

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 869

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

December 3, 1945

WANT LISTS AND RARITIES

The earliest collectors of Lincolniana to assemble large libraries were aided in their quest by issuing "Want Lists." These compilations of Lincoln books they desired to acquire were sent to dealers and also issued jointly for distribution among themselves. The group commonly known as the "Big Five" which included: Fish, Lambert, McLellan, Oakleaf, and Stewart were in constant correspondence with one another and Fish became the bibliographer for the group.

One of the accomplishments of these joint want lists was the identification of certain titles which might be called rarities. If no one of the "Big Five" was able to acquire an item it was considered excessively rare. Through the comparison of their wants, the group was able to conclude which books were the more elusive numbers. Fifteen years ago the editor of Lincoln Lore published in bulletin No. 79 a list of one hundred rare books and pamphlets compiled from one of these joint lists and all were noted in the Fish bibliography. Thirty-seven of these rare items no one of the group had been able to acquire.

The larger collections of today, assembled by both individuals and institutions, have doubled in number the items gathered by the early collectors. The Fish bibliography published in 1906 contained but 1080 titles, and in 1919, Oakleaf, the successor to Fish, added 1576 items to the Fish compilation. Monaghan's bibliography out this year, which includes all Lincoln books and pamphlets published previously to 1940, locates 3958 titles as compared with the total of 2656 noted in Fish and Oakleaf combined. The Monaghan enumeration system however does not reveal the actual increase in the volumes of Lincolniana when compared with the Fish and Oakleaf. Monaghan allows one entry to refer to a whole series of pamphlets under the same name, such as the quarterlies of the Abraham Lincoln Association, fifty-eight issues in this instance, which receive but one citation number. Oakleaf especially, was prone to pay more attention than Monaghan to the separate listing of variants which usually fall under one enumeration in the latter's plan. It will also be remembered that since 1939 nearly 600 additional Lincoln items have been published.

The tremendous increase in the size of our present day Lincoln libraries over those gathered by the pioneers in this field can be visualized by calling attention to the collection of the Lincoln National Life Foundation. The Foundation has gone about building a Lincoln library as one would compile a bibliography. The Foundation's card index summary up to November 30, 1945, shows a total of 7014 books and pamphlets gathered and catalogued under practically the same system used in the Monaghan plan except that each book is given a separate index card. This Lincoln library listing over 7,000 separate books and pamphlets on Lincoln, no two of which are identical, contains neither collateral books, nor sheets printed on both sides. There is no provision in either pamphlet or broadside listings for tabulating this latter classification.

For many years a Lincoln item was considered rare if it did not appear in the bibliography by Fish and the book dealer's favorite rarity line stated, "Not in Fish." With the appearance of the Oakleaf and Starr compilations, the Foundation used this rarity code, "Not in F. O.

S." meaning not in Fish, Oakleaf and Starr. With the availability of the Monaghan list, we are beginning to observe the citation "Not in Monaghan," which means the title was not to be found by the compiler of the bibliography in the larger Lincoln libraries.

Aside from the discovery of rare items not listed in Monaghan his bibliography may be used in one other approach to ascertain the scarcity of a Lincoln item. The compiler in the introduction of the work states "The location symbol shows the place where a copy of every book described may be found," and then he continues "a complete census of Lincolniana in the Illinois State Historical Library has been made." These statements are supported still further by the information: "Books not in the Illinois State Historical Library are allocated in the library where they were first inspected by the compiler after this study began."

The Lincoln library of the Illinois State Historical Society has always been considered one of the outstanding Lincoln collections in the country, but a few years ago its prestige was greatly enhanced by the acquisition of the late Governor Horner's library. The Horner library was called the largest private collection of Lincolniana gathered by an individual. The combining of these two libraries provided the basic material on which Mr. Monaghan depended for his original study. With this exceptional Lincoln source available, and the method of procedure and system of tabulating employed, so carefully explained by the author, we are able to set up an important basic compilation on which to establish a very helpful secondary want list.

A survey of the Monaghan notes reveals that there were 889 of the 3958 numbers listed in the bibliography which were not found in the joint Illinois-Horner library at the time the compilation was made. These 889 items were discovered, however, in one or more of the other 27 Lincoln libraries visited, which fact implies that there are nearly 900 volumes which could be called Illinois "wants" or nearly 23% of the total number of items listed. It would seem reasonable to conclude that any Lincoln book or pamphlet which had escaped both the Illinois State Historical Society, and Judge Horner as well, might be considered a desirable item.

It should not be very difficult for any person carefully using the Monaghan bibliography and its index to determine whether or not a Lincoln item is a rarity. If after exhausting the index leads, the title cannot be found, the book may be called a primary or general want as it was not found on the shelves of 28 outstanding collections. Once an item is located and if the symbol after it observed is other than "IHI", one may be reasonably assured that the item is not common and can be considered an Illinois or secondary want. Of course due caution should be used in first properly classifying the item to be sure it is eligible for a place in a Lincoln bibliography.

The two citations which might be used in preference to the earlier Fish, Oakleaf, Starr references would be (1.) "Not in M." (Monaghan) (2.) "Not in IHI" (Illinois State Historical Library). The third list and possibly the more important one for each individual collection would be a list of wants desired for his own library.