



# Lincoln Lore

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## The Scripps "Campaign Life"

John Locke Scripps campaign biography, "Life of Abraham Lincoln," published about July 15, 1860 has been declared to be "the only biography of himself that Abraham Lincoln ever authorized, revised and endorsed." M. L. Houser, in the "Foreword" of a reprinted and annotated edition of the Scripps biography (Edward J. Jacob issue, 1931), made the statement that Lincoln insisted that every statement, however unimportant, should be meticulously accurate; to insure that, he required that the manuscript be submitted to him before publication. Scripps afterwards said that the way Lincoln revised and deleted some of its most readable and interesting passages was "discouraging."

Although Scripps did make some general statements similar to that quoted above, there is no evidence that Lincoln "meticulously" read the proof sheets of the 32 page pamphlet. In fact, there is testimony to refute such a claim.

In an excellent "Introduction" to the Indiana University Press issue (1961) of the Scripps biography prepared by Roy P. Basler and Lloyd A. Dunlap, no claim is made that Lincoln meticulously read the page proofs. Basler did state, however, "that . . . it may be claimed with some justice that Scripps was the first biographer to collect original material and write a comprehensive account of Lincoln's Life."

To assist biographers, because the public needed to be informed about the life and career of the Republican nominee, Lincoln wrote out in the third person some autobiographical notes which had been promised to Scripps. This famous sketch has become a classic in Lincoln literature. However, Scripps did not have the exclusive use of the autobiography because Lincoln retained the original manuscript and later permitted John G. Nicolay, his private secretary, to send copies to William Dean Howells, D. W. Bartlett and perhaps others who wrote campaign lives. Then, too, the autobiography was issued under separate imprints on June 4.

Scripps was one of the chief editors of the *Chicago Press & Tribune* in 1860. He was born in Jackson, Missouri, on February 27, 1818. While still very young, he

removed with his parents to Rushville, Illinois and worked in his father's tannery, on his farm and in his store. Entering McKendree College at Lebanon, Illinois, he graduated in 1844. In 1847 he took up the study of law and practiced his profession in Chicago.

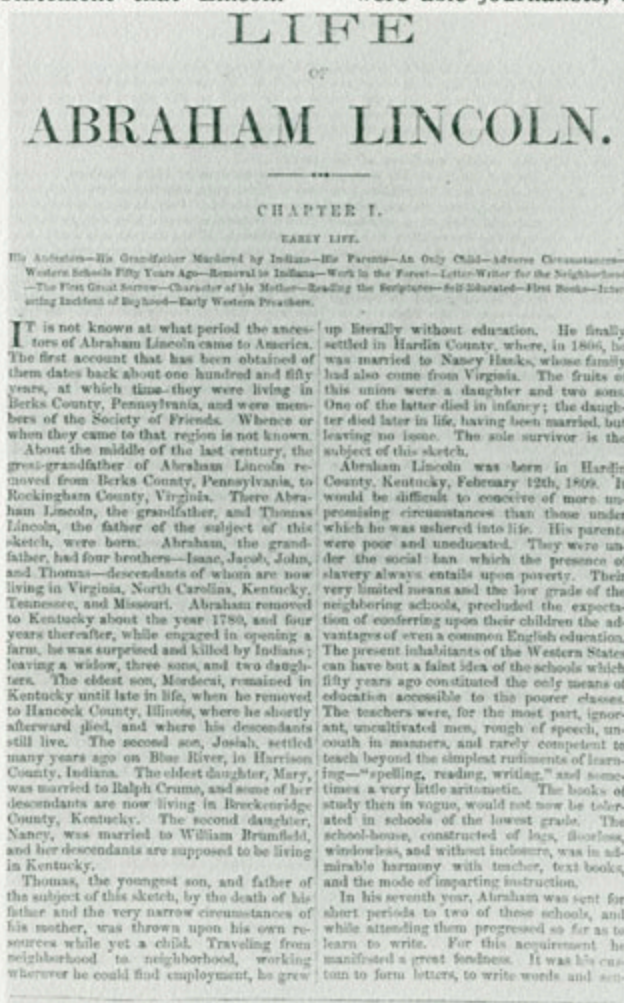
Having grown up in a family of which several members were able journalists, Scripps possessed certain inherent literary talents which attracted him to newspaper work. After holding several minor editorial positions with small newspapers, he assumed the position of chief editor of the *Chicago Press & Tribune* when the two newspapers consolidated on July 1, 1858.

