



# Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor  
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## Lincoln - Haycraft Correspondence

*Editor's Note:* Samuel Haycraft's letters to Lincoln were first published in 1963 in pamphlet form by the Elizabethtown, Kentucky, Woman's Club under the title "Haycraft's History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky" by R. Gerald McMurtry. The 12 page pamphlet sells at \$1.00 per copy. For additional information on Samuel Haycraft, Jr., see *Lincoln Lore* No. 1428 "Judge Lynch," February, 1957 and No. 1456 "Lincoln-Haycraft Correspondence—A Study in Handwriting" (page 3), June, 1959.

As a Presidential candidate and later as a President-elect, Abraham Lincoln had occasion to write five letters of a biographical and political nature to Samuel Haycraft, Jr., of Elizabethtown, Kentucky. These letters are extant and have been published in "The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln," Vol. IV, 1860-1861, pages 56, 59, 97, 99 and 115.

Haycraft was a son of one of the three pioneer settlers of Elizabethtown, and he was born when the town was still an early pioneer settlement. He served as county and circuit court clerk from 1816 to 1857. His handwriting had appeared on so many legal papers that on May 28, 1860, Presidential Candidate Abraham Lincoln wrote Haycraft that "I do not think I ever saw you, though I very well know who you are—so well that I recognized your handwriting, on opening your letter, before I saw the signature." Lincoln continued, "My recollection is that Ben Helm was first clerk, that you succeeded him, that Jack Thomas and William Farleigh graduated in the same office, and that your handwritings were all very similar. Am I right?" Lincoln had probably seen many of the legal papers of his father's Hardin County transactions.

In 1869 Haycraft wrote "A History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky And Its Surroundings" and no community's history has been so quaintly, but at the same time so amply, written. This volume gives intimate glimpses into the lives of the Lincolns, the Buchanans, the Audubons, the Helms, the Greens, the Duvalls, the Edwards, the Hodgens, the Bushs, the La Rues, the Van Meters and the Wintersmiths—most of whom played prominent roles as contemporaries of Thomas Lincoln or the Sixteenth President. It is, of course, regretful that Haycraft did not pinpoint the location of the Thomas Lincoln cabin in his history as to lot number, street and precise location, that all might visit

the site of that important Elizabethtown Lincoln home.

Lincoln and Haycraft differed politically in the Presidential contest of 1860; yet, their correspondence reveals considerable restraint on the part of both men to tread softly over sectional issues. While Lincoln had a much better grasp of the national political situation following his election than his obscure local correspondent, Haycraft nevertheless displayed an attitude of conciliation which was typical of most Kentuckians in November 1860.

The five letters written by Lincoln and the four by Haycraft are here published together in *Lincoln Lore* for the first time. Apparently, Haycraft wrote Lincoln six letters, the first two of which are not extant. In Lincoln's May 28, 1860 letter to Haycraft he mentioned "your recent letter, without date," and in his June 4, 1860 letter, Lincoln acknowledged "your second letter dated May 31st." The earliest letter from Haycraft, that is extant, is dated August 19, 1860. Other Haycraft letters addressed to Lincoln are dated October 26, 1860; November 9, 1860; and November 13, 1860. The four original letters extant constitute a part of the Abraham Lincoln papers in the Library of Congress. They have the following (microfilm) catalogue numbers:

