



# Lincoln Lore

May, 1982

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## VINDICATION

"A fact that has just been reported by the Watchman of the Dept, viz that your carriage was followed by a horseman not one of your escort and dressed in uniform unlike that used by our troupe induces me to advise that your guard be on the alert tonight." So read a note received by Abraham Lincoln on July 9, 1864. Such letters are rather unusual. Most of the people close to the President had very little fear of assassination. A few who thought it a possibility in that war-torn time were paralyzed by fatalism. They felt, as apparently Lincoln himself did, that there was no politically acceptable way to protect the President from a determined assassin. Letters advising practical protective measures are so rare, in fact, that it is useful to examine other letters written by the same person in this twilight of Lincoln's life.

When the President left for a visit to conquered Virginia in the happy spring of the next year, the same correspondent sent Lincoln frequent letters. They mixed cheery observations on the Washington scene with admonitions to be cautious. On March 24, 1865, the correspondent, commenting on the end of the congressional session, wrote: "Nothing new has transpired here. Your tormentors have taken wings and departed." Only a handful of people on intimate political terms with Lincoln wrote letters like that. A similar one from the same pen followed the next day, adding a humorous note of caution for the President's visit to the front:

We have nothing new here; now [that] you are away everything is quiet and the tormentors vanished. I hope you will remem-

ber Gen. Harrison's advice to his men at Tippecanoe, that they "can see as well a little further off."

By the next day the writer of this interesting batch of letters had heard from Lincoln and exclaimed with genuine warmth at the good news from the front in Virginia: "Your military news warms the blood or we would be in danger of a March chill." Three days later the correspondent sent his good wishes that "the present fine weather will afford you relaxation exercise and improved health." Finally, on April 3, 1865, the note of anxiety about the President's security returned to the correspondence:

Allow me respectfully to ask you to consider whether you ought to expose the nation to the consequences of any disaster to yourself in the pursuit of a treacherous and dangerous enemy like the rebel Army.

Commanding generals are in the line of their duty in run-

ning such risks. But is the political head of a nation in the same condition?

The author of this little body of correspondence should be easy to identify. How many people, after all, were on such intimate terms with Lincoln that they would dare to trespass on the harried President's time with jocular letters about the weather? Who worked so closely with Lincoln that he felt it necessary to send the President almost daily reports when he was absent from Washington? And who had the nearly unique good sense to caution the President against risking his physical safety?

If the history of Lincoln's administration had been written as



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FIGURE 1. Lincoln in Richmond.



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FIGURE 2. Richmond at the end of the war.

it should have been, the answer to these questions should come to mind immediately. Yet a majority of readers will probably give the wrong answer. The writer of these letters was Edwin M. Stanton. Lincoln worked more closely with him than any other Cabinet member, if for no other reason than that the winning of the war was the principal task of Lincoln's administration and Stanton was the Secretary of War. This frequent personal contact produced friendly intimacy despite what one hears from lesser administration officials about Stanton's bearish manner. And Stanton was the only high-ranking official to worry about assassination and to instrument practical policies to prevent it. He insisted on a cavalry escort for the President's carriage rides. He established the 24-hour guard at the Executive Mansion in 1864.

A tremendous amount of silly and sensation-seeking literature has intervened since those days to tarnish Stanton's reputation. Happily, some correctives are beginning to appear. One of them is Thomas Reed Turner's *Beware the People Weeping: Pub-*

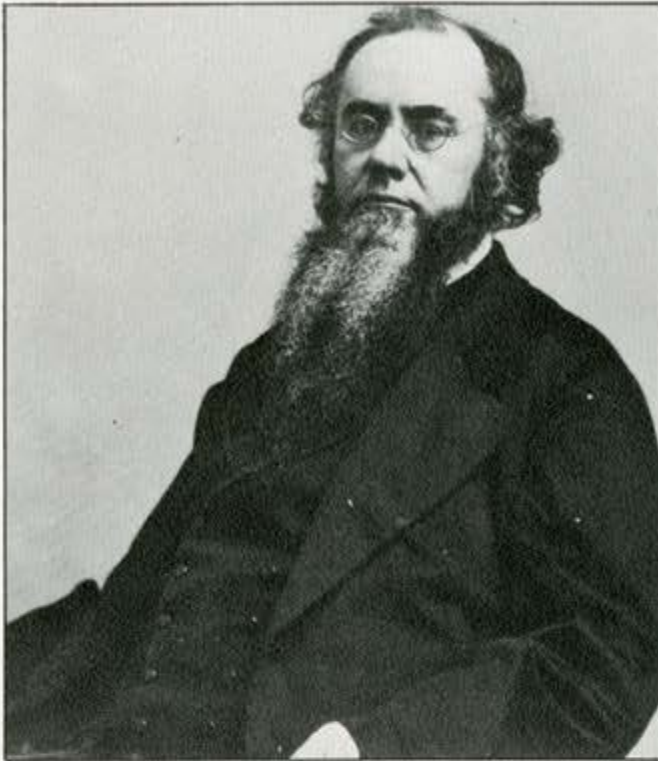
*lic Opinion and the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982). Among other worthwhile accomplishments of this, the first book on the assassination by a professional historian, is its sensible vindication of Edwin M. Stanton's behavior in the wake of the Lincoln assassination.

