



Lincoln Lore

November, 1975

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Number 1653

Emancipation: 113 Years Later

Editor's Note: I am indebted to Professor G. S. Boritt, formerly of Washington University in Saint Louis, for bringing the paper on which this *Lincoln Lore* is based to my attention. I am especially indebted to his student, Yvette Fulcher, for allowing me to see the results of her industrious survey of opinion on Abraham Lincoln among blacks today and to use that study as the basis for this article. I am performing strictly a reporter's role here; Ms. Fulcher asked all the questions, tabulated all the answers, and, in a word, did all the work. She had excellent guidance. Professor Boritt is the author of numerous articles on Lincoln, including "A Case of Political Suicide? Lincoln and the Mexican War" in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, and the forthcoming "The Voyage to the Colony of Linconia: The Sixteenth President, Black Colonization, and the Defense Mechanism of Avoidance." He is working on a book on Lincoln's economic thought. Ms. Fulcher was a freshman student in Professor Boritt's course on Abraham Lincoln last year and has, I am sure all will agree, a most promising future ahead of her.

It should be remembered that Ms. Fulcher attempts to quantify the unquantifiable. She had to make allowances in her final tabulations for intensity of feeling, tone of response, etc. Incidentally, the introductory remarks are altogether mine and are based, in part, on James M. McPherson's useful collection, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted during the War for the Union* (New York, 1965).

M. E. N., Jr.

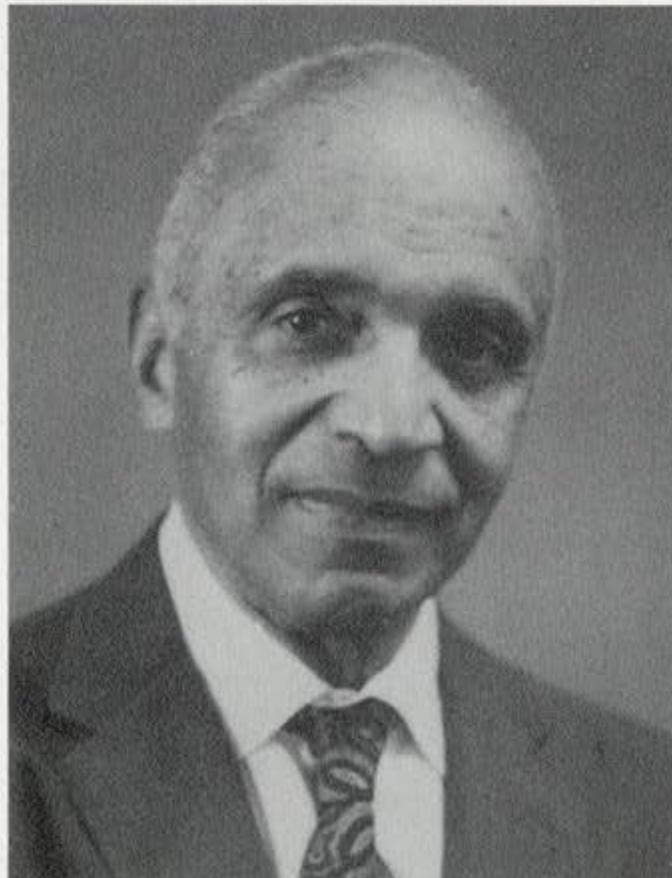
Skepticism among some black people greeted even Abraham Lincoln's first appearance on the national scene in 1860. H. Ford Douglass, an Illinois black leader, suggested at an abolitionist picnic on the Fourth of July in Framingham, Massachusetts, that "Abraham Lincoln is simply a Henry Clay Whig, and he believes just as Henry Clay believed. . . . And Henry Clay was just as odious to the anti-slavery cause and anti-slavery men as ever was John C. Calhoun. . . ." By degrees, the black orator worked up to the drastic assertion that "Abraham Lincoln, . . . is on the side of this Slave Power . . . that has possession of the Federal Government." Douglass was misinformed on at least one point, for he said that Lincoln's proposal was "to let the people and the Territories regulate their domestic institutions in their own way." This was the solution, of course, of Stephen Douglas but not of Abraham Lincoln.