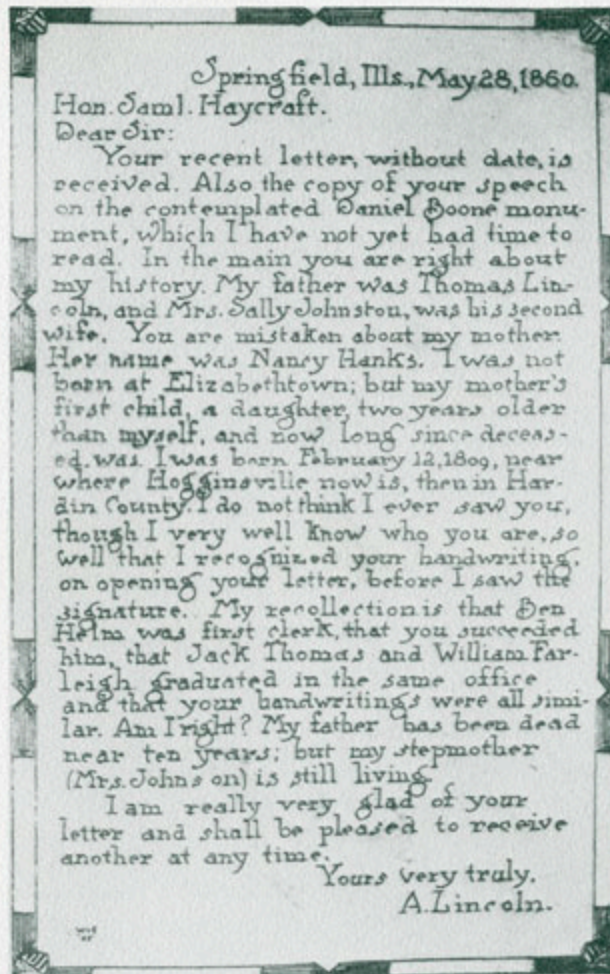
- August 19, 1860—No. 3567
- October 26, 1860—No. 4148
- November 9, 1860—No. 4391 (with envelope)
- November 13, 1860—No. 4477 (with envelope)

As Haycraft was an uncommonly poor scribe, it has been difficult to decipher parts of his scrawl. Such words as have defied translation are indicated by three periods enclosed in parentheses. Fortunately, this has occurred in only a few sentences.

Springfield, Ills.  
May 28, 1860

Hon. Saml. Haycraft  
Dear Sir:

Your recent letter, without date, is received. Also the copy of your speech on the contemplated Daniel Boone Monument, which I have not yet had time to read. In the main you are right about my history. My father was Thomas Lincoln, and Mrs. Sally Johnston, was his second wife. You are mistaken about my mother—her maiden name was Nancy Hanks. I was



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation  
Etching by Bernhardt Wall

not born at Elizabethtown; but my mother's first child, a daughter, two years older than myself, and now long since deceased, was. I was born Feb. 12, 1809, near where Hogginsville [Hodgenville] now is, then in Hardin county. I do not think I ever saw you, though I very well know who you are—so well that I recognized your hand-writing, on opening your letter, before I saw the signature. My recollection is that Ben. Helm was first Clerk, that you succeeded him, that Jack Thomas and William Farleigh graduated in the same office, and that your handwritings were all very similar. Am I right?

My father has been dead near ten years; but my step-mother, (Mrs. Johnson) is still living.

I am really glad of your letter, and shall be pleased to receive another at any time. Yours very truly  
A. Lincoln

PRIVATE

Hon. Saml. Haycraft. Springfield, Ills. June 4, 1860

Dear Sir: Your second letter, dated May 31st. is received. You suggest that a visit to the place of my nativity might be pleasant to me. Indeed it would. But would it be safe? Would not the people lynch me?

The place on Knob Creek, mentioned by Mr. Read, I remember very well; but I was not born there. As my parents have told me, I was born on Nolin, very much nearer Hodgins-Mill than the Knob Creek place is. My earliest recollection, however, is of the Knob Creek place.

Like yourself I belonged to the whig party from it's origin to its close. I never belonged to the American party organization; nor ever to a party called a Union party; though I hope I neither am, or ever have been, less devoted to the Union than yourself, or any other patriotic man.

It may not be altogether without interest to let you know that my wife is a daughter of the late Robert S. Todd, of Lexington, Ky.—and that a half sister of hers is the wife of Ben. Hardin Helm, born and raised at your town, but residing at Louisville now, as I believe.

Yours very truly  
A. Lincoln

Hon. Saml. Haycraft Springfield, Ills. Aug. 16, 1860

My Dear Sir: A correspondent of the New-York Herald, who was here a week ago, writing to that paper, represents me as saying I had been invited to visit Kentucky, but that I suspected it was a trap to inveigle me into Kentucky, in order to do violence to me.

This is wholly a mistake. I said no such thing. I do not remember, but possibly I did mention my correspondence with you. But very certainly I was not guilty of stating, or insinuating, a suspicion of any intended violence, deception, or other wrong, against me, by you, or any other Kentuckian. Thinking this Herald correspondence might fall under your eye, I think it due to myself to enter my protest against the correctness of this part of it. I scarcely think the correspondent was malicious; but rather that he misunderstood what was said.

