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Lincoln's Gettysburg Declaration: "A New Birth of Freedom"

by Louis A. Warren

Review by Arnold Gates, Literary Editor of the *Lincoln Herald*, member of the *Lincoln Lore* Bibliographical Committee, Secretary-Treasurer of The Civil War Round Table of New York and author of publications pertaining to Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War.

This has been a most difficult book to review. Not because of its subject matter or the quality of writing but because it is so uncommonly good throughout. How does one judge a work that represents a lifetime study of a dedicated and profoundly able historian? What does one say about the scholarship and painstaking attention to all detail which this superb volume represents? Any review will only be a pale observation when compared to the work itself. Whatever is said it certainly must be considered the definitive volume on Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and a work that is destined to take an honored place on the shelf of basic books dealing with the life and writings of Abraham Lincoln.

As with practically everything about Lincoln's life—whether William Herndon had his say or not—circumstances leading to the giving of the Gettysburg Address have been confused if not obscured by the conflicting accounts that have come down to us from contemporary observers. Later historians have sometimes compounded the fictions in their own writings. The service which Dr Warren rendered the Lincoln fraternity in sifting through the great mass of fact and fiction alone deserves its boundless respect. The clarity which he brings to the whole subject has earned him an honored place among the foremost of Lincoln scholars.

Dr Warren starts his excellent study of Lincoln at Gettysburg back in Lincoln's early history by explaining that the man who spoke at Gettysburg on a memorable November day in

1863 was, back in his youth, "considered to be the best stump speaker in the state." Moncure D. Conway, a writer of Lincoln's time remembered that "there was a certain artistic ability in him as a public speaker," and that "for terse, well-pronounced, clear

the "last best hope of earth." Being trained to the law and being a man who was supremely articulate Abraham Lincoln, as Dr Warren so ably outlines, was preparing his Gettysburg Address years before he actually gave it.

There is little Dr Warren doesn't explore with the care and patience of a true scholar. He analyzes the "underlying influences" that enabled Abraham Lincoln to put into words his wonderful and enduring credo of democracy. The influences included his "lifelong practice of preparing speeches; his belief in the equality of men; and his spirit of patriotism."

Probably one of the most outstanding features to a book that reflects excellence chapter after chapter is Dr Warren's keen and able analysis of the Address itself. He takes each sentence or phrase of the Address and discusses its meaning and background. Only a man with a profound knowledge of Abraham Lincoln's full public career and private life would be able to do this with as much thoroughness. Dr Warren disproves any idea that Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was something hastily conceived or extemporaneous. It was rather the fruit of much sober reflection and deepest conviction. It was something out of the heart and deeply sincere.

As for the style and wording of the Address Lincoln employed the same simple and concise language he had always found most faithfully conveyed his full meaning. He once remarked that even as a child ambiguous speech bothered him and that he would study a sentence he heard until he fully understood its author's meaning. He said he always liked to say things so that even those with limited understanding could comprehend. On one occasion he was to remark that

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*"A New Birth
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By

LOUIS A. WARREN

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speech, for perfect tones; for quiet, chaste, and dignified manner; it would be hard to find his superior." With a speaking ability, which Lincoln developed and polished, must be coupled his intense dedication to the propositions for human relationships which the Declaration of Independence and American Constitution spelled out so clearly. As he was to so ably express it, the Constitution gave promise of

people who obscured their meaning in difficult wording reminded him of a short Frenchman who lived out in his part of Illinois and who, during the winter of the deep snow, wiped out his footprints with the seat of his pants as he walked!

Mort Lewis, in writing about Lincoln's humor, once remarked that few if any of Lincoln's stories were original with him. That in many instances they were stories Lincoln had heard. But it was how Lincoln retold them that made the story uniquely and forever a Lincoln story. The same can be said of some of the words and phrases which Lincoln used in his Gettysburg Address. In discussing the phrase, "of the people, by the people, for the people," Dr Warren cited twelve different people who used a variation of the same thought. The author then goes on to say that "the resemblance between these several citations is only coincidence. It is a case where a somewhat similar idea exists in the brains of different individuals . . . but it was left for Mr. Lincoln to mould it into its final shape, and to give utterance to an expression that is now well-nigh classical."

