



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 1553

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

July, 1967

From Our Archives

Editor's Note: For the last several months the Foundation Staff has been re-filing and cataloguing some of the manuscripts that are a part of the great accumulation of Lincoln and related material that has been collected since 1928. In going over these letters and documents one occasionally finds items, some of which are unpublished, that merit mention (with some elaboration) in *Lincoln Lore*. This issue of our bulletin is given over to a few of these interesting manuscripts. The reader will note that the manuscripts selected represent a cross section of our holdings.
—R. G. M.

Edwin M. Stanton Named Supreme Court Justice

Edwin McMasters Stanton is remembered today as Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of War (nominated and confirmed on June 15, 1862), and his abilities as a lawyer and versatile administrator have never been questioned. Few people are cognizant of the fact that Stanton, a Democrat, also served as attorney-general in James Buchanan's Cabinet having been appointed to that position on December 20, 1860, when the President reorganized his Cabinet. Even fewer people are aware of the fact that President Ulysses S. Grant appointed Stanton to a justiceship on the United States Supreme Court and that his nomination was confirmed on December 20, 1869.

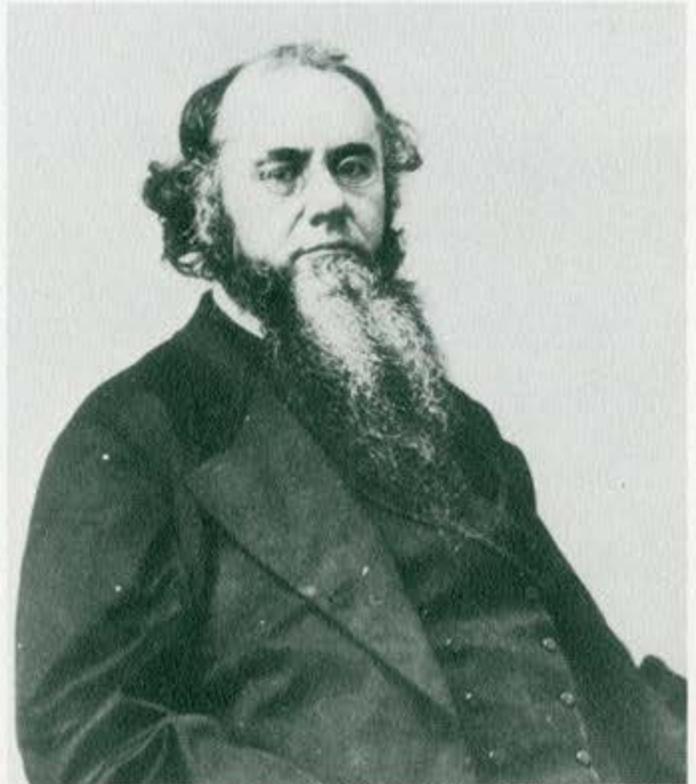
Since the date of Lincoln's death, Stanton's reputation has suffered a sharp decline. He retained his post under Andrew Johnson and very soon came into conflict with the new President and his administration. He has been charged with playing into the hands of the radicals, of being guilty of intrigue with the rising opposition, and of fostering a punitive Southern policy. Some biographers, rightly or wrongly have criticized Stanton for defects of temperament, of disloyalty and duplicity in official relations which, be they true or not, detract from his stature as a public official.

Some biographers and historians who have made a detailed study of Andrew Johnson's administration have surmised that Stanton was disloyal for political purposes, and that he was motivated by egotism, a mistaken brand of patriotism, and the desire for some unknown reason, to stand well with the congressional opposition. Interestingly enough, while Stanton's reputation has declined, Johnson's reputation has undergone a gradual rehabilitation.

Stanton is an interesting figure in United States history, and until recent years has been badly in need of a competent biographer. This need has certainly been met with the publication of *Stanton—The Life and Times of Lincoln's Secretary of War*, by Benjamin P. Thomas and Harold M. Hyman, which came from the press in 1962 and was published by Alfred A. Knopf.

Stanton resigned as Secretary of War after the Johnson impeachment charges failed (May 26, 1868). Over-exertion and internal ailments undermined his health, necessitating a complete rest. However, he was able, before the year was over, to support Grant's candidacy for the Presidency and to resume a limited law practice.

