



Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor
Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1423

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

September, 1956

A. LINCOLN - A LA BLONDIN

Abraham Lincoln's campaign for the presidency in 1860 was compared by caricaturists with the exploits of a French acrobat named Jean Francois Gravelet Blondin, who crossed Niagara River over the falls on a tight-rope on August 17, 1859.

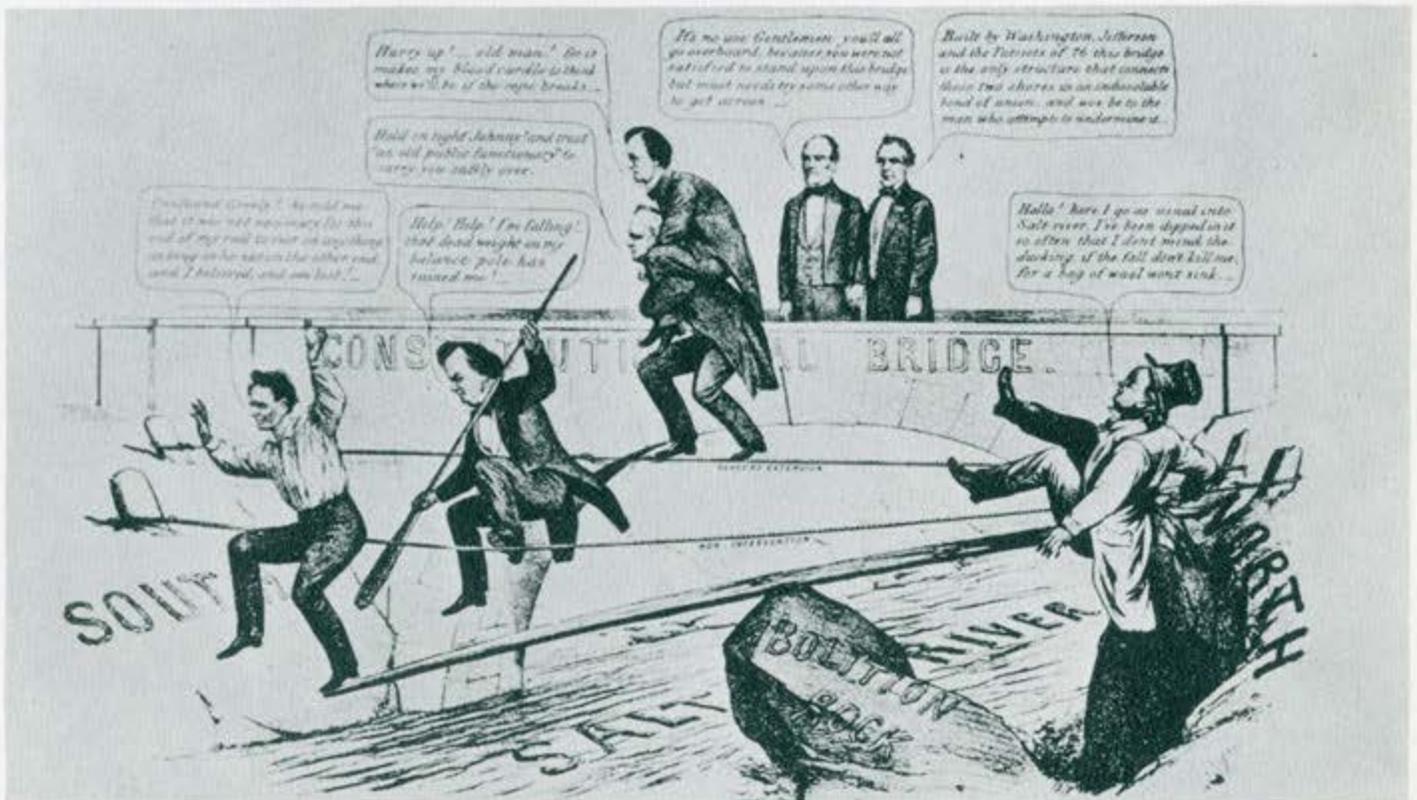
Blondin crossed on a rope 1,100 feet long (some claim the rope was 1,300 feet long), 3 1/4 inches in diameter and stretched 160 feet above the water. The Frenchman performed this remarkable exploit blindfold, in a sack, pushing a wheelbarrow, on stilts, with a man on his back and once he sat down midway across the tight-rope and cooked and ate an omelet. Probably the largest crowd ever gathered at Niagara Falls up to that date witnessed the feat.