I have heard people question the fact that Lincoln wrote the Address given at Gettysburg and assert that it was the handiwork of Seward or some other member of the Lincoln cabinet. As in the case of William Shakespeare, Abraham Lincoln was considered too deficient in study and learning to be able to give voice to truths that are universal. The detractors always argue that someone else must have been the "real" author of this immortal address. That same question apparently was rampant during Lincoln's own day for Dr Warren quoted a newspaper of the time which questioned, "Who will write this ignorant man's state papers?" Dr Warren added that one author came to the conclusion "that the Gettysburg Address was written by the Secretary of State, and 'put into every collection of great speeches, and attributed to Lincoln not Seward.'"

It seems as though everything about the Address was either questioned or criticized almost from the day it was delivered in Gettysburg. If someone did accept the fact that it was Lincoln's very own they would question when it was written and under what circumstances. Some said it was completed in Washington. Others held that part of it was written in Washington and the balance finished in Gettysburg. Dr Warren has the last and best word by making short work of disposing of Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews' story of Lincoln writing the address on a sheet of brown wrapping paper while on the train trip to Gettysburg. He concludes that "the story is a travesty on how masterpieces are created."

For some perverse reasons never fully fathomed even the color and size of the horse Lincoln rode at

Gettysburg could not be agreed upon by those who said they saw the President that day. A number did agree that Lincoln was "the most striking figure in the procession" and that he rode his horse well and that he towered "above his fellows."

Of the variety of impressions of Lincoln's address itself Edward Everett was reported to have voiced quite a few himself. One observer stated that Everett went over to Lincoln and said:

"I spent much time and painstaking effort on my speech of an hour or more, but yours of a few minutes will live and mine will be forgotten."

A man named John Morrow claimed he heard Everett say to Lincoln, while on the platform:

"Yes, Mr. Lincoln but there was more in your twenty lines than in my twenty pages."

A gentleman named Arthur B. Farquhar heard this from Everett:

"Mr. President you have made a great speech, my address will only be remembered because it was made on the same day."

Isaac N. Arnold, in his biography of Lincoln, recorded Governor Dennison as hearing Everett say:

"Oh Mr. President how gladly would I give all my hundred pages to be the author of your twenty lines."

In his own biographical study of Lincoln Ward Hill Lamon wrote that while on the platform Seward turned to Everett and asked him what he thought of the President's speech. Everett, according to Lamon, replied:

"It was not what I expected of him: I am disappointed."

The only reliable account of Edward Everett's true reaction to Lincoln's address appears in the letter he wrote to the President the next day. In it he said, "I should be glad, if I could flatter myself that I came as near the central idea of the occasion in two hours as you did in two minutes. My son, who left me at Baltimore, and my daughter concur in this sentiment."

Following Lincoln's "few appropriate remarks" the program included a chorus and a benediction. It can be reasonably assumed that Lincoln returned to his seat. In describing the seating arrangement on the platform Dr Warren states that Edward Everett sat on Abraham Lincoln's right. How he managed to comment as Ward Hill Lamon has him comment gives cause for wonder. Where was Lincoln at the time?

Dr Warren explodes the myth that Lincoln's brief address at Gettysburg was given in a voice that just didn't carry to the outer fringes of the assembled crowd. As Dr Warren explains, "Lincoln, throughout his early years, in fact, during most of his life,

was an open-air speaker." The author goes on to quote a number of eye-witness accounts of what went on when Lincoln spoke. The strong conclusion was that Lincoln's voice was "loud and clear."