After Grant's election, friends prevailed upon the President to give Stanton a place on the Supreme Court bench as a replacement for Roger Brooke Taney who died on October 12, 1864, and the former Secretary worked untiringly for the appointment. Stanton for many years had delighted in the sermons of the Methodist bishop, Matthew Simpson, and they became close friends. Working through the clergyman, who enjoyed considerable prestige, Stanton asked him to intervene with the President on his behalf.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Edwin M. Stanton
1814 - 1869

The Lincoln Library-Museum of the Lincoln National Life Foundation has three letters written by Stanton to Simpson, two of which are dated October 26, 1869 and one, November 3, 1869. One of these letters is a formal statement of regret over the Secretary's and Mrs. Stanton's inability to be present for the wedding of Bishop Simpson's daughter. This letter was enclosed with another of the same date marked "Private & Confidential."

"My Dear Friend

"This note is accompanied by the regret of Mrs. Stanton and myself that we are unable to attend your daughter's marriage, and by our good wishes for her and her husband's happiness. What I add herein, you will please to consider as *strictly personal* and confidential.

"You have been aware of my infirm health during the past year, and will be glad to know that by relaxation from labor, & travel it has very much improved so as to encourage hopes that it may be fully restored to enable me to enjoy some years longer of usefulness. But this may depend upon how I am employed. When I left my private pursuits for the public interest I had the best professional practice in the United States, was rapidly accumulating wealth, & living at ease. My expenses above my salary exhausted my surplus resources and with years ad-

vanced, and diminished strength I must toil for my living. There is a vacancy on the Supreme Bench for which I have adequate physical power, & so far as I can judge of my intellect, its powers are as acute & vigorous as at any period of my life—and perhaps more so.

"General Grant in justice to the Country, to himself & to me, ought to give me that appointment. So far as relates to himself not all his friends in the United States, upheld & advanced him as firmly & successfully during the war as I did in my official acts. There is no man who would uphold the principles of the war on which his usefulness & fame must rest, with more or equal vigor from the Bench. The Bench has now a great part to play in history during his administration, and upon no experienced resolute jurist, can he rely with greater confidence. My appointment would gratify the great mass of republicans, & rally them around Grant—it would be considered as disinterested, unpurchased, and a sure proof of the President's loyal determination. My residence here in the District is also a recommendation being free from Geographical discriminations.

"I have said *nothing* to General Grant on the subject and *shall not*—but I would be glad to have you talk with him fully & freely and report to me his views on this question. To me it may in considerable degree be a question of life—it certainly is of health, for I must go to the Bench or Bar. His name & fortune he owed at a critical moment to me. He can preserve me to my family under Providence. I have communicated to you more fully than ever before to mortal man, & in confidence you will do what seems right of which you are a better judge than I am.

"Hoping to see or hear from you soon I am ever

Yours Edwin M. Stanton

Rt Rev Bishop Simpson"

Grant reacted favorably at first to the Methodist Bishop's entreaties, but George W. Childs, a Philadelphia banker who was friendly with the President, insisted

that Stanton's health was a factor to take into consideration when the former War Secretary's name was presented for appointment to the Supreme Court bench. Bishop Simpson reported to Stanton as to how the matter of the appointment stood, and Stanton replied on November 3, 1869:

"My Dear Friend

"I am under much obligation for your note received this morning. When I heard that your daughter & her husband were to start so soon for Europe it caused me much regret to have troubled you with any affair of my own, but I hope it gave you no inconvenience. The result of your conference is very plain to me, and gives me no surprise, being what I have expected, and I am quite sure that you will conform to my wish that the matter be strictly confidential and confined to your own bosom. In regard to Childs, who for several years has been an active bitter enemy of mine because of my annulling a bargain between him & Gen'l Cameron which I disapproved—he doubtless *knows* the President's purpose, and my health is made an evasive excuse by Childs for a predetermined purpose, influenced by quite different consideration from that assigned. I shall take no step in the matter, and no allusion to it has ever been made except in my letter to you.

"So far as my health is concerned it is in the hands of Providence, and as respects Gen'l Grant he will be influenced by his judgment as to his own interest.