The acrobat appeared in silk tights and was bare-headed and he wore rough-dressed buckskin shoes; just the type of outlandish costume best suited to lampoon the Railsplitter. Like most tight-rope artists he used a balancing pole. The crossing to the Canadian side took

longer than an hour, with many exciting, breathtaking performances enroute.

However, it was the return trip, fifteen or twenty minutes later, that was the most thrilling. Blondin appeared on the rope with his agent, Mr. Henry Colcord, weighing about one hundred and thirty-six pounds upon his back and his balancing pole in his hands. Proceeding very slowly and cautiously to a point about one hundred feet from the Canadian side, Mr. Colcord dismounted and stood behind Blondin. Resting three or four minutes, they proceeded with Colcord's arms around the acrobat's neck, with his legs resting on the pole. Colcord was in his shirt sleeves and wore a straw hat. The return trip required five rest stops as described. The time required to make the trip was forty-two minutes from bank to bank.

Observers reported that on reaching the American side M. Blondin was very flushed, and appeared quite fatigued, while Mr. Colcord was pale, but did not betray



POLITICAL "BLONDINS" CROSSING SALT RIVER

This print published by Currier & Ives in August, 1860, depicts the four candidates for the presidency along with President James Buchanan and Horace Greeley (whose identity is revealed by Lincoln's statement). There are many legends concerning Salt River that flows into the Ohio River at West Point (Hardin County) Kentucky. One story relates that Henry Clay

went up Salt River to play a little poker and missed an important speaking engagement, which was an unfortunate turning point in his race for the presidency. Salt River as used in this cartoon may mark a division between North and South with Abolition Rock being used as a fulcrum by Greeley to place Lincoln on the other side of the stream.



Jean Francois Gravelet Blondin
1824-1897

any signs of fear. After the Niagara Falls crossing Blondin appeared in other parts of the country performing thrilling feats and his name became a household word and was synonymous with "daredevil" or "danger."

Perceiving that Lincoln was a "political Blondin" crossing Salt River, which was the proverbial "River Styx" for politicians, cartoonists delighted in lampooning Lincoln as a tight-rope walker. *Vanity Fair* for June 9, 1860, Currier & Ives "Printmakers To The American (Continued on page 3)



The Coming Man's Presidential Career, a la Blondin
Motto—"Don't Give Up The Ship"

This cartoon signed "J. D." appeared in *Harper's Weekly* on August 25, 1860. Perhaps Blondin's feat of carrying his agent, Henry Colcord, across the Niagara River on a tight-rope is the basis for this caricature.

THE LINCOLN PENNY

The Lincoln penny, first coined in 1909, continued to be issued each year with no change in the design or metal content, until 1943. At this time, to preserve copper, the alloy was changed to a steel and zinc composition. The new pennies were struck off at all three of the United States mints, but in January 1944 the coinage of copper pennies was resumed and the old copper-zinc ratio of 95-5 was restored. The steel pennies are occasionally seen as there were about a billion of them put in circulation.

In order that one may be informed as to the number of pennies by millions struck off each year, a table presenting this information follows: P=Philadelphia, S=San Francisco, D=Denver.

DATE	P	S	D	DATE	P	S	D
1909*	27	3/2	t	1932	9	t	10
1909	72	2	t	1933	14	t	6
1910	146	6	t	1934	219	t	28
1911	101	4	12	1935	245	38	47
1912	68	4	10	1936	310	29	41
1913	76	6	16	1937	309	34	50
1914	75	4	1	1938	157	15	20
1915	29	4	22	1939	316	52	16
1916	131	22	36	1940	587	113	81
1917	196	33	55	1941	887	92	129
1918	288	37	48	1942	658	86	207
1919	392	140	57	1943	685	192	218
1920	310	46	49	1944	1435	283	431
1921	39	15	t	1945	1041	182	226
1922	*	t	7	1946	992	198	316
1923	74	9	t	1947	191	99	195
1924	75	12	3	1948	318	82	173
1925	140	26	22	1949	217	64	154
1926	157	5	28	1950	273	119	335
1927	144	14	27	1951	295	101	625
1928	134	17	31	1952	187	138	746
1929	185	50	42	1953	257	182	701
1930	157	24	40	1954	72	96	252
1931	19	3/4	4	1955	331	45	563

* Initials V. D. B. appear.

* None reported, but some in circulation, possibly counterfeit.

t None issued.