Critics have accused Stanton of losing his head in the crisis, with organizing the pursuit of the assassins too slowly, and with keeping Booth's name from the public as long as he possibly could. Even sober historians who knew better than to read any sinister implications into these actions have been lulled into thinking they are accurate descriptions of Stanton's behavior. The first telegram from the Secretary of War mentioning Booth's name was sent at 3:20 a.m. on April 15. A telegram sent at 4:44 a.m. stated that two assassins were involved in the attacks on Lincoln and Secretary of State William H. Seward. In fact, some newspapers learned Booth's name earlier from their own reporters (proof that there was no suppression of



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FIGURE 3. Stanton at Lincoln's deathbed.



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FIGURE 4. Edwin M. Stanton.

the news). Turner makes an even more telling point: "The announcement of the assassin's name in the newspapers, in any case, should hardly have been a government priority, for it could have little bearing on the pursuit. The government's primary responsibility was to notify its military commanders and detectives who would be engaged in tracking the assassins, and this was fairly rapidly accomplished." Some members of the administration feared violence in the army, and the news was kept from some commands until passions cooled. Giving the information to the press in half-baked form might have led to just the sort of frenzy feared by those who accuse Stanton of losing his head.

Far from reacting slowly, Stanton was the only high authority who acted quickly. Seward was, of course, incapacitated by wounds. Salmon P. Chase spent the fearful night in his house. Everyone else seemed paralyzed by grief or terror. Stanton, terribly grief-stricken himself (he spent parts of the next few days weeping visibly), swung into action because he had always seen to the modest security apparatus the President would allow and because he controlled the army and the military detectives who must maintain order and solve the crime.

There were many things to do that night, and the amount of time it took Stanton to decide Booth was the assassin was hardly excessive. He saw to the security of Washington (who knew but what the assassination was part of a Confederate plot to take over the capital?), he investigated both the Lincoln and the Seward assaults, he kept a lid on the potentially explosive army, and he watched his old friend slide into death. Surely that is plenty of activity to occupy four and a half hours.

As for the only really censurable aspect of his handling of the assassination's aftermath — Stanton's quick decision that Booth's was a Confederate plot planned in the highest realms of Confederate government — that was a natural assumption at a time when all Confederate forces had yet to surrender. As Paul Fussell shows in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, wars have a dichotomizing effect even on the imaginations of great writers. One begins to think always in terms of "us" and "them," "the front" and "the rear," or "victory" and "defeat." When something bad happens to us at such times, we naturally leap to the conclusion that "they" did it. Four years of bloody Civil War — the bloodiest war in American history, in fact — were certainly sure to condition that reflex. Even Edward Bates, formerly the Attorney General and probably the most conservative person to serve in Lincoln's Cabinet, immediately assumed that the assassination was the work of the rebels.

Crusty, skeptical, independent-minded, and acerbic old Gideon Welles, also a conservative Cabinet member, blurted out, "Damn the Rebels, this is their work."

There is more to the history of the assassination than the story of Stanton's handling of its immediate aftermath. Thomas R. Turner's book contains many fascinating details and much sound reasoning on other points. Nothing in the book is more satisfying emotionally, however, than Turner's vindication of Edwin M. Stanton.

## AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Ralph Geoffrey Newman will present the sixth annual R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture on Thursday, May 19, 1983, at 8:00 p.m. at the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana. His subject will be "Preserving Lincoln for the Ages: Collectors, Collecting, and Our Sixteenth President."