H. Ford Douglass represented only a minority among the black minority in 1860, and by 1865, his opinions had surely shrunk in influence. Even the first cautious rumblings of Lincoln's great emancipation policy were enthusiastically greeted by black men. When a message to Congress of March 6, 1862, suggested federal compensation to any state which moved to abolish slavery gradually, the *Anglo-African*, a Negro newspaper, called it "an event which sent a thrill of joy throughout christendom." The paper called it "a stroke of policy, grandly reticent on the part of its author, yet most timely and sagacious, which has secured for Abraham Lincoln a confidence and admiration on the part of the people, the whole loyal people, such as no man has enjoyed in the present era." Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation increased the enthusiasm in a crescendo which erupted into wild rejoicing when, on April 4, 1865, the Great Emancipator visited the conquered capital of the Confederacy. A Negro correspondent reported the scene of Lincoln's visit to Richmond this way:

The great event after the capture of the city was the arrival of President Lincoln in it. . . . There is no describing the scene along the route. The colored population was wild with enthusiasm. Old men thanked God in a very boisterous manner, and old women shouted upon the pavement as high as they had ever done at a religious revival. . . .

Everyone declares that Richmond never before presented such a spectacle of jubilee. It must be confessed that those who participated in the informal reception of the President were mainly negroes. There were many whites, but they were lost in the great concourse of American citizens of African descent. . . .

I visited yesterday several of the slave jails, where men, women, and children were confined, or herded, for the examination of purchases. . . . The owners, as soon as they were aware that we were coming, opened wide the doors and told the confined inmates they



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

FIGURE 1. Professor Benjamin Quarles

were free. The poor souls could not realize it until they saw the Union army. Even then they thought it must be a pleasant dream, but when they saw Abraham Lincoln they were satisfied that their freedom was perpetual. One enthusiastic old negro woman exclaimed: "I know that I am free, for I have seen Father Abraham and felt him."

When the President returned to the flag-ship of Admiral Porter, in the evening, he was taken from the wharf in a cutter. Just as he pushed off, amid the cheering of the crowd, another good old colored female shouted, "Don't drown Massa Abe, for God's sake!"

After President Lincoln was assassinated ten days later, Edgar Dinsmore, a black soldier from New York, wrote his fiancée:

We mourn for the loss of our great and good President as a loss irreparable. Humanity has lost a firm advocate, our race its Patron Saint, and the good of all the world a fitting object to emulate. . . . The name Abraham Lincoln will ever be cherished in our hearts, and none will more delight to lip his name in reverence than the future generations of our people.

Most Lincoln students have suspected for some time that the predictions of eternal reverence for Lincoln on the part of American Negroes have proved to be in error. There have been some undercurrents of ambivalence all along. At the inaugural ceremonies of the Freedmen's Memorial Monument to Abraham Lincoln in Washington, D. C., on April 14, 1876, "nearly all of the colored organizations in the city" heard Frederick Douglass, black abolitionist, give a memorable and prophetic address. He pointed out carefully that this was the first occasion on which black Americans "have sought to do honor to any American great man." Before Abraham Lincoln, he intimated, Negroes had had no reason to celebrate American history. Then, warning his audience that "Truth is proper and beautiful at all times and in all places," Douglass dropped his bombshell: "Abraham Lincoln was not, in the fullest sense of the word, either our man or our model. . . . He was pre-eminently the white man's President. . . ." Douglass conceded to his "white fellow-citizens, a pre-eminence in this worship" of Lincoln. "You are the children of Abraham Lincoln," he said. "We are at best only his step-children, children by adoption, children by force of circumstances and necessity." Douglass then catalogued the inadequacies he found in Lincoln's policies. Above all, "He was ready and willing at any time during the first years of his administration to deny, postpone and sacrifice the rights of humanity in the colored people, to promote the welfare of the white people of this country. . . . the Union was more to him than our freedom or our future. . . ." The specific charges were these:

. . . he tarried long in the mountain; . . . he strangely told us that we were the cause of the war; . . . he still more strangely told us to leave the land in which we were born; . . . he refused to employ our arms in the defence of the Union; . . . after accepting our services as colored soldiers, he refused to retaliate when we were murdered as colored prisoners; . . . he told us he would save the Union if he could with slavery; . . . he revoked the proclamation of emancipation of General Fremont; . . . he refused to remove the commander of the Army of the Potomac, who was more zealous in his efforts to protect slavery than suppress rebellion. . . .

