



Lincoln Lore

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LINCOLN'S ATTENDANCE AT SPIRITUALISTIC SÉANCES

Part II

(Continued from the January, 1963 issue)

"Mr. Shockle was much prostrated after this, and at Mrs. Lincoln's request it was thought best to adjourn the séance, which if resumed, I shall give you an account of."

This newspaper story appears in Carl Sandburg's biography, "Abraham Lincoln—The War Years", Volume III, pages 343-345. Sandburg questioned Lincoln's motives in the staging of this White House affair. Why, the author asked, had Lincoln "permitted a metropolitan news-writer to be present, had thrown no air of privacy around the séance, and seemed entirely willing to have a story of it go out to the country?" Sandburg believed that Lincoln was curious about the "psychic-phenomena manipulators, who . . . were preying on many good people over the country". The biographer also pointed out that "there was little or no hostile comment on this procedure". However, Sandburg observed that "any ordinarily acrimonious editorial writer with a satirical touch and an air for trifles could have done much with it".

May 1, 1863 Séance

Lincoln attended a séance on the first day the battle of Chancellorsville was fought. The circle developed without advanced planning. It appears that Mrs. Lincoln that day was mentally distracted over the war news from the front. While she was in this dejected mood

Nettie Colburn and Parthenia Hannum came to the White House conservatory to obtain a bouquet of flowers. Their presence was noted and they were summoned to Mrs. Lincoln's room. Upon finding Mrs. Lincoln in a depressed mental state, Nettie became controlled by "Pinkie" (an Aztec (sic) princess), and in pidgin English the spirit assured the First Lady that her alarm was needless. True, a battle was in progress, but better news would be received by nightfall. These words from the spirit world seemed to comfort Mrs. Lincoln.

At this point the President entered Mrs. Lincoln's room. He too was anxious and careworn. Rather than repeat what had transpired, Miss Colburn decided to bring Mr. Lincoln direct assurance. This time the medium fell under the control of a spirit called "wisdom", and the President was told that the battle was in no wise disastrous, "and though not decisive particularly in character, was sufficiently so to be a gain, not a loss, to the Union cause."

Of course, the facts of history do not confirm the spirit's prediction—Chancellorsville was a disastrous defeat for the Union.

Winter 1863-64 Séance

Sometime during the winter of 1863-64 Mrs. Lincoln invited to the White House Mr. and Mrs. Somes, Miss Parthenia Hannum, and Miss Nettie Colburn. In the invitation Mrs. Lincoln expressed a desire to have these spiritualists meet a friend. Mrs. Lincoln expressly stated



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

A drawing, taken from Dr. Fayette Hall's pamphlet, "The Copperhead or The Secret Political History of Our Civil War Unveiled," 1902, (M 1373), depicting Lincoln with his medium and his spirit cabinet. The spirits are identified (left to right) as follows: Romano, Wisdom, Priscilla, Bright Eyes, Pinkie, Medium and Old Dr. Bamford. President Lincoln is depicted at the extreme right.

that she wished to see if she (Miss Pinkie) would be able to tell who it was. Pinkie, the little Indian maiden, often controlled Miss Colburn. The "friend" mentioned by Mrs. Lincoln was to be an important person in disguise. At this time the spiritualists were in disrepute, due to séances being held by quacks, swindlers and the mentally deranged. Mrs. Lincoln desired that Nettie Colburn prove the genuineness of her gift.

The meeting was held in the Red Parlor, and the guests arrived at half-past eight. The mystery guest was wrapped in a long military cloak which concealed his person and his military rank. Mrs. Lincoln did not reveal the gentleman's name in making the introductions. Miss Colburn immediately recognized Congressman and Mrs. Somes who were the guests of the Lincolns' that evening. With the introductions over, Mr. Lincoln entered the room. He stated that he was very tired and quite busy. He wondered what "our little friend" could give him. "He would have to forego the pleasure of conversation. Would the medium be as brief as possible as the cabinet was awaiting his return".

