



Lincoln Lore

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William Makepeace Thayer His Works on Abraham Lincoln

Editor's Note: In 1942, 1945 and 1950, during the editorship of Dr. Louis A. Warren, he devoted considerable space to the works of Thayer in *Lincoln Lore* Numbers 689, 862 and 1100. As many of our present day subscribers have never seen or read these early issues, it is not inappropriate to reprint them all together, accompanied by illustrations of some of the major rarities bearing the name of this particular author.

An excerpt from *Lincoln Lore* No. 1100, titled *Campaign Biographies of 1864*, May 8, 1950 might serve as an introduction to this study:

William Makepeace Thayer is better known to Lincoln students as the author of *The Pioneer Boy* rather than *The Character and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln*, the title of his campaign biography. At the top of the front page of the book bound in wrappers is the citation "The 'Campaign Document'." The first edition consisted of 76 pages although a subsequent edition having had the objectional criticism about Horace Greeley removed, contained but 75 pages. A portrait of Lincoln appears on the cover. *Harper's Weekly* of July 9 in a brief book review calls it "an admirable summary, . . . a most convenient political hand-book of the times."

Not only do we have the 75 page variant but also another rare volume in which the publishers have bound together Thayer's first edition of 76 pages and *The Pioneer Boy* of 310 pages. From all probability this latter publication came from the binders during the campaign.

THAYER'S PIONEER BOY

The earliest cloth bound story of Abraham Lincoln's youth which was widely circulated and used more or less as a source book by other biographers, was *The Pioneer Boy* by William M. Thayer. This publication came from the press about the first of April 1863, and by July 31 of that year five thousand copies had been issued. Before 1864 had closed, 26,000 copies were in the hands of the people. Later on, according to the author, the book "after a very large sale, passed out of print in consequence of the destruction of the plates by fire."

In March, 1882, a revised edition of *The Pioneer Boy* was published by Thayer and he extended the story to cover the President's complete life. This book also had a large sale, the eleventh edition with an English imprint reached a total, for all editions, of fifty thousand copies. This book had a tremendous sale in European countries and was translated into many languages. The conception of Abraham Lincoln held in foreign lands was largely influenced by Thayer's work.

Thayer was the first biographer

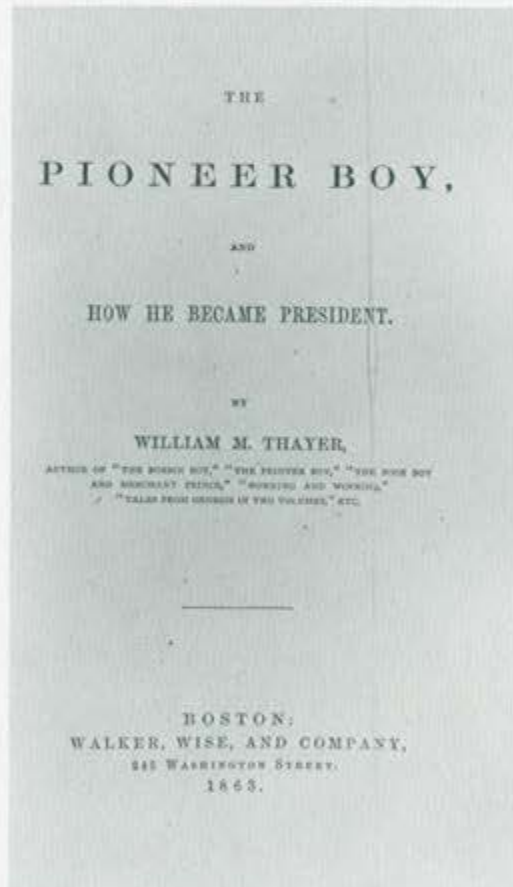
to use in his writing what was known as "the conversational style," and most of his many big sellers were written in dialogue form. This manner of composition invited the use of extraneous data and while *The Pioneer Boy* written in this form was looked upon with askance by some authors, others used many of the human interest stories and gave them the atmosphere of authenticity by placing them in reputable biographies of the President.

