



Lincoln Lore

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Lincoln Named Grant Lieutenant General March 9, 1864

With the opening of the 1st session of the 38th Congress the Illinois Congressman, Elihu B. Washburne, introduced and carried through the bill creating the office of Lieutenant General. While there was considerable debate on the bill, with a great many objections or amendments offered, it was generally understood that the hero of Vicksburg, General Ulysses S. Grant, would be given the commission.

The bill stated "That the President is hereby authorized, whenever he shall deem it expedient, to appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, a Lieut. General, to be selected from among those officers in the military service not below the grade of Major-General, most distinguished for courage, skill and ability, who, being commissioned as Lieut. General, shall be authorized, under the direction and during the pleasure of the

President, to command the armies of the United States." On February 29, (some authorities give the date of February 22) 1864 Lincoln approved the act, and sent the nomination of U. S. Grant as Lieutenant General to the Senate for confirmation. On March 3, the nomination was confirmed.

Grant was a comparatively young man to have attained this high honor, but he had distinguished himself by his invaluable services to his country. The sentiment of the entire country pointed to him as the man whom everyone wished to see honored with this signal mark of distinction. This commission was no empty honor for the 42 year old Grant. While it was true that Lieut. General Winfield Scott, then on the retired list, still retained his rank, he was a Lieutenant General only by brevet; whereas,

with the exception of George Washington, General Grant was the only man in the United States who had been honored with the full rank of Lieutenant General.

With the Senate's confirmation of Grant's appointment, his presence at the Capital was immediately requested by Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton. Grant received this order while he was at Nashville, Tennessee. Stanton was the only member of Lincoln's Cabinet who had ever seen Grant. They met once in a Louisville, Kentucky railroad station. This would be Grant's first visit to Washington since the beginning of the war. He reached Washington about 5 P.M. on March 8. Due to the negligence of some official, there was no one at the railway station to meet him; nevertheless, with his two staff members he found his way to Willard's Hotel.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

"General Grant Receiving His Commission as Lieutenant-General From President Lincoln" as depicted in the March 20, 1864 edition of *Harper's Weekly*.

In Ben: Perley Poore's *Reminiscences* there is to be found a personal description of Grant at the time of his arrival in Washington:

"He wore a plain, undress uniform and a felt hat of the regulation pattern, the sides of the top crushed together. He generally stood or walked with his left hand in his trousers pocket, and had in his mouth an unlighted cigar, the end of which he chewed restlessly. His square-cut features, when at rest, appeared as if carved from mahogany, and his firmly set under-jaw indicating the unyielding tenacity of a bulldog, while the kind glances of his gray eyes showed that he possessed the softer traits. He always appeared intensely pre-occupied, and would gaze at any one who approached him with an inquiring air, followed by a glance of recollection and a grave nod of recognition."

At 8 P.M. on March 8 President and Mrs. Lincoln began receiving guests at the White House. It had been announced that Grant would attend the reception. This news brought out a considerable crowd, even though the weather was bad. At 9:30 P.M. Grant and his staff members arrived at the executive mansion unaccompanied by any Government official. Grant's arrival created much excitement among the guests, and Lincoln moved with the crowd to meet the visitor. The President approached the general with the question: "This is General Grant, is it not?" Grant replied, "Yes." Thereupon, they greeted each other cordially.

It is commonly believed that this was the first meeting between the President and the General. However, according to Lincoln's Secretary of the Interior John P. Usher, in an address delivered at a banquet in Wyandotte, Kansas on June 20, 1887, Lincoln and Grant had met on August 27, 1858 on the occasion of Lincoln's second joint debate with Stephen A. Douglas.

The reminiscences of Usher were published in 1925 in a 34 page pamphlet (M. 2817) following his impromptu speech at Wyandotte, Kansas. Usher's account of the Freeport meeting follows:

"Mr. Lincoln directly said to General Grant (at the meeting of the Cabinet the next day), 'I have never met you before.' Grant replied, 'Yes you have; I heard you in your debate with Douglas at Freeport, and was there introduced to you. Of course, I could not forget you, neither could I expect you to remember me, because multitudes were introduced to you on that occasion.' Mr. Lincoln replied, 'That is so, and I do not think I could be expected to remember all.'"