The editor visited Lincoln sometime prior to June 18, 1860, because on that date he wrote him a letter and, among other things, said, "Since I returned from Springfield it has been thought best, provided satisfactory arrangements can be made, to bring the work out in New York." According to Scripps, he was hard at work on the biography and he needed "the remaining notes, which I trust Mr. Nicolay will be able to send me without much delay." At this time Scripps was under the impression that he was to prepare a 96 page biography.

It can be assumed that while Scripps was in Springfield he discussed with Lincoln and Nicolay the outline of his proposed publication. Perhaps, it was on this occasion that Lincoln insisted that every statement be meticulously accurate and probably vetoed the author's plans to insert what Scripps considered to be the "most readable and interesting passages." Undoubtedly, it was during this interview that Lincoln insisted the manuscript be submitted to him before publication. While the agreement may never have been carried out, there was apparently a tacit understanding between author and nominee as to what should be included and what should go un-

mentioned.

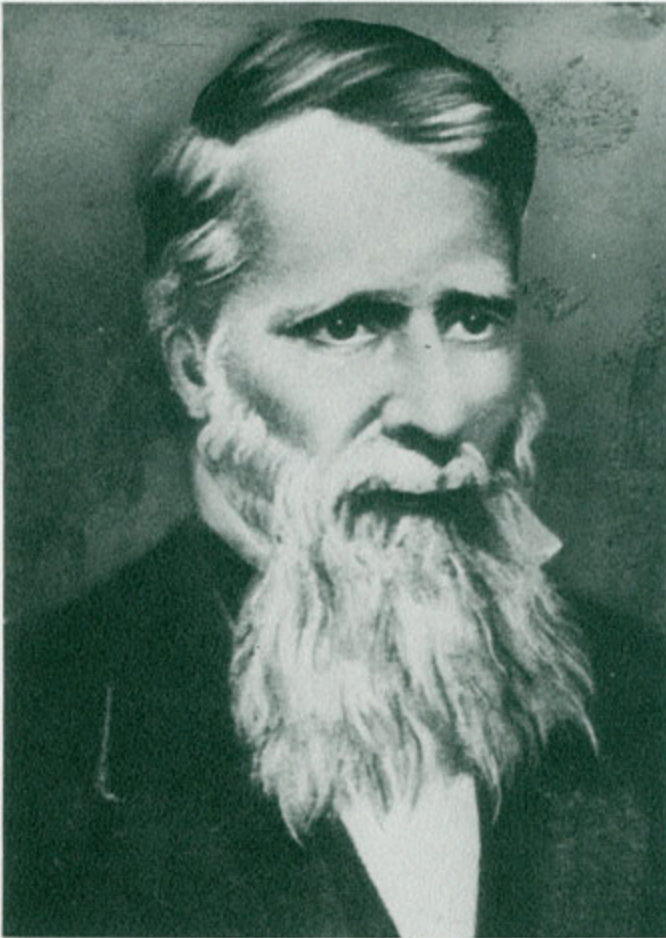
A great deal of pressure was brought to bear on Scripps to get his copy ready for the printer; and the Chicago journalist, Joseph Medill, who owned a part interest in the *Press & Tribune*, insisted that the biographer go to New York City in order to facilitate the publication



Reprinted according to Act of Congress, in the year 1863, by the CHICAGO PRESS AND TRIBUNE CO., in the Office of the District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Page one of the Scripps "Life of Abraham Lincoln" bearing the Chicago Press and Tribune Company imprint.



Chicago Tribune Photograph

John Locke Scripps 1818-1866

According to the A. N. Marquis publication **WHO WAS WHO IN AMERICA—HISTORIC VOLUME, 1607-1896**, page 471, Scripps was "never married." However, James E. Scripps in a foreword to the Cranbrook Press edition of the "Life of Abraham Lincoln" made the statement that "He (John Locke Scripps) was married in 1848 to Mary Elizabeth Blanchard of Greenville, Ill., by whom he had three children, the eldest of which died in infancy. Mrs. Scripps died a few months before her husband." Scripps was further described as "an affectionate husband and father and a warm and generous friend to all who commended themselves to his notice."

of the campaign tract. Scripps wrote Lincoln in his letter of June 18, that "In that event I will complete the MS here, and take Springfield in my route to N. Y."

