



Lincoln Lore

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William M. Prior's Portraits of Lincoln on Glass

Editor's Note: A biographical sketch of William Matthew Prior appears on page 517 of *The New York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America 1564-1860* compiled by George C. Groce and David H. Wallace, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1957.

Painting in reverse on glass with oil paint showing through the glass is today a lost art. However, such a practice was not unusual in the early Nineteenth Century

when there was a constant demand for decorative glass to place in clock doors around the faces of the early time-pieces. Such an artist was William Matthew Prior (1806-1873) whose life and career have been recorded in articles by Grace Adams Lyman and Nina Fletcher Little in *Antiques* magazine, November 1934 and January 1948, respectively.

Perhaps it was the late Robert S. Barton's articles entitled "Lincoln Portraits on Glass," (*Hobbies*, October 1950) and "The Mystery of the Lincoln Portraits on Glass," (*Hobbies*, February 1951), that first brought Prior's Lincoln portraits to the attention of collectors. Barton's researches led to the discovery of fourteen Lincolns painted by Prior on glass, of which two (a third was later discovered in Boston) face to the right. Since that time a few more examples of Prior's work have been found.

In making a study of Prior's Lincoln portraits it has been noted that the glass varies in size, ranging from 20 x 24 inches to 13 x 24 inches. In all likelihood Prior painted his portraits of President Lincoln to fit whatever glass or frame he was able to provide at the time. The similarities of the portraits might suggest mass production, from one factory or source of supply produced under one supervisor.

Apparently, the artist copied only one photograph of Lincoln (0-91)—the one taken by Anthony Berger at Brady's Washington gallery, on Tuesday, February 9, 1864. Needless to state, the artist selected a very popular photograph to serve as a basis for his artistic productions. Prior did not confine his portrait work on glass solely to Lincoln. Works identified as his include portraits of George and Martha Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Napoleon Bonaparte, Ulysses S. Grant, George B. McClellan and Theodore Parker.

It is difficult to understand why Prior would deviate from his general practice of painting Lincoln facing to the left with three studies depicting Lincoln facing to the right. Barton commented as follows: ". . . it almost seems that some artist may have laid a sheet of glass

over a left-facing portrait and then done his painting, thereby producing a right-facing Lincoln. Even the mole which was on Mr. Lincoln's right cheek, and which is shown in all the left-facing portraits, here appears on the left cheek." Of course, other glass portrait painters may have produced some mysterious Lincolns, but every one discovered up to date appears to be the work of Prior. This artist appears to have been alone in his field of work, at least so far as New England was concerned.

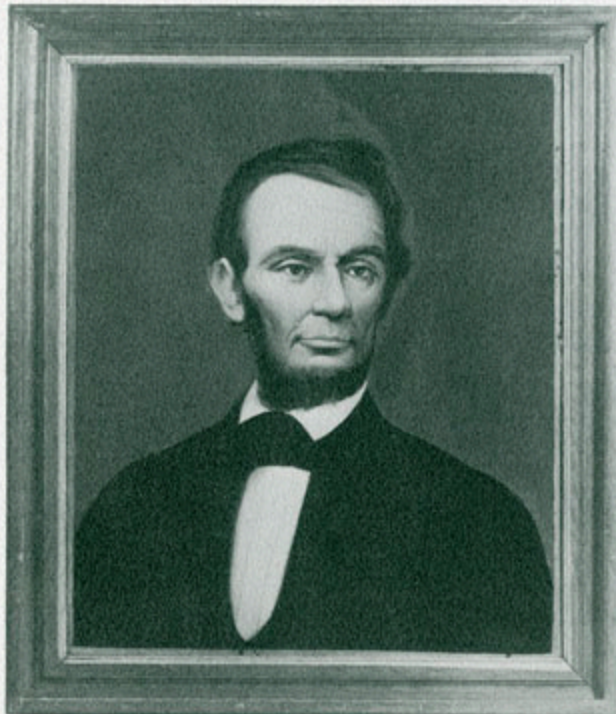
Using the Lyman and Little articles which appeared in *Antiques*, Barton provided a brief biographical sketch of William Matthew Prior:

"He was born May 16, 1806 at Bath, Maine, the second son of Matthew, a ship-master, lost at sea in 1816. There is no record that the boy ever received any artistic training, but there exists a portrait, on a white pine panel, done by him in 1824, when he was 18 years old. Three years later his advertisements began to appear in (the) *Maine Inquirer*. A sample quoted by Mrs. Little reads: 'Ornamental painting. Old tea trays, waiters japanned and ornamented in a very tasty style. Bronzing, oil gilding, and varnishing, by Wm. Prior, Bath, No. 1 Middle Street.'