Yours very truly  
A. Lincoln

Elizabeth Town Ky.  
August 19, 1860

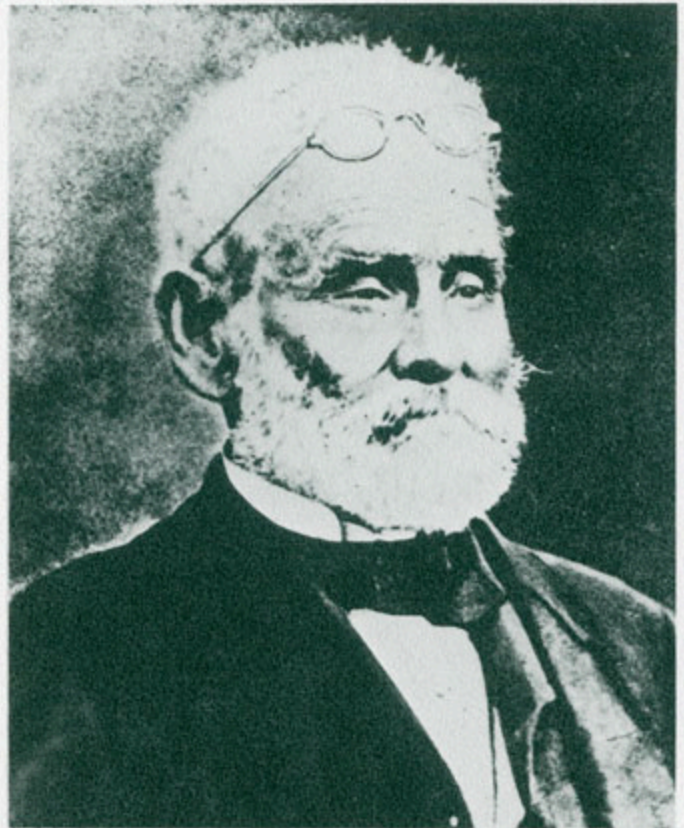
Hon. Abraham Lincoln

My Dear Sir:

Your letter of 16 Inst was received by this days mail. And I hasten to reply. Not only to acquit you but to clear myself of any knowledge of that statement of some correspondent from the N. Y. Herald saying that you had been invited to visit Ky. but that you suspected it was a trap to inveigle you into Ky. in order to do violence to you.

I will tax your patience by adding to our correspondence. It was generally understood that you were born in this Town (Elizabeth Town) as there was some difference of opinion about this place & also about your parentage, that I took the liberty of writing to you on the subject, to which you frankly & promptly responded.

That letter called out another from me, in which I did not invite you to visit Kentucky, but in speaking of



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Samuel Haycraft, Jr., 1795-1878

this place of your birth & of your recollections of this old Home Stead, I made a passing suggestion that it might be pleasant for you now in the turn of life to visit the scenes of your nativity. To which in your letter marked *Private* dated June 4th you in this playful language "You suggest that a visit to the place of my nativity would be pleasant to me—Indeed it would—But would it be safe? Would not the people lynch me? The place on Knob Creek mentioned by Mr. Read I remember very well, but I was not born there."

"As my parents have told me, I was born on Nolin very much nearer Hodgins-Mill than the Knob Creek place is. My earliest recollection is of the Knob Creek place."

The remark about the lynching. No man of sense would have understood it in any other way than a (. . .) playfulness and pleasantry on your part. I at least so understood it, and was about to reply to it in the same humor, that a visit here would subject you to a good many attacks—But they would (. . .) for office under you, as it was regarded as a foregone conclusion that you would be the next President unless the split in the Democratic party lets in Bell. The mark *Private* on your letter I supposed simply meant that it was not for publication. Had it been marked Confidential nobody would have seen it. But as it was I showed it to Mr. W. B. Read who was attending our Court and one or two other acquaintances and spoke of it to others who like myself had a curiosity about your birthplace. The reason why I did not reply was through a little delicacy, least my object might be misconstrued.

I suppose you have noticed the votes of the Clerk of the Court of Appeals in which the Bell Candidate beat the Breckenridge man upward of 25,000 votes. That Breckenridge is in a minority in Ky. I have no kind of doubt, but I do not deem the late election a fair test as a great many Douglas men voted for Country. But I have no doubt that if the parties stand as they now are in Nov. next that Bell & Everett will carry the state of Ky. by a considerable plurality of votes.

