

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 1044

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

April 11, 1949

THE SHOWER OF LINCOLN PRINTS AT THE WIGWAM

A recent acquisition by the Foundation in the form of an original print of Lincoln from a woodcut has aroused some interesting speculations. On the lower margin of the picture there is a pencil notation in the handwriting of George William Curtis: "These prints were showered through the Wigwam immediately after Mr. Lincoln's nomination May 1860." Mr. Curtis was a delegate to the Republican convention at Chicago which chose Lincoln as the Republican nominee for the presidency and the above mentioned print was evidently acquired by him at the time.

The 9" x 12" picture itself with its inscriptions is of interest. It is a reproduction of what is known as the "towsled hair" Lincoln and listed by Truesdell as Meserve 6:4. This first edition seems to be unknown to Truesdell as he notes only a third edition which adds the lines "Price 15 cents Third Edition" and "Rounds, Printer." The picture is a vignette in an ornamental oval within a rectangle 8" x 6". Under the print in the margin are the words "ABRAHAM LINCOLN" and under this inscription "From a photograph by Hesler." There is also a line; "Copyright secured" and woven into the ornamental border the name of the artist "E. H. Brown, Del & Sc" and the name of the place "Chicago." The words "State Sovereignty" and "National Union" are also worked into the design.

Possibly the absence of any personal statement on the print about Mr. Lincoln arouses more interest than the printed data. There is no statement that he is a candidate for any office and there is no mention of the Wigwam Convention. Could the pictures have been printed with the idea of using them in an emergency during the balloting for the presidency? Or were they prepared primarily for the vice presidency contest in case Lincoln should lose out in his quest for the higher office?

The real curiosity builder however is the pencil notation by Mr. Curtis. George William Curtis was editor of *Harper's Monthly* and in 1857 editor of the newly established *Harper's Weekly*. In 1862 President Lincoln offered him the office of council general of Egypt but he declined the office. He continued his interest in politics however throughout his life and was especially active in civil service reform.

Mr. Curtis' statement about the time element in the distribution of the pictures raises many questions. Why the picture of Lincoln, an active candidate for the presidency, should not have been distributed before the presidential balloting may have been another part of the Lincoln strategy of remaining, as John Wentworth advised, not too "prominent." That Lincoln's followers already had them available for distribution before Lincoln's nomination is evident. It also seems likely that they had instructions as to when they were to be released.

The question one is bound to ask himself in the light of this interesting print of ambiguous purpose, did Lincoln have secreted a double barrel gun in his attempt to bring down one of the two prize offices? Was this print similar to an emergency shell that could be taken out of one barrel and put in the other if one hammer failed to ignite the cap?

James H. Matheney is said to have told Henry C. Whitney that "Lincoln's first real specific aspirations for the presidency dated from the incident of his being named in the convention (1865) as a candidate for vice president." Whitney further states that on June 20th he was in court at Urbana with Judge Davis and Lincoln and read to Lincoln from a Chicago paper of that date that Lincoln had received 110 votes for the vice presidency on the Republican ticket, according to Whitney Lincoln's only reaction to the news was: "I reckon that ain't me; there's another great man in Massachusetts named Lincoln, and I reckon it's him." There is positive evidence that Lincoln was in Urbana at the time the Republican convention was in session at Philadelphia and he probably made some such remark as was credited to him. It is reasonable to conclude, however, that after Lincoln learned what a favorable showing he had made in the balloting for vice president that he did not first lament lack of organization for the winning of that party office.

We are rather inclined to believe that Lincoln's process of selling himself on the presidential idea was evolutionary and that he gradually elevated his vice presidential sites of 1856 to the presidential aspirations of 1860, not suddenly but gradually and with more assurance after the Cooper Union speech.

In November 1859 there was a concerted action on the part of Cameron's friends to line up Lincoln as vice president on a ticket headed by Cameron and a pamphlet was printed under the caption *Address of the Cameron and Lincoln Club of the City of Chicago to the People of North West*. Even on his way to Cooper Institute in February Cameron and David Wilmot attempted to contact him at Philadelphia.

Henry J. Raymond declared that the speech at Cooper Institute "made Mr. Lincoln the second choice of the great body of Republicans of New York." Raymond further stated that in conversation with a friend in New York it is implied that Lincoln had evidently been approached about the vice presidency. He opened a discussion with his friend in these words: "If they make me vice president with Senator Seward as some say they will. . . ."

Possibly the same speech may have helped Horace Greeley to choose his ticket composed of Dayton and Lincoln. Dayton had beaten Lincoln for the vice presidency in 1856 and Lincoln's supporters had graciously withdrawn in his favor. One paper in the west was advocating Chase and Lincoln as a strong ticket.

Professor Randall in referring to Lincoln's chances for the Presidency in 1860 after suggesting Lincoln's strength in the west, states that one of the threats that Lincoln had to guard against was that "The Lincoln movement would be side tracked into the vice presidency."

It is evident that such a course would spell disaster to Lincoln's presidential hopes which had reached a high tide by convention time but we are wondering if even then the vice presidency on the Republican ticket would have been despised by Mr. Lincoln. Putting forth such a tremendous last minute effort at Chicago, John Wentworth had advised Lincoln, "It should nominate you to one of the offices."