

LINCOLN LORE

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INDEX VOLUME OF THE COLLECTED WORKS

Abraham Lincoln Association. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*. Index. Rutgers University Press. 377 pp.

Public and private libraries have had on their shelves for the past two years an invaluable set of eight volumes entitled *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* published by the Abraham Lincoln Association in 1953. Its usefulness has been greatly curtailed by the absence of an index volume which has just now come from the press. Of course, all are anxious to observe how well the key opens the treasure house of Lincolniana. Although it is unusual to write a review of an index volume, the tremendous amount of work which it entailed and the frequency with which it will be used seems to warrant a few comments.

The book contains 378 pages with the general index covering 320 pages. However, there are two supplemental indexes included: one associated with "Appendix II Volume VIII" and the other citing the "Location of Lincoln Documents in Institutions." The index volume also contains a frontispiece in the form of a facsimile letter written by Lincoln to his wife when he was a member of Congress. Lincoln was usually very explicit in his correspondence and why this particular letter which is open to almost any interpretation would be selected as an appropriate introduction to this index volume we are unable to discern. With such a wealth of distinctive holographical Lincoln writings available it seems so inappropriate to use as a final exhibit possibly the only Lincoln letter which invites the defamers of Mary Todd, through innuendo and insinuation, to further their attack on a much abused woman.

When it was understood that the index was being compiled at Springfield, Illinois under the direction of able students of the Emancipator, there was a feeling of satisfaction that the important volume would offer an adequate guide to the vast amount of data collected. Upon reading the introduction to the index volume, however, we learn that "certain practical considerations," apparently economic, "caused a transfer of the work of compilation to the Rutgers University Press."

Robert L. Collison in his book *Indexes and Indexing* published in 1953 makes this general statement, "Most publishers do not encourage the provision of really adequate indexes." Mr. Collison further observes with respect to much of our indexing that one finds "a whole string of page references to a subject without any differentiation between those which merely mention the subject and those which treat it in detail." This paragraph on Mr. Collison's suggestions might be included with his trite observation: "Time is more valuable than type and the wear and tear of the temper than the extra page of index."

Proper names are usually of supreme importance in an index and this fact is especially true where correspondence is predominant in the basic subject matter. Now one may turn to the index volume and in a moment discover whether or not there are available letters Lincoln may have written to an individual in question. The proper name approach will be helpful in the discovery of writings unknown to the compilers and such items may be immediately classified as "unpublished." This index should invite all persons owning Lincoln documents to have them checked with the new volume. Lincoln National Life Foundation will be pleased to render this service if a copy of the index is not conveniently at hand.

Lincoln's law partners in Illinois, congressional representatives from that state, members of the cabinet and Civil War generals are adequately treated with sub-entries and well distributed page numbers. But outside this comparatively small group the index volume, as

far as names are concerned, will prove very disappointing. Even the close associates of Lincoln in Illinois are given merely page references with no guides to subject matter. For example: David Davis with 50 page citations, Norman Judd with 40 and Leonard Swett with 32 have no subentries to guide one to important episodes associated with them. The same is true of outstanding historical figures, George Washington with 64 page citations, Thomas Jefferson with 57 and Andrew Jackson with 45 have no further leads than the page number. The same condensation finds expression in locality references. States like Indiana and Ohio with over 50 page references each and cities comparable to Cincinnati and Louisville with about 50 references each, lack any subentries to reveal the nature of the information specified.

One exceedingly valuable contribution which the general index makes is the approach to the subject matter relating directly to Abraham Lincoln. Eleven different groupings of subjects are made under the general heading Abraham Lincoln. They are mentioned in the brief introduction as follows: Autobiographical references, Comments (quotations), Lawyer, Postmaster, Storekeeper, Surveyor, Political Career, Presidential Nominee, President Elect, President, and Commander-in-Chief. The Abraham Lincoln biographical break down seems to be the best feature of the book and gives quick access to the subject matter desired.

It is rather difficult however, to approach some general subject information directly, for instance under the topic "liberty" which includes "equality" and "civil rights" there are over 100 different page citations with no subentries to guide the searcher. While it may be of some interest to have 225 pardons noted by volume and page number only, somewhere we have come under the impression that in indexing it is not good form to have more than 4 or 5 page references to any one subtitle.

The *Index to Appendix II* promises to be one of the most frequently consulted parts of the volume. The various classes of writings which taper off from the letters written by secretaries to the absolute forgeries open up an interesting field for study. There are 18 of the secretarial writings noted and as many as 175 items indexed that are "communications attributed to Lincoln." Possibly the most interesting grouping is the compilation of exhibits called "forgeries." These number as many as 97 references. This index may serve as a basis for the study of documents said to be spurious.

Another supplemental index, or possibly it should be called a check list, noting the location of the data used in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* will be of great value to research students. The National Archives of Washington seems to be the outstanding depository for original Mss. closely followed by the collection in the Library of Congress. The combining of the Abraham Lincoln Association papers with the Illinois State Historical Society and State Archives Mss. offers the third largest concentration of data. Sizable collections at Brown University, Huntington Library, New York Historical Society, and the Emerson Foundation at Auburn, N. Y. follow in about that order of importance.

While students of Lincoln will welcome this guide to the contents of the monumental eight volumes of *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, we cannot refrain from referring to one of Mr. Collison's comments about indexing, "In these days of rapid advancement and development, every method which we can adopt to assist the research worker, and the ordinary reader is not only justified, it is imperative."