

LINCOLN LORE

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APRIL, LINCOLN-CIVIL WAR MONTH

Those who have many invitations to speak on Abraham Lincoln during the period surrounding Lincoln's Birthday in February often wish that there were other calendar days during the year which would spread out these requests over a wider space of time. With the increasing interest in the Civil War, as the centennial of the hostilities approaches, it appears as if the month of April might almost rival February as an anniversary month.

There are no nationally observed holidays in April but there are several days set apart within this spring month which have more than a local interest. In New England April 19, Patriots Day, commemorating the battle of Concord and Lexington, is a legal holiday in both Massachusetts and Maine. In the South and West the birthday of Thomas Jefferson on April 13 is observed and legalized in Alabama, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma. The most important April date associated with the Confederacy is April 26, one of the two Confederate Memorial days. It is a legal holiday in Alabama, Florida, Georgia and Mississippi.

Although one usually associates the sad ending of Abraham Lincoln with the month of April, it was mostly a month of beginnings for him in his early life. It was in the spring of 1831 that on April 19 his flatboat was marooned on the mill dam at New Salem when he was introduced to the community. The following April he began his military duties as a captain in the Black Hawk War. Lincoln's residence in Springfield began on April 15, 1837 and on April 14, 1841 his legal partnership with Logan was formed.

Our particular interest just now, however, centers around the events occurring in the Aprils during Lincoln's administrations, especially in 1861 and 1865 as they relate to war. The month might be designated Civil War Month and the days between April 9th and April 15th Civil War Week.

1861
April 1

On the first day of April 1861 Hon. W. H. Seward, Secretary of State, prepared a manuscript entitled "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration" which began: "1st. We are at the end of a month's administration, and yet without a policy, either domestic or foreign." This document of five hundred words contained the statement that someone should be responsible for establishing the government policy to be pursued, and Seward closed his recommendations as

follows. "It is not my special province, but I neither seek to evade or assume the responsibility." Whether Lincoln ever forwarded the answer he wrote out for Seward on the same day or advised him verbally, makes little difference but on this first day of April 1861 the President did inform Seward that if the policy were formed "I must do it."

April 14

General Anderson at Fort Sumter received from General Beauregard a letter sent from "Headquarters, Provisional Army, C. S. A." dated "Charleston, S. C. April 11, 1861" in which he stated in part: "I am ordered by the government of the Confederate states to demand the evacuation of Fort Sumter." Anderson's refusal to evacuate caused the firing by Beauregard of a signal mortar for the bombardment of the fortress at 4:30 on that same day. On April 13 "Anderson agreed to the terms of evacuation and on April 14 he left the fort after saluting his flag with fifty guns.

April 15

Abraham Lincoln issued his Proclamation Calling Militia and Convening Congress. The proclamation called out "the militia of the several States of the Union to the aggregate number of seventy-five thousand." That part of the proclamation dealing with Congress states "I do hereby, in virtue of the power in me vested by the Constitution, convene both Houses of Congress . . . to assemble at their respective chambers, at 12 o'clock, noon, on Thursday, the fourth day of July next. . . ."

April 19

A Proclamation of a Blockade was issued by the President April 19, 1861 which stated, "A competent force will be posted so as to prevent entrance and exit to vessels from the ports." The states affected were South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. On April 27 by proclamation the blockade was extended to Virginia and North Carolina.

1865
April 1

The President desiring to be near General Grant's operations during the closing days of the war had been at City Point since March 24. His family had been with him, but on the first day of April Mrs. Lincoln decided to return to Washington, but Tad remained with his father.

April 3

General Grant suggested the President might wish to visit him at Petersburg which place the General was

then occupying. Lincoln remained an hour and a half. Lincoln had telegraphed Stanton about the probability of this visit to the front. Stanton admonished him by telegraph of endangering himself.

April 5

On this day there occurred in evacuated Richmond, the fallen capital of the Confederacy, the most unusual triumphant entry to a conquered city which had ever been observed. Abraham Lincoln, commander-in-chief of the victorious army, without vehicle or mount for transportation, walked through the shattered city holding by the hand his twelve year old son, Tad. With no exhibition of exultation the President walked slowly through the streets to the home so recently occupied by the confederate leader. Upon reaching there after the long hot walk, he made but one request, "I wonder if I could get a drink of water?" Lincoln remained in Richmond over night.

April 7

Lincoln had received from Grant, Sheridan's famous message which prompted the President to telegraph Grant on April 7. "Gen. Sheridan says 'If the thing is pressed I think that Lee will surrender.' Let the thing be pressed."

April 9

Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant near Appomattox Court House late in the afternoon of April 9, 1955, virtually bringing the war to a close.

April 11

The President had been serenaded continuously through April 10 at the White House and had made some extemporaneous speeches. On the evening of April 11 however he made his last public address.

April 14

The President was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth while attending the performance "Our American Cousin" at Ford's Theatre. On the same day ceremonies were being held at Fort Sumter on the anniversary of the fall of the fort on April 14, 1861.

April 15

The President had been moved immediately after the attack to the Petersen home directly across the street from the theatre and he passed away without regaining consciousness at 7:22 a.m.

April 19

Funeral services for the President at Washington were conducted in the East Room of the White House by Bishop Simpson and Dr. Gurley. During the remaining days of the month, the body was enroute to the burial place at Springfield, Illinois.