On the other hand, in his "Personal Memoirs" Grant made no claim to ever having met Lincoln prior to March 8, 1864. Grant wrote: "Although hailing from Illinois myself, the State of the President, I never met Mr. Lincoln until called to the Capitol to receive my commission as lieutenant-general." Grant's "Memoirs" provide

us with no details of the events connected with his receiving the commission of lieutenant general. However, he did mention that "I knew him (Lincoln), however, very well and favorably from the accounts given by officers under me at the West who had known him all their lives. I had also read the remarkable series of debates between Lincoln and Douglas a few years before, when they were rival candidates for the United States Senate."

John G. Nicolay, the President's private secretary, wrote the most voluminous notes we have of Lincoln and Grant at the White House reception:

"... the two greeted each other more cordially, but still with that modest deference, felt rather than expressed in word or action, so appropriate to both—the one the honored ruler, the other the honored victor of the nation and the time.

"The crowd too partook of the feeling of the occasion. There was no rude jostling, or pushing, or pulling, but unrestrained the circle kept its respectful distance, until after a brief conversation the President gave the General in charge of Seward to present to Mrs. Lincoln, at the same time instructing me to send for the Secretary of War. After paying his respects to Mrs. Lincoln the General was taken by Seward to the East Room, where he was greeted with cheer after cheer by the assembled crowd, and where he was forced to mount a sofa from whence he could shake hands with those who pressed from all sides to see him. It was at least an hour before he returned, flushed, heated and perspiring with the unwonted exertion."

Newspaper accounts of the reception confirm Nicolay with the statement that the General was "literally lifted up," and that "Secretary Seward preceded him to his eminence on the sofa." After all present had greeted Grant there was a promenade of the receiving party through the East Room. The President walked with Seward and Mrs. Lincoln walked with the guest of honor. After the promenade they returned to their seats in the Blue Room.

Lincoln's private secretary has provided an intimate glimpse of the conversation that ensued between Lincoln and Grant:

"'Tomorrow,' said the President to the General, 'at such time as you may arrange with the Sec. of War, I desire to make to you a formal presentation of your commission as Lieut. Genl. I shall then make a very short speech to you, to which I desire you to reply for an object; and that you may be properly prepared to do so I have written what I shall say—only four sentences in all—which I will read from my M.S. as an example which you may follow and also read your reply, as you are perhaps not as much accustomed to speaking as I, myself—and I therefore give you what I shall say that you may consider

it and form your reply. There are two points that I would like to have you make in your answer, 1st, to say something which shall prevent or obviate any jealousy of you from any of the other generals in the service, and 2d, something which shall put you on as good terms as possible with this Army of the Potomac. Now, consider whether this may not be said to make it of some advantage; and if you see any objection whatever to doing it, be under no restraint whatever in expressing that objection to the Secretary of War who will talk further with you about it."

Nicolay had further comments concerning the meeting of Lincoln and Grant: "The General asked at what time this presentation would take place." Lincoln replied, "The Secretary of War and yourself may arrange the time to suit your convenience. I will be ready, whenever you shall have prepared your reply." Grant replied, "I can be ready in thirty minutes."

The hour of presentation was fixed at 1 P.M. on March 9 in the Cabinet Chamber. The Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, wrote in his diary that "the Cabinet was all there, and General Grant and his staff with the Secretary of War and General Halleck entered." For some unknown reason William E. Barton in his work, "President Lincoln," in a footnote (vol. II, page 614) stated that "That entertaining gossip, Secretary Welles, was absent in New York on a confidential errand, and has left us no account of this incident, and the only member of the Cabinet who has given us the story of that event is Usher." This is an error because Welles attended the Cabinet meeting, and the reception the evening before. It was Edward Bates, Lincoln's Attorney-General, who apparently did not consider Grant's appointment significant enough to be recorded in his diary—and he made a long entry for March 9, 1864.