Except for quotable quotes illustrating Lincoln's racial views before the Civil War, Douglass had laid out the black case against Lincoln largely as it has been laid out ever since by any black who disliked him. The quotable quotes and the public controversy necessary to make the case against Lincoln a subject for popular consumption were both provided, ironically, by the Citizens' Councils of America, white Southern groups which opposed passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In advertisements widely printed in major American newspapers, including the *Washington Post*, in February of 1964, the Citizens' Councils claimed that three quotations represented "Lincoln's Hopes for the Negro In His Own Words." Two of the three dealt with colonization, and the third was an answer to Stephen Douglas, protesting that he (Lincoln) was not "in favor of bringing about in any way the social and poli-

tical equality of the white and black races." The irony of this campaign was that it may have convinced blacks and left whites unconvinced. Congressman Fred Schwengel of Iowa, a member of the Bibliography Committee for *Lincoln Lore*, commented simply: "Sedulous selection, it is well known, can make the Scriptures seem the work of Satan."

Nevertheless, a period of black disillusionment, epitomized by Lerone F. Bennett's article in *Ebony* in 1968 ("Was Abe Lincoln a White Supremacist?"), began, and it has apparently reached deeply into the black community.

We can be sure of very little in this area because, despite its being a topic on which almost everyone has an opinion, scientific surveys of Negro opinion on Abraham Lincoln are few and far between. A brief check of our files at the Lincoln National Life Foundation uncovered no such surveys whatever. Therefore, the significance of Yvette Fulcher's survey of "The Attitudes of Blacks Today Toward Abraham Lincoln" is great. It provides us with our first concrete sampling of this very important segment of opinion on Abraham Lincoln.

Ms. Fulcher's survey was conducted by mail. One hundred twenty persons were contacted and all but thirteen responded. The questions were designed so as not to be loaded in favor of one answer or another and so as to be understandable to "not only a black Representative in the United States Congress . . . but also a black former convict with an eighth grade education." These are the six questions:

1. What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the name "Abraham Lincoln?"
2. What is black colonization?
3. Was Abraham Lincoln good or bad for blacks in the 1860's?
4. Is Abraham Lincoln and what he stood for good or bad for blacks in 1974?
5. What is the Emancipation Proclamation?
6. What is your opinion of Abraham Lincoln?

Ms. Fulcher broke the responses down by some simple social classifications. Government officials, business executives, doctors, lawyers, and writers were classified as black professionals. Engineers, nurses, union leaders, school officials, and teachers were classified as higher white-collar workers. Firemen, policemen, social workers, secretaries, and soldiers were classified as lower white-collar workers. Dock workers, trash collectors, custodians, and assembly line workers were classified as wage or blue-collar workers. Another classification included the unemployed, welfare recipients, present and former convicts, and criminals. Mothers were considered a special classification as well, perhaps because of Ms. Fulcher's own reading of the importance of mothers in light of the history of the black family. The elderly were given a category to themselves, as were students.

The tabulated results of the survey, broken down according to these categories, appear below:

	Professionals					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Pro-Lincoln	3	4	4	3	4	4
Anti-Lincoln	12	10	13	14	13	13
Neutral	2	3	0	0	0	0

	Higher White-Collar					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Pro-Lincoln	9	3	5	5	6	6
Anti-Lincoln	10	13	13	12	13	13
Neutral	0	3	1	2	0	0

	Lower White-Collar					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Pro-Lincoln	16	16	17	17	17	17
Anti-Lincoln	4	3	4	3	4	4
Neutral	1	2	0	1	0	0

