



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 46801

Number 1615

Fort Wayne, Indiana

September, 1972

Tad Lincoln: Could He Have Written a Letter Or Telegram in 1864?

Could eleven year old Thomas "Tad" Lincoln have written a letter or telegram in the fall of 1864? The editor of the Summer 1972 (Volume XXIV — Number 3) issue of *Manuscripts* has published on the inside front cover a facsimile of a telegram dated October 6, 1864, addressed to Gustav Edward Gumpert, which presumably is in the handwriting of Tad. The telegram follows:

Executive Mansion
Washington, Oct. 6th, 1864

Dear Gumpert:

I send Thomas Cross to see you about the Carriage Bill. It was sent to me and I ant got any money to pay the man with.

And Oblidge
Thomas Lincoln
Yur Friend
Tad

The above telegram is described as: "A rare A.L.S. of Tad Lincoln (signed with both full name and 'Tad') on Executive Mansion stationery. It concerns payment for a carriage bill Tad evidently incurred. From the collection of George T. Harding, Sr., M.D. and Herndon P. Harding, M.D." The document was originally the property of Dr. Charles W. Olsen (Barrett sale-1952).

On April 6, 1918, Robert T. Lincoln wrote Isaac Markens, and, in answer to his correspondent's question about the Tad letter (October 6, 1864), he made the statement that, "I do not remember at all any person named 'Gumpert,' to whom my brother Tad's letter was addressed. Thomas Cross, whom you speak of, was a colored servant, who did not permit himself to be forgotten by me for many years. This letter (see Paul M. Angle's: *A Portrait of Abraham Lincoln In Letters By His Oldest Son*, The Chicago Historical Society, 1968, page 58) was written by a boy eleven years old and is of course very crude. I fancy the carriage bill refers to a cart he used with a goat. There may have been some person named Gumpert in the Company which furnished the House sentinels, but I do not know."

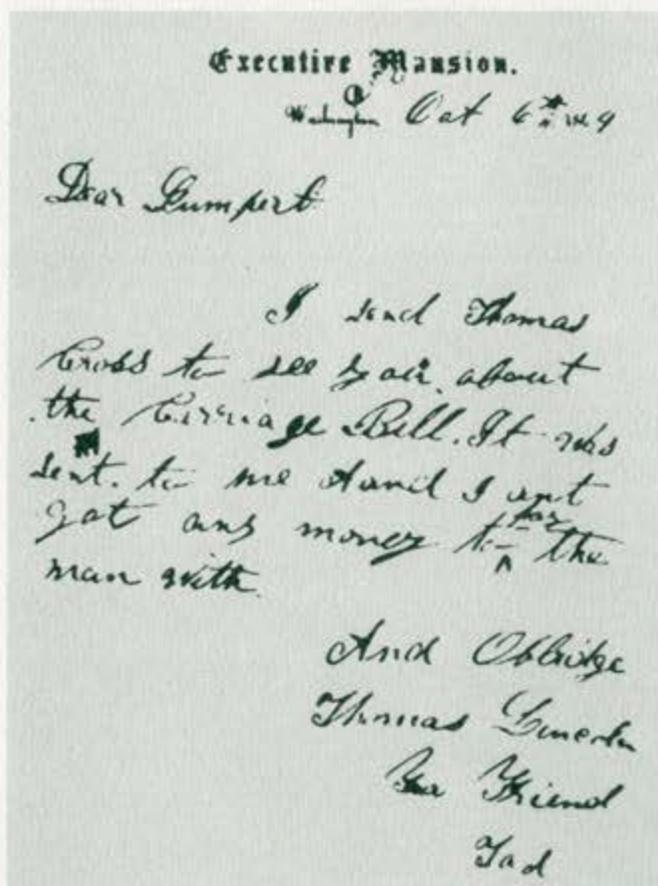
By this late date, Robert had forgotten something he had related years earlier to another correspondent. On September 10, 1866 (two years after the telegram to Gumpert), Tad's elder brother wrote a Mrs. C. Dawes(?) in response to her request for autographs of the Lincoln family. He enclosed autographs of himself and his mother, Mary Todd Lincoln, but, as to Tad, he reported, "My brother is very young — and has not yet learned to write but will no doubt be happy to gratify you at some future time (Chicago Historical Society)."