"He married Rosamond Clark Hamblen, on April 28, 1828, and thereby acquired four brothers-in-law, of whom one died, and three were painters. The Hamblens and Priors lived together in Portland, and together they moved to East Boston some

time early in 1840; and at various addresses in East Boston. Prior lived there until his death in 1873. His wife died in 1849, a year after the birth of their eighth child, and about a year later Prior married Hannah Frances Wolworth of Andover, Mass.

"About the time the Prior and Hamblen group was preparing to leave Maine for East Boston, Prior and at least one of his brothers-in-law, Joseph G. Hamblen, became followers of William Miller, the evangelical prophet who predicted that the Second Coming of Christ, and the end of the world, would occur some time between March 21, 1843 and the same date in 1844. Those dates came and went, and the world did not come to an end; but Prior apparently continued his allegiance to Miller, for in 1862 he published a book, 'The King's Venure; Evidence from Scripture and History applied to William Miller, the Chronologist



Photograph from the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Prior's portrait of Lincoln on glass (facing left) in original frame. The approximate size of the glass is 19 x 23 inches. (See chart for further information)

of 1843; and a similar book, 'The Empyrean Canopy,' followed in 1868.

"Of Prior's several East Boston addresses, the important one is 36 Trenton Street, where he built a house, of which the third story was identified as 'The Painting Garret.' These words, and the addresses, appear on the back of many of Prior's paintings. The 'Garret' was a busy beehive of painters and painting, beyond any doubt. By 1850 there were at least six members of the growing Hamblen clan engaged in painting, and as for Prior, he was turning out work at a rate and in a manner almost unbelievable today.

"At 'The Painting Garret' he executed portraits on canvas in record time, for which he charged such sums as \$3 or \$4 frame included! He also turned out some landscapes and fanciful scenes, and, as we know, he painted a great many portraits on glass, employing the technique he had learned in his early years for decorating clock doors and mirror panels. These were part of his stock in trade, awaiting buyers, and for his customers' choice he had a good selection of eminent subjects, including the two Washingtons, Lincoln, Grant, McClellan, Napoleon, the great theologian Theodore Parker and others.

"In addition to all this production at his home, Prior was frequently away on extended trips, travelling through New England with a supply of canvasses and living at the homes of clients while he painted por-

traits of members of the family. He made at least one such trip as far south as Maryland, for examples of his work exist bearing a Baltimore address and the date 1855.

"Finally, as though his time were not already sufficiently accounted for, Prior prepared his own canvasses, ground his own paints and with the help of his sons, made many of his own frames.

"It was in 1850 that Prior finally obtained permission to copy the Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington owned by the Boston Athenaeum. Prior had long been Stuart's great admirer, and had named his eldest son Gilbert Stuart Prior. It was this copy which Prior followed in painting his numerous Washington portraits on glass.

"Prior died in 1873, aged 67 years. If his portraits on glass followed the copying of Stuart's Washington in the Boston Athenaeum, the many examples of his work of that kind were produced in the last 23 years of his life. (Obviously, the paintings of the bearded Lincoln were done after his inauguration in 1861 and before Prior's death in 1873)."

An effort has been made to compile a list of the Lincoln portraits on glass painted by Prior that are known to exist at the present time. Undoubtedly, there is some overlapping as to present-day ownership as the collections of deceased owners have been dispersed. A chart follows:

