincoln in his legal practice of Illinois, and another group of men who had served Lincoln in some secretarial capacity in Washington.

William Herndon, law partner of Lincoln, was one of the first of the President's Illinois associates to announce his intention of writing a biography. He sold his documents to another law associate of Lincoln, Ward H. Lamont. Both Herndon and Lamont secured collaborators named Weik and Black respectively, to do the actual writing of their books. Isaac N. Arnold, a Chicago lawyer acquainted with Lincoln, contributed a volume, and he was followed by Henry C. Whitney who wrote about Lincoln on the circuit.

In the secretarial groups, the works of Nicolay and Hay are too well known to need much comment. W. O. Stoddard and Noah Brooks, both serving Lincoln in secretarial capacities, followed with interesting discussions.

Compilers

When authors who were actually acquainted with Lincoln passed from the scene, their places were taken by *Compilers* who interviewed those who had known and met Lincoln, or had preserved some information relating to him. These authors gathered a voluminous source of material. Possibly there should be included in these groups: Chittenden with his "Recollections," Rice with his "Reminiscences," Gilmore with "Personal Recollections," and the compilations gathered by Oldroyd, Browne, McClure, Chapman and others.

Analysts

When the generation that knew Lincoln in the flesh passed, there came a school of students who in a large measure has been responsible for popularizing the Lincoln story and making the Emancipator live again here and everywhere. The first *Analyst* who had also compiled much original material, was Ida M. Tarbell, then came Rothschild, Charnwood, Barton, and Ludwig, and perhaps the greatest of them all, as far as a vivid portrayal of the President is concerned, Sandburg.

Social Scientists

The era of modern science is slowly, but surely, having its effect on our literature and the scientific spirit has gripped the historians and biographers interested in the field of the Social Sciences. Possibly the modern school of biographers now emerging might be called the *Social Scientists*. They largely ignore the writings of the *Journalists*, and *Associates*, also the *Compilers* of folklore and even the *Analysts*. They attempt to get back to original documentary sources. Their primary interest is not political capital, personal tributes, eulogies, or even character sketches, but they are searching for historical facts. Their attention is naturally directed to Lincoln's own writings and addresses, and documentary sources in the archives of Mississippi Valley State and County Court Building and the inexhaustible collection of manuscripts at Washington.

Nathaniel Wright Stevenson and Albert J. Beveridge, although reluctant to leave out entirely the inviting folklore, were members of the vanguard of author scientists interested in the social studies. Possibly Prof. James G. Randall best represents the school of a dozen or more authors who are writing, not merely for this generation, but for the generations to come.

Lincoln literature has passed through the stages of colorful biography, hero worship, eulogies, narratives and folklore, character study, and now that the written pages about him will be presented from the viewpoint of the *Social Scientists*, we may anticipate documented discussions and enduring writings on Abraham Lincoln as the Statesman supreme.