



Lincoln Lore

October, 1983

Bulletin of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum. Mark E. Neely, Jr., Editor.
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Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801.

November 1748

OF TOMBSTONES, FORGERIES, AND MRS. LINCOLN'S COACHMAN

In 1959 the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company sponsored a television special called *Meet Mr. Lincoln*. Among its many beneficial effects was the unforeseen one that people contacted the company, and through it this library and museum, offering various Lincoln items for sale.

One of the most curious letters came from a lawyer in Brookhaven, Long Island. The television broadcast had reminded him of a client from thirty years past, "a Civil War widow" who, though destitute, owned a Lincoln letter which she thought might some day be exchanged for a tombstone for her grave. Years previously he had tried to interest several different institutions but with no success. He still had the letter. He did not know whether it was genuine or not, but he could send a photostatic copy.

R. Gerald McMurtry was then the director of this institution and an old hand at acquiring historical Americana. He knew that good things had come from stranger circumstances than these and was not about to leave this story uninvestigated.

McMurtry examined the photostat. The letter appeared genuine (and previously unknown). He arranged to buy the headstone, and the lawyer sent the letter.

The letter, addressed to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton on March 11, 1864, concerned one Daniel Christian, a coachman for Mrs. Lincoln. He had been arrested ten days earlier for "constructive desertion" and was an inmate at the Old Capitol Prison. Mrs. Lincoln needed the man's services, and the president ordered that he be sent to the Executive Mansion.

The text of the letter did not appear in Roy P. Basler's *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, published in 1953, but when McMurtry learned years later that Basler was planning a supplemental volume, he sent him a photocopy of the letter for inclusion in the new book. Basler proved suspicious of the letter's authenticity. True, he said, the photocopy of the letter did not "look bad," but he could not identify Christian from any other source and there should have been some other contemporary record of him if the letter were "ok." The Christian letter was docketed on the verso, and Basler checked all the letters from November 1863 through July 1864 without finding another letter docketed in the same hand. He thought it strange too that the letter was not on Executive Mansion stationery. On the rare occasions in the period from January to July 1864 when Lincoln used plain paper, it had an identifiable watermark or embossment, usually in the upper left hand corner. The careful editor did not want to make his first error of this kind in compiling Lincoln's collected works and, therefore, he required more proof.

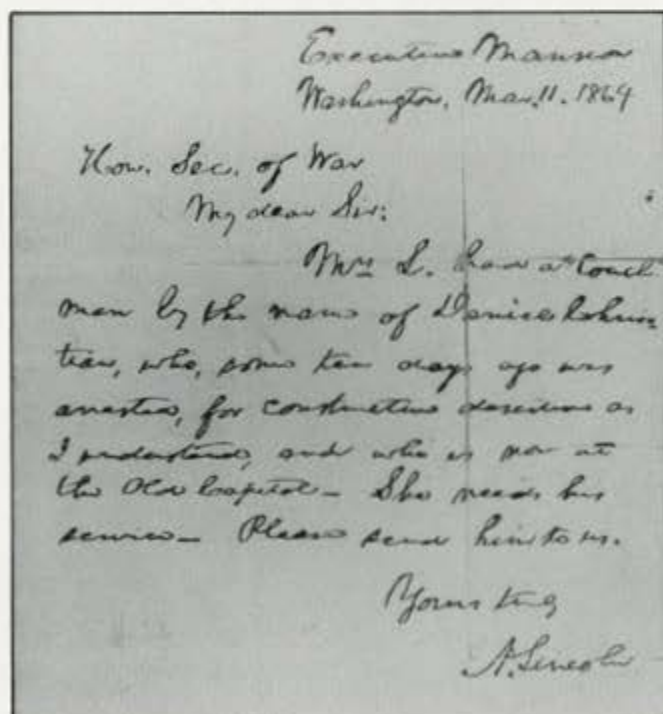
None was forthcoming. When *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln: Supplement, 1832-1865* appeared in 1974 the letter about Daniel Christian was not in it. Instead, an appendix listing "forgeries and spurious or dubious items" noted the letter: "Dubious, perhaps a forgery. No record of Daniel Christian at Old Capitol Prison or on Executive Mansion payroll."

