

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 1052

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

June 6, 1949

LINCOLN IN NEWSPAPER FEATURES

Attention is focused on newspaper features by the death last week of Robert L. Ripley, the creator of "Believe It or Not." While he extended his human interest information through many vehicles of distribution it was his cartoon appearing in daily newspapers by which he will be remembered.

The *United Press* in a first page announcement of Mr. Ripley's death mentioned that "his statements were not always what they appeared to be . . . and occasionally he was wrong." Illustrating the last affirmation attention was called to his allegation that "Abraham Lincoln and Robert E. Lee were first cousins." A "not" of course in the Ripley vernacular. The fact is significant that the *United Press*, out of all of the thousands of his propositions, should choose a Lincoln subject for one of its two references. Yet how often Ripley used some statement about Lincoln is well established by the large number of his cartoons in the files of the Foundation.

One of the earlier Ripley drawings stressing the Lincoln theme appeared on Lincoln's birthday twenty-seven years ago. It was an illustration with a large Lincoln portrait associated with a log cabin with date, 1809; the capitol at Washington with date, 1861; and the Washington Lincoln Memorial with date, 1922. It did seem almost unbelievable that the boy born in the cabin should eventually become the seated Lincoln in America's most beautiful shrine.

One might conclude from the frequent references to Lincoln in Ripley's well known feature that he was greatly interested in this unique character. When *Simon and Schuster* published the second series of his book entitled *Believe It Or Not* a portrait of Abraham Lincoln was used as a cover design with the caption "Lincoln was Wrong!" The words of Lincoln recalled were those found in the Gettysburg speech, "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here," and Ripley comments, "Yet this address is remembered longer and more universally than any other."

It would be expected that the popularity of Ripley's features would invite other artists to try their hand at the same type of human interest illustrations. Possibly the best known of the competitors, if they can be so considered, is the feature by John Hix "Strange as it May Seem." Hix also seems to have been attracted by the Lincoln story as the large number of drawings relating to the Emancipator reveal.

A fragmentary list of other series of illustrated features developing along the same line as the Ripley approach and which have drawn occasionally upon the Lincoln story is submitted here:

THE UNUSUAL

- Berg, R. O.—Religious Remarkables
- Ferguson—This Curious World
- Flanagan, Raymond—Explore Your Mind
- Foxy—Today's Riddle
- Gaille, Walter—Truth is Stranger than Fiction
- Gaille, Walter—'But It's True
- Krenz, Art—Miracles of Sport
- Payne, Christi—Food Oddities
- Roberts, Paul—Oddly Enough
- Scott, R. J.—Scott's Scrap Book
- Scott, R. J.—Now You Know

BIOGRAPHICAL

One of the earliest picture strip feature series relating to Abraham Lincoln was released by the *McClure Newspaper Syndicate* in 1927. The first installment appeared in the *Chicago Herald Examiner* on Thursday, February 24 and continued daily except Sundays until Wednesday, June 22.

The strip consisted of four pictures for each of the 102 panels and with four pictures to a panel. Over 400 episodes in Lincoln's life from cradle to grave were displayed. The art work was done by Nicolas Alfonsky. Ida M. Tarbell was the editor of the text and the series was called, "In the Foot Steps of Abraham Lincoln." Its historical accuracy is most unusual for a work of this type and gave the reading public an excellent portrayal of Lincoln. It is to be regretted that the art work by Mr. Alfonsky was not on a par with the editorial contribution.

J. Carroll Mansfield brought out a Lincoln picture strip in 1933 and used the same form of four episodes to a panel as were used in the Tarbell effort. There were 84 strips in the series which also covered the complete life of Lincoln. The illustrative material, and especially the sketches of Mr. Lincoln, received much better treatment at the hands of the artist than the longer and more detailed series to which we have already referred.

EPISODES

The Tarbell and Mansfield features were also directly or indirectly instrumental in bringing before the public historical and biographical series such as the following, all of which featured Lincoln incidents regardless of the "unusual" character of the episode. Here are a few of them as gleaned from the Foundation files:

- Beck, Thomas—All in a Lifetime
- Brown, Paul F.—Uncle Sam, His Day Book
- Bull—The Week's News
- Byrnes, Gene—Reg'ler Fellers
- Cox, Edwin—Private Lives
- Globe Feature Syndicate—The Story of Our Country
- Krenz, Art—100 Years of Baseball
- Leonard, Lank—Brushing Up your Memory
- Mathieu, Herbert—Our Democracy
- Murray, Fig—Secin' Stars
- Swain, Bob—Your Maryland and Mine

MISCELLANEOUS

There are also a large number of miscellaneous columns which includes, such items as cross-word puzzles, etc. which might be extended indefinitely. Nearly all the comic strips have at some time referred to Lincoln. The latest series appeared in "Dixie Dugan" by McEvoy and Striebel. A few features follow, exclusive of the funnies, which have occasionally used Lincoln themes:

- Dodd, Ed.—Back Home Again
- Knecht, Karl Kae—Going and Coming
- Prim—Telling Tommy
- Shafer, Bo—Pen Paragraphs
- Thomas, Dan—Closeup and Comedy
- Wiggam, Albert Edward—Let's Explore Your Mind