

LINCOLN LORE

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IMPRINTS ON LINCOLN PHOTOGRAPHS

There is much confusion about the identity of original photographs of Abraham Lincoln. Most of the early prints of the President are mounted on cards 2½ by 4 inches, the size of visiting cards contemporary with Lincoln's day. They are designated as carte-de-visite photographs. On the back of the card, imprints giving the name and address of the photographers are usually found. These imprints are helpful in assisting one to come to one of three conclusions; whether or not the picture is from the original negative, a copy of a positive print, or a photograph of an engraving.

Copies of engravings are most numerous and are of little or no value, and although they were undoubtedly made during the Civil War and sold by the thousands they have little interest as collectors' items. An engraving may be identified by a checkered appearance of the wearing apparel. These minute designs are not a woven pattern in the cloth, but marks of the engravers' instruments. There are twenty-nine carte-de-visite photographs of engravings in the Foundation collection of the Brady Lincoln which appears on the five dollar bank note. The fact that these are all different indicates how widely they were distributed.

Many photographers made copies of original photographs. They followed the custom of buying an original print of Lincoln and then photographing the print so they would have a negative from which to make duplications. These pictures are difficult to distinguish from an original but the imprint which appears on the back helps to eliminate artists who would have been in no position to give the President a sitting. For instance, the only photographer outside of Illinois to make a negative of Lincoln portraying him with a beardless face was Brady of New York. With the exception of a negative made by Alschuler in Chicago in 1860 and three by Germon of Springfield in 1861, no other photographer in the west was able to make a bearded picture of Lincoln as he did not return to the west after growing a beard. Generally speaking smooth face pictures bearing the names of eastern photographers, as well as those showing Lincoln with a beard made in the west, are not originals but usually copies. They are also of little value as collectors' items.

Although there is no positive proof that a card bearing the name of a photographer in the west showing a smooth face Lincoln and a bearded Lincoln bearing the imprint of an eastern photographer are genuine,

they are guides to a final solution. With the exception of the Chicago and Springfield prints already mentioned, some photographs made of Lincoln at Philadelphia on his way to Washington, and others at Antietam battlefield, all known photographs of the President showing him with a beard were taken in Washington. It is true that E. and H. T. Anthony and C. D. Fredricks & Co. of New York had access to some negatives. Also Wenderoth & Taylor of Philadelphia and Warren of Waltham, Mass. went to Washington to make pictures of the President. With these exceptions all originals showing Lincoln with a beard should bear the imprint of Brady or Gardner, Washington, D. C. photographers. Walker, an employee in the Treasury department also took a picture of the bearded Lincoln.

The revenue stamp which may appear on the back of these carte-de-visite photographs are not proof of genuineness, merely a proof that they were sold at some time during the period the war revenue tax was in force.

The question of photographic imprints was suggested by an announcement appearing in the Lincoln Papers in the Library of Congress. James P. Root of Chicago on March 7, 1865 wrote to Mrs. Lincoln suggesting that the Sanitary Fair at Chicago was planning "a very extensive art gallery" for the month of May and requesting negatives of imperial size of both Mrs. Lincoln and the President. Mr. Root enclosed a note from Matthew Brady addressed to Mrs. Lincoln conveying this information:

"We have no pictures or negatives of imperial size such as he (Root) wishes for exhibition at the Fair in our collection and will be very much pleased to make such as he wishes and present them to the Chicago Fair."

Root also had Governor Yates of Illinois write to Mrs. Lincoln about the need of such pictures and two days later Root wrote to Mr. Lincoln stating that "our people desire yourself and Mrs. Lincoln to sit for imperial photographs . . . Brady understands the kind we want. Any day next week will do." Root enclosed in this letter the program for the Sanitary Fair entitled as follows:

"Circular of the Committee on Photographs for the Northwestern Sanitary Fair to open at Chicago Illinois May 30, 1865."

Excerpts from the circular letter issued in the pamphlet follows:

"To the Photographers of the United States

In the great Sanitary Fair to be held in Chicago, opening May 30, 1865

a department is to be set apart for the exhibition and sale of works of photographic art. . . . You are requested to aid in any and all ways by the contribution of photographs of distinguished persons, views, copies of engravings, stereoscopic views, etc. . . . All contributions and loans for the photographic Department must be addressed to the chairman of the Photographic Committee, S. M. Fassett, Northwestern Sanitary Commission for the Fair, Chicago, Ill."

Page three was utilized for the listing of the committee which contained the names of the outstanding photographers in America. The list might serve as a photographic directory for 1865. The names of photographers known to have original negatives of the President are marked with an asterisk.

Committee

S. M. Fassett,* Chicago, Ill.
A. L. Rawson, Chicago, Ill.
John Carbutt, Chicago, Ill.
A. Hesler,* Chicago, Ill.
E. & H. T. Anthony & Co.,* New York, N. Y.
Gurney & Son, New York, N. Y.
C. D. Fredricks & Co.,* New York, N. Y.
Brady,* New York, N. Y.
Bogardus, New York, N. Y.
C. H. Williamson, Brooklyn, N. Y.
W. J. Kuhns, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Germon, Philadelphia, Pa.
F. Gutekunst, Philadelphia, Pa.
Wenderoth & Taylor,* Philadelphia, Pa.
R. Glover, Philadelphia, Pa.
Black & Case, Boston, Mass.
Whipple, Boston, Mass.
J. R. Burnham, Boston, Mass.
C. A. Douglass, Buffalo, N. Y.
Platt D. Babbitt, Niagara Falls, N. Y.
B. F. Powelson, Rochester, N. Y.
H. Lazier, Syracuse, N. Y.
J. H. Harter, Auburn, N. Y.
Pine & Bell, Troy, N. Y.
Thompson, Albany, N. Y.
Churchill & Dennison, Albany, N. Y.
Barnard, Army of Potomac, Gen.
Grant's Staff
Whitney, Washington, D. C.
Bierstadt Bros., New Bedford, Mass.
Manchester Bros., Providence, R. I.
J. Reid, Patterson, N. J.
J. H. Whitney, St. Paul, Minn.
Sherman, Milwaukee Wis.
R. Getting, Detroit, Mich.

These Illinois photographers not mentioned above are also said to have made original pictures of Lincoln: Shepherd, Springfield; Joslin, Danville; Von Schneider, Chicago; Byers, Beardstown; Pearson, Macomb; Jackson, Pittsfield; Thompson, Monmouth; Cole, Peoria; Butler, Springfield; Church, Springfield; Barnwell, Decatur.