With this assertion by the President Miss Colburn went into a trance. She felt as if a strong and powerful presence dominated and directed her. Her remarks dealt with the condition of the Freedmen, declaring that their condition in and around Washington was deplorable. There was a duty to be performed—the creation of a separate bureau to control and regulate their affairs.

The medium then directed her remarks to the mystery guest. The man in the military cloak was a general. He gave evidence of having made a noble sacrifice (lost a leg at Gettysburg) on his country's altar. Then "Pinkie" took possession of the medium and after greeting the Lincolns in pidgin English Miss Colburn addressed the general as "Crooked Knife". The officer was Major-General Daniel E. Sickles. "Pinkie" had passed the test which Mrs. Lincoln had required. The cordial meeting came to an end at eleven o'clock when the visitors' carriages were announced.

Last Séance—1864

The only eyewitness account of Lincoln's last séance is that of the medium who conducted it. This private séance, held in the executive chamber, was regarded by Miss Colburn as one of the most important ever held in the White House. The meeting in the evening was held in secret. Mr. Lincoln, Mrs. Lincoln, Mr. Somes, and two gentlemen "evidently military officers" were present with the medium.

Miss Colburn was entranced about one hour. When she became conscious she was standing at a table with a large map of the Southern States. She held in her hand a pencil. Apparently the medium had drawn certain lines on the map that conformed with current military plans. Miss Colburn never understood the purport of this meeting. Nevertheless, she was pleased that she was consulted in regard to such momentous military matters.

Not being conscious when controlled by the spirits, Miss Colburn did not recall the nature of numerous communications addressed to the President and Mrs. Lincoln when she came to the White House by appointment, and there were no other witnesses. She did remember that most of the appointments were around one o'clock, the time when the President ate a light lunch. The private séances usually lasted about one hour. Of course, many meetings between Mrs. Lincoln and Miss Colburn were held without Lincoln's presence.

Eventually, the Colburn séances came to an end. Nettie made a tour of New England during the presidential campaign of 1864 and as a trance-medium she brought spirit messages to her audiences urging the reelection of Abraham Lincoln. Later on her father became ill, which prevented her from attending the inauguration. With a fond farewell, she bade the Lincolns good-bye, and so far as anyone knows, this ended Lincoln's contact with the spirits.

The question before the Lincoln student is the proper evaluation of Lincoln's so-called interest in spiritualism. It seems odd that John G. Nicolay could not recall a séance ever being held in the White House—and how did such activities escape the eagle eye of John Hay who kept a remarkably frank diary about the "Tycoon"?

And Hay would not have hesitated to comment on Mrs. Lincoln's spiritualistic activities if they had come to his attention. How did Welles, Stanton, Seward, Chase, Bates and others fail to notice the repeated visits of the spirit mediums as they held their séances—even while the cabinet waited for the President's return? Why is the subject of spiritualism completely omitted in so many of the contemporary Lincoln biographies?

The truth of the matter is that about all we know about Lincoln and spiritualism has been provided by the spiritualists—even to the point that the medium related the events that transpired during some of the séances. The details are interesting but can they be accepted as facts? Far too much of this fantastic structure rests on such foundation stones as Kase, Quinn, Williams, Richmond, Hall Gordon, Fitzgerald, Hulburd and Nettie Colburn Maynard, all ardent spiritualists.

Jay Monaghan whose scholarly article, "Was Abraham Lincoln Really a Spiritualist?", *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, June 1941, incorporates at the end of his study a conversation between Miss Colburn and Lincoln to the effect that the medium's father was sick. Lincoln is reputed to have said, "But can not our friends from the upper country tell you whether his illness is likely to prove fatal or not?" Miss Colburn replied that she "had already consulted with our friends, and they had assured me that his treatment was wrong, and that my presence was needed to effect a cure". Lincoln then turned to Miss Colburn's friend and said, "I didn't catch her, did I?" This statement Monaghan believed revealed "his whole attitude toward the new cult".



