

LINCOLN LORE

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SYSTEMATIZING AN AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION

Recently there has been formed an organization known as the *National Society of Autograph Collectors*. The aims of the group are: "To encourage the meeting of autograph collectors; To stimulate and aid them in their various collecting specialties; To facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge among collectors and scholars." The first meeting of the association will be held at the William L. Clements Library of the University of Michigan on May 17 and 18. Besides an interesting program there will also be an exhibition of autographs loaned by libraries, dealers, and individual collectors.

The Lincoln National Life Foundation has assembled through the years a valuable collection of original correspondence, manuscripts, documents, endorsements and signatures associated with the Lincoln story. It has also assembled a vast amount of facsimile writings and printed information relating to Lincoln's complete works. This data has gone through a process of organization which has made it possible to systematize the information so that it may be immediately accessible. The forming of the autograph association has suggested the presentation of a plan of procedure for beginners.

The writings as a whole are gathered under five different divisions as follows: A. Correspondence, B. Manuscripts, C. Documents, D. Endorsements, and E. Signatures.

(A) Correspondence

There is a practice, that is rather general, of arranging most autobiographical material in chronological order and this plan is followed by the Foundation. A letter actually written by and signed by Lincoln is of most value and an item of this sort is usually designated in catalogues as an "A. L. S."—autograph letter signed. A letter typed or written by a person, not the correspondent, yet signed by him, is called an "L. S."—letter signed.

With the opening of the Lincoln papers at Washington more attention is being paid to letters written to Lincoln which makes possible a two way correspondence; also letters which refer to Lincoln have long been popular with collectors. Letters by Mrs. Lincoln, the Lincoln children or relatives of the Lincolns, have come to be desirable items. Collateral correspondence offers an intensely interesting field and can be extended to challenge the perseverance of the most ardent devotee. Possibly a complete set of presidential letters is the acme of autograph collections.

On and on through the collateral

list one might go until he reached the Lincolnians, and in this group there is no end to the possibilities of expansion as it eventually leads one into the field of "extra illustrating."

1. PERSONAL—*a.* Autograph letters signed. *b.* Letters signed. *c.* Autograph notes signed.
2. ADDRESSES—Letters written to Lincoln.
3. REFERENCE—Letters referring to Lincoln.
4. FAMILY—Letters by members of family.
5. COLLATERAL—*a.* Presidents of the United States. *b.* Administrative; Cabinet and Secretaries. *c.* Military; Army and Navy Personnel. *d.* Political; Congressmen, Governors, Notification Committee, Illinois Legislature, "Long nine" members, etc. *e.* Lincolnians; Authors, Sculptors, Poets, Artists, Musicians, etc.

(B) Manuscripts

In the use of the caption "manuscripts," we are confining our definition of the term to embrace only such contributions as might approach the status of a written composition. Under this classification would fall autobiographical sketches, copy for Lincoln's informal addresses, notes, memorandums and transcripts which eventually reached the public in the form of speeches, lectures or debates.

1. AUTOBIOGRAPHIES.
2. PRE-ADMINISTRATION ADDRESSES.
3. DEBATES.
4. OCCASIONAL PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESSES.
5. POETRY.

(C) Documents

A document, so classified in this arrangement, carries with it a formality which is usually found in presenting evidence and relative procedure, also administrative papers which have vested in them a note of authority, making them official.

This division opens up a vast territory to explore which reaches chronologically, from the copies of the early surveys made by Lincoln as a young man, up to the items penned on the last day of his life. The legal career of Lincoln, extending over twenty-three years, can best be broken down into his partnerships, as most of this class of documents bear the names of the joint partners. Lawyer collectors might prefer a subject or a jurisdiction arrangement rather than the partnership designation. Of course the documents of the administration period are so numerous that the classi-

fication at best must be merely suggestive.

1. BUSINESS—*a.* Surveys. *b.* Maps. *c.* Deeds. *d.* Promissory Notes.
2. LEGAL—*a.* Stuart Partnership. *b.* Logan Partnership. *c.* Herndon Partnership.
3. POLITICAL—*a.* Legislative and Congressional Reports. *b.* Party Procedure.
4. ADMINISTRATION—*a.* Inaugurals. *b.* Messages to Congress. *c.* Proclamations. *d.* Calls for Troops. *e.* General Orders.

(D) Endorsements

Most endorsements such as are included in this section contain something more than a signature, usually a line or two of instruction or explanation. Here is another instance where it is impossible to approach anything like an exhaustive list. It does not seem advisable to attempt any sub-grouping of papers because they differ so widely with respect to the character of the original writing which is endorsed.

1. AMENDMENTS.
2. APPOINTMENTS.
3. AUTHORITY TO AFFIX SEAL.
4. CONFIRMATIONS.
5. DISCHARGES.
6. PARDONS.
7. PASSES.
8. RECOMMENDATIONS.
9. REFUSALS.
10. WARRANTS.

(E) Signatures

The matter of signatures is almost as exhaustive as the division of endorsements, but they can be divided more expediently. Signatures of Abraham Lincoln on his cancelled checks seem to have been clipped and presented to many solicitors by Robert Lincoln. Signatures on petitions, resolutions, etc., were quite common. A certain class of government forms which needed nothing more than the President's signature, represent a very large classification, and a miscellaneous list of signatures which greatly enhanced the value of the items on which they appeared has caused many thrills for autograph collectors.

1. FINANCIAL—*a.* Checks. *b.* Receipts. *c.* Franks.
2. LEGAL—*a.* Election Returns. *b.* Fee Books. *c.* Estray Notices. *d.* Petitions.
3. EXECUTIVE—*a.* Certificates. *b.* Commissions. *c.* Dismissals. *d.* Land Grants. *e.* Orders. *f.* Promotions.
4. MISCELLANEOUS—*a.* Autograph Albums. *b.* Books and Pamphlets. *c.* Family Bible. *d.* Hotel Registers. *e.* Pictures.