

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 1210

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

JUNE 16, 1952

A \$24,000 SCRAPBOOK

The single item that brought the highest price at the Oliver Barrett sale in February was a scrapbook made by Abraham Lincoln. It was purchased by Alfred W. Sterne of Chicago for \$24,000 and presented by him to the Library of Congress. Possibly the contents should be considered a manuscript as they contain newspaper reports of the speeches made by both Lincoln and Douglas in the famous debates of 1858. Lincoln gathered the subject matter and personally prepared the copy. The value of the scrapbook is greatly enhanced by eighteen manuscript notes and many corrections and deletions in his hand.

Not long after the close of the campaign for the Senate in 1858 it is apparent that Lincoln contemplated compiling newspaper clippings of the debates with Douglas. On November 20 he wrote to Dr. C. H. Ray of the *Chicago Press-Tribune* stating:

"I wish to preserve a Set of late debates (if they may be called so) between Douglas and myself. To enable me to do so, please get two copies of each number of your paper, containing the whole, and send them to me by Express; and I will pay you for the papers and for your trouble. I wish the two sets, in order to lay one away in the room and to put the other in a scrapbook. Remember, if part of any debate is on both sides of one sheet it will take two sets to make one scrap-book." The following spring in some correspondence he stated, "Last autumn and winter I got up a scrapbook."

As early as the month of March 1859 Lincoln must have given some thought to the possibility of having the debates, or at least some of them, put in print. On March 18 William A. Ross of Washington, Tazewell County, Illinois in writing about a contemplated volume stated: "I propose to begin with the Republican platform adopted at Springfield, your speech made at that time, the Douglas Chicago speech, your reply to it, then follow with the seven joint discussions, etc."

Lincoln must have taken up the question of having the debates printed locally by Johnson and Bradford, as three days after the Ross proposal, Lincoln received this note from the Springfield publishers:

"We have concluded not to print the debates. You can tell the other man to go ahead. We cannot do it well now.

"Accept our thanks for your courtesy and good feelings in the matter."

Reconsidering again the Ross proposal Lincoln wrote a long letter on March 26 advising Ross, "I would really be pleased with a publication substantially as you propose. But I would suggest a few variations from your plan . . ." He then told Ross that he had a scrapbook which he had prepared which presented the items he felt should be included.

While Lincoln could have had no idea of the monetary value of the book he did tell Ross in this letter:

"My scrapbook would be the best thing to print from; still, as it cost me a good deal of labor to get it up, and as I am desirous to preserve the substance of it perma-

nently, I would not let it go out of my control." Lincoln then suggested that possibly the book could be printed in Springfield under his supervision. Lincoln suggested as a title: "Illinois Political Canvass of 1858."

Ross replied to Lincoln on April 2 in part as follows:

"I received your letter yesterday giving your consent to the proposed publication . . . The whole amount of matter now proposed would make a book of about 400 pages . . . My idea was to have it published at Peoria by Nason, a job printer but I would sooner have it done at Springfield . . . I have no objection to your title but I think it would help the sale of the work to have on the title page or on the back of the book; Douglas & Lincoln Debate, Illinois Canvass 1858 or Debates between Judge Douglas and Hon. A. Lincoln in the Illinois canvass 1858."

Apparently the plans for publishing the debates were laid aside for the summer with Lincoln out of the city much of the time. Some political speeches Lincoln made in Ohio during September may have been responsible for transferring the publishing interest to that state. Lincoln received letters from both the Republican State Committee of Ohio and the State Board Equalization of Ohio thanking him for his speeches. The letters were written primarily to "express the earnest hope that together with the seven debates held by you with Judge Douglas during the famous Illinois campaign, they may be republished in an authentic and permanent form."

Lincoln replied to this suggestion on December 19, 1859 in a letter directed to G. M. Parsons & Others which is printed in full and becomes the closing chapter in the preliminaries to the publication of the famous scrapbook now housed in the Library of Congress.

"Gentlemen: Your letter of the 7th instant, accompanied by a similar one from the Governor elect, the Republican State officers, and the Republican members of the State Board of Equalization of Ohio, both requesting of me, for publication in permanent form, copies of the political debates between Senator Douglas and myself last year, has been received. With my grateful acknowledgments to both you and them for the very flattering terms in which the request is communicated, I transmit you the copies. The copies I send you are as reported and printed by the respective friends of Senator Douglas and myself, at the time—that is, his by his friends, and mine by mine. It would be an unwarrantable liberty for us to change a word or a letter in his, and the changes I have made in mine, you perceive, are verbal only, and very few in number. I wish the reprint to be precisely as the copies I send, without any comment whatever.

Yours very truly,

A. Lincoln."

The Follett, Foster & Co. of Columbus were the publishers who put out the book. It became the most important campaign document of 1860, and nearly 30,000 copies were sold.