Blue-Collar

	Question					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Pro-Lincoln	3	1	2	3	3	3
Anti-Lincoln	8	8	9	8	8	8
Neutral	0	2	0	0	0	0

Unemployed

	Question					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Pro-Lincoln	2	1	2	2	2	2
Anti-Lincoln	6	6	6	6	6	6
Neutral	0	1	0	0	0	0

Mothers

	Question					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Pro-Lincoln	3	1	1	1	1	1
Anti-Lincoln	0	2	2	2	2	2
Neutral	0	0	0	0	0	0

Elderly

	Question					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Pro-Lincoln	2	2	2	2	0	2
Anti-Lincoln	0	0	0	0	2	0
Neutral	0	0	0	0	0	0

Students

	Question					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Pro-Lincoln	4	3	5	5	5	5
Anti-Lincoln	21	20	20	20	21	20
Neutral	1	3	1	1	0	1

Summary of Survey

	PRO-LINCOLN	ANTI-LINCOLN	TOTAL
PROFESSIONALS	4	13	17
HIGHER WHITE-COLLAR	6	13	19
LOWER WHITE-COLLAR	17	4	21
BLUE-COLLAR	3	8	11
UNEMPLOYED	2	6	8
MOTHERS	1	2	3
ELDERLY	2	0	2
STUDENTS	6*	20	26
TOTAL	41	66	107

*Includes one neutral.

Ms. Fulcher provided an analysis of the figures and provided percentages which make the survey even more startling. Three-fourths of the black professionals are anti-Lincoln. Almost seventy percent of the higher white-collar workers are anti-Lincoln. Three-fourths of the black unemployed are anti-Lincoln. Two-thirds of the black mothers are less than enthusiastic about Lincoln. Almost eighty percent of black students are anti-Lincoln, and that figure, of course, practically guarantees that future surveys will not see these figures turned around for some time to come. Almost three-fourths of blue-collar workers are anti-Lincoln. Only the elderly and lower white-collar workers retain the respect black soldier Edgar Dinsmore predicted would be Lincoln's forever. All the elderly interviewed and eighty-one percent of the lower white-collar workers are pro-Lincoln.

Among black professionals, knowledge of Lincoln's activity in behalf of colonization is high. In fact, their opinions al-

most perfectly reproduce the opinions of black professional Frederick Douglass one hundred years ago. They feel that Lincoln freed the slaves too slowly and that he did so only to save the Union, but they do realize that, in the context of the 1860's, Lincoln's policies certainly helped blacks. The minority opinion among black professionals is well represented by historian Benjamin Quarles, author of *Lincoln and the Negro*, still the definitive treatment of that subject in the field of Lincolniana. Quarles feels that Lincoln moved as fast in behalf of the slaves as public opinion would permit.

Opinions among the higher white-collar workers are similar to those among professionals, and this is important, for the group includes the teachers who will shape future opinions on Lincoln. The thirty-two percent of higher white-collar workers who are pro-Lincoln are an interesting group. They know about colonization, too, but they interpret it as Lincoln's efforts to lead blacks to self-help in a congenial atmosphere. They also feel that Lincoln wanted freedom for all, black and white.

The rest of the groups seem less aware of colonization. Blue-collar workers and the unemployed distrust Lincoln's motives for emancipation as "political." Although Ms. Fulcher does not say so, these groups seem to share with particular intensity the pervasive distrust of politics in American society in general. Incidentally, the minority in these groups who are pro-Lincoln are very pro-Lincoln and consider him a savior who alone stood between blacks and a continuing slave status for many years to come.

Black mothers seem to blame Lincoln for the plight of the freedman after emancipation. Black students, like black professionals and higher white-collar workers, are anti-Lincoln because Lincoln, they say, used freedom as a means to the end of saving the Union.

Those groups which are pro-Lincoln seem to be as aware of the facts of Lincoln's career as those that are anti-Lincoln. They merely interpret the facts differently. The elderly, for example, are aware that the Emancipation Proclamation did not free all the slaves, but they trust Lincoln's way of going about freeing the slaves.