While Usher waited twenty-three years to record his reminiscences of the presentation of the commission to Grant, his account in part is worthy of consideration:

"When the President delivered the commission of Lieutenant General to General Grant, the members of the Cabinet were Mr. Seward, Secretary of State; Mr. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury; Mr. Stanton (successor to Mr. Cameron), Secretary of War; Mr. Welles, Secretary of the Navy; Mr. Blair, Postmaster General; Mr. Bates, Attorney General; and myself, Secretary of the Interior.

"Mr. Lincoln thought it fit and proper to convene the Cabinet to witness the ceremony. (There is every reason to believe that Nicolay and Congressman Lovejoy (Ill.) were also present.) Upon my entering the room of the President all of the Cabinet were present with the exception of Mr. Stanton. Soon after I inquired of the President why we were summoned; he made no direct answer. Whether the other members present knew why they were called I do not know. The President seemed to be

in good spirits, which made me wonder the more why we were there; but I supposed in due time I would find out, and listened to the conversations going on. The President had not much order in the arrangement and keeping of his papers; his table was generally filled up with papers as long as they would lie on it. He did not seem to have any difficulty in finding any paper that he wanted amongst the huge mass thrown promiscuously there. Presently, Mr. Stanton, General Halleck and General Grant (accompanied by two members of his staff one of which was likely Gen. John A. Rawlins) entered the room. Without accosting the President or any one present, they moved rapidly to the far side of this table and stopped facing the table, with General Grant between General Halleck and Mr. Stanton. The President was on the opposite side. As they stopped and were in the position described, the President arose and took from the table a scroll tin case, opened it and took out the parchment commission. He then took from the pile of papers upon the table what soon proved to be his address to General Grant, the precise words of which I cannot remember, neither have I a copy."

While Secretary Usher attempted to reconstruct from memory Lincoln's presentation speech, it is hardly worthwhile to quote it as the original statement, owned by Ulysses S. Grant III, is extant:

"General Grant

"The nation's appreciation of what you have done, and its reliance upon you for what remains to do, in the existing great struggle, are now presented with this commission, constituting you Lieutenant General in the Army of the United States. With this high honor devolves upon you also, a corresponding responsibility. As the country herein trusts you, so, under God, it will sustain you. I scarcely need to add that with what I here speak for the nation goes my own hearty personal concurrence."

Taking up again Secretary Usher's reminiscences, that officer wrote that Grant then read his penciled reply:

"Then General Grant took from his vest pocket a paper containing the response to the President . . . I do remember that the paper upon which it was written was probably less than a quarter of a sheet; that he held the paper in his right hand and commenced reading it, and read probably half of it, when his voice gave out. Evidently he had not contemplated the effort of reading and had commenced without inflating his lungs. When General Grant commenced reading he was standing most awkwardly, what in common parlance would be called 'hip shot.' When his voice failed he straightened himself up in his fullest and best form, threw his shoulders back, took the paper in both hands, one at each end, and drew the paper up within proper reading distance and commenced again at the beginning and read it through

in a full strong voice. As he straightened himself up and took the paper in his hands it seemed to me that he was thinking to himself 'I can read this paper without faltering and I am going to do it.' and he did."

What Grant read follows:

"Mr. President:

"I accept this commission with gratitude for the high honor conferred.

"With the aid of the noble armies that have fought on so many fields for our common country, it will be my earnest endeavor not to disappoint your expectations. I feel the full weight of the responsibilities now developing on me and know that if they are met it will be due to those armies, and above all to the favor of that providence which leads nations and men."

Thereupon Grant received from Lincoln the commission which was dated from March 2, 1864. With the conclusion of the ceremony the members of the Cabinet were introduced to the nation's highest ranking military officer.

Certainly, no one could find fault with Grant's response to Lincoln's presentation speech. However, Nicolay felt that in enunciating his reply his effort was "rather sorry and disjointed." The secretary stated that Grant "had either forgotten or disregarded entirely the President's hints

to him of the night previous." It is obvious that Grant was "quite embarrassed by the occasion." His mistake was in writing hurriedly his response in lead pencil on a half-sheet of note paper, in a fashion that was almost illegible.