"I regret that it was not in my power to leave home to witness your daughter's marriage ceremony and make her husband's acquaintance. I hope they have a pleasant location in Italy. Their residence in that favored climate may tempt you to take the relaxation of a visit where there is much of interest and thus guard your own health from the dangers that I have apprehended you were incurring by too much labour and care.

"With many thanks and most sincere affection I am

Truly Yours

Edwin M. Stanton

Rt. Rev. Bishop Simpson"

Despite Stanton's insistence that Bishop Simpson cease to push his case, the Methodist clergyman continued to press Grant for the appointment, and he was assisted by other friends of Stanton. On December 20th, 1869 Grant named Stanton for the supreme bench, and his nomination was confirmed on December 20th, the day following his fifty-fourth birthday. Four days later Edwin McMasters Stanton was dead.

Lincoln's Proposed Cabinet

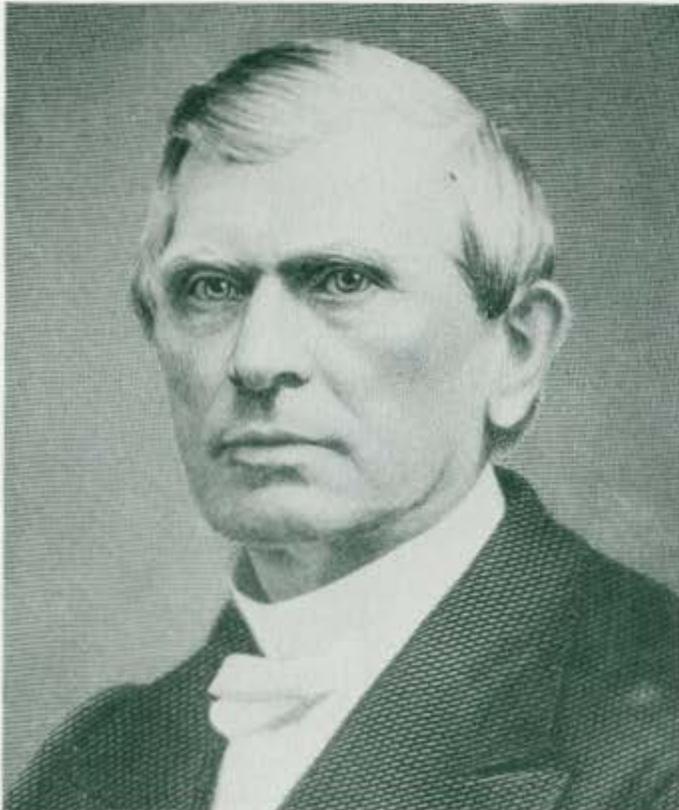
Editor's Note: In the archives of the Lincoln National Life Foundation is to be found a three page manuscript, in handwriting that resembles that of John G. Nicolay, which describes in some detail the manner in which President Abraham Lincoln selected his first Cabinet.

"It was, with two exceptions, the same as that which, four months later, he commenced his administration. His first cast of persons to compose the administration was as follows:

Lincoln	Judd
Seward	Chase
Bates	Blair
Dayton	Welles

"The four names in the first column, including that of Mr. Lincoln himself, were of men who in their political antecedents had been Whigs, while the four in the opposite parallel column were democrats in their principles and convictions, though Mr. Chase never identified himself with the democratic organization. He was distinctly anti-slavery, but concurred with the democrats in supporting the rights of the States and an advocate of a strict construction of the Constitution.