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

A drawing, taken from Dr. Fayette Hall's pamphlet, "The Copperhead or The Secret Political History of Our Civil War Unveiled," 1902. (M 1373), depicting "The spirit of Pinkie, an Aztec (sic) princess, who lived in Mexico five hundred years ago, who was one of the chief factors in the management of our national affairs during most of the time of the Lincoln miracle." Dr. Hall believed that President Lincoln was influenced by bad spirits.

President-elect Lincoln's "Magnificent Reception"

President-elect Abraham Lincoln's inaugural tour would have been excessively expensive if the total cost had been borne by the incoming President or the Republican party. Perhaps one of the first expenditures was for the publication of a time card (see cut) issued by

GREAT WESTERN RAILROAD.

TIME CARD

For a Special Train. Monday, Feb. 11, 1861,
WITH
His Excellency, Abraham Lincoln, President Elect.

Leave Springfield	8:00 A.M.
" JAMESON	8:15 "
" DAWSON	8:24 "
" MICHANOSBERG	8:30 "
" LANSVILLE	8:37 "
" ELGIN	8:49 "
" STACY	8:58 "
" SPENCER	9:07 "
Arrive at DECATUR	9:24 "
Leave DECATUR	9:29 "
" OAKLEY	9:45 "
" CROSS HURON	9:54 "
" BARNETT	10:15 "
" SHELBY	10:40 "
Arrive at TOLEDO	10:50 "
Leave "	10:55 "
" PRINCE	11:07 "
" STONEY	11:17 "
" HARRIS	11:30 "
" SALLA	11:45 "
" CAPLAN	11:59 "
" BRYANT	12:07 P.M.
" DANVILLE	12:15 "
Arrive at STATE LINE	12:30 P.M.

This train will be entitled to the track, and all other trains must be kept out of the way. Trains to be passed and not meet on the side track at least 10 minutes before this train is due. Agents at all stations between Springfield and State Line must be on duty when this train passes, and maintain the station and know that all is right before it passes. Through of Telegraph Stations between Springfield and State Line must remain on duty until the train leaves, and immediately report to the Chief Clerk, Springfield. All Passengers and team-trails their directions must be on the track and allow passengers and the train to proceed. It is very important that this train should keep the track in safety, and all employees are required to render all assistance in their power. This is the signal for the train to proceed. It is forbidden to take any other train or engine until the train is cleared, and the signal is given. It is forbidden to take any other train or engine until the train is cleared. F. W. BOWEN, 1861.

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the Great Western Railroad indicating Lincoln's hour of departure from Springfield, Illinois to his arrival at State Line. Undoubtedly the greatest expense of the inaugural tour was assumed by the railway companies which provided Lincoln with transportation to the United States Capital. The first segment of Lincoln's trip took the future President through twenty-one cities and towns in Illinois.

At Springfield Lincoln delivered his famous "Farewell Address", and he made brief remarks to the people who gathered at Tolono, Danville and State Line. Arriving in the State of Indiana at 12:30 P.M. on February 11, 1861, Lincoln was welcomed by a committee of the State Legislature headed by Captain Frederick Steele. At State Line the Great Western joined the Toledo & Wabash, and a large number of Indiana politicians boarded the train. While enroute to Indianapolis Lincoln spoke from his railway coach at Lafayette, Thorntown and Lebanon, but every station along the route had a crowd.

Arriving at West Washington Street in Indianapolis at 5:00 P.M., Lincoln was officially welcomed by Governor Oliver P. Morton and given a 34 gun salute. The President-elect thereupon thanked Morton for the "magnificent reception" tendered him, and, of course, expressed sentiments of patriotism and reliance upon the people of the United States to preserve the Union and the liberties of the country.

At this juncture Lincoln left his train for a carriage, and standing up in the horse-drawn vehicle, he received the plaudits of 20,000 people, some of whom were members of both houses of the legislature, public officials, municipal authorities, military units, musicians, and firemen. Arriving at the Bates House, he spoke from a balcony of that hostelry to a large assembly. Again he enunciated his concept of our democratic form of government touching upon such timely subjects as "coercion and invasion" in the Government's efforts to retake the Southern forts and other property. While speaking

from the balcony of the Bates House, Lincoln again alluded to the "magnificent welcome" which had been extended to him.