There was something of the earmarks of genuineness in Thayer's work which may account for the acceptance of much of the folklore found therein. In the preface the author states "the imagination had done nothing more than connect facts gathered from authentic sources." Again he states, "Real names are generally used in the work. In some instances, however, where objections to such a use seemed to exist, fictitious names are employed."

Possibly Thayer's most valuable testimonial was a letter written on April 17, 1863 which he received from the President's son, Robert Lincoln. Robert stated, "You have been singularly successful in avoiding errors, as I find I have at some time heard nearly everything you narrate from a 'reliable gentleman.'" The publishers took full advantage of this statement and claimed that *The Pioneer Boy* "contains the full and reliable life of President Lincoln, from the time he was seven years of age until he took his seat in the Presidential chair."

The publishers, furthermore, made the statement that, "This is the authentic and authorized life of the President as is shown by the subjoined letter from the son of the President, a student in Harvard College." The letter was then printed in full.

It is doubtful if there is a single early Lincoln biography published after 1863 that is not somewhat influenced by this book. Indirectly it helped to color the personal testimonies of nearly everyone interviewed who had read the book, so that those authors who hesitated to take the stories from Thayer were willing to take them as personal reminiscences of those who had read Thayer's work.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

An Early Biography of "The Pioneer Boy." (William Makepeace Thayer). *The Pioneer Boy and How He Became President*. Boston, 1863. This book was extremely popular in the United States where it outsold contemporary biographies and was the first book about Lincoln to be published abroad. It was translated within the decade into Greek and Hawaiian and in later years, in expanded form, was translated into German, Swedish and Finnish. This (Edition No. One) is the only known copy to carry an embossed sun-burst above the capitol dome on the front cover. Fifteen different editions in English are to be found in the Foundation collection.

A few outstanding stories in the Thayer book follow:

Sale of Kentucky Farm For Whiskey

Thayer is the first author to tell the story of the sale of the Lincoln farm in Kentucky in 1816 for 10 barrels of whiskey and the transportation of the liquor by flatboat to Indiana. There is not a single available fact to support this tradition and plenty of documentary evidence to refute it. Apparently Thayer used the whiskey story to teach a lesson in temperance and utilized three chapters of his book to fully relate an incident that never happened. Minus the moral Thayer drew, nearly every Lincoln biographer has accepted the story.

The Half-faced Camp

Thayer was evidently the inventor of another story which had no factual background. He goes into some detail how Thomas Lincoln concluded to build a "half-faced camp." He was very much confused as to just what the cabin was like. Authors who used his story have supplied this difficulty and taken no pains to stress the fact that the Lincolns lived through one or two winters in a cabin in Indiana with one side open to the weather.

Letter To Parson Elkins

Another story which apparently printed for the first time in Thayer's work may still be classified as folklore, although there is some evidence which might support part of the story. Thayer says Dennis Hanks taught Lincoln to write and that the first letter Lincoln penned was to a preacher by the name of David Elkins, living in Kentucky, whom he asked to come to Indiana to preach his mother's funeral. Most authors have accepted the story but some have been skeptical about using it.

Weems' and Ramsey's Washington

There were some incidents in the early life of Lincoln that Thayer told with some accuracy and which were later on bungled by authors who felt they were correcting a mistake. It was undoubtedly Weems' Washington that Lincoln read in early Indiana days, and Ramsey's Washington that he borrowed from Josiah Crawford and which became damaged by the storm.

Flatboat Trip to New Orleans

Another excellent version of an important episode in Lincoln's early life is Thayer's story of the first river trip to New Orleans. It seems likely from Thayer's account of the trip that he secured the story from one of the members of the Gentry family. Lincoln's almost super-human strength displayed on this trip, made with Allen Gentry, is seldom emphasized.