In *Lincoln's Gettysburg Declaration: "A New Birth of Freedom"* Dr. Warren makes the very able point that probably one reason the true story of Lincoln at Gettysburg has been shrouded in controversy and confusion is that within a period of six years three ceremonies took place in Gettysburg. All were equally well attended. One was on the occasion of the laying of the cornerstone of the Soldiers' Monument on July 4, 1865, less than two years after the dedication of the cemetery. The third was the dedication of the completed monument on July 1, 1869. Perhaps this is the key to what people, who attended the dedication of the cemetery, remembered when it came time to set their impressions on paper. This is not unlike Dr Warren's observations in an earlier book when he studied the impressions and recollections of people in Kentucky who were trying to remember the character and personality of a Lincoln family that once lived among them. In any number of instances they spoke of Abe or Tom or Nancy Lincoln but were really thinking of a someone entirely different.

Just before going to Gettysburg Lincoln had had a chance to read over Edward Everett's rather wordy oration. What he had prepared for his moment after Everett had finished speaking was to the point, to the mind, and to the heart. In this very able study by Dr Warren we see Lincoln taking the very solemn occasion not only to say solemn things but to also capture, in a few beautifully chosen words, the very essence and heart of American democracy. Lincoln did not praise the fallen Union dead alone. He spoke simply of the men who had died on the battlefield. To Lincoln the war was but an unfortunate and unhappy interlude in the nation's growth. In his understanding the nation would pick up the broken skein of peaceful pursuits after the war was over. And when it did resume peaceful ways it would be North and South together. So when Abraham Lincoln rose to speak he had to say something that the discerning and intelligent Southerner would understand included him, as it included people of his day and of days ahead. It took Lincoln but one hundred and thirty five seconds to give his "few appropriate remarks." No man in American public office or private pursuit had ever captured the American spirit in so short a time or in so few words. And after reading Dr Louis Warren's book I cannot think of any other work that has managed to capture the spirit of Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg with a clearer or more forceful vitality.

Gettysburg Cemetery

A recent addition to the Foundation's manuscript collection is a two page letter written by Henry Edwards who was appointed by Massachusetts Governor John A. Andrew to serve as a Gettysburg Cemetery Commissioner. The letter follows:

Boston Dec. 30th 1863

Charles O. Green Esq

Dear Sir,

In reply to your Letter of 28th, this morning rec'd, the arrangements with regard to the Cemetery at Gettysburg, have been principally in hands of David Wills Esq of that town, as agent of the State of Penn., there being no regular organization as yet, by which the States honoring Soldiers there buried, take a part in its management, but an Act of Incorporation of the "Soldiers National Cemetery" is proposed to be obtained of the State of Pa., in which one trustee for each state interested, will be named, and after an organization under it, these trustees will have control of all matters concerning it.....

At the request of Gov. Andrew, I have twice been to Pa on this matter, but I am not aware, of what rules have been established, with regard to the dead, after once being placed in the Cemetery.....I presume that all bodies not removed, previous to the commencement of the dis-interment, it was inferred, would not be claimed by the relatives & in placing them in the Cemetery, they are so arranged and numbered with names, Co & Reg. of each, on all records that have gone forth, that to change them, will cause confusion I should fear, and at least inaccuracy in them all.....My own views are, that if a relative of mine was buried there, I should much prefer to have the precious remains repose where they are, the whole arrangement being such, as will do honor to the noble dead and to the States they represent—each grave is to have a head Stone, with name, Reg., Co., and State to which they belonged, inscribed upon it & the grounds are to be well enclosed and cared for in the future, with a Granite Monument erected there, within the enclosure, from which it is hoped, the whole battle field can be seen.....Gettysburg Cemetery, will doubtless be the Mecca of the United States, in coming time, so important to the Country, was the result of that Battle, and to have contributed to its achievement, even at the sacrifice of the life of some beloved object, should assuage the grief of relatives, and the honoured dead can no where be placed where their remains will be more honoured than there.....