Ruth Painter Randall in her book, *Lincoln's Sons*, Little, Brown and Company, 1955, wrote that, "Gustav Edward Gumpert . . . was a great friend of Tad's who lived in Philadelphia. He and his brothers had a store which Tad delighted to visit, sometimes opening the cash drawer and scattering its contents, and once riding a pony into the store itself, to the great consternation of the customers."

Mrs. Randall, in her book, discussed Tad's telegram on pages 197-198. She described it as being "written in

a far from well-trained handwriting," and after quoting it in full, she made the following statement: "This document has been much argued over because Mrs. Lincoln, subsequent to the writing of it, made several statements indicating that Tad could not write when he was in the White House and Mrs. Keckley's testimony gives the impression he could neither read nor write at that time." Elizabeth Keckley was Mrs. Lincoln's colored dressmaker as well as friend and confidant. Her book, *Behind The Scenes*, is believed to have been ghost-written.

Mrs. Randall further pointed out that, "On June 15, 1865, Mrs. Lincoln wrote from Chicago to Alexander Williamson, a young Scotsman who had been a tutor to Willie and Tad, that her youngest was ' . . . at length seized with the desire to read & write . . . I hope he will



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

This letter-telegram was originally published in Mrs. Ruth Painter Randall's book, *Lincoln's Sons*, Little, Brown and Company, 1955. The document was then the property of Dr. Charles W. Olsen.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

This print of Tad Lincoln, from a carte-de-visite photograph, was taken in Mathew B. Brady's, Washington, D. C., studio.

be able to write by fall so that he may be able to write you a letter inviting you *out here* to see him."

Mrs. Randall commented that: "Perhaps the strongest statement Mrs. Lincoln made on the subject of Tad's backwardness in learning was that in her letter to Alexander Williamson on December 16, 1867. It was also written in Chicago. 'Taddie is well. Can now read, quite well — as he did not know his letters when he came, here, you will agree he learned rapidly.'"

Two days before sending the telegram under discussion, Tad wired Gumpert, "Gus, I want to know about that box you was to send me. Please let me know right away if you Please And Oblige Col Thomas Lincoln." Mrs. Randall noted that, "The 'Col' of course referred to the officer's commission which Tad had received from Secretary Stanton . . . A telegram signed by a colonel has a certain air of authority, which Tad doubtless liked, and, of course, such an officer has a perfect right to send his communications by military telegraph." Tad's army commission was usually designated as that of lieutenant. Perhaps it was the military commission that prompted Tad to send telegrams.

After revealing such convincing evidence that Tad could not read or write in 1864, Mrs. Randall evidently took another look at the telegram dated October 6, 1864. She asked her readers, "Were Mrs. Lincoln's statements literal or relative? Certainly the telegram of October 6, 1864, was not competent writing. Noah Brooks spoke of the time in the White House when Tad 'could scarcely read.' If he wrote that telegram," Mrs. Randall commented, "it could be stated truthfully that he could scarcely write. It has been suggested that when Mrs.

Lincoln wrote of his not knowing his letters she meant he could not repeat the alphabet. It also sometimes happens that a child learns to sign his name before he knows all his letters or can be said to write."

Mrs. Randall also compared Tad's unquestionably, genuine signature on a legal document, in the Illinois State Historical Library, dated 1867 which bears "a marked resemblance to the signature of the telegram in question." The two signatures can be compared in the Randall book entitled *Lincoln's Sons*.

Another Tad Lincoln telegram, which is likely unpublished, is to be found in the Foundation's archives:

Executive Mansion,
Washington, 30: Nov., 1864.

Mr. Gompert
Brevoort House
New York.
Please inform me when
you will be here.