There the matter rested until August 1984, when I discovered this order, written on March 11, 1864, from the War Department by Assistant Adjutant General E. D. Townsend to Judge Advocate Levi C. Turner: "The Secretary of War directs that Daniel Christian, in the Old Capitol prison, be discharged from custody, and ordered to report at the Executive Mansion immediately." On the same day, Turner, who had the responsibility of reviewing the cases of political prisoners in Washington, wrote William Wood, the superintendent of the Old Capitol: "You will discharge from custody Daniel Christian, and conduct him, immediately, to report himself to the President."

Here at last is proof that Daniel Christian was a prisoner at the Old Capitol, and we can now remove this controversial letter from the list of possible forgeries. It is the real thing.

Yet many mysteries remain. Who was Daniel Christian? Why is there no other record of his service at the Lincoln White House? How did someone so close to the Lincoln family manage to run afoul of the military authorities? And why did Mrs. Lincoln need him so much in March 1864?

Doubts about the authenticity of the only known letter mentioning Christian have in the past made a zealous search for the answers to these questions appear doomed from the start. But now it is time for a fresh look at this little puzzle.



From the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 1. A controversial letter.

THE CASE OF ALEXANDER NORTON An Unpublished Lincoln Endorsement

On June 13, 1864, President Abraham Lincoln spent the day in his office handling routine administration. He agreed to travel to Philadelphia later in the week to attend the Great Central Fair of the United States Sanitary Commission. He signed a convention between the United States and Colombia and sent it to the Senate for ratification. He also sent, in compliance with a senate resolution, a report by Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton on the case of William Yocum, convicted of kidnapping a "contraband" black at Cairo, Illinois, and giving him to a slave dealer to be returned to a loyal master. Lincoln had pardoned Yocum against the recommendation of Stanton on the grounds that (1) the act had made illegal only shortly before Yocum committed it (albeit in secret) and (2) that it was a rare occurrence and further punishment seemed unnecessary to discourage others from committing the crime. Influential Kentuckians had pleaded Yocum's case with Lincoln.

The president dispatched another unpleasant problem related to the Border States and slavery. General Lew Wallace, commanding the Middle Department (which included Maryland) had recently helped steer that state skillfully and unobtrusively through elections which abolished slavery. He later issued sweeping general orders which, among other things, confiscated the income from Maryland property, real and personal, owned by persons who had left the state for the Confederacy or by persons who were residents of the Confederate states. This included the income from slaves.

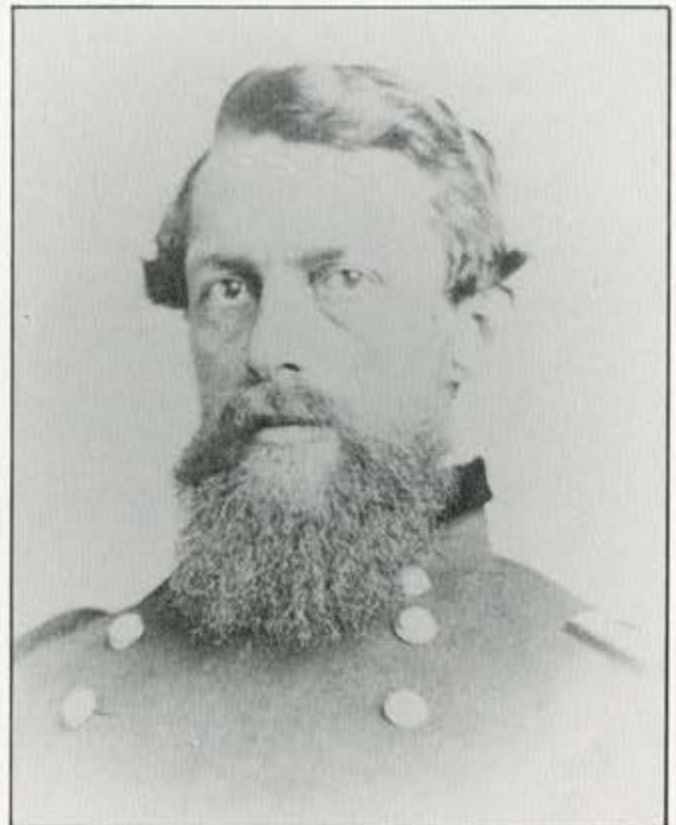
Attorney General Edward Bates grew quite excited about this and two days earlier had told Lincoln that Wallace's orders "were not only without law, but flatly against law and against his (the president's) orders." Wallace's defense of the offensive orders was, in Bates's estimation, "most absurd." The general was "assuming arbitrary and illegal powers, without a pretense of military necessity," and these acts of confiscation conflicted with the Attorney General's jurisdiction over such matters. Bates said he would protect himself and his office, and, if Wallace were not stopped, Bates would "leave of record, in the office" a "solemn protest against the military usurpation." On the 13th Lincoln saw Bates again and told him that Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton would revoke Wallace's orders "on the ground (not touching the legal merits of the question) that they relate to a subject about which the Genl. ought not to give any order, without consulting the head of the Dept."