Prior Portraits on Glass

<i>Philip D. Sang</i>	<i>Chicago, Illinois</i>	1 Lincoln
<i>C. W. Loud, Old Salem Country Store</i>	<i>Petersburg, Illinois</i>	1 Lincoln
	[This portrait was recently sold to a customer whose identity is unknown. It came from the collection of Leonard C. Stock (deceased) and was once shown on the cover of <i>Hobbies Magazine</i> , Feb. 1946.]	
<i>Illinois State Historical Library</i>	<i>Springfield, Illinois</i>	1 Lincoln
<i>Lincoln Library-Museum of the Lincoln National Life Foundation</i>	<i>Fort Wayne, Indiana</i>	1 Lincoln
	(See illustration on page one.) [This portrait, the property of King V. Hostick, is a temporary loan to the Foundation.]	
	<i>Portland, Maine</i>	1 Lincoln
	<i>Kennebunk, Maine</i>	1 Lincoln
<i>Richard F. Lufkin (deceased)</i>	<i>Boston, Massachusetts</i>	2 Lincolns
	[One facing to the right. The one facing to the left may today be the property of the Illinois State Historical Society.]	
<i>Robert S. Barton (deceased)</i>	<i>Foxboro, Massachusetts</i>	2 Lincolns
	[One facing to the right.]	
<i>Town Offices</i>	<i>Foxboro, Massachusetts</i>	1 Lincoln
	<i>Also</i>	1 Washington (George) 1 Washington (Martha) 1 Franklin (Benjamin) 1 Bonaparte (Napoleon)
<i>Mr. and Mrs. M. H. Doane</i>	<i>Swampscott, Massachusetts</i>	1 Lincoln
	[Faces to the right.]	
	<i>Worcester, Massachusetts</i>	1 Lincoln
	[This Lincoln portrait may today be the one that belongs to King Hostick but is on temporary loan at the Lincoln National Life Foundation.]	
<i>New Hampshire Historical Society</i>	<i>Petersboro, New Hampshire</i>	1 Lincoln
	<i>Concord, New Hampshire</i>	6 (None of Lincoln)
	<i>Ashland, New Hampshire</i>	1 Lincoln
<i>Mrs. Buell Alvard</i>	<i>Poughkeepsie, New York</i>	1 Lincoln
		1 Washington (George) 1 Washington (Martha)
	<i>Cincinnati, Ohio</i>	1 Lincoln
<i>Brown University</i>	<i>Providence, Rhode Island</i>	1 Lincoln
		7 Other portraits
<i>Lincoln Memorial University</i>	<i>Harrogate, Tennessee</i>	1 Lincoln
	(Once the property of the famous Lincoln Collector, Oliver R. Barrett of Chicago, Illinois.)	

Lincoln Herald

The *Lincoln Herald* is "a magazine devoted to historical research in the field of Lincolniana and the Civil War, and to the promotion of Lincoln ideals in American education." At the present time it is the only magazine devoted exclusively to the events of the life and career of the Sixteenth President.

Since October 1937 Lincoln Memorial University at Harrogate, Tennessee has published this quarterly historical magazine. The first number (Vol. XL, No. 1) was called *The Mountain Herald*. In February 1938 (Vol. XL, No. 2) the name of the magazine was changed to *Lincoln Herald*. Up to the Winter 1965 (Vol. 65, No. 4) number, 107 issues have been published. The magazine has always been priced at \$1.00 per copy, or \$4.00 per year.

The first editor was Robert L. Kincaid, who later became the president of the college. Beginning with the October 1947 number, R. Gerald McMurtry served as editor-in-chief. Upon resigning his position as Director of the Department of Lincolniana, William E. Taylor became the editor, and his first number was the Fall 1956 issue. Taylor resigned as editor with the publication of the Fall 1957 issue. During the interim, until a permanent editor could be appointed, Kincaid edited the Winter 1957 and the Spring 1958 issues. Beginning with the Summer 1958 issue, Wayne C. Temple became editor and has served in that capacity up to date.

The magazine is a scholarly journal and is profusely illustrated. The following indexes are also of great value.
 (1954) Analytical Index 1937-1949
 (1962) Analytical Index 1950-1960
 (1963) Lincoln Herald Index — Spring 1961 through Winter 1961
 (1964) Lincoln Herald Index — Spring 1962 through Winter 1962

A check list of the different issues follows:

1. October1937	55. Spring1952
2. February1938	56. Summer1952
3. May1938	57. Fall1952
4. July1938	58. Winter1952
5. October1938	59. Spring1953
6. February1939	60. Summer1953
7. May1939	61. Fall1953
8. July1939	62. Winter1953
9. October1939	63. Spring-Sum. 1954
10. February1940	64. Fall1954
11. May1940	65. Winter1954
12. July1940	66. Spring-Sum. 1955
13. October1940	67. Fall1955
14. March1941	68. Winter1956 (1955)
15. June1941	69. Spring-Sum. 1956
16. October1941	70. Fall1956
17. December1941	71. Winter1957 (1956)
18. February1942	72. Spring1957
19. June1942	73. Summer1957
20. Oct.-Dec.1942	74. Fall1957
21. February1943	75. Winter1957-58 (1957)
22. June1943	76. Spring1958
23. October1943	77. Summer1958
24. December1943	78. Fall1958
25. February1944	79. Winter1958
26. June1944	80. Spring1959
27. October1944	81. Summer1959
28. December1944	82. Fall1959
29. February1945	83. Winter1959
30. June1945	84. Spring1960
31. Oct.-Dec.1945	85. Summer1960
32. February1946	86. Fall1960
33. June1946	87. Winter1960
34. October1946	88. Spring1961
35. December1946	89. Summer1961
36. February1947	90. Fall1961
37. June1947	91. Winter1961
38. October1947	92. Spring1962
39. December1947	93. Summer1962
40. February1948	94. Fall1962
41. June1948	95. Winter1962
42. October1948	96. Spring1963
43. Dec. '48-Feb. 1949	97. Summer1963
44. June1949	98. Fall1963
45. October1949	99. Winter1963
46. December1949	100. Spring1964
47. February1950	101. Summer1964
48. June1950	102. Fall1964
49. October1950	103. Winter1964
50. December1950	104. Spring1965
51. Spring1951	105. Summer1965
52. Summer1951	106. Fall1965
53. Fall1951	107. Winter1965
54. Winter1952 (1951)	