The author's plan to go to New York City by way of Springfield did not prove to be practicable. *The New York Tribune* people, who were to be the publishers of the biography, informed Scripps that he should not delay an hour in getting to New York with his manuscript. Once Scripps arrived in New York City, he was informed that the pamphlet should consist of 32 pages (the last page to be devoted to advertisements), and be the same style of publication as the campaign life of Fremont which the *Tribune* issued in 1856. This was a disconcerting development for Scripps because "the work had to be pretty much done over again." Then, too, it was difficult to do the revision in New York City for want of additional information, and Scripps was bitter because his Springfield friends failed to send him certain biographical material that they had promised.

The revision also played havoc with Horace White's contribution, which was solicited by Scripps, relating to the senatorial campaign of 1858. White, a journalist, had reported the Lincoln-Douglas debates, and the information he had to offer was significant. Scripps' criticism of the condensed treatment of the Lincoln-Douglas campaign was that it was "sadly botched."

The final pages of the revised sketch were set in type

on Saturday night, July 7, and the completed work was stereotyped on the following Monday and Tuesday. Two sets of plates were made, one for the *New York Tribune* and one for the *Chicago Press & Tribune*. Scripps was of the opinion that the *New York Tribune* would probably print its edition on July 12, and that the *Chicago Press & Tribune* would receive its stereotyped plates on July 13.

Apparently, Scripps was fearful about how Lincoln would feel about his failure to "submit the M. S. of the biography . . . before taking it to New York." In a letter dated at Chicago on July 11, Scripps attempted to explain the frantic efforts of both author and publisher to get the pamphlet in circulation before the reading public. He wrote Lincoln: "I think you will find nothing in the biography which will in any respect annoy you or give you pain. Having failed to submit it to you, I was the more careful, and struck out several matters for that reason which probably you would have allowed. Of course I have been compelled to omit much that I would have got in had we published a larger pamphlet. It is less satisfactory to me also for the reason that I prepared a large part of it for a larger work, and then had to condense and strike out to make it fit."

On July 17, from the office of the *Chicago Press & Tribune* Scripps sent Lincoln a copy of the campaign biography. In his letter of the same date the biographer again was on the defensive by stating that "I believe the biography contains nothing that I was not fully authorized to put into it." However, in one instance Scripps took the liberty of stating that Lincoln read in early life *Plutarch's Lives*. He wrote Lincoln that "I took the liberty of adding Plutarch's Lives. I take it for granted that you read that book. If you have not, then you must read it at once to make my statement good." Lincoln did not reply to Scripps' facetious suggestion but the author heard "of his frequent humorous allusions to it."

Almost five years later on June 24, 1865, Scripps wrote William E. Herndon from Chicago about his "little Campaign Life of Lincoln." In his remarks about the publication, Scripps made the statement that "I assure you I never performed a work more conscientiously in my life than the production of that biographical sketch. I am also very sure that Mr. Lincoln was equally sincere and conscientious in furnishing me with the facts connected with his own and his family's history. The chief difficulty I had to encounter, was to induce him to communicate the homely facts and incidents of his early life. He seemed to be painfully impressed with the extreme poverty of his early surroundings—the utter absence of all romantic and heroic elements, and I know he thought poorly of the idea of attempting a biographical sketch for campaign purposes. 'Why Scripps' said he on one occasion, 'it is a great piece of folly to attempt to make anything out of my early life. It can all be condensed in a single sentence and that sentence you will find in Gray's Elegy: "The short and simple annals of the poor." That's my life, and that's all you or anyone else can make of it.'"

In spite of Scripps' difficulty the pamphlet reveals the author's excellent literary style which has been described as "simple and direct, scrupulously fair and truthful, of elegant diction and in every way a model of descriptive writing."

In the year 1865 the biographer did not own a copy of his campaign life and he wrote Herndon that "soon after the death of Lincoln, I succeeded in finding a copy, but I let Dr. Holland have it." He inquired of Lincoln's former law partner, "Can you find me a copy in Springfield?"