About 7:00 P.M. no less than 3000 persons jammed the main parlor of the Bates House to attend an impromptu reception for Lincoln. Mrs. Lincoln and sons did not join the President-elect until the next day, having made a delayed departure from Springfield. Lincoln's reception was on an elaborate scale. Indianapolis had never witnessed anything comparable to it in all the previous history of Indiana's Capital.

On the morning of February 12, (Lincoln's 51st birthday) the honored guest had breakfast at the governor's mansion, and at the State Capitol he exchanged greetings with members of the legislature.

Shortly after 10:00 A.M. Lincoln appeared for a third time on the balcony of the Bates House and, in response to the crowd, he made substantially the same remarks that he had made on the previous evening. At 11:00 A.M., escorted by the governor and a committee from the legislature, Lincoln boarded his train, and during his four-hour trip to Cincinnati he spoke from the rear platform of his railway coach in the Indiana towns of Morris, Shelbyville, Greensburg and Lawrenceburg.

A "magnificent welcome", such as the State of Indiana and Indianapolis offered the incoming President entailed considerable expense. This fact is revealed by the action of the Forty-First Regular Session of the Indiana General Assembly which met on March 9, 1861. Passing an act "making specific appropriations for the year 1861", they provided for the payment of the following "expenses connected with the reception of Hon. A. Lincoln:

"Sec. 24 (page 11). That the several parties herein named be allowed the respective sums specified for expenses and services in connection with the reception of Hon. Abraham Lincoln, President-elect of the United States; House committee of invitation and escort, D. C. Branham fifteen dollars and fifty cents; J. C. Veach four dollars; John H. Stotsenburg four dollars; M. A. O. Packard two dollars and fifty cents; R. A. Cameron eleven dollars. Senate committee of invitation and escort, George K. Steele four dollars; Walter March seven dollars and fifty cents; A. B. Line three dollars; Western Telegraph Company sixteen dollars and seventy-eight; City Grey's Artillery seventy-five dollars; City Grey's Music thirty-five dollars; National Guard's Band thirty dollars; Bates House eighty-three dollars. For carriages, as follows: Myron North six dollars; William Wilkinson nine dollars; Brinkman & Buckshot twelve dollars; Weaver & Williams fifteen dollars; Oliver H. Johnston twelve dollars; Elijah Hedges thirty dollars; Allen & Hinesly eighteen dollars."

Apparently the Grey's Band was underpaid in the initial appropriations, because on page 17 under Sec. 81 the following order appears:

"That the Grey's Band be allowed the sum of twenty-five dollars for services on the reception of Honorable Abraham Lincoln."

Under Section 141 (page 21) the following appropriation is made:

"That D. C. Anthony be allowed the sum of five dollars as expenses as one of the committee on Mr. Lincoln's reception."

Lincoln's entertainment on February 11th and 12th cost the State of Indiana \$423.28 which was no little sum in that day. Perhaps Lincoln never learned of the cost of his "magnificent reception". Anyway, it was not his responsibility.

The Tenth General Assembly

"The tenth general assembly was one of the most remarkable bodies of law-makers which ever assembled in the legislative halls of Illinois or of any other state. . . . In this list are found one President of the United States, six who have occupied seats in the United States Senate, eight Congressmen, three Governors, three Lieutenant-Governors, two Attorney Generals, five State Treasurers, two State Auditors, one State Superintendent of Schools and several Judges."

"John Francis Snyder: Selected Writings" edited by Clyde C. Walton, The Illinois State Historical Society, 1962, Page 155.

CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY—1962

Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members: Arnold Gates, 289 New Hyde Park Road, Garden City, N. Y.; Carl Haverlin, 2 Masterson Road, Bronxville, N. Y.; E. B. Long, 708 North Kenilworth Ave., Oak Park, Ill.; Richard F. Lufkin, 45 Milk Street, Boston 9, Mass.; Wayne C. Temple, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tenn.; Ralph G. Newman, 18 East Chestnut Street, Chicago 11, Ill.; William H. Townsend, 310 First National Bank Bldg., Lexington 3, Ky.; and Clyde C. Walton, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Ill.

New items available for consideration may be sent to the above addresses or to the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

POTTER, DAVID M. 1962-37
Lincoln and His Party/in the/Secession Crisis/By David M. Potter/New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Book, paperbound, 5¼" x 8", xxxii p., 408 pp. (3), n.i., price \$1.95.

SPRINGFIELD CENTRAL AREA DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION 1962-38

(Lincoln Portrait)/Abraham Lincoln/Postal Dedication/Sangamon County Courthouse/Springfield, Illinois/Monday, November 19, 1962/3:00 P.M./(Cover title).

Folder, flexible boards, 7½" x 10", (4) pp., illus., enc. 2 first day of issue cancellations.

BIXBY, IVAN F. 1962-39

With Charity/For All/ High-lights of Abe Lincoln's Life/in Verse/by/Ivan F. Bixby/Along With Some of Lincoln's Addresses and Letters/Profusely Illustrated/(device)/An Exposition - Banner Book/Exposition Press/New York.

Book, cloth, 6" x 8½", 88 pp., Fr., illus., Price, \$3.00, First Edition.

BRADLEY, CHESTER D. 1962-40

Tales of Old Fort Monroe/No. 15/Abraham Lincoln at the Hampton Roads/Peace Conference (1865)/(Caption title).

Folder, paper, 8" x 11", (4) pp., illus., Fort Monroe Casemate Museum, Box 341, Fort Monroe, Va.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY 1962-41

Lincoln Memorial University Press/Summer, 1962/Vol. 64, No. 1/Lincoln Herald/A Magazine devoted to historical/research in the field of Lincolniana and/the Civil War, and to the promotion/of Lincoln Ideals in American/Education. Pamphlet, flexible boards, 7" x 10", 49 to 104 pp., illus.

WILSON, WILLIAM E. 1962-42

Abe Lincoln of Pigeon Creek/or/Abe Grew Tall/a Play in Three Acts/Adapted by/William E. Wilson/ from his novel entitled "Abe Lincoln of Pigeon Creek"/ Southeastern Conference Edition/Copyright 1962 by/The Children's Theatre Press/Anchorage, Kentucky.

Pamphlet, 6" x 9", paper, 77 pp., n.i.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY 1962-43

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ARGOSY BOOK STORES, INC. 1962-44

Catalogue 487/Abraham Lincoln/The Rufus Rockwell Wilson Collection/with Additions./(Portrait of Lincoln)/Argosy Book Stores, Inc./114 E. 59th Street, New York 22, N. Y./(Between Lexington & Park Avenues)/Telephone: Plaza 3-4455/(Cover title).

Pamphlet, paper, 6½" x 10", 61 pp.

MAC LEISH, ARCHIBALD 1962-45

At the Lincoln Memorial/A Poem for the Centennial/

of the/Emancipation Proclamation/By/Archibald MacLeish/September 22, 1962. (Cover title).

Pamphlet, paper, (4) pp., Limited Edition, not for sale.

MOCHIZUKI, MASA HARU 1962-46

Report No. Two/Tokyo Lincoln Book Center/September 22, 1962/(Device—Japanese and English translation)/Japanese/Japan Publications Trading Co., Bldg./1 Sarugaku-cho 1-chome Kanda, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo.

Pamphlet, paper, 7½" x 10", 8 pp., Printed in Japanese and English languages.

HOLMAN, HARVEY 1962-47

The/House Divided/The Story of Lincoln/and the Civil War/by/Harvey Holman/(Device)/An Exposition-Banner Book/Exposition Press, New York.