Recent Acquisitions

Spinner Letter

Everyone admires the beautiful signature of Francis Elia Spinner whom Lincoln appointed United States Treasurer, and his letters are of interest to Civil War and Lincoln collectors. Just recently the Lincoln Library-Museum has acquired a Spinner letter dated April 27, 1865 which reflects the feeling of the people of that day pertaining to the capture of the assassin John Wilkes Booth. The letter, written from Washington to Benjamin Liebman of New York City, follows:

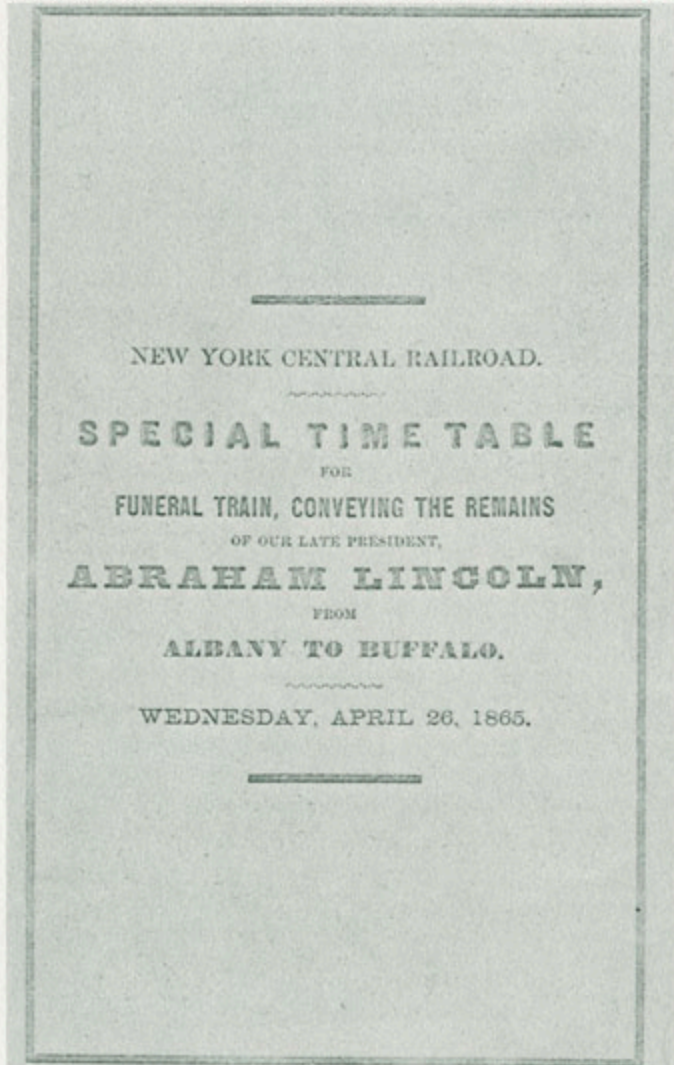
Your favor of yesterday is received.

"The name you mention (?) is bad one in this community. Several used to be in the Slave trade, and of all damned traitors those of that stripe are the worst.

"Booth's carcass came here this morning — The government have near on a hundred of supposed Confederates in the Conspiracy in safe places — We have a president now who will show these miscreants no mercy."