Coinage operations at the San Francisco mint ceased March 31, 1955. During the period January 1 through March 31, 1955, the mint manufactured 44,610,000 cent pieces.



Henry Louis Stephens drew *Vanity Fair's* first cartoon of Lincoln, which was published June 9, 1860. As Lincoln walks over a rotting rail Horace Greeley calls out, "Don't drop the carpet-bag," which signified the negroes' interests.

THE "HERMES" BUST OF LINCOLN BY VOLK No. 3

After Leonard Volk had finished his sculptured head of Lincoln, which was based on his life mask, he desired to make further measurements in order to create a bust.

According to the sculptor, Lincoln's last sitting was Thursday morning (April 5, 1860). Volk, years later, recalled this visit as follows: "I had finished the head, but desired to represent his breast and brawny shoulders as nature presented them; so he stripped off his coat, waistcoat, shirt, cravat and collar, threw them on the chair, pulled his undershirt down a short distance, tying the sleeves behind him, and stood up without a murmur for an hour or so.

"I then said that I was done, and was a thousand times obliged to him for his promptness and patience, and offered to assist him to redress, but he said: 'No. I can do it better alone.' I kept at my work without looking toward him, wishing to catch the form as accurately as possible while it was fresh in my memory. Mr. Lincoln left hurriedly, saying he had an engagement, and with a cordial 'Good-bye! I will see you again soon,' passed out.

"A few moments after, I recognized his steps rapidly returning. The door opened, and in he came, exclaiming:

'Hello, Mr. Volk! I got down on the sidewalk and found I had forgotten to put on my undershirt, and thought it wouldn't do to go through the streets this way.' Sure enough, there were the sleeves of that garment dangling below the skirts of his broadcloth frock-coat! I went at once to his assistance, and helped to undress and redress him all right, and out he went, with a hearty laugh at the absurdity of the thing."

It has been suggested that a "reminiscent pen" may have gone too far in this instance in describing the sleeves of the undershirt dangling below the skirts of the broadcloth frock-coat. Maybe he was not properly "harnessed up" for the street but the dangling sleeves make the description a little too grotesque.

Volk went to work immediately on a nude bust which he described for the United States Patent Office as follows:

"Be it known that I, Leonard W. Volk, of the city of Chicago, in the county of Cook and State of Illinois, have made or produced a new and original Design in Round Relief of a Bust Representing Hon. Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois; and I do hereby declare that the following is a full and exact description of the same.

"A 'Hermes' bust, viz., head, shoulders, and breast cut off below the pectoral muscles and without drapery or covering of any kind, the head slightly elevated and turned to the right.

"What I claim as my production, and desire to secure by Letters Patent, is—

"The design for a bust as above described, and represented in the accompanying print.

"Leonard W. Volk

"Witnesses:

Isaac D. Arnold
E. B. McCagg".

Volk's application for copyright, witnessed by Hiram Joy and John Vanannan, was received and filed on May 17, 1860, the day before Lincoln was nominated for the presidency. This indicates that the "Hermes" bust was finished several days before the patent application was received by the patent office.

The bust measures twenty-five inches in height and is approximately seventeen inches wide. On the right of the base appears the words "L. W. Volk Sculptor 1860" and on the left "Patented June 12, 1860." Later busts modeled after the original were cut in marble and cast in bronze.

Likewise, small replicas measuring twelve and one-half inches were placed on sale.

A cabinet size "Hermes" bust was presented to Mrs. Abraham Lincoln on May 18, 1860 by the sculptor, while Volk was a visitor in Springfield, Illinois. The sculptor recorded this incident: "I gave her (Mrs. Lincoln) a cabinet-size bust of her husband which I had moulded from the large one." This cabinet size bust must have been made from the working model in the studio and likely precedes the patented one. The present location of this bust, if it is extant, is not known. A cabinet size nude bust was exhibited by the New York State Library at Albany in 1947 but it has a patent date which Mrs. Lincoln's copy probably did not have.

The Women's Relief Corps, Department of Massachusetts unveiled in Boston a bronze replica of the "Hermes" bust in the Massachusetts State Capitol Building on March 28, 1912. Another bronze "Hermes" Lincoln bust was un-

veiled in Hingham, (Norfolk) England in a prominent niche in St. Andrew's Church. This was a gift of the people of Hingham, Massachusetts, commemorating the English Lincoln ancestors of the Sixteenth President.

The sculptor suffered many infringements of his patent and shortly after Lincoln's nomination for the presidency, Volk's head superimposed upon the shoulders of other men made their appearance. No one knows how many infringement busts were sold or are still being sold.