Grant's first order after receiving his commission was dated March 10, 1864 when the Commander-in-Chief wrote him as follows:

"Under the authority of an Act of Congress to revive the grade of lieutenant-general of the United States Army, approved February 29, 1864, Lieutenant-General Ulysses S. Grant, U. S. Army, is assigned to the command of the Armies of the United States."

Grant was now in a vulnerable position so far as Washington society was concerned. He was a fit subject to be lionized by every social-conscious Washington matron. Perhaps his social timidity kept him away from Grover's Theatre the evening of March 10, for the performance of Richard III, the last night in the series of Shakespearean dramas featuring Edwin Booth. President and Mrs. Lincoln attended, and Grant had ticket reservations.

Of course, Mrs. Lincoln had the first opportunity to launch Grant's social career. On March 10 Lincoln sent Grant the following telegram:

"Mrs. Lincoln invites yourself and Gen. Meade to dine with us Satur-



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

"Grant Receiving His Commission as Lieutenant-General" as depicted in Ben: Perley Poore's book, *Perley's Reminiscences of Sixty Years In The National Metropolis*, Hubbard Brothers, Publishers, 1886.

day (March, 12) evening. Please notify him, and answer whether you can be with us at that time."

Grant replied to Lincoln's telegram at 7:45 P.M.: "Genl. Meade and myself accept your kind invitation to dine with Mrs. Lincoln on Saturday."

However, at a Cabinet meeting on March 11, General Grant revealed to the President his plans to leave immediately for Nashville. Isaac N. Arnold, in his biography of Lincoln, has provided the following conversation between the President and the Lieutenant General in regard to his unexpected early departure:

"The General said, 'Mrs. Lincoln must excuse me. I must be in Tennessee at a given time.' 'But we can't excuse you' said the President. 'Mrs. Lincoln's dinner without you, would be Hamlet with Hamlet left out.' 'I appreciate the honor Mrs. Lincoln would do me,' said the General, 'but time is very important now, and really—Mr. Lincoln, I have had enough of this show business.'"

A Washington dispatch of March 13 (New York Tribune, March 14, 1864) throws further light on Grant's departure:

"The sudden return of Lieut. Gen. Grant to the West prevented him from participating in the military dinner at the Executive Mansion last night. However, nearly all, if not the entire number of Major and Brigadier Generals now here, including Gens. Halleck, Meade, Sickles, and McCook, together with the Secretary of War, dined with the President . . ."

Other generals present at the dinner (not included in the above news dispatch) were Gens. Wood (retd.), Hunter and Doubleday. The complete guest list numbered about fifteen persons.