Ernest J. Wesson, in his article, "Campaign Lives of Abraham Lincoln, An Annotated Biography," which appeared in *Papers in Illinois History*, the Illinois State Historical Society, Springfield, Illinois, 1938, pp. 188-220, made the statement that possibly as many as 200,000 copies of Lincoln campaign biographies were distributed during the political canvass of 1860. Of course, this figure gives no indication as to how many copies of the Scripps publication came from the press. Wesson's figure indicates the approximate total number of copies of thirteen biographies in English, three in German and two in the Welsh language along with three works combining the lives of the various candidates. Certainly it can be stated that the issues published by the *Chicago Press & Tribune* are much more rare than those published by the *New York Tribune*. The two issues have the identical



## CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY — 1964-1965

Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members: Arnold Gates, 289 New Hyde Park Road, Garden City New York; Carl Haverlin, 8619 Louis Avenue, Northridge, California; E. B. Long, 708 North Kenilworth Ave., Oak Park, Ill.; Ralph G. Newman, 18 E. Chestnut Street, Chicago, Ill.; Kenneth A. Bernard, Boston University, 725 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Mass.; Clyde C. Walton, Jr., Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Ill.; Judge Warren L. Jones, U. S. Court of Appeals, Jacksonville, Fla.; Hon. Fred Schwengel, 636 Union Arcade, Davenport, Iowa. New items available for consideration may be sent to the above addresses or to the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

## — 1964 —

**DUFWA, THAMAR E.** 1964-53

Lincoln/and Secession/by/Thamar E. Dufwa, Ph.D./Pageant Press, Inc./New York. [Published by Pageant Press, Inc., 101 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10003. Copyright 1964 by T. E. Dufwa. First Edition] Book, cloth, 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". (9) 438 pp., price \$4.00.

**LINCOLN NATIONAL LIFE FOUNDATION** 1964-54

Lincoln Lore/Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor/Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana/Number 1517, July 1964—Number 1522, December 1964.

Folder, paper, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 11", 4 pp., illus. Number 1517, Was Andrew Johnson Present at . . . Deathbed? — July 1964; Number 1518, Presidential Candidates of 1860 — August 1964; Number 1519, Lincoln's Gettysburg Declaration . . . September 1964; Number 1520, Edward Laboulaye On the Presidential Election of 1864—October 1964; Number 1521, Recent Acquisitions, Nov. 1964; Number 1522, U. S. Flags, Dec. 1964.

## — 1965 —

**KERNER, FRED** 1965-20

A Treasury of/Lincoln Quotations/compiled and edited by Fred Kerner/Doubleday & Company, Inc./Garden City, New York/1965. [Copyright 1965. First Edition] Book, cloth, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " ix p., 320 pp., price \$4.95.

**LANG, H. JACK** 1965-21

The Wit and Wisdom of/Abraham/Lincoln/as Reflected in His Briefer Letters/and Speeches/Edited by H. Jack Lang/(device)/The World Publishing Company/Cleveland and New York. [Reprinted for the Lincoln Centennial Library 1965. Copyright by the World Publishing Co., 1941]

Book, fabrikoid, 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", xx p., 265 pp., price \$4.00.

**LATTIMER, JOHN K., M. D.** 1965-22

The stabbing of Lincoln's/Secretary of State on the/Night the President Was Shot/John K. Lattimer, MD (caption title). [Reprinted From *The Journal of the American Medical Association* April 12, 1965, Vol. 192, pp. 99-106, Copyright 1965]

Pamphlet, 11" x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ ", 8 pp., illus.

**LINCOLN DEPOT MUSEUM** 1965-23

Lincoln Depot/Museum/(device)/10th & Monroe/Springfield, Illinois/feb. 11/Site of Abraham Lincoln's famous/Farewell Address/1861/(device and cut of Lincoln portrait)/Lincoln Depot/Gift and/Souvenir/Shoppe/Last Restored Lincoln Shrine/(device obtain an Exact Replica of Lincoln's Inaugural Train Ticket. (Cover title)

Folder, 9" x 4", contains description of Lincoln's Farewell Address in Springfield, with map of spots of Lincoln interest on reverse.

**MORGAN, CHARLOTTE** 1965-24

Mr. Lincoln/In/Springfield/(drawing)/Story by Charlotte Morgan/Illustrations by Joan Gillespie. (Cover title). [Copyright 1965. Gilmore Publishers, Springfield, Ill.]

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 11", (24) pp., illus., price, 60¢.