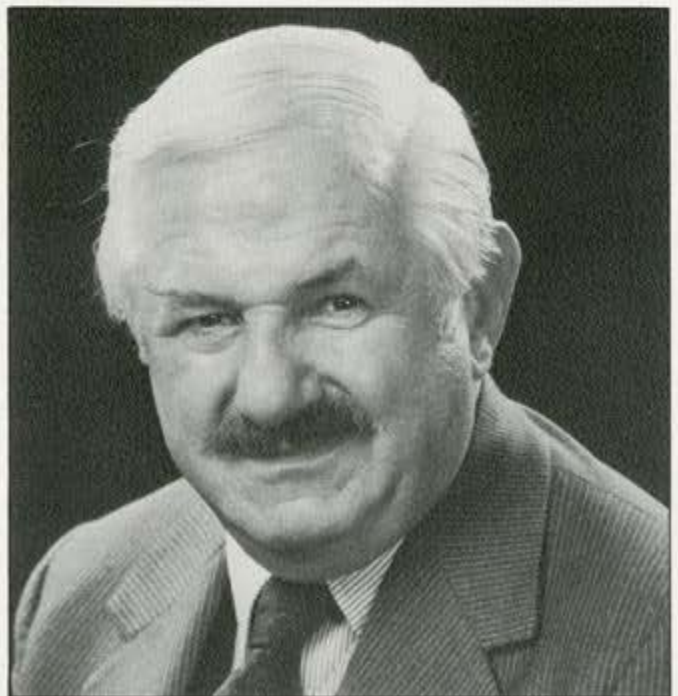
Mr. Newman has been an important part of the world of historical collecting for fifty years. He opened his first antiquarian book store in 1933. As president of the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop in Chicago, a mecca for Lincoln students and collectors from all over the country, he has been since 1940 a central hub in the great wheel of Lincoln interest. Over the years he has handled such famous Lincoln items as his letter to General Hooker about dictatorship, his uniquely intimate correspondence with Joshua Speed, and the touching letter of condolence to Fanny McCullough.

Appraisals of historic papers have taken an increasing amount of Mr. Newman's time. Ralph Geoffrey Newman, Inc., formed in 1967, is the corporate embodiment of this enterprise. Mr. Newman has handled the papers of Warren Harding's mistress, Lyndon Johnson, and Omar Bradley, among many, many others.

He was a founder of the first Civil War Round Table. For almost ten years he headed the Board of Directors of the Chicago Public Library. He has headed, shaped, aided, rescued, or advised dozens of other important institutions and organizations.

Somehow Mr. Newman also managed to write or edit (sometimes with co-authors) several books, including *Lincoln for the Ages* and *The Civil War*. He is famous for his boundless energy and his inventive and fertile mind which has been the source of countless good ideas for the Lincoln field and for history in general.

For more information call 219-427-3031.



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FIGURE 5. Ralph Geoffrey Newman.

# CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY 1981-1982

by Ruth E. Cook

Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members: Dr. Kenneth A. Bernard, 50 Chatham Road, Harwich Center, Mass.; Arnold Gates, 168 Weyford Terrace, Garden City, N.Y.; Carl Haverlin, 8619 Louise Avenue, Northridge, California; James T. Hickey, Illinois State Historical Library, Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois; Ralph G. Newman, 175 E. Delaware Place, 5112, Chicago, Illinois; Lloyd Ostendorf, 225 Lookout Drive, Dayton, Ohio; 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 Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum.

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**LEE, RICHARD M.**

Mr. Lincoln's City/An Illustrated Guide/to the Civil War Sites of Washington/Richard M. Lee/EPM Publications, Inc./McLean, Virginia/[Copyright 1981 by Richard M. Lee. All rights reserved. Designed by Tom Huestis.]

Book, paperback, 11" x 8 1/2", 175 (1) pp., illus., price, \$12.95.

**RUEHRWEIN, DICK**

Lincoln's New/Salem/State Park Coloring Book/Written By/Dick Ruehrwein Illustrated By/Susan Dorenkemper/(Illustration)/(Cover title)/[Copyright 1981 by the Creative Company, Cincinnati, Ohio 45239.]

Pamphlet, paper, 11" x 8 1/2", (32) pp., illus. Juvenile literature.

**TOKYO LINCOLN CENTER**

Abraham Lincoln/Collection/Tokyo Lincoln Center/Kodama Memorial Library/Meisei University/Tokyo 1981/[Copyright 1981 by Meisei University Library, Hino, Tokyo. Printed in Tokyo, Japan]

Book, paper, 10 1/8" x 7 1/8", xiii p., 184 (25) pp., illus., contents printed in Japanese and English; contains author and title listings of publications in English, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean.

1982

**GEORGE, JOSEPH, JR.**

Nature's First Law: Louis J. Weichmann And Mrs. Surratt/ Joseph George, Jr./[Caption title]/[Offprint from *Civil War History*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2. Copyright 1982 by the Kent State University Press.]