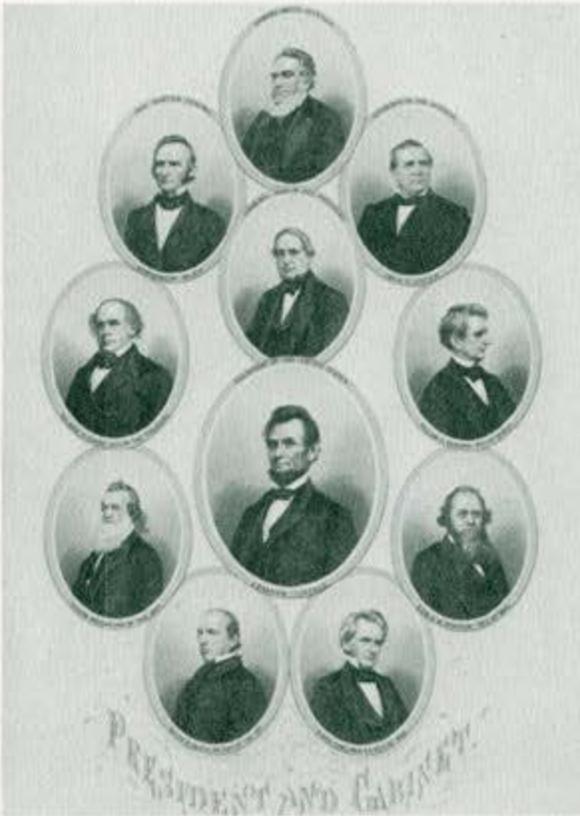
"Nathaniel (Norman) B. Judd of Chicago was an active and influential politician of Illinois, and for many years a leading member of the legislature of that state. He was also a member of the Republican National Committee, and probably did more than any other individual to bring forward and secure the nomination of Mr. Lincoln, for whom he had high regard and friendship, which was fully reciprocated. The President informed me that he had, personally a stronger desire that Judd should be associated with him in the administration than any one else but he was from Illinois, and there were political and other circumstances which intervened. Instead of a



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Matthew Simpson
1811 - 1884

American Methodist Episcopal Clergyman. Spoke widely in support of Union cause during the Civil War and delivered eulogy at Lincoln's burial service in Springfield, Illinois.



cabinet appointment therefore he received the Prussian mission which he filled during Mr. Lincoln's Administration, but he was recalled soon after Mr. Lincoln's death on representations made by Mr. Seward.

"William L. Dayton of New Jersey, who was designated for a position in the original cast of the Cabinet was appointed minister to France. He had been the successful competitor with Mr. Lincoln for the nomination of Vice President in 1856, and was held in especial esteem by him. There was, however, as usual a strong local claim for Pennsylvania, without any distinguished statesman in whom the President had such faith and confidence as he had in Mr. Dayton, but the pressure from without as well as from within the state and with certain complications of his friends led to the substitution of Mr. Cameron. It was the first intention of the President, as I have understood, after this substitution to have conferred on Mr. Dayton the mission to St. James; but Mr. Seward, who was to have charge of foreign affairs, preferred that Mr. Adams should have the English appointment and Mr. Dayton therefore received the mission to France.

"These changes in the original programme or cast of the Cabinet, did not affect the purpose of the President to have in his council an equal number of men of opposing parties in the past. Caleb Smith a Whig and Simon Cameron a democrat took the place of Judd a democrat and Dayton a Whig."

Autograph of "Old Abe"

On May 18, 1860 Abraham Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency by the Republican National Convention in Chicago. Immediately thereafter the Presidential candidate was besieged with well-wishers, a notification committee, photographers, politicians, congratulatory telegrams and innumerable letters. Some of the letters requested Mr. Lincoln's autograph, and William E. Norris of Pittsfield, Illinois, must have been one of the first to make such a request, as the following letter indicates:

Springfield May 26, 1860

Friend William

Mr. Lincoln has been so occupied with men who have called to see him, that I couldn't get a chance at him, since the receipt of your letter until this morning. I enclose you his autograph.

Yours

Jno. G. Nicolay

Upon receiving the letter, Norris wrote on the bottom

portion of the original sheet the following:

Pittsfield May 28th, 1860

Uncle Isaac

Enclosed you will find the autograph of "Old Abe" as promised with the letter of Mr. Nicolay as a voucher for its genuineness. Folks are all well. No letters have arrived for you up to this date.

Yours

Wm. E. Norris

While this original letter has been preserved in the Foundation's collection, the autograph of "Old Abe" is missing.

" . . . when the intelligence was received of the surrender of the Confederate forces . . ."

In the early 1890s John E. Remsburg compiled a series of reminiscences of the prominent men of the Civil War period for inclusion in his book *Abraham Lincoln: Was He a Christian?* The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1893. The compiler's conclusion was negative.

