

# LINCOLN LORE

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## EXTRA ILLUSTRATED AUTOGRAPHS

The most intimate memento associated with an individual which can be conveniently preserved through the years is a lock of hair. Once a living component part of a living friend or kinsman, it becomes a memorial of unusual significance. Beautiful jeweled lockets were made expressly for the purpose of encasing these keepsakes, and the locket often worn as a pendant on a gold chain became a family heirloom. Changing styles in jewelry has eliminated the locket, and with no attractive container to assure the preservation of the strands of hair, interest in these revered tokens has faded out.

The most significant item cherished today, which next to the locks of hair seems to be perfectly individualized, is an autograph writing. Possibly the parable of the lock of hair and locket, so closely associated in popular acceptance, may have a lesson of value for the collection and preservation of autographs. These desirable memorials—signatures from the pens of men and women who have graced the pages of history—are worthy of better treatment than they are often accorded. Sometimes they are dropped carelessly into an envelope or folder. Possibly they may be laid loosely and indiscriminately in a fragile pasteboard box with other specimens of little or no value. Once upon a time it was believed that they could best be honored by binding them into an extra illustrated book, where they became little more than fillers for a nondescript publication whose large paper edition was its only redeeming feature. A new emphasis seems to have been given to the importance of autographs by the circulation of the *Autograph Collector's Journal* published by the National Society of Autograph Collectors.

So distinctive a gem as a rare autograph deserves an appropriate setting. It should itself be the center of attraction, rather than serve as an illustrative feature. Modern utilities now available in the office supply field open up a new approach for displaying and preserving autograph writings. The use of transparent, flexible, plastic containers make it possible to handle and peruse a document without injury and with much satisfaction. Loose leaf covers of many designs with inexpensive fasteners offer added protection for the autograph. Furthermore, and fully as important, the cover provides for the inclusion of items associated with the rarity. These office specialties make it possible now to successfully *extra illustrate the autograph*.

The educational and historical function of an autograph may be greatly enhanced and its monetary value considerably increased if it is oriented in an environment including illustrations and related informative data. The initial step in preparing to extra illustrate a document would be the typing or printing of a title page. A picture of the signer of the manuscript might follow as a frontispiece. A typewritten copy of the featured document could next be inserted and so arranged as to face the most important item, the original writing itself enclosed in a transparent container.

The compilation of the items to be associated with the rare document could be arranged in any orderly manner, but they should follow rather than proceed or obscure the writing being featured. Biographical sketches of both signator and addressee might be prepared if the specimen being illustrated is a piece of correspondence. Facsimile copies of other related letters might be included. Pictures of people and places mentioned in the letter would be of interest. Possibly the most important contribution would be the history of the acquisition of

the document including the page of the catalogue where listed, if it be a purchase, and also the cancelled check.

The loose leaf feature of the folio would allow items to be added to the compilation without disturbing the sequence of the exhibits already assembled. When a sufficient number of extra illustrated manuscripts are prepared they may be arranged in a slip case of convenient size and the number of cases may be increased as the collection grows. The slip case will also give added protection against light and allow for filing alphabetically in library cases or in vaults. If vertical steel files are to be used slip cases with back strip but without ends might be used.

The Foundation has many valuable Lincoln documents now in the process of extra illustrating. A letter published in *Lincoln Lore* last week, Jan. 15, 1951, from Lincoln to Maj. Gen. Sherman, would serve as a good example of how extensively one might go about this process of extra illustrating autographs. We shall collate the exhibits as they are arranged numerically by sheets:

1. *Title Page*: ABRAHAM LINCOLN (L. S.)/to/ MAJ. GEN. WILLIAM T. SHERMAN/Sept. 19, 1864, 2 pages, 7% x 9% /INDIANA SOLDIERS GOING HOME TO VOTE/WASHINGTON, D. C./1864.
2. *Frontispiece*: Photograph of President Lincoln taken about time letter was written.
3. *Transcript*: Typewritten copy of the original Lincoln letter on verso page.
4. *Original*: The letter of Lincoln to Sherman displayed in transparent plastic container.
5. *Steel Engraving*: Picture of Gen. Sherman with facsimile autograph.
6. *Envelope*: The original envelope addressed "Gen. Wm. T. Sherman. Present."
7. *Pass*: Card dated Washington, Sept. 19, 1864 "Pass Hon. William Mitchell to Maj. Gen. Sherman headquarters and return." Signed by Jas. A. Hardie.
8. *Confirmation*: Copy of letter from Lincoln to Gov. Morton, October 13, 1864 confirming delivery of the letter to Sherman by Mitchell in these words, "In my letter borne by Mr. Mitchell to Gen Sherman . . ."
9. *Report*: Copy of letter from William Mitchell to President Lincoln on Oct. 24, 1864 referring to the delivery of the Lincoln-Sherman letter, "Having accomplished my mission and returned to my home to vote . . ."
10. *Purpose of Letter*: Copy of letter from William Mitchell to President Lincoln, Nov. 15, 1864 suggesting the purpose of the Lincoln-Sherman letter, "I did not underestimate the importance of the October elections when with you . . ."
11. *Identity*: Two letters from F. J. Brown in 1888 confirming the genuineness of the Lincoln-Sherman letter then in possession of William Mitchell's son, John Mitchell.
12. *Appraisal*: Telegram to owners of letter from well known dealer making offer for letter.
13. *Bill of Sale*: Acquisition papers with signatures of grantors, descendants of the above mentioned William Mitchell.

Such a procedure as demonstrated in the extra illustrating of the Lincoln-Sherman letter will not only preserve manuscripts and allow them to be safely exhibited, but the satisfaction and pride with which the owner can display his rarity will in itself compensate for time spent in an agreeable task.