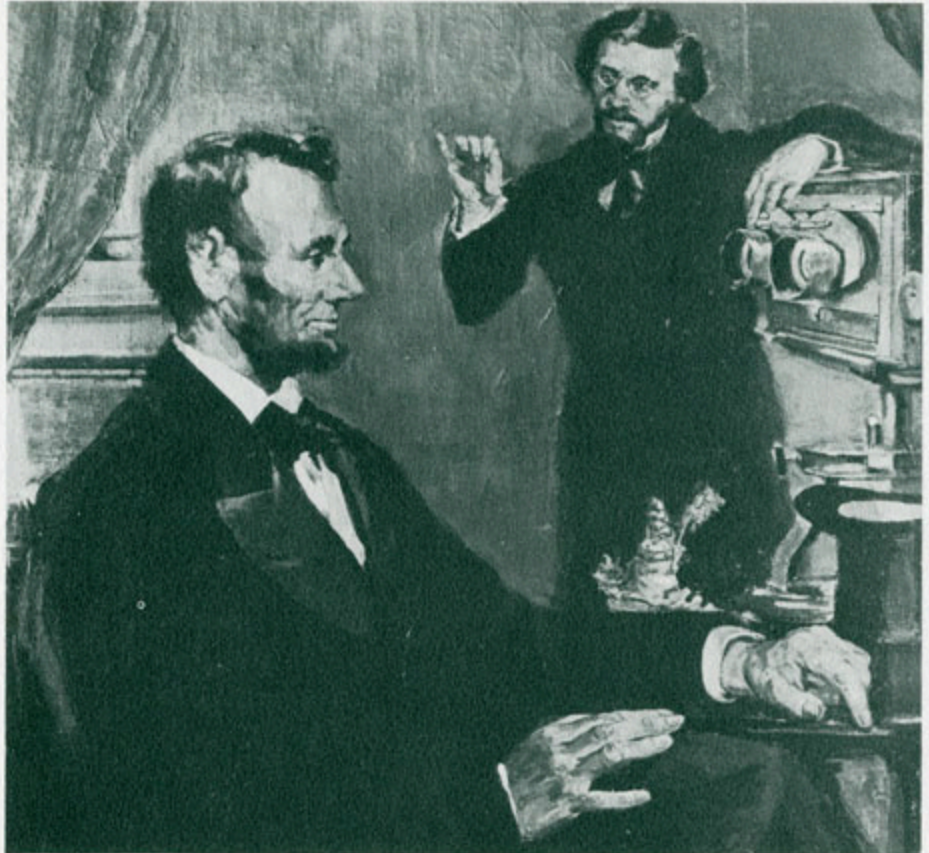
Apparently, Grant's absence at the dinner was a great disappointment to Mrs. Lincoln and the other guests, but the hero of Vicksburg had really had "enough of the show business."



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Autographed Carte-de-Visite photograph of U. S. Grant.

LINCOLN IN BRADY'S STUDIO By C. C. Beall



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

"Lincoln In Brady's Studio" by C. C. Beall.

Nearly every year The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company commissions a well known commercial artist to paint a portrait of Abraham Lincoln. Some of these artists have been Crawford, Bracker, Calvillo, Carter, Cornwell, Lettick, Leyendecker, Mizen, Nuyttens, Welsh and Riley. Last fall C. C. Beall was commissioned to do a painting depicting Mathew Brady taking a photograph of Abraham Lincoln, to be used in an institutional advertisement which appeared in the February 8, 1964 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*.

The production of these paintings entails a considerable amount of historical research on the part of the artist. A careful study of the Beall portrait will reveal minute attention to minor details such as background, camera, table, hat and inkwell. Then, too, the portrait of Brady required as much skill to execute as that of Lincoln.

In the creation of the Lincoln portrait, Beall made a studied effort not to depict Lincoln in a classifiable pose such as might be enumerated by Frederick H. Meserve, Stefan Lorant or Hamilton and Ostendorf. In other words, the Lincoln portrait by Beall might be termed a composite of several different Brady poses.

The publication by the University of Oklahoma Press (1963) of "Lincoln In Photographs" by Charles Hamilton and Lloyd Ostendorf has revealed some interesting information about Brady's Lincoln photographs. Al-

though this noted photographer is generally credited with just about all of Lincoln's bearded photographs, Hamilton and Ostendorf have revealed that he actually made only eleven in his New York and Washington studios. Classification numbers are as follows:

Meserve	Ostendorf
20	17 (New York)
66	57 (Chicago)
65	58 (Chicago)
67	59 (Chicago)
64	60 (Chicago)
63	61 (Chicago)
73	83 (Chicago)
75	84 (Chicago)
78	85 (Chicago)
76	86 (Chicago)
77	87 (Chicago)

Brady had several assistants who posed Lincoln in his studio while he was following the battles of the Civil War. These men were Alexander Gardner, Anthony Berger and Thomas LeMere. The Brady studio can be credited with having produced something less than twenty photographs taken by the above mentioned assistants. However, these assistants posed Lincoln in numerous photographs outside the Brady studio. Perhaps others of some twenty-five Brady assistants were present and were helpful in the production of Lincoln photographs. However, in all fairness to Brady it is well to point out that his assistants (Gardner, Berger and LeMere) were as skillful as the master teacher in taking Lincoln's photograph.