

LINCOLN LORE

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FIRST ISSUE OF SCRIPPS BIOGRAPHY

A copy of the Chicago imprint of the John Locke Scripps campaign life of Lincoln brought \$275 at a recent auction, but only \$18 was paid for a New York imprint of the same pamphlet. Although it must be admitted that of the two issues the former imprint is less often discovered, nevertheless, the descriptive notation in the catalogue designating the Chicago imprint as "the first issue of the first edition" undoubtedly influenced the higher figure received for it. The wide margin in price paid for these two items with similar contents naturally raises the question with respect to determining, with certainty, what printing may be considered the first issue of the Scripps work.

The confusion existing in a positive identification of the first issue of the Scripps pamphlet is caused by the appearance of what seems to be, except for imprint, caption, and advertisements, two identical printings from the same type. Ernest J. Wessen, who is our best authority on early campaign lives of Lincoln, feels quite confident that he has discovered a Chicago "Scripps" printed from type, and that "Experienced typographers who have examined the copy of the first edition" agree with him, although he concludes, "Not all are in agreement on this point, however." The Lincoln National Life Foundation is in possession of two New York imprints, one printed from type and the other from stereotype plates. Impressions with the Chicago imprint, struck off from stereotype plates, are also extant. So in reality we have four variants from which to select a first issue. Both stereotype copies can immediately be eliminated, however, as it is doubtful if in Lincoln's day any printing would be made from plates previous to an issue from the original type.

The fact that both original imprints and both stereotype copies have the identical blemishes and errors in the make-up forms indicate that all four printings are from a common source. The only way to explain the presence of similar impressions from original type published in different cities so far removed from each other is to conclude that all the printing from type was done in either one of the two places, Chicago or New York. It is Mr. Wessen's opinion "that the first edition was hurriedly printed from the type in Chicago, mats made and rushed to New York," where he believes the stereotype copies were printed. The presence of a New York imprint struck off from original type would suggest that possibly the first issue of the Chicago pamphlet was also printed in New York, and that all the press work of the Scripps biography of Lincoln was done in the *Tribune* office.

On June 29, 1860, in the *Semi-weekly Tribune* the following announcement appeared, "The Life of Abraham Lincoln by an Illinois Republican who knows well the man and his history will be issued from the *Tribune* office about the first of July, in a large compact pamphlet of 32 double column pages, for general circulation as a campaign document." The notice of the above pamphlet as *Campaign Tract No. 6* is also added to the complete list of tracts advertised by the *Tribune*. The following week Scripps announced in the *Chicago Press and Tribune* for July 4, 1860, that a campaign biography had been published, and continued: "It is a pamphlet of 32 pages of class type, double columns, and in the style and shape of the campaign life of Colonel Fremont issued in 1856."

The reference to the Fremont biography submits fur-

ther evidence as to the probable place where the Lincoln biography was printed. With the exception of a picture of Fremont, which appeared on the first page of the 1856 pamphlet, the format of the Lincoln work is identical in almost every particular. The same number of pages, chapter arrangement, introduction of chapter outlines in smaller type, copyrighted line, price announcements, and double columns of the same width are noticeable in each pamphlet. The Fremont pamphlet was printed at the *Tribune* office in New York and was undoubtedly used as a model for the Lincoln biography.

The best evidence that the Scripps life was printed in New York is the fact that the format corresponds with the other pamphlets in the *Tribune Tract Series*. The style of type discussed in detail by Mr. Wessen and especially the width of the columns (15 picas) are identical with the other *Tribune* publications, whereas the 1860 campaign pamphlets put out by the *Chicago Press and Tribune*, previous to the Scripps work are of smaller type and of different column width (13 picas).

If we accept the supposition that all copies of the Scripps work were published in New York there is little possibility that the Chicago imprint may have been run off before the New York impression. The aggressiveness of Mr. Greeley, however, would rather imply that the New York copy was first set in type, a supply of pamphlets printed, and the stereotype copy made; then the caption and advertising was changed for the Chicago first issue and still later the stereotype variant.

The *New York Daily Tribune* on July 14th, 1860, placed at the head of the advertisement for the campaign pamphlet it had been running, these words, "Now Ready. Send in your orders. The Life of Lincoln by an Illinois Republican." It was not until the issue of July 19th, five days after the New York paper announcement, that the *Chicago Press and Tribune* came out with the statement, "We issue today a campaign biography of the Republican standard-bearers. . . . It has been prepared with great care by one of the editors of this paper . . ." If the same conclusions are drawn with respect to first printings in this instance, as in other studies of campaign biographies, it is evident that the *New York Tribune* imprint rather than the Chicago edition was the first from the press.

A concluding note about the scarcity of the Chicago imprint of the Scripps, which undoubtedly influences its high price, is timely. The scarcity of the pamphlet is not due, primarily, to the "great Chicago fire" which theoretically has been responsible for the rarity of many volumes printed and widely distributed a decade or more before the conflagration occurred. A little cache of the Scripps pamphlets said to have been burned in the *Tribune* office in 1871, and the loss of those copies collected by Chicago citizens living in the fire area should represent but a very small fraction of the great volume of these tracts which undoubtedly were distributed during the campaign of 1860.

The scarcity of the Chicago Scripps more likely has been due to lack of identification. A coverless pamphlet with a caption title "Life of Lincoln" and the first page appearing very much like the opening pages of a mutilated old book with no author stated, would be difficult to identify today, even with the Chicago imprint and advertisement noted. The New York copy is usually identified as *Tribune Tract No. 4*.