An old neighbor and friend of mine Sam'l Young, told me to say to you if I wrote to you again that he would vote for you. His sister married a Hanks, and he married a sister of my old Friend Charles Sawyer who lives near

Mattoon and who tho near 80 years of age headed a Lincoln torch light procession at that place not long since and carried a fence rail on his shoulder as did every other man in the procession. Not long since a relation of mine from New York visited this place and aided by some old Citizens hunted up the remains of the Old Cabin in which your father resided. He had 8 feet of a log sawed out and took it to New York. The old house had been removed several times, was once a human residence, another a Slaughter house, and now a Stable.—excuse me for going into these little particulars. I thought you would not be displeased to hear of them. I have seen in the illustrated papers a likeness of yourself. I was almost on the point of saying that if you had a correct photograph of yourself that I would like to see it.

I do not suppose that you intend to visit Ky. But if you do I would like to see you personally and would be sure that you would be pleasantly received. I wish it understood that this letter is private and not for publication, but if you desire a reply from me to the N. Y. Herald I will with pleasure prepare a statement.

Truly yours  
Sam'l Haycraft

[Hon. Sam Haycraft  
My dear S]

[Springfield, Ill.  
Aug. 23, 1860]

Yours of the 19th is just received. I now fear I may have given you some uneasiness by my last letter. I did not mean to intimate that I had, to any extent, been involved, or embarrassed, by you; nor yet, to draw from you anything to relieve myself from difficulty. My only object was to assure you that I had not, as represented by the Herald correspondent, charged you with an attempt to inveigle me into Kentucky to do me violence. I believe no such thing of you, or of Kentuckians generally; and I dislike to be represented to them as slandering them in that way.

[Yours truly  
A. Lincoln]

Elizabeth Town Ky.  
Oct. 26, 1860

Hon. Abraham Lincoln,  
My dear Sir,

Not long since I saw my old friend Dick Wintersmith who informed me that he in company with Ben Hardin Helm had lately paid you a visit and taken tea at your house. Dick was our late Treasurer and is a fellow of rare wit and humour and told me that he had expressed his fears to your lady that if it was known in the South that he had supped at your house that he would be hung. I told Dick that I had some fears myself that if you were elected that it would be the cause of my death—How so? says Dick. I replied that Lincoln would give an appointment (. . . .) Swampy County (. . .) the Indians and that the consequences would be fatal.

I have a great anxiety to know how a man feels in your present position a candidate for the highest office one of the gifts of a mighty nation and in less than two weeks of the time.

I have myself in days past had some anxiety about some petty office. But (. . .) in your case is a deep one.

In Kentucky, tho a slave state, we occupy a middle ground—and generally we are as much opposed to the fire eating disunion gang as we are to the ultra abolitionists of the North.

From later indications we look upon your election as a fixed fact, a foregone conclusion.—Bell will certainly carry Kentucky and Tennessee as I once before remarked to you.

Old Uncle Sammy Young requested me if I ever wrote to you again to be certain to send you his respects—he will vote for you if he lives—one of our townsmen Robert L. Wintersmith is the Lincoln Elector for this District and takes decided ground—and regrets that he is not an orator that he might canvas the state for you.

Mr. James L. Hill the son of one of the (. . .) Women in (. . .) sends you his respects. His mother's maiden name was Lucy Lincoln a daughter of Annanai Lincoln who she says was a brother of your father.

James L. Hill, or as we call him Whalan Hill, is an

industrious, enterprising cabinet maker with a tolerably fair education. I make these suggestions to you supposing that they might inform or answer you to a limited extent. But as no doubt your correspondents are now numerous I must apologize for this letter on light matters, as intruding upon your time. With the highest respects,

Your Obt. St.  
Sam Haycraft

Elizabeth Town Hardin Co. Ky  
November 9, 1860

Hon. A Lincoln,  
Dear Sir,

Now that the Battle is ended and the smoke thereof is being blown away and that you are now beyond doubt President elect of these glorious United States, as I predicted six months ago, I feel inclined though an humble individual unknown to fame to address you a few lines for which I hope you will pardon me, a great weight of responsibility has now fallen on your shoulders, and the guidance of the Ship of State committed to your hand.