Recruiting black soldiers in Kentucky had led to reports that recruiters were seizing Negroes near Henderson and carrying them off against their will. Lincoln asked General Lorenzo Thomas to investigate and see to it "that the making soldiers of negroes is done according to the rules . . . , so that unnecessary provocation and irritation be avoided."

Lincoln also wrote a note for a lady who wished to see the Secretary of the Navy, ordered the release of a prisoner of war who was the son of a man who called on Lincoln that day, urged the promotion of a general championed by a Wisconsin politician, and returned without action the records in the case of a man dismissed from military service by a court martial. The president also took time to write sculptor John Rogers acknowledging receipt of a copy of his piece of parlor statuary representing a Union soldier aided by an escaped slave in a Southern swamp. Lincoln found it "very pretty and suggestive" but characteristically said that he could "not pretend to be a judge in such matters."

One other piece of business attended to by the busy president that day has just now come to light. He ordered the release of a prisoner named Alexander Norton: "Let Capt. Norton take the oath on the terms & conditions which may be directed by the Secretary of War."

Norton was one of those strange adventurers who often wound up in Northern military prisons during the Civil War. About six weeks before New Orleans fell to Federal forces, Norton left to protect his interest in two steamers on the Red River. He apparently had charge of one of them and, by his own admission to the president, carried cattle to Confederate forces at Vicksburg and above. The Confederates sometimes took the boats for their own use, Norton said to explain his



*From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum*

FIGURE 2. General George Stoneman.

presence with rebel forces, and he sometimes went with his boat to protect his interests as much as possible. The boats were eventually sold to private parties, and Norton's vessel eventually became a Confederate gunboat.

Norton then went to Houston and from there to Mexico and eventually to Havana. He arrived in New York in the spring of 1864, having come North, he pleaded, "with the sole intent and purpose of availing myself of the President's Proclamation of Amnesty, and taking the oath of allegiance to the U.S. in virtue thereof." His sympathies, he insisted, had "always . . . been for the Union." Lincoln must have believed him, for he allowed him to take the oath. By going directly to the War Department, Captain Norton apparently avoided arrest and incarceration in Old Capitol Prison.

THE CASE OF WILLIAM H. WONDERLY An Unpublished Lincoln Endorsement

On January 14, 1864, President Abraham Lincoln was in his White House office tending to routine business. He approved an act of Congress. He had an interview with Thomas Stackpole, who was on the White House staff when Lincoln assumed office. Stackpole had worked in the Executive Mansion since President Franklin Pierce brought him down from New Hampshire. Now he wanted to go into the oyster business. Lincoln thought him "a straight, energetic man," and wrote him a letter of introduction to General Benjamin F. Butler to aid his enterprise. Lincoln also sent Episcopal Bishop Charles P. McIlvaine two autographs requested in the bishop's letter bearing greetings for the New Year.

A lady named Weirman wanted employment and Lincoln gave her a letter endorsing her "to any Head of a Department or Bureau who can give it to her." Michigan Representative John S. Driggs was "very anxious" that one Ira F. Payson be appointed an Assistant Quarter-Master. Lincoln wrote an endorsement to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton on the congressman's letter urging that the appointment be made if there were a vacancy. The President sent Stanton the papers involved in a recommendation that three Iowans be appointed generals and asked in turn to see a petition from the West Virginia legislature "asking to have (Major) Gen. (Franz) Sigel

put in command there." Lincoln sent Attorney General Edward Bates, for filing, papers recommending a person to fill a federal judgeship in Indiana. He told the Attorney General that other powerful Indiana politicians had expressed their approval of the man recommended in the papers to be filed.

