

LINCOLN LORE

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CAMPAIGN BIOGRAPHIES OF 1864

General interest in the Lincoln campaign biographies of 1864 have been overshadowed by similar publications of 1860 to about the same degree as the Wigwam convention has received the emphasis over the Baltimore conclave four years later. While the dramatic setting at Chicago with its several aspiring candidates contributed to the enthusiasm generated, just why the campaign books of that period should be so much more desirable, from the collector's viewpoint, than those published four years later it is difficult to ascertain.

While there was a dearth of Lincoln biographical source material in 1860 this was not true in 1864. The war had made available important orders, proclamations and the usual executive papers of the President. Two authors who had contributed manuscripts in 1860 were back again with extended discussions in 1864. Six books in all are usually listed as coming under the classification suggested in the caption of this monograph. They will be presented in the chronological order in which they were published.

Much speculation has been aroused as to which book was "first in the field" in the campaign of 1860 but there seems to be little interest in this phase of information in the campaign biographies of 1864. One appeared two months before Lincoln received the nomination, two followed shortly after the Baltimore convention, one came out in midsummer and two more barely qualified as campaign biographies by coming out but two weeks before the election.

(Williamson)—Philadelphia, April 14, 1864

David Brainerd Williamson is said to have been the author who prepared for B. Peterson and Brothers of Philadelphia a biography of Abraham Lincoln under this title, *Life and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln*. This is the earliest of the 1864 campaign biographies. The publishers wrote a letter to President Lincoln on April 13, 1864 accompanying two presentation copies of the book. The letter signed F. B. Peterson and Bros. follow:

"We have this day sent you per mail two copies of the 'Life of President Lincoln' to be published tomorrow, and which we would be pleased to have you accept and if you (have) a moment leisure look over it and if there are any errors in it advise us and we shall be pleased to make the corrections before printing another edition."

There were two enclosures in the letter, one a two column news reprint announcing the book and stating "Life of President Lincoln is Published this Day." The other enclosure was a hand bill describing the book and noting its contents and submitting the following trade paragraphs: "Complete in one large volume of 200 pages with a portrait of President Lincoln. Price 50 cts. in paper or 75 cts. in cloth."

Raymond—New York, June 11, 1864

Henry Jarvis Raymond was chairman of the National Union Executive Committee and also editor of the influential New York Times. The preface of his book is dated May 5, 1864. As early as April 4 he was at work on the text as on that day he wrote a letter to Mr. Lincoln inquiring if "some of the dispatches from McClellan, not published, would add to the history of your administration which I am compiling."

The Lincoln Papers in the Library of Congress reveal that on June 11, 1864 a printed poster advertising Raymond's book reached the President. It was entitled: *History of the Administration of President Lincoln*. The poster stated, "Now ready and for sale by Hudson Taylor, 334 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D. C." The publishers were Derby and Miller and the book contained 496 pages. A paper covered campaign edition was issued later containing 136 pages and including a brief biography of Andrew Johnson.

Barrett—Cincinnati, June 18, 1864

Joseph H. Barrett, one of the 1860 biographers of Abraham Lincoln, prepared an extended discussion on the *Life of Abraham Lincoln* bearing the date at the close of the preface, May 14, 1864. The book was not ready for the press, however, until a month later. William H. Moore, of the Cincinnati firm, Moore, Wilstach and Baldwin, wrote a letter of presentation to accompany two volumes of the book he was sending to the President. Excerpts from this letter dated June 18, 1864 are herewith presented:

"Thinking that you might like to see what Mr. Barrett has done in his new book I have just sent you two copies by mail. If at any time you would like copies forwarded to your friends or yourself please inform me that I may have the pleasure of submitting them to you. . . . We might have waited to send you finely bound copies but I thought you would like to see the volume as it goes forth to the people, and so have forwarded copies from those first received from the bindery."

Thayer—Boston, July 9, 1864

William Makepeace Thayer is better known to Lincoln students as the author of *The Pioneer Boy* rather than *The Character and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln*, the title of his campaign biography. At the top of the front page of the book bound in wrappers is the citation "The 'Campaign Document'." The first edition consisted of 76 pages although a subsequent edition having had the objectional criticism about Horace Greeley removed, contained but 75 pages. A portrait of Lincoln appears on the cover. *Harper's Weekly* of July 9 in a brief book review calls it "an admirable summary, . . . a most convenient political hand-book of the times."

Not only do we have the 75 page variant but also another rare volume in which the publishers have bound together Thayer's first edition of 76 pages and *The Pioneer Boy* of 310 pages. From all probability this latter publication came from the binders during the campaign.

Abott—New York, October 20, 1864

One of the rarest of the campaign biographies bearing the name Abott A. Abott as author is said to have been written by Alexander Delmar. It was brought out by T. R. Dawley, publisher of New York. *Leslie's Weekly* in its "Book Notices" for the issue of October 20 makes this notation, "*The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, T. R. Dawley, 13 & 15 Park Row. A popular life of our President giving the chief events of his career in a brief and connected way."

The first edition appeared in wrappers and contained 100 pages. In this form it is very rare, although editions enlarged and printed after Lincoln's assassination are often observed.

Victor—New York, Oct. 22, 1864

While the Lincoln biography published by Beadle and Company, famous creators of the dime novel, may not have been planned as a campaign biography, the fact that it antedated the election a few days makes it eligible for this current classification. It was written by Orville James Victor, noted author and writer associated with Beadle and Co.

The last two pages of the biography seem to have been put in as an after thought to give it a little campaign atmosphere as it uses a contributed article from the issue of *Harper's Weekly* for September 24, 1864, favorable to Mr. Lincoln's candidacy. In the issue of the same magazine for October 22, appears this notice:

"See the new biography of this remarkable man just issued as No. 14 Beadle's Dime Biographical Library. Sold at all newsstands or sent postpaid on receipt of price 10 cts. Company clubs and Loyal leaguers supplied at lowest wholesale rates."