

LINCOLN LORE

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PRESENTATION MEDALS

It is amazing how current events channel our thinking for the moment in parallel grooves and bring to the surface forgotten incidents of the past. No saga of the sea for many moons has so gripped the attention of the whole world as the heroic but losing battle waged by Captain Kurt Carlsen of the American freighter, Flying Enterprise. After an heroic deed is ventured one often hears the expression, "He deserves a medal." Lloyds of London, the insurance underwriters, presented one to Capt. Carlsen.

Capt. David Jones Medal

Several years ago an English woman by the name of Mrs. Lewis Jones wrote the Lincoln Life Foundation about a silver medal in her possession which seems likely to have been a token presentation by President Lincoln to her father-in-law, David Jones. The medal bears the inscription: "The President of the United States to Capt. David Jones of the Brig Mary Ann for his rescue of the crew of the American ship Cornelia 1861." On one side there is displayed an American eagle and on the other side a storm scene is pictured with a lighthouse, at the base of which one man is assisting another out of the angry waves. The medal $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter is set in a case which bears on it the same dedication as appears on the medal. The dye maker's inscription is as follows: "LEUTZE DEL ELLIS & CO." A further notation indicates that the ship Cornelia was from Portland, Maine. While there is a possibility that the medal was awarded by President Buchanan, who served until March 4, 1861, there is a tradition in the family that the name of the chief executive who made the presentation was Lincoln.

The Foundation has not succeeded in confirming the incident by the discovery of official papers relating to the presentation, but inasmuch as the story of the Flying Enterprise and its brave captain has aroused a new interest in seafaring men possibly some information about the saving of the crew of the ship Cornelia in 1861 may come to light.

Sarah Catherine Ford Medal

John A. Ford, a soldier in the Mexican War, was run out of Virginia at the beginning of hostilities because of his loyalty to the Union and was made a captain in the army upon the recommendation of Secy. Cameron. In the course of his military duties he had an occasion to talk with the President in April 1861 and took with him his seven year old daughter, Sarah Catherine Ford. During the conference the little girl is said to have found herself seated on Mr. Lincoln's knee and told the President she wished she were a soldier and bragged about what she would do. The President said he would like to fill his army with Sarah-soldiers. While seated on Mr. Lincoln's knee she made this comment which greatly pleased the President. She said, "You've got the longest legs I ever saw." Two weeks later she received a \$20.00 gold piece from the President dated 1861. It is encased in a silver maltese cross. On one of the arms of the cross is this inscription: "Presented to Sarah C. Ford by Abraham Lincoln," and on another arm, "President of the U. S. Washington, D. C. on the 24th of April 1861."

President Lincoln's Gold Medal

Abraham Lincoln had been expected to visit Philadelphia on Independence Day 1863 when he was to have

been presented with a gold medal by the Union League of that city. However, the great struggle going on at Gettysburg and Vicksburg demanded that he remain at Washington and the medal was forwarded to him. The purpose of the presentation was to give expression "to their approval of President Lincoln's conduct of the war and national affairs."

In the center of the obverse side of the medal is a shield with the words "E PLURIBUS UNUM" inscribed on it, above the shield are the words "UNION LEAGUE July 4th," on the left "1776" and on the right "1867." Below the shield the word "PHILADELPHIA" appears. On the reverse side this inscription is placed "ORGANIZED PHILADELPHIA DECEMBER 27th 1862." This medal received by the President on July 4, 1863 may have played some part in his selection of a theme which he developed in his Gettysburg Address in November. This gold medal was presented to Congressman George Dondero by the widow of Robert Lincoln.

George Robinson Medal

Nearly fifty years ago a house painter discovered on a vacant lot in San Francisco, wrapped in a newspaper, a leather case enclosing a bronze medal about three inches in diameter. The obverse side of the medal contained the profile of an unidentified man and just under it this inscription, "For his heroic conduct of the 14th of April 1865 in saving the life of the Hon. William H. Seward, then Secretary of the United States." Encircling the profile were these words, "To George Robinson, awarded by the Congress of the United States March 1, 1871." On the reverse side of the medal two men are shown locked in combat, one armed with a bowie knife.

Robinson was a Maine volunteer who had been injured and while convalescing had been detailed as nurse and guard to attend Secretary Seward who had a broken jaw and fractured leg resulting from a carriage accident. Lewis Payne delegated by John Wilkes Booth to kill Seward overpowered Robinson and was able to get to his victim and slash his throat. Robinson "succeeded in stemming the blood from Seward's severed arteries and so saved his life." Robinson was awarded the gold medal and \$5,000 by special act of Congress March 1, 1871.

The Widow Lincoln Medal

The most famous medallion associated with the Lincoln story is the gold medal presented by the citizens of France to the widow of Abraham Lincoln.

The communication to Mrs. Lincoln accompanying the medal was dated "Paris, Oct. 15, 1866" and this excerpt is copied from the letter of presentation:

"We are entrusted with offering to you the medal struck in honor of the great and virtuous man whose name you bear, on behalf of more than 40,000 citizens of France desirous of conveying their sympathy for the American Union in the person of one of its most noble and pure representatives."

The medal is $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter and on the obverse side there is a profile of Mr. Lincoln with inscription in French and on the reverse side a group of figures of appropriate memorial design. The gold medal is now preserved in the Library of Congress and a few bronze replicas were struck off, one of which is in the Foundation collection.