New Salem Days

Thayer's informant for Abraham Lincoln's days spent in New Salem was William Green. From Green's testimony it would appear as if he were largely responsible for some of Lincoln's important decisions and achievements. It was Green who taught Lincoln grammar (pp. 243). Green claimed he suggested to Lincoln that they raise a company of militia to fight Black Hawk (pp. 246) and that a talk Green's father made to the recruits was responsible for Lincoln receiving a unanimous vote for captain (pp. 247). Green happened to be the person who won a hat by telling Lincoln could lift a whiskey barrel and drink from the bunghole (pp. 250). Green was the first one to propose that Lincoln run for the legislature (pp. 254) and he also championed the candidacy of Lincoln two years later (pp. 266). Green was the person who first suggested to Abraham Lincoln that he should study law (pp. 259, 274). It was Green who examined Lincoln on his first volume of Blackstone (pp. 278) and the New Salem years for Lincoln closed with William Green claiming that in after years Lincoln admitted while President that it was Green who "made him" during the New Salem years.

It is very likely that it was the reading of these New Salem chapters by Thayer that caused Herndon to call "Slippery Bill Green," as he referred to him, "a blow and an exaggerator." It might be of interest to note that Green had nothing to say about Ann Rutledge and the family is not mentioned by Thayer, while the New Salem years gave a general idea of Lincoln's experiences there, the over-emphasis of Green in the picture makes it a very much colored narrative.

THAYER'S WORKS ON LINCOLN

The earliest cloth bound book on Abraham Lincoln which did not have a political objective was Thayer's *The Pioneer Boy*, published April 1863. The following year a campaign biography was issued which appeared under two different titles: *The Character and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln* and also *Life and Character of Abraham Lincoln*. The latter publication and *The Pioneer Boy* were bound together with the title on the back strip inscribed *Life and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln*.

Thayer then rewrote and extended *The Pioneer Boy* into a book which he called *From Pioneer Home to White House*. [In 1882 his James A. Garfield book was published entitled *From Log-Cabin To The White House — Life of James A. Garfield*.] Both the Lincoln and Garfield volumes were bound together in 1882 under the cover title *The Martyr Presidents*. An English Edition used the title *The Pioneer Boy and How He Became President*.

I. *The Pioneer Boy, F941, M249*

The Pioneer Boy/and/how He Became President/by/ William M. Thayer/ . . . / . . . / . . . / Boston:/ Walker, Wise, and Company;/ 245 Washington Street/ 1863.

1. 1863 edition, cloth, 7x4½, illus., ads., XIV, 17-310p. Subsequent issues state number of copies published just above imprint. The 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th thousand issues are all dated 1863.

2. 1864 reprints are from same plates with additional advertisement in back of book. Also different cover design. The 18th, 21st, and 26th thousand issues noted.

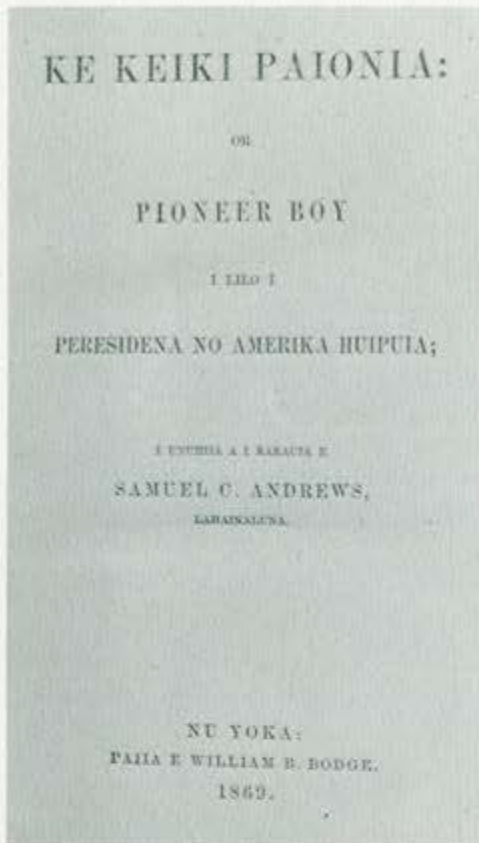
3. 1865 reprints, are from same plates as shown. Same cover design in different colors. Changed imprint "Walker, Fuller, and company". The 28th thousand issue noted.