If it is desired, I will write to Mr. Wills and ask the question, whether it is possible to comply with the request of friends, in a case like the one you name, if you will express the wishes of the friend, upon further consideration—I presume the Soldier referred to, belonged to the 15th Reg., as that was largely a Worcester Co. Reg.....I find 13 of that Reg. are buried in Section D of the Map Lot, by the list I have before

me.....Let me hear from you, what their decision is & I will do all in my power to aid them.

Very Respect, Yours
Henry Edwards

P.S., I send you a copy of the proceedings of the Commissioners from the different states, at meeting on 17th inst

The postscript of the Edwards letter refers to the proceedings of the Commissioners who met at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on December 17, 1863.

A facsimile of the original broadside follows:

HARRISBURG, Dec. 17th, 1863.

The Commissioners appointed by the Governors of the different States, who have soldiers buried in the Soldiers' National Cemetery, at Gettysburg, Pa., met at the Jones House in Harrisburg, Pa., at 2 o'clock, P. M., on the 17th of December, 1863.

The following named Commissioners were present, viz:

Hon. B. W. Norris, of Maine.
Hon. L. B. Mason, of New Hampshire.
Mr. Henry Edwards, of Massachusetts.
Mr. Alfred Coit, of Connecticut.
Hon. Levi Scobey, of New Jersey.
Mr. David Wills, of Pennsylvania.
Col. James Worrall, of Pennsylvania.
Col. John S. Barry, of Maryland.
Mr. L. W. Brown, of Ohio.
Col. Gordon Leland, of Ohio.
Col. John G. Stephenson, of Indiana.
Mr. W. Y. Sallick, of Wisconsin.

On motion of Col. Leland, of Ohio, Mr. David Wills, of Pennsylvania, was elected Chairman of the Convention.

On motion of Col. Stephenson, of Indiana, Mr. W. Y. Sallick, of Wisconsin, was elected Secretary of the Convention.

After some discussion by the members of the Convention, Col. Stephenson, of Indiana, moved that a committee of four be appointed for the purpose of preparing and putting in appropriate shape the details of the plan in reference to the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg, Pa., to be presented to the Convention for their action, which was carried. The committee was appointed as follows:

Chairman, Col. John G. Stephenson, of Indiana; Mr. Henry Edwards, of Massachusetts, Mr. David Wills, of Pennsylvania, Hon. Levi Scobey, of New Jersey.

On motion of Mr. Alfred Coit, of Connecticut, the Convention took a recess to await the action of the committee.

The Convention met again at 3 o'clock, P. M., to hear the report of the committee.

The committee made the following report:

Whereas in accordance with an invitation from David Wills, Esq., agent for his Excellency A. G. Curtin, Governor of Pennsylvania, the Governors of the several States appointed Commissioners who met at Harrisburg, December 17th, 1863, to represent the States in convention, for the purpose of making arrangements for finishing the SOLDIERS' NATIONAL CEMETERY; therefore, be it

Resolved, By the said Commissioners in convention assembled, that the following be submitted to the different States interested in the "Soldiers' National Cemetery" through their respective Governors.

First, That the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, shall hold the title to the land which she has purchased at Gettysburg for the Soldiers' National Cemetery, in trust for the State having soldiers buried in said Cemetery, in perpetuity for the purposes to which it is now applied.

Second, That the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, be requested to create a Corporation, to consist of one Trustee, to be appointed by each of the Governors of the States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and of such other States as may desire to be represented in this Corporation, which Trustee shall, at their first meeting, be divided into three classes. The term of office of the first class to

expire on the first day of January, 1865. The second class on the first day of January, 1866. The third class on the first day of January, 1867.—The vacancies thus occurring to be filled by the several Governors, and the persons thus appointed to fill such vacancies to hold their office for the term of three years. The Corporation to have exclusive control of the Soldiers' National Cemetery.

Third, The following is the estimated expense of finishing the cemetery:

Enclosing grounds.....	\$16,000 00
Burial expenses and superintending.....	6,100 00
Head stones.....	10,000 00
Laying out grounds and planting trees.....	5,000 00
Lodge.....	2,500 00
Monument.....	25,000 00

Total\$63,600 00

Fourth, that the several States be asked to appropriate a sum of money, to be determined by a division of the estimated expenses according to representation in Congress, to be expended in defraying the cost of removing and re-intering the dead and finishing the cemetery under directions of the cemetery corporation.