Thomas Lincoln
Ex. Mansion

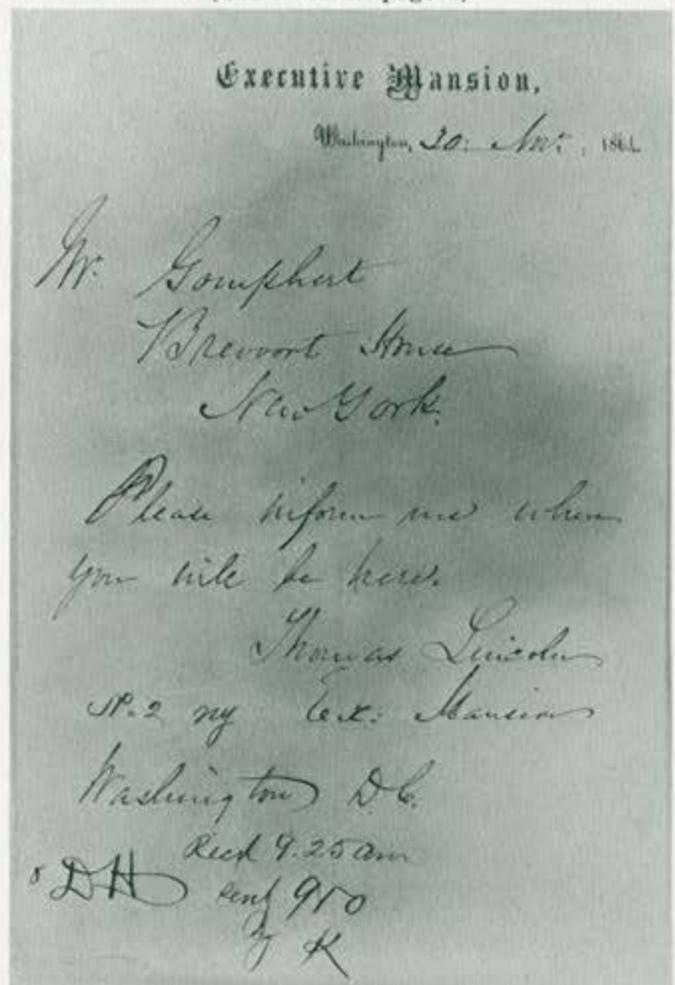
No. 2 NY
Washington, D. C.
Recd 9.25 am

DH sent 910
By K

It has been suggested that Tad's telegrams were dictated by him and written down by any one around the Executive Mansion who was handy. Four of the original telegrams in the Illinois State Historical Library indicate at least two different handwritings. Mrs. Randall surmized that, "Tad got some semiliterate adult, perhaps a servant like Thomas Cross, to write out some of the telegrams, some grown-up person who knew so little he would write 'ant' for 'ain't.'"

A comparison of the document bearing the date of November 30, 1864 with that of October 6, 1864 reveals

(Continued on page 4)



Executive Mansion,

Washington, 30: Nov., 1864.

Mr. Gompert
Brevoort House
New York.

Please inform me when
you will be here.

Thomas Lincoln

No. 2 NY Ex. Mansion

Washington D.C.

Recd 9.25 am

DH sent 910

By K

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

A friendship with Tad Lincoln apparently required a constant involvement in his affairs.

A Lincoln Forgery

Dr. George Winfield Stipp of Bloomington, Illinois, was an "old personal friend" of Abraham Lincoln. On October 6, 1862, Lincoln wrote to Dr. Joseph R. Smith (surgeon with rank of major) the following letter: "Assistant Surgeon General please see Dr. Stipp. He says he is ordered to Gen. McClellan's camp while his preparations — tools, so to speak — are at Corinth, Miss. Not intending to interfere by an order, I still would be glad if he could be sent to Corinth. Oct. 6, 1862. A. Lincoln."

The above mentioned, original statement is written on both sides of a small card and is the property of the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. For some unexplained reason, it has been the pattern for a forgery, which was recently submitted to the Foundation for authentication.