Lower white-collar workers see all the difference in the world between legal freedom and legal slavery, and therefore they enthusiastically admire Lincoln as the bringer of freedom. They dismiss Lincoln's interest in colonization because it was always a voluntary rather than forced colonization which he envisioned. The only dissenters in this group dislike Lincoln because the Emancipation Proclamation itself did not actually free all the slaves and because freedmen were left in a poor condition.

There are encouraging signs for Lincoln's reputation even in this rather dismal reading of the current barometer of opinion. Most encouraging to anyone interested in history is the rather high level of information among people not selected, apparently, on a basis of interest in history. Thirty years ago, even ten or twenty years ago, knowledge of the practical effectiveness of the Emancipation Proclamation, of Lincoln's interest in colonization, or of his letter to Horace Greeley explaining his policies as a function of his duty to save the Union were considered fine points, subtleties which were well known in the profession but which were unknown to the man in the street. Blacks probably have a higher awareness of such things than whites today because these things are absolutely central to their history and because their history has become a major area of emphasis in all public education. Whatever the case, all historians and students of history should rejoice to see that they have not been talking simply to each other, and that things that were professional subtleties yesterday are today's common knowledge.

In regard to Lincoln's views on race and his policies concerning slavery, the fundamental pieces of evidence have not changed since Frederick Douglass's day, but popular opinion has changed in many ways. The results of a survey taken years hence might be quite different. Among historians, the sensational anti-Lincoln arguments of the late 1960's are clearly taking a new turn, and this survey proves that these changes in opinion become widespread in time.

CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY 1974-1975

Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members: Dr. Kenneth A. Bernard, Belmont Arms, 51 Belmont St., Apt. C-2, South Easton, Mass.; Arnold Gates, 289 New Hyde Park Rd., Garden City, N.Y.; Carl Haverlin, 8619 Louise Avenue, Northridge, California; James T. Hickey, Illinois State Historical Library, Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois; E. B. (Pete) Long, 607 S. 15th St., Laramie, Wyoming; Ralph G. Newman, 18 E. Chestnut St., Chicago, Illinois; Hon. Fred Schwengel, 200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C.; Dr. Wayne C. Temple, 1121 S. 4th Street Court, Springfield, Illinois. New items available for consideration may be sent to the above persons, or the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

1974

ARMSTRONG, WILLIAM H.

1974-25

The Education of/Abraham Lincoln/by William H. Armstrong/Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc./New York/ [Copyright 1974 by William H. Armstrong. All rights reserved.]

Book, cloth, 8 1/2" x 6 1/2", fr., 127 (1) pp., illus., price, \$4.64.
Juvenile literature.

BROWNE, RAY B.

1974-26

Lincoln-Lore/Lincoln/in the/Popular Mind/edited/by/Ray B. Browne/with/a/foreword/by/Russel B. Nye/(Device)/Popular Press/Bowling Green, Ohio 43403/ [Copyright 1974 by The Bowling Green University Popular Press, Ray B. Browne, Editor.]

Book, cloth, 9 1/4" x 6 1/4", xii p., 3-510 pp., illus., price, \$20.00.

CARTER III, SAMUEL

1974-27

The Riddle/Of/Dr. Mudd/By Samuel Carter III/(Device)/G. P. Putnam's Sons/New York/ [Copyright 1974 by Samuel Carter III. All rights reserved.]

Book, cloth, 8 1/2" x 5 1/4", 380 pp., maps on inside of front and back covers, illus., price, \$8.95.

COOLIDGE, OLIVIA

1974-28

Olivia Coolidge/(Device)/The Apprenticeship of/Abraham Lincoln/Charles Scribner's Sons/New York/ [Copyright 1974 by Olivia Coolidge. All rights reserved.]

Book, cloth, 9 1/4" x 6 1/4", viii p., 242 pp., illus., price, \$6.95.

Juvenile literature.

JONES, ALFRED HAWORTH

1974-29

Alfred Haworth Jones/Roosevelt's/Image/Brokers/Poets, Playwrights, and the/Use of the Lincoln Symbol/National University Publications/Kennikat Press . 1974/Port Washington, N.Y. . London/ [Copyright 1974 by Alfred Haworth Jones. All rights reserved.]