On April 11th, 1891 Hugh McCulloch, who had served as Secretary of the Treasury under Lincoln and Johnson (1865-69), and under Arthur (1884-85), received a letter from Remsburg making the usual inquiries regarding the religion of the Sixteenth President. Although McCulloch did not reside in Fort Wayne at this time, his letter addressed to Remsburg was postmarked in this city on April 15th. Due to our lack of information as to the contents of the Remsburg letter, the first paragraph is meaningless:

"Yours of the 11th inst duly came to hand. I can answer, yes, to both of your inquiries. I send you a copy of his reply and am pleased that it is so complete and satisfactory.

"The description of what occurred, at the executive mansion, when the intelligence was received of the surrender of the confederate forces, which you quote from the *Western Christian Advocate* is not only absolutely groundless, but absurd. After I became Sec-



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Hugh McCulloch

1808 - 1895

American lawyer and banker born in Kennebunk, Maine. Practiced law in Fort Wayne, Indiana (1833); bank official, Fort Wayne 1835-63). U. S. Comptroller of the Currency (1863-65); U. S. Secretary of the Treasury (1865-69) and again (1884-85).

retary of the Treasury I was present at every Cabinet meeting, and I never saw Mr. Lincoln or any of his ministers upon his knees or in tears.

"We were not especially jubilant over Lee's surrender, for this we had been prepared for some days. The time for our great rejoicing was a little earlier. After Gen. Sherman had commenced his celebrated march to the sea, and long and weary days had passed without any reliable reports from him, we were filled with anxiety and apprehension. It was when the news came that he and his army in excellent condition, were in the neighborhood of Charleston, that our joy was irrepressible, not only because of their safety, but because it was an assurance that the days of the Confederacy were nearly ended. With Grant before Richmond, in command of Superior forces, and Sherman with the finest army in the world, ready to move northward, everybody felt that the war must be soon concluded, and that the Union was safe.

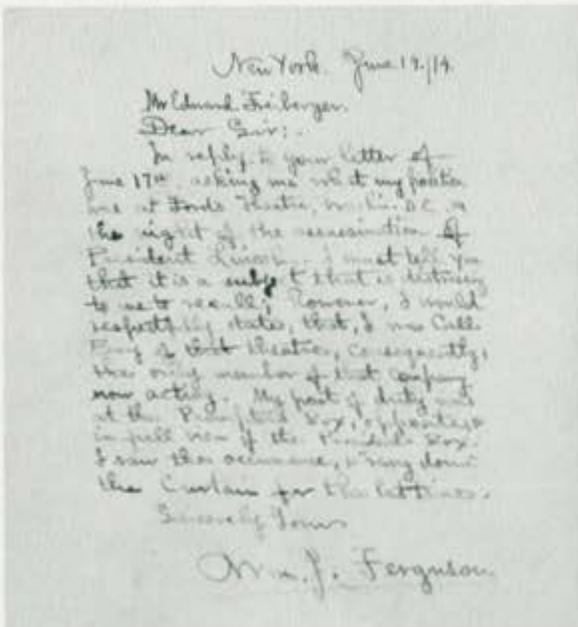
"We were, of course, happy when Gen. Lee and his severely tried soldiers, laid down their arms, but this, as I have said, was not unexpected. It was when our anxiety in regard to Sherman, was succeeded by hopefulness and confidence, that our joy became exuberant, but there was no such exhibition of it as has been published by the Advocate."

"Very Truly Yours
Hugh McCulloch"

Mr. N. P. Stockbridge

As the theme of McCulloch's April 15, 1891 letter did not dwell upon Mr. Lincoln's religion, Remsburg did not incorporate it into his book. Instead he selected from the *Reminiscences of Lincoln*, pages 412-413, McCulloch's statement regarding Lincoln's lack of regard for creeds and dogmas, but the compiler did record the Secretary's contention that "He (Lincoln) was a man of strong religious convictions . . ."

William J. Ferguson Saw Booth Shoot Lincoln



In 1930 the Houghton Mifflin Company, Cambridge, Massachusetts, published one thousand copies of a book titled *I Saw Booth Shoot Lincoln*, by the actor, W. J. Ferguson. The work is amply illustrated, and the narrative of the assassination is dramatically reported by the one-time Call Boy.

