

# LINCOLN LORE

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## THE McCLURES' ANECDOTES AND YARNS

The collector of Lincolniana will find few books more confusing in his cataloguing effort than those bearing the name McClure. There were two different authors by the same family name, one, the famous Alexander H. McClure, of Philadelphia, contemporary and friend of Lincoln, and the other, J. B. McClure, a compiler and publisher, of Chicago.

Not only is there confusion in name, but to further add to the difficulty, both authors published compilations of Lincoln stories, and both of these books were published in Chicago. Alexander McClure referred to his story of Lincoln as "Yarns," and J. B. McClure used the synonym "Anecdotes." The title of Alexander's book was *Abe Lincoln's Yarns and Stories*, and J. B.'s book was called *Anecdotes of Abraham Lincoln and Lincoln's Stories*.

The preface to J. B. McClure's first edition was signed on July 4, 1879, while A. K. McClure inscribed the introduction to his publication March 15, 1901.

Rhodes and McClure, publishers of the J. B. McClure item, stated in their advertisement, "This volume contains the best collection of stories ever issued, as told by one of the greatest story tellers and best of men, Abraham Lincoln." A paper covered copy with Lincoln's picture on the cover sold for thirty-five cents. The same text in a cloth binding with a frontispiece, similar to the cover portrait in the paper covered edition, sold for seventy-five cents.

The cloth covered book was on sale earlier than September 1879, as the Lincoln National Life Foundation has one with this interesting inscription: "George B. Lincoln, Sr. from his loving son George. Rochester, New York. Sept. 25, 1879."

Apparently there was an immediate response by the people to this book as two more editions of the cloth bound book came out in 1879 and they are so dated. The advertisements on the pages in the back of the book allow them to be identified as special issues. The second edition and third edition in the Foundation Library have green and dark blue covers, respectively. It is likely that cloth of various colors was used in binding these early editions. The cover designs also vary.

In the second edition there appears in the advertisement this review from *The Interior*, "J. B. McClure, who has become one of the most successful compilers of idle hour books in this country, has made another list with a large collection of 'Lincoln Stories.' Mr. McClure sells his books by the ten thousand. His compilations have decided merit. They are always of a pure moral religious tone, and they hit the popular fancy." This edition also carries a testimonial in the advertisements bearing the date September 18, 1879 so the edition must have been published later than this date. The third edition in 1879 did not come from the press until after December 9, as a printed letter bearing this date appears in the advertisements.

At least one more edition of the book with the same format came from the press in 1880 and the advertisements in the back of the book were cut down to only two pages. At this time also the first text in German appears and it carried the date 1880. There were but 178 pages, ten less than in the English version, but the book was of the same mechanical design as the first cloth edition.

Five years later, in 1885, a new series of the publication began, and although the preface was not changed, a new date was appended, July 4, 1885. More important, however, is the 58 pages of additional stories. Up to page 188 the text is the same as in early editions. The size of the pages was changed and a heavy beveled cover with a new design made this a deluxe edition. The removal of all

illustrations to the front of the book did not improve it, however, and the paper was of much poorer quality. The German edition also appeared in the same format with 198 pages and cover of beveled edge. They both sold at one dollar each.

After this beveled cover edition, the book began to take on a more humble appearance. The 1888 edition, although retaining the same size format and same pagination in both the American and German editions, appeared in a cheap cover and inferior paper. However there were at least two editions of the book in 1888. Apparently the paper covered volume had a new lease of life in 1888. The cover was the same as the 1879 edition with the exception of slight changes at top and bottom of cover. The edition was called "Standard Library No. 9." Both cloth and paper editions now used the date January 1, 1888 at the conclusion of the preface.

The editions of 1891 and 1893 both carried at the conclusion of the preface the dates January 1 for each respective year, and the 1893 edition came out in a red cover instead of the black cover which had predominated in the years previous. These books were known in the advertisements as the Standard Library Edition, although both the English and German versions were mentioned as having 240 pages, the English had slightly more pages and the German slightly less.

In 1891 J. B. McClure made a venture in another publishing program which was to greatly change the book of anecdotes. He issued a publication entitled, *Abraham Lincoln's Speeches*, and in the preface, dated July 4, 1891, he stated it was the first compilation of this kind. It contained 478 pages. This book was largely responsible for a combination book of stories and speeches which he brought out in 1895.

The extension of the original story book to contain a collection of Lincoln speeches caused the title to be changed to *Abraham Lincoln's Stories and Speeches*. A new preface was prepared, dated, "Chicago, June 1, 1895." The type was reset in a more readable style and the miscellaneous section was revised to a large extent, closing with page 290. The new section on Lincoln speeches, containing selections from his 1891 publication, started with page 291 and concluded with 477. The advertisement in the book called the publication "the new 1895 edition, handsomely illustrated, 473 pages." There may have been a 473 page edition, but the ad was probably written before the additional pages were appended, as subsequent advertisements carry the same citation. A new date, January 1, 1896, appears with the preface of an edition published the following year, but the 1893 imprint carried no date whatever under the preface.

When the 1897 edition appeared the advertisement it carried mentioned an edition for 1904 while it carried no date under the preface it did mention in an advertisement the "new (1897) edition" and then followed the correct pagination, "477 pages." The last edition which preserved in the Foundation collection was dated 1906 and it was identical with the edition of 1904 except the date.

Alexander McClure's *Yarns and Stories* was first published and copyrighted in 1901, but inasmuch as none of the issues carried imprint dates, it is difficult to ascertain the number of editions which have been published. At least three different formats have been used with various book dealers imprints stamped or printed in the space provided for such use. The John C. Winston Company brings out a new edition at intervals. Alexander McClure published in 1892 one other title, "*Abraham Lincoln and Men of Wartimes*," of which there were at least two editions.