

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 905

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

August 12, 1946

GROWING INTEREST IN THE IMPOUNDED LINCOLN PAPERS

A recent feature article by William H. Myers released for daily newspapers has produced a new wave of curiosity with respect to the contents of Lincoln papers now impounded in the Library of Congress and which are eligible under the provisions of a bequest to be opened on July 24, 1947. It appears as if there will be a steadily growing interest in this collection until the papers through some form of duplication, are actually made available to the general public.

Mr. Myers' article obviously was inspired by an interview with Jay Monaghan who in turn had talked with "persons cataloging and indexing the papers." It is Monaghan's conclusion that "the papers apparently do not reveal any scandals concerning the Lincoln family or Republican Party," as has been intimated. J. C. Fitzpatrick, chief of the Division of Manuscripts in the Library of Congress is said to have informed Monaghan that "the collection consists of 10,000 to 12,000 items requiring 126 boxes for storage." Further information supposedly released by Fitzpatrick states that "the papers date from 1832 to Lincoln's death in 1865." It is also reported that less than one-seventh of the items are signed by Lincoln and ninety-nine per cent have already been printed by Nicolay and Hay.

The observation seems to have escaped most Lincoln students that when Emanuel Hertz brought out in 1931 his work entitled *Abraham Lincoln, a New Portrait*, he published on the last eight pages of the second volume what purports to be a summary of these impounded papers not used by Nicolay and Hay. Previous to 1931 it would appear that Hertz was allowed to make some notations of the titles which appeared on the outside of the folded papers. Here are the introductory words in the section of the book containing the compilation: "List of Letters and Documents in the Lincoln collection in the Library of Congress and not published in Nicolay and Hay. The deed of gifts from Robert T. Lincoln provided that the collection is not to be opened for examination until the expiration of twenty-five years after the donor's death. The numbers on the extreme left preceding each item indicate the folders in this collection in which each item is found."

There are 137 different documents cited by Hertz with rather complete caption titles and the numbers of the bundles in which they are deposited are recorded. The papers noted are from 35 scattered bundles, the numbers running from 8 to 67 inclusive. The largest group of manuscripts mentioned as having been taken from any one bundle is sixteen.

The bulk of the material listed is for the war years. There are only two items mentioned previous to 1860, one dated July 24, 1858, is a copy made by Lincoln of a letter from Horace Greeley to Joseph Medill. The other item written by Lincoln is dated February 22, 1859, a veto message to the Illinois House of Representatives and signed by William H. Bissell. The absence of any other documents previous to this time would imply that Nicolay and Hay already had used such data in their *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln* as related to the early years of the President.

The campaign year of 1860 produces but five documents the most important consisting of the earliest draft of the opening paragraph of the First Inaugural. Of more

human interest are copies of correspondence passing between Lincoln and Grace Bedell about her suggestion that he grow a beard. A letter on Tariff Protection of American Industry is also listed.

The year 1861 seems to produce the largest number of unpublished items according to Hertz as he records 37 manuscripts which did not appear in the earlier work by Nicolay and Hay. The data with respect to the trip to Washington should be of interest as it contains correspondence carried on with the different cities where Lincoln was to visit with some fragments of his brief speeches, among them a "pencil draft of the Farewell Address at Springfield." Although there is available certain facts about the composition of the First Inaugural Address, first proofs and revised proofs, a letter from Browning and Seward's suggestion for the Inaugural's closing paragraph should contribute further information about the preparation of this notable state paper.

Most of the documents for 1861, as might be expected, relate to the war, the Fort Sumpter bundle especially should clarify some points of discussion. Several proclamations, a great many endorsements, and memoranda about the purchase of supplies and messages to military personnel constitute the bulk of the unpublished material for the year. Those interested in the Mason-Slidell affair will find a draft of the reply to Earl Russell.

There are eighteen unpublished items mentioned by Hertz for 1862 and possibly foremost in interest are two separate documents relating to the plan for compensated emancipation which Lincoln was stressing at this time. An endorsement on a letter from Seward states "Profoundly laid by" and there also appears the memoranda relating to an officer whose wife is urging his promotion; Lincoln comments, "She is a saucy woman and I am afraid she will keep tormenting till I may have to do it."

Emancipation year 1863 produces 26 items but apparently of most importance are the items relating to the Vallandigham case with many letters of commendation as well as a draft of the letter to the Ohio Committee. Lincoln's humor finds expression in an endorsement on a military letter; "Submitted to Mars and Neptune."

Next to 1861, the year 1864 has the greatest number of unpublished items as recorded by Hertz. There are 29 notations but practically all of them have to do with routine matters relating to the war such as recommendations, pardons, reports from the front, findings of military courts, etc. There is one notation for June 16 which is labeled "Opinion on Poem."

There are but eight citations for 1865 none of which seem to be of much importance but a half dozen papers marked "memorandum" at the close of the list, with such subjects such as slavery in the District of Columbia, ways and means of prosecuting the war, Mexican War, tariff, Niagara Falls, etc., undoubtedly will be of some interest.

If Mr. Hertz, and whoever may have assisted him, have given us an accurate and complete list of all the papers in the impounded manuscripts which do not appear in the Nicolay and Hay "Complete Works," then very little information not already known will be forthcoming when the papers are opened.