Book, cloth, 8 1/4" x 5 1/4", 134 (6) pp., price, \$8.95.

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Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10 1/2" x 7 1/4", 117-168 pp., illus., price per single issue, \$1.50.

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Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10 1/2" x 7 1/4", 169-228 pp., illus., price per single issue, \$1.50.

LONGFORD, LORD

1974-32

Great Lives/Abraham Lincoln/Lord Longford/Introduction by Elizabeth Longford/(Portrait of Lincoln and

son)/Weidenfeld and Nicolson London/ [Copyright 1974 by George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Limited and Book Club Associates. All rights reserved.]

Book, cloth, 10" x 6 1/2", fr., 231 pp., scenes of Lincoln-Douglas debates on inside front and back covers, illus., price, \$8.50. British edition.

SORMANI, LUCA

1974-33

Lincoln/E Il Razzismo/Dopo La Schiavitu/(Device)/Edizioni Cremonese/Roma/ [Published February 10, 1974 by Edizioni Cremonese, Roma. Copyright 1973 by Edizioni Cremonese, Roma. Entire contents of book printed in Italian language.]

Book, paperback, 7 1/4" x 4 1/4", 128 pp., price, \$2.50.

1975

ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL LIBRARY 1975-1

Illinois/History/Volume 28/Number 5/February 1975/Abraham Lincoln/Down the Mississippi to New Orleans—East-Central Illinois/Connections—Defeat Brings/Victory—River Traffic versus/Rail Traffic—Assassination/Attempts—"Leather Lungs" for/Lincoln—Views of the British/Press—The Summer White/House—Problems of the First/Lady—Ominous Dreams—Those/Who Stayed

Away—The Coffin/Conspiracy—Lincoln and the/Press—Historic Indian Canes/(Portrait of Lincoln)/A Young Mr. Lincoln/(Cover title)/ [Copyright 1975 by the Illinois State Historical Society. Published by the Illinois State Historical Society, Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois 62706.]

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10" x 7 1/4", pages 99-119, illus., price, 20¢.

ILL. STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1975-2

Journal/of the Illinois State Historical Society/Volume LXVIII/Number 1/February 1975/Contents/3 Introduction/William K. Alderfer/9 Lincoln and Frederick Douglass: Another Debate/Christopher N. Breiseth/27 Lincoln and the Politics of Morality/Ronald D. Rietveld/45 Lincoln and the Weight of Responsibility/Don E. Fehrenbacher/57 Lincoln and Congress: Why Not Congress and Lincoln?/Harold M. Hyman/74 Lincolniana: Lincoln and the Printmakers/Harold Holzer/85 Book Reviews/96 Picture Credits/Cover: Statue erected in 1909 in the courthouse

square of Lincoln's birthplace, Hodgenville, Kentucky./Sculpture by Alexander Weinman./Copyright, Illinois State Historical Society, 1975 (Device) 14 Printed by Authority of the State of Illinois/(Abraham Lincoln Issue)/

Book, flexible boards, 9 1/2" x 7 1/4", 95 (1) pp., illus., price, \$2.00.

(LINCOLN MEMORIAL SHRINE, THE) 1975-3

A Selective Bibliography/Of/Books, Pamphlets (sic), Letters, Documents/And Other Materials/In/The Lincoln Memorial Shrine/(Picture of the shrine)/Redlands, California/1975/(Cover title)/

Pamphlet, paper, 8 1/2" x 5 1/4", 39 (1) pp., illus. (Contains a brief history of the shrine and a selective bibliography of their collections of books, pamphlets, manuscripts, art objects, photographs, stamps, coins, artifacts and periodicals.)

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY (1975)-4

The Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum/(Embossed portrait of Lincoln and lettering)/that government/of the people,/by the people,/for the people,/shall not perish/from the earth/(Cover title)/

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 11" x 8 1/2", 16 pp., illus. (Contains historical data on the formation and growth of Lincoln Memorial University, data and illustrations of its Lincoln collection along with an illustrated picture of its future goal, the construction of a new memorial, The Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, to house its collection.)

