

# LINCOLN LORE

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## LINCOLN BOOKS FOR YOUTH

The governor of Indiana sets aside by proclamation each year a period of time to be known as Indiana Library Week. This year the days to be observed are from March 18 through March 24. It seems quite appropriate because of other interesting announcements recently made to give some emphasis in this bulletin on Lincoln books for youth.

The annual Thomas Alva Edison Foundation's recognition for "The Youth Book Best Portraying America's Past" was awarded for 1955 to Virginia S. Eifert, editor of *The Living Museum* published by The Illinois State Museum at Springfield. Her book entitled *The Buffalo Trace* and issued by Dodd Mead and Company was the honored publication. It tells the story of the Lincoln family migration from Virginia to Kentucky in 1782.

Mrs. Eifert was born and grew up in Springfield, Illinois and is therefore very familiar with the Lincoln story. Her primary interest has been in nature and her delightful stories in this field are well known to natural history students. She has contributed many monographs to various nature magazines. The editor of *Lincoln Lore* for many years has admired her literary contributions and remembers suggesting to her on one occasion that some of her talent should be directed to the Lincoln theme.

The author's first Lincoln book was published in 1953 and entitled *Three Rivers South* featuring Lincoln's trip to New Orleans. The second book of the Lincoln trilogy she contemplated was *The Buffalo Trace* and will be completed by a third book *Out of the Wilderness* to be published in June 1956. It will narrate the Lincoln episodes occurring in the Kentucky and Indiana years. The text of her prize winning book based on reliable sources should be classified as fiction although most of the characters introduced are historical figures. The story is oriented in an accurate geographical setting and follows the fortunes of the Pioneer Abraham Lincoln (1744-1786) and his family as they moved over "The Buffalo Trace" from the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia to Hughes Station near Louisville in the Kentucky country where the President's grandfather was massacred by the Indians.

During the past few years there has appeared a large number of books, profusely illustrated, written especially for children to read, or to be read to children by adults. Abraham Lincoln has not been ignored in this modern emphasis on this type of literature. Lincoln books for the next group of children in their early teens have been available for fifty years or more. In fact it was just half a century ago, in October 1906, that Helen Nicolay's *The Boy's Life of Abraham Lincoln* came from the press. The outstanding Lincoln student of her day, Ida M. Tarbell, in 1921 published a book which she called *Boy Scouts Life of Lincoln*. Like Miss Nicolay's work it was a full length biography from Lincoln's birth to his assassination. There are available now in several "Famous Americans Series" Lincoln titles for children in the early teens or the Boy and Girl Scout age.

The Boy Scout movement has been very successful in the encouragement of Scouts to make pilgrimages to historic sites of well known Americans. The hikes over the very paths which Lincoln followed in childhood and youth in moving from Kentucky to Indiana, Indiana to Illinois, and New Salem to Springfield are very popular and tokens have been made available for those who make the treks. The Lincoln National Life Foundation for many years has sponsored a pilgrimage of Boy Scouts on February 12 each year to Lincoln statues and recognition certificates are supplied the 7,000 boys who participate annually.

It appears to be the youth of the high school period who have been most neglected as far as the publication of Lincoln books for a specific age group is concerned. It is true that some of the school book publishing houses have tried to supply this need and such titles as *A. Lincoln* written by Ross F. Lockridge twenty-five years ago might serve as an illustration. It is also a book however covering the complete biography of Lincoln. Not only has there been a lack of dependable Lincoln books written for youth of high school age, but there has appeared during the past few years some very misleading and wholly unreliable novels covering the period of Lincoln's own youth in the state of Indiana.

It is hoped that a new approach to the study of Lincoln, for youth in the later teens, may have been introduced by Mrs. Eifert in 1953 with her Lincoln flatboat episode dramatized in *Three Rivers South*. This presentation was supplemented a year later by a high school teacher, Regina Z. Kelly with her *Lincoln and Douglas The Years of Decision*. This was an ideal approach to an extremely important historical event told in an attractive way by a teacher who had sensed the lack of an adequate printed discussion of the subject to be reviewed by her pupils.

As has already been observed, Mrs. Eifert last year brought out her prize-winning story on the Lincoln's participation in the westward movement, and this year her publishers promise another story covering the formative period of Lincoln's Life. The monograph method of presenting the story of Lincoln in detached episodes attractively written and illustrated seems to be more adaptable to the high school pupil than complete biographical studies.

Mrs. Eifert's work was first arranged as a trilogy to be consummated with the last mentioned title to appear in June. We trust for the purpose of inspiring American youth she may be encouraged to go on with further studies covering important episodes in Lincoln's life. It is hoped she may eventually build a shelf of Lincoln monographs which will allow American youth to get an intelligible word portrait of America's first citizen. Possibly Regina Kelly can also be persuaded to develop other discussions on phases of Lincoln history which have not been adequately presented for youth of high school age.