The Lincoln National Life Foundation has several questionable sculptural works which appear to be infringements on Volk's patent. (See *Lincoln Lore*, No. 1047, May 2, 1949 "Busts of Lincoln by Volk Created In 1860.")

BLONDIN

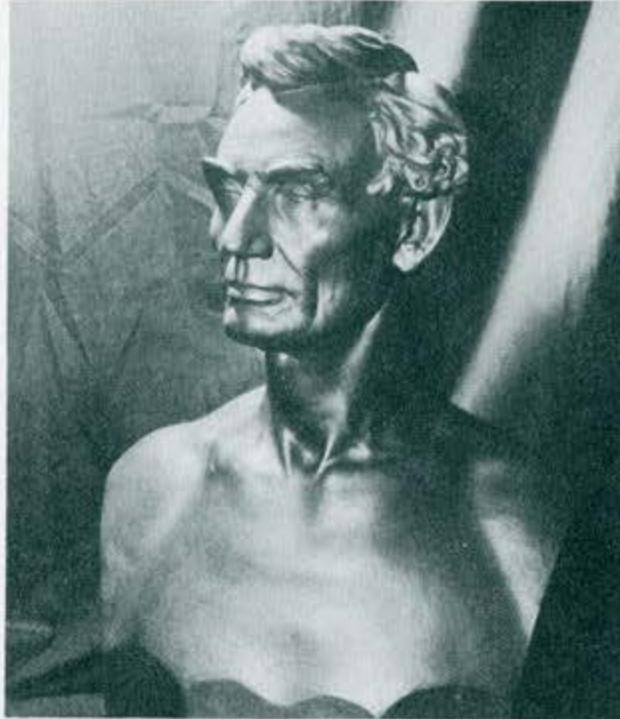
(Continued from page 2)

People (August 1860)" and *Harper's Weekly* for August 25, 1860 published cartoons depicting Lincoln as another Blondin.

Even President Lincoln is reported to have used the name of "Blondin" as a means to put across a point to some visitors variously described as "perturbed politicians of the west;" and as "an excited delegation of clergymen." This disgruntled group, whoever they were, came as critics of the administration and they suggested the course which Lincoln should follow.

Hearing their complaints, Lincoln said at length, "Suppose all the property you were worth was in gold and this you had placed in the hands of Blondin to carry across the Niagara River on a rope. Would you shake the cable and keep shouting at him: 'Blondin, stand up a little straighter; Blondin, stoop a little more, go a little faster, go a little slower, lean a little more to the south'? No, you would hold your breath, as well as your tongue, and keep your hands off until he got safely over.

"The Government is carrying an enormous weight. Untold treasure is in their hands. Don't badger them. Keep silence and we will get you safely across."



LINCOLN THANKED FORNEY FOR HIS "STONEWALL JACKSON" EDITORIAL

Col. John W. Forney, editor of the *Washington Daily Chronicle* which was considered to be a Lincoln administration newspaper, published on May 13, 1863, an editorial on "The Death of 'Stonewall' Jackson":

"Stonewall Jackson is dead. While we are only too glad to be rid in anyway, of so terrible a foe, our sense of relief is not unmingled with emotions of sorrow and sympathy at the death of so brave a man.

"Every man who possesses the least particle of magnanimity must admire the qualities for which Stonewall Jackson was celebrated—his heroism, his bravery, his sublime devotion, his purity of character! From the beginning of the world we have seen such men—men of narrow minds but strong passions and tremendous will.

"Religious enthusiasts of all religions and creeds have often devoted themselves with conscientious and determined energy to a wicked cause, or have by their excesses degraded good causes to the level of a bad one.

"Mahomet, Cyril, Philip of Spain, Loyola, Xavier, Bloody Mary, several of the Popes of Rome, Robespierre, George IV, and Jo Smith are familiar instances of enthusiasm, fanaticism, and obstinacy, combined with that curious obliquity of reasoning powers which is one of the most puzzling characteristics of the human mind. Jackson belonged to this class of men.

"He had one great and overmastering trait of character—a fanatical enthusiasm which overleaped all obstacles and sharpened prematurely the other qualities of his mind. He was a genuine fanatic. But for all that, we do not less admire the great and wonderful powers he possessed.

