

LINCOLN LORE

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FOUR CENT LINCOLN STAMP

A new lavender four cent postage stamp bearing a profile of Abraham Lincoln is announced by the Post Office Department. It will be released in New York City November 19 on the opening day of the National Postage Stamp Show conducted by the American Stamp Dealers Association. The fact that November 19 is the anniversary day of Lincoln's famous address at Gettysburg may have contributed also to the selection of the day for release. The stamp will not be available for general distribution throughout the nation until November 20. It is a vertical rectangular design with the lettering in white gothic. The word "LINCOLN" is in the lower right of the bust and the denomination "4¢" over "U. S. POSTAGE" is in the lower left hand corner. It is the fifth stamp in the "new regular series."

The likeness of Lincoln chosen for this stamp is from an oil painting by Douglas Volk, son of the famous sculptor, Leonard Volk, who made the life mask of Lincoln and the casts of Lincoln's hands. Douglas Volk created a great many oil paintings of Lincoln and fifteen years ago *Lincoln Lore* (No. 583) listed nine different studies. Some of them have been widely copied and many variations occur as they have been reproduced by different artists.

Volk's full name was Stephen A. Douglas Volk, whose mother was a first cousin of his namesake. At the time Volk died in Frybury, Maine on February 7, 1935 he was working on another painting of Lincoln. He was then seventy-nine years of age.

The Volk painting selected as a basic study for the stamp is one that has gone through many stages. As late as 1922 Volk created a seated Lincoln, which some critiques call his best work. This shows a profile of Lincoln's face closely resembling the head used on the stamp. *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly Newspaper* for April 22, 1915 published a likeness of the original bust painting and referred to it as "a portrait of Lincoln just painted by Douglas Volk of New York." This picture or a slight variation was copyrighted by the Detroit Publishing Co. As early as 1908 Douglas Volk, the painter himself, had a bust portrait of Lincoln copyrighted which appears to have been similar to the one distributed by the Detroit firm.

Current news releases about the origin of the new stamp claim that it is from "a portrait by Douglas Volk, now in the Mellon Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C." The *New York Times* for February 4, 1936 reports the sale of the Thomas Benedict Clark collection of famous paintings. Mr. Clark passed away in 1931 and had in his collection a painting of Lincoln by Douglas Volk similar to the bust on the new stamp. This painting was acquired by Knoedler and Co., New York art dealers. In a letter from Knoedler received by the Lincoln National Life Foundation in 1940 the dealer states that the painting of Abraham Lincoln purchased at the Clark auction "is now in possession of the Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, 716 Jackson Place, Washington, D. C." Apparently this is the identical painting from which the new four cent stamp has been copied.

However, this is not the first four cent postage

stamp of Abraham Lincoln released by the Postal Department. In 1894 a brown four cent stamp was issued which passed through four subsequent stages in 1894, 1895, 1898 and in 1901, respectively. The last mentioned issue bore a Philippine imprint. It was designed from a painting made by John H. Littlefield, who was a student in Lincoln's law office at Springfield, Ill. The Foundation stamp collection contains a proof sheet of another design, submitted for this stamp but apparently rejected. It is from a reproduction of an original photograph of Lincoln made in 1861.

The stamp dealers sixth national exhibition at New York will be held in the Seventy-First Infantry Regiment Armory. The theme of the show is "The Life and Times of Abraham Lincoln." A special room is being set apart for a display of Lincolniana and the Post Office Department and the Lincoln Museum at Washington are sending items of special Lincoln interest to place on display. It is expected the attendance will exceed last year's record total of 70,000. A postal substation will be set up at the show where the new stamp will be available and a special postmark will be used for all mailings with the following imprint "First day of issue/A.S.D.A. National Postage/Stamp Show Station."

The organization is placing special stress on the use of envelopes embellished with appropriate illustrations for attaching the "first day" 4¢ stamp on November 19. These decorated envelopes are known to stamp collectors as "cachets" or "covers" and comprise an important phase of the philatelic hobby.

Such "covers" were widely circulated during the Civil War and even those envelopes which do not bear the stamps have become desirable items. This is especially true of those which show a likeness of Abraham Lincoln. The Foundation has a large number of these prints, and among them possibly the rarest of all, a set produced in a series known as the Lincoln-Davis prize fight. It was published in a series of five views representing a five round bout. There does not seem to be available any adequate published check list of covers confined to the Lincoln theme alone.

The use of the modern cachet however, places much stress on the "first day" stamps and appropriate postmark dated in the city where the stamp is first to be put on sale. Cachets for this purpose are now produced commercially using such data as may create a historical background for the anniversary or episode commemorated. One of the earliest of the cachets featured was the "Special Flight Lindbergh Day" cover with the ten cent air mail stamp attached, and a Springfield, Ill. post mark.

Possibly the most attractive Lincoln stamp which has been released was issued on November 19, 1948 and was given wide circulation. It was classified as a commemorative stamp featuring the Gettysburg Address and portrayed a bust of Lincoln by Daniel Chester French taken from the heroic bronze statue in front of the Nebraska State Capitol at Lincoln, Nebraska. The first day sales, however, were made at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.