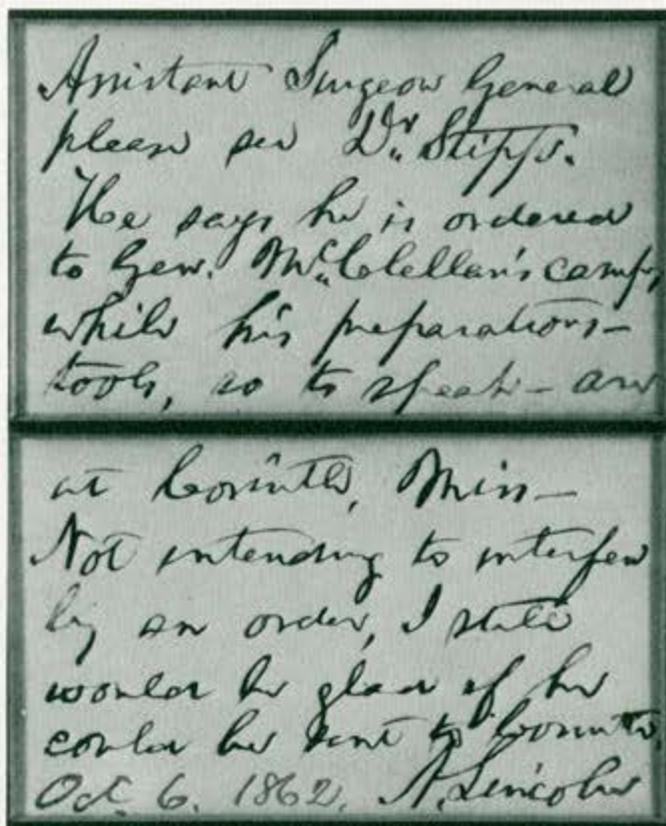
The forged document is written on one side of a sheet of paper of questionable texture, the date is different, the number of words to the line are unlike the original and several words appearing in the original document do not appear in the forged document. The small forgery was photographed and enlarged, and a study of the print seemed to indicate that the writer made a labored effort to copy Lincoln's handwriting. This fact was much more obvious in the photograph than in the forgery itself. The wording of the forged document follows:

"Assistant Surgeon General please see Dr. Stipp. He says he is ordered to Gen. McClellan's camp while his preparations tools so to speak are at Corinth, Miss. I still would be glad if he could be sent to Corinth. Oct. 5, 1862.

A. Lincoln."

Again, Lincoln was called upon to help Dr. Stipp. Writing to Edward D. Townsend, he made the following request: "Dr. Stipp is my old personal friend, and I shall be very glad if he can, consistently with the public service, be assigned as he desires. June 24, 1863, A. Lincoln."

Medical Inspector Stipp had asked that "in consideration of my bad health . . . I may be assigned for duty, to the Department of Ohio, for a few months, in the hope & belief that a change of climate, water and diet, will aid materially, in restoring to me a measure of former health." Townsend referred the letter to Surgeon General Hammond, who recommended a leave of absence instead of the transfer, and on June 25 Townsend directed that a leave be granted. Roy P. Basler, in compiling information on Stipp for *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume VI, 1862-1863, noted that "Lieutenant Colonel Stipp was assigned as medical in-



From the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. The original document (two sides) written on a card and bearing the correct date of October 6, 1862.

spector of the Department of the Gulf on December 19, 1863."

So far as is known, Lincoln's endorsement of June 24, 1863 has not been a subject for the forger.

Perhaps Lincoln autograph collectors were much more gullible in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's than they are today. Undoubtedly, the less sophisticated collector, even today, treasures questionable "Lincoln" documents which are the work of Joseph Cosey, Charles Weisberg, or maybe, Mrs. Lincoln's coachman.

It has been stated that a Lincoln document should pass five tests of authentication; namely, quality of paper, color of ink, date, provenance and literary quality. Maybe, too, it is not smart to make a forgery of an original document that has been published in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, where ownership, date and other details are so readily accessible.

"... Intimate Friends of the President ..."

John Crow, an attorney at Griggsville, Pike County, Illinois, wanted the appointment of pay master in the U.S. Army and he had some influential friends to vouch for him.