Pamphlet, paper, 8 7/8" x 5 15/16", pages numbered 102-127 (1) pp.

**LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY**

Lincoln Memorial University Press/(Device)/Spring 1982/Vol. 84, 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./[Harrogate, Tenn.]

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10 1/16" x 7 1/8", 1-56 pp., illus., inside and outside back covers illus., price per single issue, \$5.00.

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Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10 1/8" x 7 1/8", 135-198 pp., illus., price per single issue, \$5.00.

**LOG-ANNE PRESS** 1982-15

Lincoln/said. . . /With Portraits/by/Herschel C. Logan-

1982/Log-Anne Press/Santa Ana, Calif./[Designed, illustrated, printed, and hand bound at the Log-Anne Press, Santa Ana, California.]

Miniature brochure, cloth, 2 3/4" x 2 3/16", fr., (32) uncut pp., illus., price, \$12.50.

**NEWMAN, RALPH G.** 1982-16

Robert Todd Lincoln:/An Informal Appraisal/By Ralph G. Newman/Chicago, Illinois/(Portrait)/Bulletin Of 38th Annual Meeting/of/The Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin/held at Cedarburg, Wisconsin/April 26, 1981/Historical Bulletin No. 37/1982/(Cover title)/

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10" x 7 1/2", 16 pp., illus., price, \$2.50. Send to Mrs. Carl Wilhelm, c/o State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1107 Emerald Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53715.

**SAMPLES, GORDON**

Lust for Fame:/The Stage Career/of John Wilkes Booth/by Gordon Samples/(Device)/McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers/Jefferson, North Carolina, and London/1982/[Copyright 1982 by Gordon Samples.]

Book, cloth, 9 1/4" x 6 1/8", fr., xii p., 238 (6) pp., illus., price, \$21.95.

**SLIDE FACTOR (1982)-18 (Portrait of Lincoln)/On February 12, 1984/Abraham Lincoln will/be 175 years old./ (Cover title)/[Published by Slide Factor, 75 Gardner Street, West Roxbury, MA 02132.]**

Folder, paper, 7" x 3", single sheet folded three times, (7) pp., illus., contains text of "What are you going to do about it?"; "Anniversaries like this come only four times a century."; and states that Slide Factor can help put together anything, small or large, for any type of display or show.

**TEMPLE, WAYNE C., PH. D.** 1982-19

(Device)/Illinois College/Oldest College in Illinois/Jacksonville Journal Courier/Founded July 30, 1831/Oldest Continuously Published Newspaper in the State of Illinois/Lincoln as a Lecturer/on/"Discoveries, Inventions, and Improvements"/by/Wayne C. Temple, Ph.D., F. R. S. A./Deputy Director/Illinois State Archives/Wayne C. Temple/Village of South Jacksonville (Device) City of Jacksonville/(Illustration)/Union Hall on the east side of the Public Square in Jacksonville as it appeared when Abraham Lincoln spoke here in 1859./Copied by Bill Wade from the border of an 1860 lithograph in the Jacksonville Public Library./[Cover title]/[Copyright May 23, 1982, by the Journal Courier, Jacksonville, Ill.]

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A Collection Of/Abraham Lincoln/Pamphlets/&/American Civil War/Tokyo Lincoln Center/Kodama Memorial Library/Meisei University/Tokyo 1982/[Printed in Tokyo, Japan.]

Book, paper, 10 1/8" x 7 1/8", 147 (23) pp., contents printed in English and subdivided into four parts: Bibliographies, Books, Pamphlets, and Periodicals.

**TURNER, THOMAS REED** 1982-21

Beware the People Weeping/(Device)/Public Opinion and the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln/(Device)/Thomas Reed Turner/Louisiana State University Press/Baton Rouge and London/[Copyright 1982 by the Louisiana State University Press. All rights reserved.]

Book, cloth, 9 1/4" x 6 1/8", fr., xvi p., 265 (7) pp., illus., price, \$27.50.

**ZALL, P. M.** 1982-22

Abe Lincoln Laughing/Humorous Anecdotes/from Original Sources/by and about/Abraham Lincoln/Edited with an introduction by P. M. Zall/Foreword by Ray Allen Billington/University of California Press/Berkeley Los Angeles London/[Copyright 1982 by The Regents of the University of California.]

Book, cloth, 9 3/16" x 6 1/8", fr., xii p., 193 (3) pp., price, \$15.95.

## Beware the People Weeping

Public Opinion and  
the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln



THOMAS REED TURNER