Lincoln issued several pardons on that day. He suspended execution of the death sentence in the case of a Michigan volunteer soldier named Allen G. Maxson. Kentucky Representative Brutus J. Clay came to Lincoln's office with the mother of a nineteen year old boy who was a prisoner of war in Illinois. Lincoln let the boy be discharged. Another man was pardoned after having served part of his sentence.

The President issued one other pardon that day. The man pardoned was a cavalryman named William H. Wonderly. The reason for the pardon is fairly clear: General George Stoneman recommended the pardon even though he knew little of the facts in the case. But Wonderly had served with Stoneman before the war and, Stoneman wrote, "has I believe served in various capacities since the breaking out of the Rebellion creditably to himself and I would recommend him to the President as a fit subject for executive clemency. He is a young man of good habits, or was when I knew him—and I feel an interest in his case—and hope he will be pardoned." Because of Stoneman's request, Judge Advocate Levi C. Turner, who investigated military arrests for the War Department, sent the papers on Wonderly's case to Lincoln. "Pardon is granted in this case," the President wrote in small letters on the back of one of the papers.

Stoneman was a high-ranking Union officer and his word may have sufficed without further investigation to cause Lincoln, who was generally disposed toward leniency in soldiers' cases, to let the man go. But, if the President bothered to read the letter Wonderly wrote to explain his own case, he was treated to quite an adventurous tale.

For a young man of "good habits," Wonderly had a wondrous penchant for getting into scrapes, and one cannot help concluding from reading his record that what passed for good habits in the United States cavalry was markedly different from the good habits normally expected in a Victorian parlor. William H. Wonderly first enlisted in the Army on August 11, 1856, in Philadelphia. He was sent to Stoneman's company, then serving in Texas against the Comanche Indians. He served there until July 28, 1860, when he gained permission to visit Zionsville, Texas, for three days. The town was apparently on the Rio Grande River, and on the second day of his three-day pass, Wonderly went to a "fandango" at a Mexican rancho. There he got into a fight with some Texas Rangers, was arrested, and was charged with shooting the rangers. He escaped the next day and reached Goliad, Texas. He remained there under an alias until March 1861 when he went to Port Laraca and sailed on a lumber schooner for Galveston. He was arrested again, perhaps because of his Union sympathies or affiliations, and given twenty-four hours to leave the port. The next day he went as a sailor on a voyage to Philadelphia. He drilled a company of cavalry a while and, about mid-June went to Washington D.C. He was then appointed Second Lieutenant in Harlan's independent cavalry, but when he explained that he had been a deserter, the colonel of the unit said he would have to give up his commission and serve out his term as a private. This Wonderly agreed to do, but he asked for a transfer. It was granted and he went to the Fourth Pennsylvania Cavalry. In September he was appointed sergeant major. The following March he became second lieutenant in the Fifth Pennsylvania Cavalry.

Wonderly was obviously a good soldier. Pennsylvania Governor Phillip Curtin commissioned him second lieutenant for meritorious conduct, and Wonderly served as General W. H. Smith's escort throughout the Peninsula campaign of 1862. He resigned at Harrison's Landing, Virginia, on August 11, 1862. He then undertook to organize a company for a colonel, investing his life's savings of \$600 in the enterprise. Success would have meant a commission, but the effort failed. Without money or rank or position Wonderly found employment in the Quarter-Master's Department until Robert E. Lee invaded the

North in 1863. Wonderly went to Washington and enlisted as a private in Colonel Baker's Mounted Rangers on June 14, 1863. He eventually became second lieutenant again and was at least twice mentioned in dispatches for meritorious conduct. On January 1, 1864, Wonderly's past caught up with him and he was arrested while on duty in Washington.

General Stoneman, Wonderly's excellent combat record, and Lincoln's merciful heart saved him.

PROFESSOR KLEMENT REPLIES

Professor Frank Klement responded to *Lincoln Lore* Number 1741 (March, 1983), which dealt with "the embarrassing case of Dr. Blanchard," as follows:

Since neither my copperhead book nor my Vallandigham book make mention of Dr. Blanchard and his arrest, we turn to my article ("Copperhead Secret Societies in Illinois during the Civil War") which appeared in the Summer, 1955, issue of the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*. On page 161 I state that those arrested by U.S. Marshal David L. Phillips "denied links with subversive societies" and I quote Blanchard's two-sentence refutation.