Fifth, When the cemetery shall have been finished, the grounds are to be kept in order, the fence and enclosures in repair out of a fund created by annual appropriations made by the States which may be represented in the cemetery corporation in proportion to their representation in Congress.

On motion of Col. Barry, of Maryland, the report of the committee was accepted, and the committee discharged.

It was moved by Col. Barry, of Maryland, that the report of the committee be considered *seriatim*, which was concurred in, and the report was then adopted in detail.

Letters from the Governors of the following States were received by Mr. Wills, Chairman of the Convention, who were not represented by Commissioners, expressing their disposition to approve the action of the Convention in reference to the completion of the cemetery at Gettysburg, Pa., viz:

- Hon. Horatio Seymour, of New York.
- Hon. Austin Blair, of Michigan.
- Hon. James Y. Smith, of Rhode Island.
- Hon. Wm. Cannon, of Delaware.
- Hon. Henry G. Swift, of Minnesota.

On motion of Mr. Scobey, of New Jersey, the following committee was appointed by the Chairman, with a view to procure designs of a monument to be erected in the cemetery:

- Hon. Levi Scobey, of New Jersey,
- Hon. B. W. Morris, of Maine,
- Mr. D. W. Brown, of Ohio,
- Col. J. G. Stephenson, of Indiana,
- Col. John S. Barry, of Maryland.

On motion of Mr. Alfred Coit, of Connecticut, the plans and design of the Soldiers' National Cemetery, as set out and designed by Mr. Wm. Saunders, was adopted by the Convention.

A motion was made by Mr. Coit, of Connecticut, returning thanks to Mr. Wm. Saunders for the designs and drawings gratuitously for the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg, Pa.; which was unanimously adopted.

Mr. Brown, of Ohio, offered the following; which was adopted:

Resolved, That Mr. Wm. Saunders be authorized to furnish forty photographic of the plan of the Soldiers' National Cemetery, for the use of the states having soldiers buried therein.

DAVID WILLS, President.
W. Y. SALICK, Secretary.

The New York Herald April 15, 1865

Do you have in your attic a copy of *The New York Herald* dated April 15, 1865? Many people do, because that newspaper's coverage of the assassination and death of President Abraham Lincoln was one of the most sensational news stories ever reported. Perhaps no other newspaper has been so avidly collected and so carefully preserved.

Unfortunately, most of the copies in the hands of collectors today are cheap reprints—not worth the paper they are printed on. A quick but not infallible guide to authenticity lies in the physical condition of the newspaper. If its pages are yellow and quite fragile, it is a so-called new wood pulp product. If its pages are of soft, off-white rag paper, it is in all probability genuine. Some sixty different reprints, dating from the 1870's, have been collected and catalogued.

The Library of Congress, the Chicago Historical Society and the Lincoln National Life Foundation have from time to time issued bulletins (See *Lincoln Lore* Number 576 & 1425) attempting to collate those characteristics which determine the genuine newspaper. Presently, the most comprehensive study has been made by Miss Margaret Scriven, librarian of the Chicago Historical Society. Her bulletin, dated March, 1963, with recent emendations, follows:

The New York Herald, April 15, 1865

On April 15, 1865, the day Abraham Lincoln died, five issues of *The New York Herald* were published: 2 A.M., 3 A.M., 10 A.M., 2 P.M., and 3:30 P.M. All were on the soft, off-white rag paper of the period. The first two issues and one issue of the 2 P.M. edition have eight pages. The Library of Congress has an eight page 2 P.M. issue on rag paper. It is believed that the eight page issue with ads was circulated in the city and that the four page issue without the ads served as a news extra, and was the one that was sent out of the city. The other issues have four pages. Pages 2-3 and 6-7, which were chiefly classified advertisements, were omitted. The 2 A.M. and 3 A.M. editions carried news of the tragic event at Ford's Theatre the night before, and the condition of the President; the 10 A.M. edition, (one issue of which

carried a reward notice while another issue did not) and the subsequent ones, reported Lincoln's death, the inauguration of Johnson, and erroneously, the capture of Booth. Beginning with the 10 A.M. edition, black mourning lines were used.