Funeral Time Table

Today, railroad time tables of Lincoln's funeral train are exceedingly rare. However, the Lincoln Library-Museum has been fortunate in acquiring one published by the New York Central Railroad in April 1865. The time table was issued by H. W. Chittenden, the general superintendent of the New York Central, and it provides the arrival time for both the pilot engine and the funeral train at all stations between Albany and Syracuse, and between Syracuse and Buffalo in New York State. Some fifty-eight cities, towns and villages are listed. The



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

A New York Central Railroad time table in the form of a four page folder providing a schedule for Lincoln's funeral train between Albany and Buffalo.

funeral train was scheduled to leave Albany at 4:00 P.M. on April 26, 1865 and to arrive in Buffalo at 7:00 A.M. on April 27, 1865.

The time table states that the "pilot engine and train will have the right to the track over all other trains, and no train will run within twenty minutes of their time."

Todd Genealogy

An interesting original document listing the name of Robert Smith Todd's first wife and their children has recently been acquired. The names of the children listed are Elizabeth, Levi, Frances, Mary, Anne and George. Also, the name of Elizabeth is recorded as the wife of N. W. Edwards, Frances as the wife of William S. Wallace, Mary as the wife of A. Lincoln, and Anne as the wife of C. M. Smith. Apparently, some member of the Todd family wrote on the document the name of Robert T. Lincoln, but could not remember his birth day. Also, the name Wm. W. appears with no birth date, but his death date is given correctly as February 20, 1862. However, the great significance of this document lies in the notations on the margin in the handwriting of Lincoln. He wrote as follows:

"My father Thomas L. Jan. 177

Mother Nancy Hanks, Feb. 5, 1784

Married Nov. 4 (corner of document removed)

Born (birthdate of Robert) Aug. 1, 1843

Edw. Mar. 10, 1846

Willie Dec. 21, 1850

Tad April 4, 1853."

A Cast Iron Platform Scale and an Original Pen and Ink Sketch Featuring Abraham Lincoln's Connection With The Corneau-Diller Drug Store at Springfield, Illinois.

An exhibit depicting Abraham Lincoln's connection with the Corneau-Diller Drug Store in Springfield, Illinois, has been placed on display in the Lincoln Library-Museum of the Lincoln National Life Foundation. The exhibit consists of the original cast iron platform scale from the drug store, and a pen and ink sketch by Lloyd Ostendorf of Dayton, Ohio featuring Abraham Lincoln, the druggist and the scale.

It is well known among Lincoln students that in the 1850's Lincoln was a familiar figure in the business life of Springfield, and his favorite loafing place in the winter months was around the back stove of the Corneau-Diller Drug Store, located on the east side of the Public Square. In the summer months, Lincoln and his cronies lined up on the sidewalk in front of the store.

Here Lincoln and his friends swapped yarns, argued politics, and occasionally made purchases, according to the business ledgers (still extant) which show various entries to the future President's account.

An article entitled "Loafing with Lincoln" by Wayne C. Temple, which appeared in the Summer, 1961 issue of the *Lincoln Herald*, provides a scholarly and exhaustive study of this mercantile establishment, along with a photograph of Roland Weaver Diller, one of the proprietors.

As loafing at Diller's was a daily happy interlude in Lincoln's life, artists have attempted to capture in imaginary scenes some of the events that transpired here. Jay Hambridge drew two illustrations for Ida M. Tarbell's "Billy Brown" stories, which feature the drug store and its proprietor. The chief character in the Tarbell



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

This original pen and ink sketch by Lloyd Ostendorf depicts Abraham Lincoln with Roland Weaver Diller in the Corneau-Diller Drug Store. The original sketch measures 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Note the druggist's scale in the picture. In the Foundation's photographic files are to be found exterior and interior views of the Corneau-Diller Drug Store as well as excellent photographs of the druggist and his wife.

stories was R. W. Diller who was introduced to her readers as "Billy Brown."

Up to date, Ostendorf has made four sketches of the exterior and interior of the Corneau-Diller Drug Store. Three of these drawings were published in his excellent book, *A Picture Story of Abraham Lincoln*, Lathrop, Lee and Shepard Company, Inc., 1962. These same sketches have also appeared in the quarterly magazine, *Lincoln Herald*.

A fourth sketch depicting Lincoln purchasing drugs from R. W. Diller has been drawn by Ostendorf primarily to feature the scale. In executing this drawing, the artist gave particular attention to minute details after making a study of early photographs taken of the interior of the establishment. This sketch has never before been published.

While the original scale has no direct connection with Lincoln, it is a part of the original equipment of the drug store and was in use during the period when Lincoln was a frequent visitor or customer.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Original cast-iron platform scale used in the Corneau-Diller Drug Store when Lincoln was a frequent visitor and customer. The scale measures 12" long, 4" high and 5" wide.