A letter written by Ferguson from New York on June 19, 1914, addressed to Mr. Edward Freiburger, has found its way into the Foundation's collection:

Dear Sir:

In reply to your letter of June 17th asking me what my position was at Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C. on the night of the assassination of President Lincoln, I must tell you that it is a subject that is distressing to me to recall; however, I would respectfully state, that I was Call Boy of that theatre, consequently, the only member of that company now acting. My post of duty was at the prompter's Box, opposite and in full view of the President's Box. I saw the occurrence,

rang down the curtain for the last time.

Sincerely yours
Wm. J. Ferguson

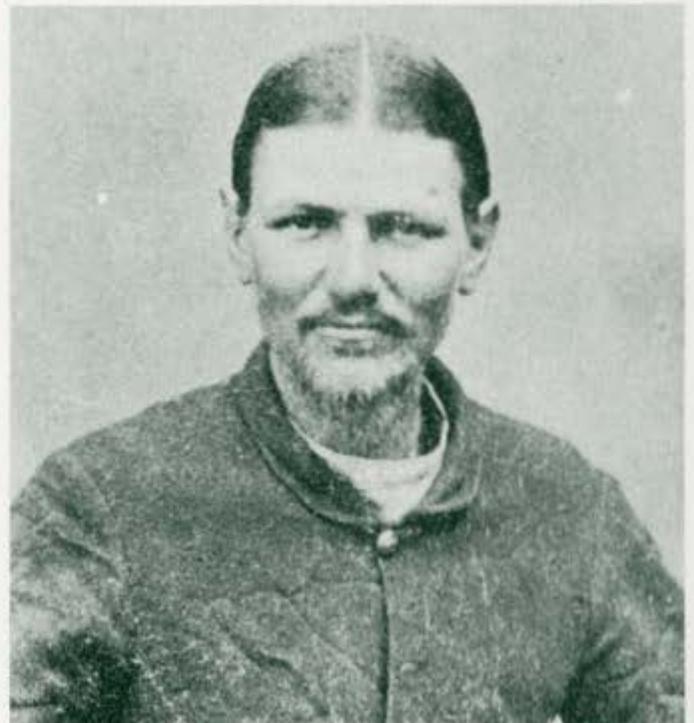
"Boston" Corbett

About ten years ago the director of the Lincoln Library-Museum purchased from a book catalogue a manuscript account of Thomas "Boston" Corbett, who allegedly shot John Wilkes Booth on April 26, 1865. Writing with a pencil, five years after the affair (1870), an unknown Philadelphia *Sunday World* correspondent described Corbett as living in "a little old forlorn-looking house at Camden, New Jersey" and proceeded to quote his conversation and to describe his appearance. Corbett was one of the mysterious figures of the Lincoln assassination story, and his ultimate end remains to this day a mystery.

The correspondent's penciled notes follow:

Boston Corbett who shot Wilkes Booth, lives in a little old forlorn-looking house at 328 Pine St., Camden N.J., where he has been visited by a correspondent of the Philadelphia *Sunday World*. This writer describes Corbett as short in stature, with a resolute and rather stern face. He is about forty years old, is very plain in dress and his principal boast appears to be his devotion as a Methodist. He busily plys his trade as a hatter. He lives alone in his little house, doing his own cooking and housekeeping, and seeing nobody but members of the little flock of Methodists, which meet nightly at his house and of which he is the head. Heaped together in a corner of his kitchen are half a dozen rough benches for the use of his congregation. He preaches and exhorts himself and uses a Windsor chair for a pulpit. When asked if the name "Boston" was not a nickname he became rather angry, and his eyes flashed, and holding on high a Testament with the name "Boston Corbett" printed on it in black ink he said, pointing his finger at the name, "Young man, there is my name; the only one I shall ever own. In Boston I was converted; there met my Redeemer, and Boston is the only name I wish to be called by."

As he accompanied his visitor to the gate he said, "On that eventful morning of my life, as I shot the assassin crouched like a savage beast in the recesses of the barn, I felt that I was doing my duty to my God and my country. To this day I feel justified in my course. Were the ghosts of twenty assassins to rise against me, they could not disturb a calm Christian Spirit."



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Thomas "Boston" Corbett

This fanatic was alleged to have shot Lincoln's assassin.