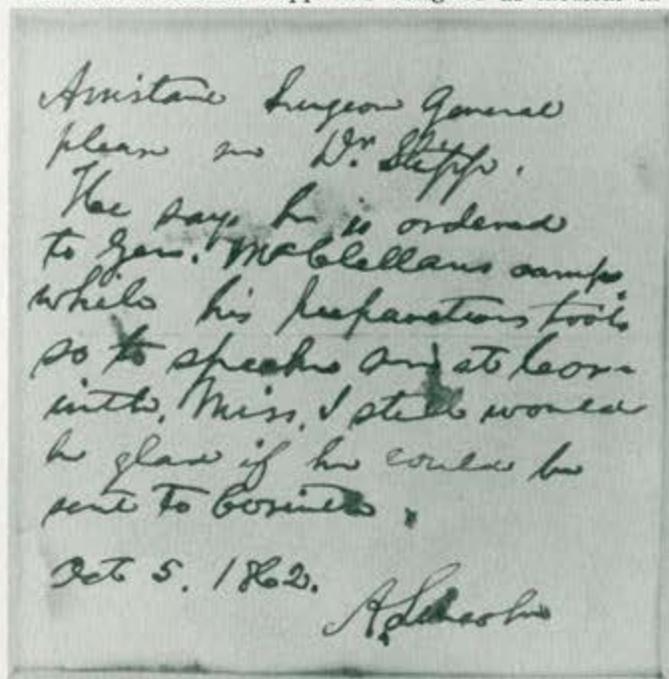
Ozias M. Hatch, a native of Griggsville and the Secretary Of State of Illinois, wrote a letter on his official stationery to President Abraham Lincoln on October 31st, 1861 stating that:

"We take pleasure in recommending the appointment of John Crow, a citizen of Pike County in this State, to the office of Pay Master.

"He is a prudent, careful, capable, honest man, with good business and financial qualifications. His moral character is above reproach.

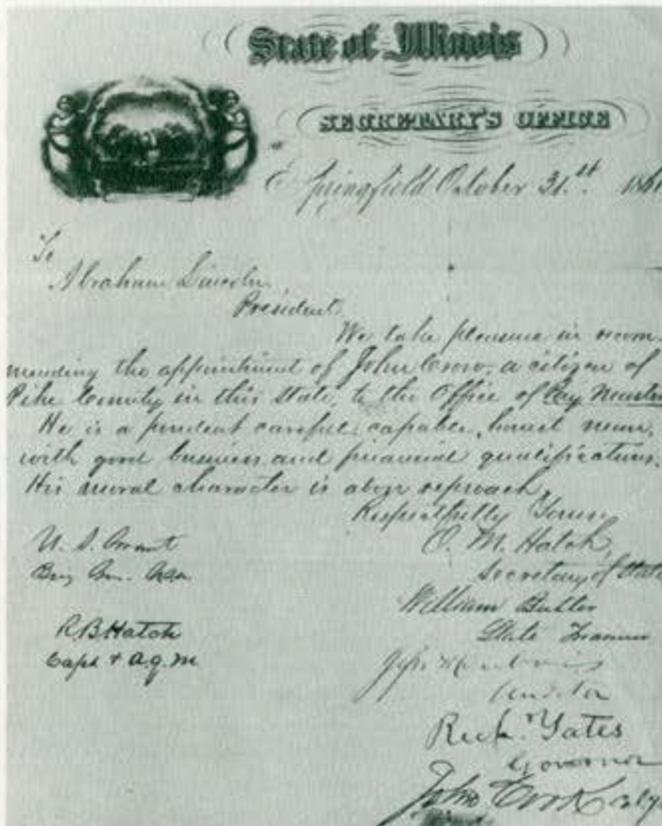
Respectfully Yours,
O. M. Hatch,
Secretary of State . . ."

Other friends of Crow who signed the letter were William Butler, State Treasurer; Jesse K. Dubois, Audi-



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

The forged document which in many respects differs from the original.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

This letter has been published in *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, Volume 3: October 1, 1861 — January 7, 1862, on Page 410.

tor; Richard Yates, Governor; John Cook, Colonel of the Twenty-fifth Illinois Infantry; U. S. Grant, Brigadier-General; and Reuben B. Hatch, Captain of the Twenty-fifth Illinois Infantry.