The first paper of the day—the 2 A.M. one—was reprinted several years later on pulp paper. The advertisements were omitted, and black mourning rules were added. This reprint is not commonly seen.

The 8:10 A.M. Edition

It is still another "edition," one not mentioned above, that is owned by thousands of persons throughout the country. The hour of publication is given, in column four of the first page, as 8:10 A.M. The column is headed "Extra" and the President's death is briefly reported.

It is reasonable to suppose that there was an Extra published at about this time. Lincoln died at 7:22 that morning, a telegram was sent from Washington to New York at 7:30 and was received in New York shortly before 8 A.M. The news of the President's death had been expected for hours, and it could be supposed that type was kept ready for a new edition, space left only for the announcement. When the news did come, the "Extra" could have been set immediately, the presses started, and the papers, still wet, could have been on the streets at 8:10, or shortly thereafter. Reasonable or no, there is no direct evidence to show that there was a printing between 3 A.M. and 10 A.M.

It is possible that this "edition" was first made up to be sold as a souvenir at the Centennial Exposition, which was held at Philadelphia in 1876. The general news was copied from the 2 A.M. edition, and the "Extra" and black mourning rules were added. Once begun, there seemed to be no end—more than sixty different printings are known. All have mourning rules; most consist of four pages, others of two; some have a picture of Lincoln on the front page, others do not; some carry the printer's name and the date of publication, others do not . . . Many of them are unashamedly advertising pieces. The front page is left intact, as well as portions of other pages, but such products as liniment, catarrh cures, pills, and coffee, with illustrations and testimonials, take up considerable space. One advertiser, who printed the paper in 1889 and again in 1900,

stated that copies would be sent to those who asked for them at one cent each.

It is doubtful that the issue was ever printed with the intent to deceive, but many people who come across it now, seeing the date April 15, 1865, and the news of Lincoln's death, believe it to be genuine and valuable.

This is not the case. Almost all the copies found today are printed on cheap, wood-pulp paper—a dead give away. Thanks to an article in the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* (V. 33, No. 10, Oct., 1929: *Herald* p. 745, 747) it is stated that the *Herald* used part pulp paper on December 31, 1874, and then a mixture until 1882, after which only pulp paper was used. Pulp copies are discolored, break easily at the folds, and crumble at the edges. Advertisements of firms that were not in existence in 1865, and dated testimonials, are other evidences of later publication.

As of March, 1963, despite extensive search, *no original of the 8:10 has been found*. The copies so commonly owned today are interesting as souvenirs, but have no commercial value.

HOWEVER

It took 130 years to find an original copy of another newspaper that was often reprinted. This was the issue of *The Ulster County Gazette* (Kingston, N.Y.) that reported Washington's death. It is dated January 4, 1800; the first of two known originals was discovered in 1930.

It is scarcely 99 years since *The New York Herald* reported Lincoln's death. It may be that an original 8:10 A.M. will come out of hiding sometime.

It is of interest to point out that while all of the above five original issues are extant, no institution or private collector owns the complete set. The Lincoln National Life Foundation owns the 2 A.M., 3 A.M., and the 2 P.M. (4 pages) editions. The Chicago Historical Society has the 2 A.M., 3 A.M., 10 A.M., and the 3:30 P.M. editions. The Library of Congress owns the 2 A.M., 3 A.M., 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. editions.

The question might be asked, "How can I find out whether my copy of *The New York Herald* is printed on rag or pulp?" Perhaps, if you will take your newspaper to a paper maker, a newspaper publisher, a public library or a stationery store, your question may be answered.