I have before me my impressive stack of notes from the Baker-Turner Papers. My evidence for Blanchard's arrest was Phillip's undated report to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton (Item 142, Vol. III of the Baker-Turner Papers). My source for Blanchard's two-sentence quotation is mentioned in footnote No. 26 of the article mentioned above; the source is cited as "Blanchard's statement (n.d.) with Phillips' report of Sept. 4, 1862, *ibid.*" Let me state, unequivocally, that my sources for my statements were items in the Baker-Turner Papers, not the Blanchard sketch in Marshall's *American Bastille*.

My thesis dealt with the "nearly forty" arrests made and their relationship to Golden Circle rumors. It was not my place or intention to discuss when and where Blanchard was arrested, where he was confined and how he was treated, nor when and why he was eventually released. In other words, to have introduced Logan's letter and Lincoln's role in Blanchard's release would have digressed from my theme. So your suppositions on why I "excluded mention" of them is also incorrect.

I believe Logan's letter relevant to the topic "Arbitrary Arrests in Illinois in 1862"—but that *was not* my topic and to have dealt with it would have been to digress.

Professor Klement petitioned to open the now famous Turner-Baker Papers and was the first scholar to use them. His was the pioneering archival research on the question of arbitrary arrests, and his interest, as the above reply shows, continues. Even now, he is at work on another book on the subject of secret societies, soon to be published by Louisiana State University Press.

McMURTRY LECTURES AVAILABLE

Each May, the Louis A. Warren Library and Museum invites an outstanding authority on Lincoln to Fort Wayne to deliver a lecture. The lecture honors R. Gerald McMurtry, the second director of the institution. The lectures are published later in the year of their delivery. Copies of some R. Gerald McMurtry Lectures are still available upon request. They include the following:

Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Minor Affair: An Adventure in Forgery and Detection* (1979)

Harold M. Hyman, *Lincoln's Reconstruction: Neither Failure of Vision nor Vision of Failure* (1980)

Robert V. Bruce, *Lincoln and the Riddle of Death* (1981)

Stephen B. Oates, *Builders of the Dream: Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (1982)

CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY 1983-1984

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, 1711-7 Margate, Encino, 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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HUNT, H. DRAPER 1983-18
(Photograph of Lincoln)/Educating A President: Abraham Lincoln and Learning, 1809-1854/Lincoln/University of Southern Maine/Walter E. Russell Endowed Chair in Philosophy and Education Lecture—1983/by H. Draper Hunt, Ph.D./Professor of History/(Cover title)/[Published by the University of Southern Maine, 1983.]

Pamphlet, paper, 9" x 6", (15) pp. Copy autographed by the author.

KIM, DONGGILL 1983-19
Abraham Lincoln/An Oriental Interpretation/by Donggill Kim/Published by Jungwoo-sa/Seoul, Korea/[Copyright 1983 by Donggill Kim.]

Book, cloth, 9" x 6 1/2", xv p., 281 (2) pp., price \$20.00.

KRUSE AUCTION SERVICES 1983-20
Abraham Lincoln's/Personal Farm at/Public Auction/Monday, August 8, 1983/Sale Time: 1:00 P.M./Held at the Adjacent State Park Pavilion/The Lincoln Log Cabin State Park/Fully Documented/(Picture)/Auction Includes/Adjacent 95 Acres/Farm Land/and Tom Lincoln's/Farm/Liberal Financing/Terms Inside/Auction Conducted by:/Kruse Auction Services/.../Kruse Building/Auburn, IN 46706/(219) 925-5401/ (Cover title)/[1983]

Pamphlet, paper, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", (10) pp., illus.

KUNHARDT, PHILIP B., JR. 1983-21
A New Birth/of Freedom/Lincoln at Gettysburg/by/Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr./(Device)/Little, Brown and Company Boston Toronto/[Copyright 1983 by Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr.]