Undoubtedly, this letter received the attention of President Lincoln, because his private secretary, John Hay, made the following notation on the back of the document:

"Respectfully referred by the President to the consideration of the Secretary of War (Simon Cameron). The names attached are intimate friends of the President and the most worthy citizens of Illinois. Dec. 14, 1861."

When this original document was purchased for the Lincoln Library-Museum, it was thought that it would be relatively easy to identify John Crow and determine whether or not he received the appointment of paymaster. A diligent search failed to disclose an answer. Later on, it was discovered that the letter appears in *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, Volume 3: October 1, 1861-January 7, 1862, on page 410. There the statement is made by the editor, John Y. Simon, that, "No record of the appointment of John Crow has been found."

With the acquisition of the above mentioned document, the Foundation now has in its archives 225 original letters addressed to President Lincoln.

Tad Lincoln

(Continued from page 2)

that the former was written by a more sophisticated scribe. However, whoever he was misspelled the name of Gumpert. Nevertheless, he recorded such detailed information as to when the telegram was sent and received, and he even identified the telegraph operator by initial.

The reader will have to draw his own conclusions as to whether or not Tad Lincoln could write a letter or telegram in 1864. The editor is inclined to believe that Tad Lincoln, while a resident in the Executive Mansion, could not write and that all of his letters or telegrams were written for him.

Former and Future Presidents Addressed Letters to Abraham Lincoln

In the archives of the Lincoln Library-Museum, are to be found three letters (not including the letter signed by General Ulysses S. Grant featured in this issue of *Lincoln Lore*) addressed to Abraham Lincoln by a former President and two future Presidents. The first two letters were published in the July, 1957 (No. 1433) issue of *Lincoln Lore*. The first letter by Millard Fillmore follows:

Buffalo, March 8, 1861

His Excellency
Abraham Lincoln
Sir,

The bearer, E. C. Sprague, Esq. visits Washington on business and has requested me to give him a letter of introduction to your excellency, which I do with great pleasure, as I have known Mr. Sprague from his childhood, and have a very high regard for him as a gentleman of intelligence and high moral character.

He studied law in my office and is now a partner of my son, and occupies a high rank in his profession, and I may add (without being suspected of partizan-ship) that he is a devoted Republican.

I am Respectfully and
Truly Yours
Millard Fillmore

The second letter by Ulysses S. Grant follows:
Headquarters, Depts. of the Ten.
Millikins Bend, La., April 12/63

A. Lincoln
President of the United States
Sir:

Enclosed please find a copy of my letter and also one from General Sherman,* to Thos. D. Knox, correspondent of the *New York Herald* in reply to his application to be permitted to remain in this Dept.

I send these knowing the propensity of persons to misrepresent grounds taken in matters when they are personally interested and fearing that in this case, it might be represented that your wishes had not met with the respect due them.

As stated in my letter the wish of the president will always have the favor and respect of an order.

I am very respectfully
Your Obt. svt.
U. S. Grant
Maj. Gen. Vols.

* Copies of the original correspondence sent to Thos. D. Knox of the *New York Herald* accompany this original letter.

The third letter by Andrew Johnson follows:
State of Tennessee
Executive Department
Nashville, December 3, 1864

His Excellency
Abraham Lincoln
President United States
Washington
D. C.

Mr. President,
Permit me

to introduce to you, Mr. A. F. Lillard of Marshal County Tennessee, —
Mr. Lillard is represented to me as being a truly Loyal Man, and desires an interview with you on Some business which he will make known

I am very respectfully
Your Ob't Serv't
Andrew Johnson

Lincoln's Autograph

About fifteen years ago, a simple signature of Lincoln (Abraham Lincoln is likely more valuable than A. Lincoln) was valued between \$50 to \$100. Before the 1920's, Lincoln's signature cut from legal documents sold for as little as \$2.50 to \$5.00. Early in the 1920's, they brought from \$12.50 to \$15.00. Today a Lincoln signature is worth from \$150 to \$200.