"When England learned that the sudden death of the Emperor Napoleon had removed the great obstacle in their success in the Crimean war, the people were delirious with joy. Bonfires blazed throughout the land; churches and societies sang peans of joy; newspapers teemed with the most violent abuse of the dead man. Punch's cartoon was a disgusting hallelujah over the event—though the picture was drawn with such power (as if the whole nation had thrown its soul into it) as to extort from the critical Ruskin the highest praise; and for one week the whole people indulged in the most immoderate expressions of joy.

"We hope and believe that no such brutal and unseemly exhibitions will disgrace the American people. They are unworthy of a magnanimous nation and a stain upon humanity.

"Let us rather devoutly acknowledge the Providence of God, who, while He smites the accursed land with famine and the people with madness, takes from their accursed cause its bravest, noblest, and purest defender.

"Stonewall Jackson was a great general, a brave soldier, a noble Christian, and a pure man. May God throw these great virtues against the sins of the secessionist, the advocate of a great national crime."

In the spring of 1863 Forney's editorial policy had been one of criticism of Union generals and on the day before he published his Jackson editorial he wrote Lincoln an apologetic letter for the "most ungenerous criticism upon Generals Halleck and Hooker" which had appeared in his *Philadelphia Press*.

In all likelihood, Forney's recent correspondence and future editorial policy was of interest to Lincoln and he read the May 13 issue shortly after its release from the press. He wrote Forney the following note:

"Executive Mansion
Washington, May 13, 1863.

"Col. Forney
My dear Sir:

"I wish to lose no time in thanking you for the excellent and manly article in the *Chronicle* on 'Stonewall Jackson'.

"Yours truly
A. Lincoln"

In his letter to Forney the President wrote the word "excellency" and then crossed out the last five letters and substituted "lent." Forney answered Lincoln's May

13th letter and again stated that he was: "Deeply chagrined by the error in my Phila. paper a few days ago, in my absence, and am therefore glad to find that you can see also what is right and just. . . ."

As a part of the Oliver R. Barrett collection, Lincoln's letter to Forney was sold by the Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., in 1952 for \$550.

PHILATELIC LINCOLNIANA



Issue of 1862-66



Issue of 1869

The *Stamp Collector's Record*, New Series, Albany, N. Y., May 1, 1865, No. 5, carried the following statement:

"The death of our beloved president by the hand of an assassin, forms the darkest page in the history of our country. He had just seen the fond fruition of his patriotic endeavors in the victorious triumphs of our armies, victories which must result at an early day, in a united and happy people. His memory will be cherished by our posterity as long as that posterity shall prove either worthy a country or a history. We trust that the suggestion which was made to the Postmaster General, (William Dennison) some time since, will now be acted on, and that we may expect an effigy of our martyred president on one or other of the new forthcoming issue of U. S. postage stamps."

About a year later, June 17, 1866, Lincoln's likeness appeared on a 15 cent value of the U. S. series (1862-66). The black Lincoln stamp and its variants bear the following Scott numbers: 77, 91, 91a, 98, 98a and 108. The Lincoln head facing three-fourths right is from the original photograph taken at Springfield, Illinois, on January 16, 1861 by C. S. German.

Many collectors consider this stamp of somber black a memorial to Abraham Lincoln, and this may have been the intention of the Post Office Department at the time of its issue, but no official announcement was made.

The first stamp to bear Lincoln's portrait was the 25 cent red, periodical stamp which was issued in the September quarter of 1865. However, the color contradicts any idea of it being a commemorative issue. The issue was terminated about February 1, 1869.

Perhaps the ninety-cent adhesive issue of 1869 (March 1, 1869, to April 9, 1870) was intended to commemorate Lincoln but again the Post Office Department made no comments. A description of the ninety-cent stamp follows: "Head of Lincoln, from a photograph, in an ellipse, three-quarters face, looking to right, surrounded by ornamental and scroll work; numeral '90' at each of the upper corners; 'U. S. postage' at top; 'Ninety' and 'Cents' in scroll at lower left and right corners of medallion, respectively; 'U' and 'S' in German text at lower left and right corners of stamp, respectively. Colors: Portrait in black; surrounding ornamental and scroll work, carmine."

This design, among others, was submitted by the National Bank Note Company of New York with their bid. A contract was entered into on December 12, 1868.

The ninety-cent Lincoln stamp (12 perforations) appeared with a grill and has the catalogue number 122. Number 122a has no grill and was printed on hard white paper. Number 132 is a re-issue. The scourge of design was from a photograph by German which appeared on the fifteen-cent black issue. See *Lincoln Lore* No. 445, October 18, 1937. "Check List of Lincoln Stamps."