Book, cloth, 9 1/2" x 8 1/2", vii p., 263 (46) pp., illus., price, \$22.50.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY 1983-22
Lincoln Memorial University Press/(Device)/Winter 1983/Vol. 85, No. 4/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 1/2" x 7 1/2", 209-300 pp., illus., price per single issue, \$5.00

WARREN, DAVID A. 1983-23
(Device) Copyright 1983 David A. Warren, Lincoln Services/(Picture)/Lincoln's Furniture/Great Woodworking Projects/(Cover title)/

Folder, paper, 18" x 11 1/2", (2) pp., illus. Requests for information should be directed to David A. Warren, Lincoln Services, Post Office Box 542, Crystal Lake, Illinois 60014.

1984

BLUE & GRAY ENTERPRISES, INC. 1984-1
(Device)/Blue & Gray/Magazine/Volume 1 issue 4/"For Those Who Still Hear The Guns"/February-March 1984/[Copyright 1984 by Blue & Gray Enterprises, Inc., Columbus,

Ohio, 43228.]

Pamphlet, paper, 11" x 8 1/2", 1-58 (2) pp., illus., price, \$2.95.

HISTORICAL TIMES, INC. 1984-2
Civil War/Times/February 1984/Illustrated/Volume XXII Number 10/[Copyright 1984 by Historical Times, Inc., Harrisburg, Pa. 17105.]

Pamphlet, paper, 10 1/2" x 8", 1-50 (16) pp., illus., price, \$2.00.

HOLZER, HAROLD 1984-3
Abraham Lincoln/Mary Todd Lincoln/by Harold Holzer/(Device)/Published by the United States Historical Society/Copyright 1984 United States Historical Society/First and Main Streets, Richmond, Virginia/3/

Pamphlet, paper, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", 35 (3) pp., illus., price, \$2.00. For copies write United States Historical Society, 5611 Pride Road, Richmond, VA 23224.

HOLZER, HAROLD, GABOR S. BORITT, MARK E. NEELY, JR. 1984-4

The Lincoln/Image/Abraham Lincoln and/The Popular Print/Harold Holzer/Gabor S. Boritt/Mark E. Neely, Jr./The Scribner Press/Charles Scribner's Sons. New York/[Copyright 1984 Harold Holzer, Gabor S. Boritt, and Mark E. Neely, Jr.]

Book, cloth and hardboards, 11" x 8 1/2", xxi p., 234 (72) pp., price, \$35.00.

LEE, JENNIFER B. 1984-5

Lincoln and the/American Political Tradition/An Exhibition in Honor of the 175th/Anniversary of the Birth of Abraham Lincoln/John Hay Library/John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library/Brown University/Providence, Rhode Island/May-August 31, 1984/Jennifer B. Lee/Introduction by Mark E. Neely, Jr./[Copyright 1984 Brown University Library.]

Pamphlet, paper, 10" x 7", 72 (32) pp., illus., price, \$5.00. Limited to 1000 copies. Send requests to John Hay Library, Attention: Jennifer B. Lee, Box A, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY 1984-6

Lincoln Memorial University Press/(Device)/Spring 1984/Vol. 86, 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 1/2" x 7 1/2", 1-48 pp., illus., price per single issue, \$5.00.

OATES, STEPHEN B. 1984-7

Abraham/Lincoln/The Man Behind the Myths/Stephen B. Oates/(Device)/1817/Harper & Row, Publishers, New York/Cambridge, Philadelphia, San Francisco/London, Mexico City, Sai Paulo, Sydney/[Copyright 1984 Stephen B. Oates.]

Book, cloth and hardboards, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", xiv p., 224 (12) pp., price, \$12.95.

TICE, GEORGE 1984-8

Lincoln/George Tice/(Device)/Rutgers University Press/New Brunswick, New Jersey/[Copyright 1984 by Rutgers, The State University.]

Book, cloth, 12" x 12 1/4", 72 (23) pp., illus., price, \$37.95.

VIDAL, GORE 1984-9

Gore Vidal/Lincoln/A Novel/(Silhouette of Lincoln)/Random House/New York/(Device)/[Copyright 1984 by Gore Vidal.]

Book, cloth, 9 1/2" x 6 1/2", 657 (3) pp., price, \$19.95.

WILLIAM DOYLE GALLERIES 1984-10

William Doyle/Galleries/175 East 87th Street. New York, New York 10128/Two Highly Important Lincoln Manuscripts/From the Payson Estate/Auction/Thursday, May 17, 1984/.../Catalogue \$3.00/

Pamphlet, paper, 9 1/2" x 8 1/2", 18 (3) pp., illus.