4. 1866 reprints, same as above but no advertisements in front or back of book. Same imprint but press line



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

A Greek Translation of the Lincoln Biography by Thayer (William M. Thayer) *O apoikos pais etoi existoresis ton periteteion tou biou tou nun proedrou ton henomenon politeion tes Amerikes. Abraam Ligkolnos me eikonographias. En Athenais, 1865. A Greek translation by G. Konstantinou of Thayer's *The Pioneer Boy*. The title is transliterated. Autographed by author to "Eugene R. Thayer from his Father."*



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation
**An Hawaiian Translation
of the Lincoln Biography by Thayer**

(William M. Thayer) *Ke Keiki Paionia: or Pioneer Boy I Lilo I Peresidena No Amerika Huipua; I Unuhia A I Kakauia E Samuel C. Andrews, Lahainaluna. Nu Yoka, 1869. This is a very rare translation by Samuel C. Andrews of Thayer's *The Pioneer Boy*. Autographed by author to "Eugene R. Thayer from his Father."*

dropped. A 30th thousand issue noted.

5. 1868 reprints, from same plates as former editions but changed imprint: "H. B. Fuller and company successors to Walker, Fuller and Company." A 32nd thousand copy noted.

II. Life and Character. F943, M354

Life and Character/of/Abraham Lincoln/by William M. Thayer, author of the "Pioneer Boy," "The Youth's History of the Rebellion," etc./Boston:/Walker, Wise and company/245 Washington Street/1864.

1. Wrappers 7x4½, illus., 76p.
2. Wrapper 7x4½, illus., 76p., same as above with variant imprint: "Boston: Dinsmoor and company. 33, School Street. 1864."

III. Character and Public Services. F942, M353

The/Character and Public Services/of/Abraham Lincoln/President of the United States/by Wm. M. Thayer/Author of the "Pioneer Boy", "Youth's History of the Rebellion", and c./Boston, Walker, Wise, and Company/245, Washington Street, 1864.

1. (a) Wrappers, 7x4½, illus., Ads., 75p. Greely comments on pages 72 and 73 expurgated.
2. Wrappers, same as above with imprint: "Boston:/Dinsmoor and company, 33, School Street/1864."

IV. Life and Public Services (not in bibliographies)

Life/and/Public Services/of/Abraham Lincoln./Device/Walker, Wise and Co. [Back strip title.]

Bound in red cloth embossed with portrait of Lincoln and decorated in gilt. 7x4½, illus., 76 and 310p. M. 354 Note.

V. Pioneer Home to White House. F945, M991

From/Pioneer Home/to/the White House/Life of/

Abraham Lincoln/Boyhood, Youth, Manhood, Assassination, Death./by/William M. Thayer./author of "From Log Cabin to White House." etc./with Eulogy/by Hon. George Bancroft./Enlarged, Revised, and newly illustrated./Norwich, Conn.: The Henry Bill Publishing Company/1882.

1. Bill imprint — (a) Cloth, 7½x5¼, illus., 469p. (b) A variant, same text thicker paper, title page, omits line, "Enlarged, Revised and newly illus." and additional imprint line; "C. C. Wick & co., Cleveland, O." Same date.

2. Alden reprint — (a) Cloth 7¼x4¾, front, 469p. Same title page, plates for text, and frontispiece but other illustrations lacking. Imprint on title page changed to "New York:/John B. Alden, Publisher./1883." (b) Another issue 7x4¾ same as above dated 1885.

