

LINCOLN LORE

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FOURSCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO

The unique terminology used by Abraham Lincoln in the initial words of the Gettysburg Address, in which he refers to the birth of the nation as having occurred "fourscore and seven years ago," has been given a new emphasis by the fact that it is just eighty-seven years ago this last November 19 that Lincoln used the expression.

Paul M. Angle, director of the Chicago Historical Society, should be complimented for making the anniversary of the Gettysburg Address this year a memorable one. He conceived the idea of bringing together in the rooms of the society all five holograph copies of the oration. This is the first time all the known originals have been assembled in one place. They were unveiled at a special opening ceremony held on the afternoon of Sunday, November 19, at which time Hon. Adlai E. Stevenson, governor of Illinois and Hon. Martin H. Kennelly, mayor of Chicago, made appropriate speeches.

The care with which the exhibit was arranged, allowing both sides of the manuscripts to be visible, made possible a comparative study of the documents. The trustees of the Chicago Historical Society sent special invitations to a number of prominent citizens to be present and the general public was invited to view the exhibit and enjoy the program. While the chronological sequence of the last three copies of the address is well established there is much division of opinion about the identity of the copy which Lincoln held in his hand while delivering the speech. The limited space available in *Lincoln Lore* will not allow a discussion of this controversial subject in these columns, so the numerical citations used on the exhibits are retained and the descriptive sentences, in part, which appeared under the first two manuscripts will be presented.

FIRST DRAFT Twenty-Nine Lines

"Written in Washington ten days or two weeks before the dedication ceremonies. The fact that the conclusion is in pencil may indicate that Lincoln worked on the draft at two different times."

John Nicolay, private secretary of the President, prepared an article on "Lincoln's Gettysburg Address" for the February 4, 1894 issue of *Century Magazine* in which his conclusions differ from the above statement. He reproduced a facsimile of the original draft and commented that Lincoln during his speech "held in his hand the manuscript first draft of his address which he had finished only a short time before." This was originally known as the Nicolay copy of the address. James Grant Wilson writing for the April 24, 1913 issue of *The Independent* in referring to this same copy stated that "It was long in possession of his (Lincoln's) secretary and biographer John G. Nicolay, to whom it was presented by the President, but since his death has unfortunately disappeared, and nothing is now known of it." However this copy turned up in the papers of John Hay and it was presented to the Library of Congress by his children.

SECOND DRAFT Thirty-Three Lines

"Written at Gettysburg on the morning of November 19, 1863. This is the copy that Lincoln held while he spoke."

The editor of *Lincoln Lore* was interested in noting that this copy was immaculate as far as condition is concerned, apparently never having been folded or carried in anyone's pocket. There are nine corrections in the text implying that it had been a working copy. In

The Independent article by Mr. Wilson he stated with reference to this copy: "It is believed to be the one its author intended to take with him to Gettysburg, but which in some way was overlooked or forgotten and later, on his return to Washington was presented to Col. John Hay and now in possession of his family." This copy also was presented to the Library of Congress by the heirs of John Hay.

THIRD DRAFT Thirty-One Lines

Edward Everett, who was the principal speaker at Gettysburg, wrote to Lincoln in January 1864 requesting a copy of the President's few remarks to bind with his own lengthy oration for presentation to the Metropolitan Sanitary Fair at New York. Lincoln complied with the request and the copies bound together, which were sent to one of the sponsors, Mrs. Hamilton Fish, sold for \$1,000. Hon. Henry W. Keyes claimed that the purchaser was an uncle of his whom he does not name. Inasmuch as his mother's maiden name was Pierce and in 1875 Mrs. Carlos Pierce of Boston was in possession of the manuscripts, it appears as if Carlos Pierce may have been the uncle who made the purchase. Thomas A. Madigan in 1930 acquired the manuscripts from the Keyes family. In 1935 Mr. Madigan through the solicitation of Charles B. Pike loaned the address to be exhibited at the Chicago Historical Society of which Mr. Pike, who died in 1941, was President. The address was acquired by a Chicago collector who died previous to 1943 and in 1944 the manuscripts were purchased by the school children of Illinois with the aid of Marshall Field. The Illinois State Historical Library is the custodian of these valuable acquisitions.

FOURTH DRAFT Thirty-One Lines

George Bancroft, the historian, wrote to Lincoln in the spring of 1864 for a copy of the Gettysburg Address which might be used in a collection of writings to be lithographed and then sold at the Maryland Soldiers' and Sailors' Fair to be held in Baltimore. When the copy arrived, with no caption or signature, it was found to be unsuitable for the lithographer's use. After receiving from Mr. Lincoln a second draft of the address Mr. Bancroft kept the former copy for himself and this has become known as the First Bancroft Copy. This draft remained in possession of the heirs of George Bancroft and it was also acquired by Thomas A. Madigan and recently sold to Mrs. Nicholas H. Noyes of Indianapolis, who presented it to Cornell University.

FIFTH DRAFT Thirty-Seven Lines

The second copy prepared for Mr. Bancroft by the President found its way into the hands of Col. Alexander Bliss who with J. P. Kennedy, issued and had charge of the sale at the Baltimore Fair, of the lithograph book called *Autograph Leaves of Our Country's Authors*. This publication contained a facsimile copy of Lincoln's final draft of the address. While some of the books were sold, the original manuscripts did not find ready purchasers and Col. Bliss retained the second copy Mr. Lincoln had sent to Bancroft. This copy remained in the Bliss family at Baltimore until sold by the heirs of Dr. William J. A. Bliss through the Parke-Bernet Galleries. At an auction sale held on April 27, 1949, Oscar B. Cintas of Havana, Cuba purchased the draft for \$54,000. It is by far the most valuable of the five drafts, for in 1909 it was designated by the War Department as "the standard version."