**NEWMAN, RALPH G.** 1965-25

"In This Sad World/of Ours, Sorrow/Comes to All"/A Timetable for the/Lincoln Funeral Train/by/Ralph G. Newman/Springfield, Illinois/1965. (Cover title)

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 6", 16 pp., illus. Reprinted by the Civil War Centennial Commission of Illinois with the permission of the Illinois State Historical Society from its Spring, 1965, *Journal*.

**R. R. DONNELLEY & SONS COMPANY** 1965-26

(Cut of Lincoln)/Liberty Abraham Lincoln (Cover title) [Abraham Lincoln "Speaks"—The words of our Sixteenth President as presented at the Illinois Land of Lincoln Pavilion New York World's Fair 1965] Compliments of The Lakeside Press, R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company, Chicago.

Folder, stiff paper, 11" x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

**STERN, PHILIP VAN DOREN** 1965-27 [M3716(8)]

The Man/Who/Killed/Lincoln/The story of John Wilkes Booth/and his part in the assassination/Philip Van Doren Stern/(device)/The World Publishing Company/Cleveland and New York. [Copyright 1939. Reprinted for the Lincoln Centennial Library 1965. Book, fabrikoid, 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", vii p., 376 pp., price \$4.00.

**TURNER, JUSTIN G.** 1965-28

The Five Manuscript Copies/of the Gettysburg Address/By/Justin G. Turner/Reprinted from *Manuscripts*, Winter 1965. (Volume XVII—Number 1) Pamphlet, flexible boards, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 10 pp.

**COLVER, ANNE (Polly Anne Graff)** 1965-29

Anne Colver/(device)/Mr. Lincoln's Wife/(device)/Holt, Rinehart and Winston/New York Chicago/San Francisco. [Copyright, 1943 and 1965. First edition.] Book, cloth, 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 363 pp., price \$5.95.

**COUNTRY BEAUTIFUL** 1965-30

Lincoln/His Words and His World/By the Editors of Country Beautiful Magazine/Editorial Direction: Michael P. Dineen/Edited by Robert L. Polley/Published by Country Beautiful Foundation, Inc., Waukesha, Wisconsin, for Hawthorn Books, Inc., 70 Fifth Avenue, New York, 10011.

Book, 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ ", 98 pp., illus., price \$4.95.

**EL COLOMBIANO** 1965-31

Full 8 page newspaper, El Colombiano, special supplement, printed April 14, 1965 in honor of Centennial of death of Abraham Lincoln. [Printed in Columbia, South America, in Spanish language.]

Lincoln/(cut of Lincoln portrait by Francisco Morales, against background of American flag in color. (Caption title).

Newspaper, 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 23", 8 pp., illus.

## The Scripps "Campaign Life"

(continued from page 3)

at his own expense a company of infantry called the Scripps Guard, which was eventually enrolled as Company C, 72nd Illinois Volunteers.

During the Civil War Scripps exerted considerable power in Illinois Republican politics, and in 1864 he attempted to secure the nomination for Congress. His opponent was Isaac N. Arnold, who as the incumbent was seeking re-election. Scripps was accused of using his position as postmaster with "over one hundred appointees . . . to crush one who has sustained the administration." Arnold insisted that Lincoln must inform Scripps that "he must not use his office to injure his competitor." Lincoln handled the matter adroitly. The President gave Arnold a letter to give to Scripps. It took the form of a letter that he had used to settle a dispute between Cornelius Walborn, postmaster at Philadelphia, and Judge William D. Kelley, candidate for Congress. Lincoln substituted the names of Scripps and Arnold for those of Walborn and Kelley. The main point was expressed by Lincoln as follows: "My wish therefore is that you will do just as you think fit with your own suffrage in the case, and not constrain any of your subordinates to do other than he thinks fit with his. This is precisely the rule I inculcated, and adhered to on my part, when a certain nomination, now recently made, was being canvassed for." The President had reference to the candidacy of Salmon P. Chase who sought the Republican nomination in 1864.

Scripps agreed to desist; however, he suggested to the President that "it would be well for you to give the various heads of . . . offices the same instructions." Lincoln refused and in a reply to Scripps stated that "I do not quite like to publish a general circular on the subject, and it would be rather laborious to write a separate letter to each." Ironically enough, neither Scripps nor Arnold received the nomination which went to John Wentworth of Chicago, who was popular enough to get elected.

At the close of his appointive term as postmaster, Scripps' failing health required his retirement from active duty. He died on September 21, 1866.