3. Earle reprint—Cloth 7¼x4¾. Same plates as above. Changed imprint: "Boston/James H. Earle, Publishers/178 Washington Street/1886." Two different cover titles: (a) Log Cabin Series and (b) White House Series. Slight changes in cover designs for following dates (c) 1887, (d) 1887, (e) 1888, (f) 1889, (g) 1890, (h) n.d.

4. Hurst reprint—Cloth 7x4¾, front. Same title page and text as above. New frontispiece but no other illus. Imprint "New York/Hurst & Company/Publishers, n.d." Two different picture cover designs: (a) Boy with football, (b) Two boys with dog.

5. Whitman reprint — (a) Cloth 7¼x5, front. Same text but reset title page. Frontispiece different from above. Imprint: "Chicago/Albert Whitman & Company/Publishers." (b) Another copy with same reset title as above retains imprint of number four above.

VI. The Martyr Presidents. O1389, M992

The/Martyr/Presidents/Abraham Lincoln/James A. Garfield/H. B. Pub. Co. [Back strip title].

1. A prospectus with same title page as no. V. Also a section excerpted from book on Garfield. Samples of cloth and leather bindings attached to inside of front and back covers. 7½x5½, illus., (50)p.

2. (a) Morocco, same title page as no. V. 7½x5¼, illus., 469p. plus 483p., with title on backstrip. Same frontispiece text and illus. in Lincoln section as no. V. (b) Also in cloth.

3. (a) Moorocco same as above except imprint similar to no. V. (b) Also in cloth.

VII. Pioneer Boy and How He Became President. F947, O1339, M990

The Pioneer Boy/and How He Became President/The Story of the Life of Abraham Lincoln/by W. M. Thayer/author of]"From Log Cabin to White House", "Tact, Push and Principle etc./London:[Hodden and Stoughton, 27. Paternoster Row, MDCCCLXXXII.

1882 edition, (a) cloth, 7¾x5, front., ads. XIX, 359p. Subsequent issues in 1882 show a number of copies published in line above imprint. (b) 2nd, (c) 3rd, (d) 9th thousand. 1885, (e) 3rd edition, 17th thousand, same as above except different ads. 1890, (f) 6th edition, 23rd thousand, same as above. 1894, (g) 10th edition, 52nd thousand, same text but title page set in smaller type. 1896, (h) 11th edition, 54th thousand, (i) a 12th edition, same year. 1902, (j) 15th edition, 67th thousand. 1909 (k) contains new additions in imprint "20 Warwick Square". 1933, (l) imprint Humphrey, Milford, Oxford University Press. Color edition, (m) imprint "Illustrated in color. London Henry Froude, Hodden and Stoughton."

VIII. (The Pioneer Boy) Greek. F944, M3793

Cloth 7¾x5, illus., 289p., 1865. Translation from M249.

IX. (The Pioneer Boy) Hawaiian. F31, M3828

Cloth, 7½x4½, illus, 306p., 1869. Translated from M249.

X. (The Life of Abraham Lincoln) German. F946, M3848

Cloth 8½x5¾, 315p. Editions of (a) 1886 and (b) 1897. Translated from M990.

XI. (Abraham Lincoln's Life) Swedish. O1396, O1398, M3849

(a) Cloth 6½x4¼, front, 319p., 1886. (b) Board cover same year. (c) Board cover (1900). (d) Board cover with

Lincoln picture, 7¼x5½ (1906). Translation from M990.

XII. (Abraham Lincoln) Finnish. O1379, M3861

Wrappers 8¼x5¼, 354p. Translated from M3849.

ETIQUETTE IN THE WHITE HOUSE

The John G. Nicolay collection of manuscripts in the Library-Museum of the Lincoln National Life Foundation has among its many interesting documents a "memorandum from the State Department laying down rules of etiquette" for the Lincoln Administration.

The cardinal rule, because it comes first, is to the effect that the President must "never say 'sir' in addressing a titled foreigner."

Nicolay's rather rough and incomplete notes, based on the State Department's memorandum, follow:

Calls

The Private Secretary represents (the President) in acknowledging social courtesies by return and other calls.