I pray God that you may be enabled manfully to bear up under that weight and skillfully to pilot the vessel through the breakers of the threatened storm, that you will in all the honesty of your heart do so I have an abiding confidence, and that our Southern fire eaters will find (if they give you time to show your hand) that you are a conservative chief of the Nation in a national point of view that is the President of the *United States* and not a sectional ruler. Altho Kentucky gave you but a small vote, you will find her clinging on to the union, and honestly aiding you in the very arduous duties that lie before you. It will no doubt require all your wisdom and skill to conduct the Ship of State through the breakers, and it should be the duty, and I hope will be the pleasure of all good and true men to stand by you in the Conflict. And I hope that all may be well and the unity of the States preserved. This Hot Spring of the South will no doubt try a while to kick up a dust but sober second thought calms them down into decent acquiescence to the choice of the Nation. I do not profess to have the wisdom or the ability to suggest a course of policy. But your prudence and that proper decent respect which you have during the Canvass shown to the dignity of the office to which the people have elevated you without your compromising the respect for the opinions of an enlightened Nation—Stumping the States and harranging the people for an office of the highest dignity—will lead you to a course (. . .) and conservative in your administration—is the ground work of my hope for the future. These remarks are timidly made and I hope you will not think me presumptuous or obtrusive in making them. If an outsider may be allowed the privilege, I would name one man in a small way deserving of your patronage, and I make the suggestion without his knowledge or (. . .). I mean our fellow citizen (of this Town) Mr. Robert L. Wintersmith who was one on your electoral ticket. He stood almost alone and advocated your claim. And I have heard but one sentiment among the people and that is that he ought to be remembered while favors are being dispensed. He has labored through adverse fortune with a large family and is poor, but as firm as the Rock of Gibraltar.

I expect you will be annoyed to decide with letters and all sorts of petitions and communications from your own supporters, and I can hardly expect any reply to this communication. Indeed it may be considered impertinent under all circumstances; but it is not so intended, and is made in the honesty of my heart. It is true that I would like to hear from you if your leisure permits.

Very Respectfully Yours,  
Sam'l Haycraft

Private, and confidential

Hon. Samuel Haycraft Springfield, Ill. Nov. 13, 1860

My dear Sir: Yours of the 9th. is just received. I can only answer briefly. Rest fully assured that the good people of the South who will put themselves in the same temper and mood towards me which you do, will find no cause to complain of me.

While I can not, as yet, make any committal as to offices, I sincerely hope I may find it in my power to oblige the friends of Mr. Wintersmith. [Yours very truly,

A. Lincoln]

Elizabeth Town Ky  
Nov. 13, 1860

(Private)  
Hon. Abraham Lincoln,

Notwithstanding my late communication excuse me for troubling you so soon again. My apology will be found in my great desire that you should be disabused before the South and in the Slave States and thereby afford you a smoother sea than the present ebullitions of the South seem to portend. I am satisfied that a very large majority of Kentuckians are (. . .) to your election from the fact that they believe firmly that your administration will be honest, just and conservative. If you read the Louisville Journal you will see a decided tendency in that way, and that paper gives tongue to a very large portion of our people. But to come to the point—It has been intimated to me (knowing that I had been in correspondence with you) that it might serve the public and be promotive of some good for you to pay a visit to Kentucky at this point, being the County of your nativity and make a public address—and it was suggested to me to draw up a call upon you to be signed by all our old citizens giving you a public invitation. But I answered that it would be proper for me first to address you privately on the subject and learn from you confidentially whether such a demonstration would be agreeable to you to meet your notion of propriety. My own opinion is that there would be no impropriety in it as the election is over, and you could have no private ends to answer, and coupled with the fact that before the election you maintained that (. . .) silence which became a candidate for so high a position. I want Ky to speak out in such decisive language of the importance of adhering to the union and Constitution as would leave no doubt about her position and give no hope to the South that she would in the slightest degree encourage the madmen of that Section to look to her for aid, comfort or help in their hairbrained attempt to dissolve the union. I conversed with Governor Helm today on this subject. He highly approves of the plans to get your answer by a visit or such a reply to an invitation as would have a tendency to allay the troubled elements. But as some of his friends about Frankfort and Louisville have spoken of him as likely to obtain some executive favors, in which he has had no (. . .) or expectations in that way will induce him as a modest and high toned gentleman to take no active hand in the arrangements. This I say confidentially—I am confident that a visit from you once arranged would bring a tremendous crowd who would meet you openhanded, and listen to you with pleasure. If you can answer personally please let me hear from you.