Book, cloth, 5½" x 8½", 80 pp., prose and poems, first edition.

BABCOCK, BERNIE 1962-48

The Soul of/Ann Rutledge/The True Story of/Abraham Lincoln's First Love/by Bernie Babcock/(device)/A Banner Book/Exposition Press, New York/.

Book, cloth, 5½" x 8½", 222 pp., fourth edition, revised and enlarged, price \$3.00.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY 1962-49

Lincoln Memorial University Press/Fall, 1962/Vol. 64, No. 3/Lincoln Herald/A Magazine devoted to historical/research in the field of Lincolniana and/the Civil War, and to the promotion/of Lincoln Ideals in American/Education. Pamphlet, flexible boards, 7" x 10", 105-160 pp., illus.

LINCOLN NATIONAL LIFE FOUNDATION 1962-50

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 1487, January 1962—Number 1498, December 1962.

Folder, paper, 8½" x 11", 4 pp., illus., Number 1487. Extreme Weather conditions during Lincoln's Residence in Rural Illinois: 1488. Heroic Lincoln Statues in Bronze: 1489. The Thirteenth Amendment: 1490. Coddling's "Republican Manual for The Campaign—1860: 1491. Lincoln's Funeral in Michigan City, Indiana: 1492. Most Significant Lincoln Cartoon—February 12, 1962: 1493. William Marshall Swayne, The Man Who Made a "Mud Head" of Lincoln: 1494. Indiana's Reaction To Lincoln's Proclamation of Emancipation: 1495. The Lincoln Country of Kentucky: 1496. Lincoln's Five Visits to Indiana: 1497. Baker's Spirit Message to Lincoln: 1498. Lincoln Publications in Foreign Languages.

McMURTRY, R. GERALD 1962-51

Beardless Portraits of Abraham Lincoln/Painted From Life/by/R. Gerald McMurtry./Director Lincoln National Life Foundation/Allen County-Fort Wayne/Historical Society/1962.

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 5½" x 8½", (1) 45 pp., illus., first edition.

McMURTRY, R. GERALD 1962-51b

Beardless Portraits of Abraham Lincoln/Painted From Life/by/R. Gerald McMurtry./Director Lincoln National Life Foundation/Reprinted with the/special permission/of the/Allen County-Fort Wayne/Historical Society/Public Library of/Fort Wayne and Allen County/1962.

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 5½" x 8½", (1) 45 pp., illus., second edition.

GEORGE, JOSEPH JR. 1962-52

Philadelphians Greet Their/President-Elect—1861/by/ Joseph George, Jr./Reprint from Pennsylvania History/Quarterly Journal of the Pennsylvania Historical Association/Vol. XXIX, No. 4, October, 1962.

Pamphlet, paper, 6" x 9", 381-390 pp.

McMurtry's
Speaking Itinerary—1963

Columbus, Ohio, Jan. 7-8.
Louisville, Kentucky, Jan. 14-15.
Baltimore, Maryland, Jan. 17-18.
Washington, D. C., Jan. 21-22.
Pittsburgh, Pa., Jan. 28-29.
Erie, Pa., Jan. 30.
Harrisburg, Pa., Jan. 31-Feb. 1.
Philadelphia, Pa., Feb. 7-8.
New York City, N. Y., Feb. 11-14.
Boston, Mass., Feb. 18-19.
Providence, R. I., Feb. 21-22.
Montclair, N. J., Feb. 25-26.
Hartford, Conn., Feb. 27.
Portland, Maine, March 1-4.

Any persons who might be interested in learning of the schedule in detail in the various cities named above, may contact the general agency office of The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company.

Swayne, The Man Who Made a "Mud Head" of Lincoln: 1494. Indiana's Reaction To Lincoln's Proclamation of Emancipation: 1495. The Lincoln Country of Kentucky: 1496. Lincoln's Five Visits to Indiana: 1497. Baker's Spirit Message to Lincoln: 1498. Lincoln Publications in Foreign Languages.