Official Calls

On Senate, House, Sup. Court & etc.

On Diplomatic Corps

Style of card

No. of Cards left

One card for each member of family in Society. Mark no card at private house except to designate a stranger or one not member of the family.

Folded

Turn over corner when left in person.

Send only to hotels.

Receptions

Ordinarily when given

Beginning first Tuesday in January and alternating with Secretary of State to end of March.

Special

As military

Official reception on New Years

11 to 11½ the Diplomatic Corps

11½ to 12 Judges of Supreme Court

11¼ to officers of Army and Navy
from 12 to 2 general reception

Diplomatic

At the Diplomatic reception the cabinet & their families form part of President's family

Official

No other regular reception for Diplomatic Corps
At informal evening calls of Diplomats it is well for the President to go down.

At Saturday receptions the President ought to go down.

Parties

Parties if given must be entirely informal or accidental.

Calls

As the President accepts no invitations to dine or to parties (only in exceptional cases) he is at liberty to make social visits or calls when and where he pleases.

Dinners

Cabinet

Diplomatic

Senatorial

Representative

Supreme Court

Heads of Bureaus ought to be invited occasionally.

Citizens of Washington ought to be invited now and then.

May be given during the spring when the crowds are away.

Visiting strangers ought to be invited — May be mixed in at official dinners.

Military and Naval

Sometimes given invitations.

When Issued

For dinner, invitations should be issued one week before.

See to getting answer

Form of Answer required

As soon as possible

Additions

May send additional invitations up to within two

days of dinner & verbally after.

How Addressed

Cards should be addressed to the lady of the house when there is one

[The hour for state dinners was 7]

Dress for gentlemen

Coat

Black Dress

Blue Dress bright buttons

(Never wear frocks)

Pants

Black — white in Summer

Vest

Black

Shirt

.....

Gloves

White or straw kids

Boots

Boots or shoes

Cravat

White

New Years Receptions

Many details

Note: The Speaker & Vice President are not invited formally but admitted in case of their own accord see fit to come

THE WIT AND WISDOM OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Nobody appreciated the wisdom of laughter more fully than Abraham Lincoln. His peculiar genius for utilizing the funny story to illustrate a point, or to sway others to his way of thinking, is widely recognized. It would be expected, therefore, that in a library such as we have at the Lincoln National Life Foundation, which contains over ten thousand books and pamphlets dealing with the life of Abraham Lincoln, there would be a considerable number devoted to his wit and his wisdom. Each year we would normally expect to add a few more items in this category, and this would certainly astonish no one. What is surprising is that within a period of nineteen months we have added to our collection four publications with identical titles: *The Wit and Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln*. These range in size from a miniature brochure measuring 3¼ by 2½ inches and containing 60 pages, to an 8¼ by 5½ inch book of 265 pages.

The book, by H. Jack Lang, was first published in 1941, with additional printings in 1942, 1943, 1944, 1946 and 1965. The brochures are compiled by Hallmark Cards, Inc., Pyramid Books and the Fleming H. Revell Company.

A fifth publication recently added to our library bears the title *Abraham Lincoln, Wisdom & Wit*. This brochure of 61 pages is compiled by Louise Bachelder. Like those mentioned above, it is comprised of excerpts from Lincoln's speeches, letters and other writings.

Still another publication with similar title, *Abraham Lincoln — A Digest of the Wit and Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln* by King V. Hostick was released in 1958 and added to our library in 1962.

Ruth Higgins

NOTICE

Lincoln Lore Index 1-1500

About November 1, 1967 there will be available for sale a *Lincoln Lore Index* extending from the first copy issued April 15, 1929 to the fifteen hundredth copy issued in February, 1963. The index will be a 56 page publication in offset printing of green ink and will measure 11"x8½", the identical measurements of *Lincoln Lore*. The index will be in three divisions; namely, titles, subjects and persons.

The price of the index will be \$2.00. All orders will be handled through the Lincoln National Life Foundation.