Yours truly  
Saml Haycraft

### **“I hope I may find it in my power to oblige the friends of Mr. Wintersmith.”**

In Haycraft's letter of November 9, 1860, addressed to President-elect Lincoln, he suggested the name of Robert L. Wintersmith, Sr. of Elizabethtown, Kentucky as deserving of patronage. Lincoln replied to Haycraft on November 13, 1860 that “I sincerely hope I may find it in my power to oblige the friends of Mr. Wintersmith.”

Apparently, Wintersmith wanted a federal appointment, and immediately after Lincoln's inauguration he went to Washington and called upon the President. Because of Wintersmith's work as a Republican elector, Lincoln appointed the Kentuckian to the office of Elizabethtown Postmaster. Wintersmith was a merchant, and he continued to operate his general store even after the presidential appointment.

Wintersmith's father was Horatio Gates Wintersmith, who came to Kentucky from Martinsburg, Virginia with Major James Crutcher in 1806. Horatio G. Wintersmith was married three times; Robert L. was born to his first wife, who was before her marriage Elizabeth Hodgen, a daughter of Robert Hodgen who was a neighbor of Thomas Lincoln in Larue County.

Wintersmith was the only Elizabethtown resident to cast his vote for Lincoln in the 1860 Presidential Campaign. His vote was one of 6 out of a total of 2,091 cast in Hardin County for the Republican candidate.

### **“It so happens that I was born in Hardin County, Ky.”, G. W. McMurtry**

*Editor's Note:* In connection with the Lincoln-Haycraft correspondence it has come to the editor's attention that other Hardin County Kentuckians took advantage of their prerogative to write to the President. This particular letter by G. W. McMurtry has a special appeal for the editor as he is undoubtedly a kinsman. Perhaps Lincoln was pleased with the McMurtry letter of June 20th because it must have vindicated his desire to patronize a member of his wife's family. Then, too, Mrs. Lincoln possibly insisted upon the appointment. The McMurtry letter is a part of the Abraham Lincoln papers in the Library of Congress, microfilm No. 10371, Reel No. 23.

L. M. Todd, a son of Dr. John Todd of Springfield, Illinois, was eager to secure the appointment of Custom House Drayman at San Francisco, California. As this was a federal position, President Abraham Lincoln was asked to make the appointment.

On May 31, 1861 Ira P. Rankin, the Collector of Customs at San Francisco, wrote the President that “I feel compelled to write to you in regard to the appointment of L. M. Todd as Custom House Drayman . . . A formal protest has been sent to me against it, signed by the county Committee and a large number of the Republicans of Solano County, where he resides, representing that he has been a most bitter and violent opponent of the Republican Party . . . .”

Meanwhile, in a letter dated April 5, 1861, the President had written to Rankin as follows: “Lockwood M. Todd, above named, is a cousin of Mrs. L. and she and I will be much obliged if the collector can give him the place he seeks.”

Perhaps the appointment of Todd was never made, because there is no record to that effect. Although Todd may have had violent opponents in the Republican Party, he did have at least one Kentucky friend then residing in Suisun City, California, who, even though he differed with Lincoln politically, wrote the President in his behalf.

Hon. A. Lincoln Suisun City, June 20th 1861  
Dear Sir:

I write to you in behalf of Mr. L. M. Todd not because I have any wish or partizan right to mix myself up with the miserable (Dog in the Manger) War that is being waged against him by certain parties in this County but because I believe him to be a good young man and think he is not being fairly dealt with. It so happens that I was born in Hardin County, Ky. some years after you were, and although differing with you in politics, I yet feel more than an ordinary interest in you personally. This sentiment was not lessened by the fact that Mrs. Lincoln's family were also of Kentucky.

I plead guilty to the charge of having a tenderness for Kentuckians. And under the circumstances have frequently conversed with Mr. Todd concerning you. And willingly bear testimony to the fact that he invariably spoke of yourself and family in the most kind and respectful terms. I think Mr. T. is a very well qualified man for the position to which he aspires. Do not think his appointment to that position would offend a single decent man in this state. And I sincerely hope he may get the place as he needs it. As to those men, who are making war upon him the less that is said about most of them the better. They are my neighbors and most of them my clients, but they are not the sort of men who should influence your action.

Yours very Respectfully  
signed G. W. McMurtry

Refer'd to  
Hon. J. Y. Brown Ky  
Ira P. Rankin San Francisco

The earliest record of an L. M. Todd appointment is March 25, 1864, when he was made commissary of subsistence with the rank of Captain.