

LINCOLN LORE

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INTRODUCING THE NEW EDITOR OF LINCOLN LORE

The pleasure of preparing these bulletins each week for the past twenty-seven years will be terminated with this issue, as the editor will retire on July 1. However, we are very happy indeed to announce that *Lincoln Lore* will be continued. The new editor who will also be the director of the Lincoln National Life Foundation is Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry. He is a well known Lincoln student who for the past nineteen years has been Director of the Department of Lincolniana at Lincoln Memorial University and the editor of its publication the *Lincoln Herald*.

The introduction of my successor presents a very agreeable task as I have known him intimately since he was a fourteen year old youth and watched with interest his development. The four years which he spent as librarian of the Lincoln National Life Foundation from 1931 to 1935 might be called his apprenticeship in the field of Lincolniana. This interest he has persistently pursued all these years until he has become one of the nation's best informed men on the Lincoln subject. Possibly a somewhat detailed account of his accomplishments would be more appropriate in introducing him rather than a highly complimentary personal tribute which it would be possible for me to prepare with little effort.

The early life of Dr. McMurtry was spent in the environs of the Kentucky Lincolns. He was born in Elizabethtown, Hardin County where the parents of Abraham Lincoln first went to keeping house and where their first child, a daughter, was born. Some of his relatives lived on the same farm on Knob Creek once in possession of the Lincolns when Abraham was a boy. Dr. McMurtry as a young man in the employment of the Kentucky State Highway Department assisted in re-surveying the Knob Creek road over which Thomas Lincoln was a supervisor in 1816 then living on an adjacent farm. When Thomas Lincoln returned to Kentucky after the death of his first wife he chose as a new mate the widow Johnston who lived at that time on the same lot in Elizabethtown where later on stood the boyhood home of Dr. McMurtry.

At Centre College, the Alma Mater of John T. Stuart, Lincoln's first law partner, Dr. McMurtry received the A.B. degree in 1929 and later in 1953 the college conferred the degree of Litt. D. upon him. Iowa Wesleyan College also honored him with a LL. D. degree in 1946. Two years after his graduation from Centre, where he had majored in history, as already mentioned he accepted the position as librarian of the Foundation. In 1937 he became the Director of the Department of Lincolniana at the Lincoln Memorial University at Harrogate, Tennessee. Here he inaugurated an accredited course of study on Abraham Lincoln which he taught for twelve years. Other subjects in American history which he directed gave him an excellent background for the Lincoln period and also an opportunity to specialize on phases of the Civil War.

Possibly Dr. McMurtry is best known among Lincoln students as the former editor of the *Lincoln Herald*, the only magazine devoted exclusively to Lincolniana, and widely circulated among universities, public libraries and historically minded scholars. He has also contributed a great many Lincoln monographs to historical and popular magazines.

The new editor of *Lincoln Lore* is also the author of a number of books and pamphlets. The titles of some of the more important ones are noted chronologically:

1932, *The Lincolns in Elizabethtown, Kentucky*; 1934, *Influence of Riley's Narrative Upon Abraham Lincoln*; 1935, *Lincoln Knew Shakespeare*; 1937, *The Lincoln Migration from Kentucky to Indiana*; 1938, *A Series of Monographs Concerning the Lincolns and Hardin County, Kentucky*; 1939, *A New Portrait of Lincoln's Childhood Environment*; 1939, *The Kentucky Lincolns on Mill Creek*; 1939, *Let's Talk of Lincoln*; 1940, *The Lincoln Log Cabin Almanac*; 1941, *A Great Lincoln Collection*; 1943, *Ben Hardin Helm, "Rebel" Brother-in-law of Abraham Lincoln with a Biographical Sketch of His Wife and an Account of the Todd Family in Kentucky*; 1945, *Poet and President—Riley's Estimate of Lincoln*; 1945, *Lincoln and the Hutchinson Family Singers*; 1946, *Lincoln's Friend, Douglas* and also in 1946 in collaboration with Olive Carruthers the important book, *Lincoln's Other Mary*.

One of the organizations in which Dr. McMurtry has been especially active is the Civil War Round Table. He is a member of both the groups at New York and Chicago and has addressed other units of this organization throughout the country. He has also accompanied Civil War students on the famous battlefield tours. Dr. McMurtry is a member of the Society of the Sons of the American Revolution and his historical interests have reached back into the period represented by this group. He is a life member of the Filson Club of Louisville, Kentucky and well informed on the history of that state.

The chief contribution, however, which Dr. McMurtry has made to Lincolniana has been the gathering at Lincoln Memorial University what is said to be the largest collection of literature pertaining to the Civil War period to be found in any college or institution of higher learning. The Lincoln National Life Insurance Co. is fortunate indeed to have brought back to the Foundation one so well qualified to direct its activities.

One might expect in this last issue under the present editor, some brief comment on the long series of monographs about Abraham Lincoln which have been issued. The first *Lincoln Lore* bulletin came from the press on April 15, 1929. It had the appearance of a clip sheet as it was printed on but one side allowing the several short items to be cut out and filed by subject. Later the contributions took the form of monographs confined to one subject, and it has continued in this form during the years. The earliest subscription list of *Lincoln Lore* consisted of but two hundred names, but by the end of the first year it had increased to over 2000. Now nearly 6000 recipients are on the mailing list, about a thousand copies going to universities and school libraries, five hundred to public libraries and the remainder to individuals especially interested in the life of Abraham Lincoln.

This bulletin presents the last opportunity for the retiring editor of *Lincoln Lore* to express to its recipients his sincere appreciation for the many indications of good will which have been manifested through the years. The helpful suggestions and criticisms likewise have been welcomed. I can best reveal my sentiments by choosing a phrase from Lincoln's Farewell Address upon his departure from Springfield when he said: "I have received nothing but kindness from your hands." We solicit for our successor the same consideration which has made this editorial task so agreeable.