



Lincoln Lore

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Lincoln Had Smallpox At Gettysburg

It is not generally known that, when Abraham Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address on November 19, 1863, he was suffering from the early stages of a dread disease called smallpox. After a very busy day touring the battlefield, meeting people, taking part in the cemetery dedication and attending a political meeting, the President left Gettysburg about 7 P.M. on his special train for Washington, D. C. While enroute home, he became ill, and, while lying down in the drawing room of his railway coach, towels were placed on his forehead to relieve a severe headache. At first it was thought that Lincoln suffered from fatigue, but later his illness was diagnosed as a mild case of smallpox.

The medical doctors who examined the President preferred to call the disease varioloid, which is a mild form of smallpox acquired by the partially immune. Consequently the Executive Mansion was not quarantined, but it was turned into a kind of smallpox hospital, and White House staff members were advised to get vaccinated if they had not already done so. While the disease was described in light form, it held on longer than was expected. Lincoln spent a great deal of time in bed, and was attended by Dr. Robert King Stone, his family physician. The disease was accompanied by fever, and Lincoln suffered chiefly from severe pains in his head.

According to the chronological calendar, *Lincoln Day by Day, 1861-1865*, the President conducted business as usual on November 20th, although he may not have been feeling well. Upon being informed that he suffered a mild case of smallpox, he quipped the following day that, "Now I have something to give to everybody." On November 21st through November 25th, Lincoln, while up and down, carried a light work load, and is reported to have retired early on the 25th feeling unwell. The following day, November 26th, the President was confined to his sick room, and the next day he was forbidden by his physician from receiving visitors or interviewing members of his cabinet.

On November 26th, John Hay, the President's assistant secretary, made the following entry in his *diary*, "The President is sick in bed—bilious." It was on November 27th, that Lincoln

sent a pencilled note to William H. Seward about his condition:

"Hon Secretary of State I am improved but I cannot meet the cabinet today

A. Lincoln

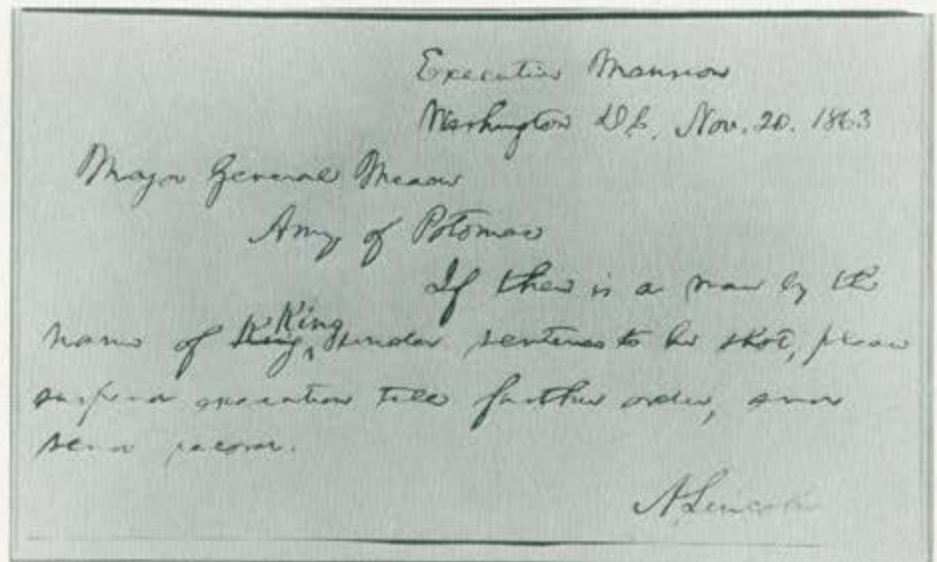
Nov. 27, 1863"

On November 28th, the *Washington Star* informed its readers that, "The President is reported to be much better this morning." The *New York Herald*, on November 30th, reporting the news the day before, carried the statement that, "President Lincoln is much better to-day, and will be able to resume his official duties to-morrow or next day." Edward Bates wrote in his diary that the "President has been sick ever since Thursday (November 26th)." The *Chicago Tribune* of December 1st, reported that (Nov. 30th), "Lincoln (was) still confined to bed but resumes work on (his) message to Congress." On December 1st, the *Washington Star* carried the news that the "President is steadily recovering from his indisposition and it is not doubted that he will in a day or two be equal to the active resumption of his arduous duties." William E. Barton in his book *President Lincoln* made the statement: "Lincoln had to

be well by that time, for on December eighth Congress convened."

Some of the nation's newspapers magnified the nature and extent of Lincoln's illness which prompted the *London Spectator* to speculate on the effect of the war if the President's illness should prove terminal. According to Milton H. Shutes, *Lincoln And The Doctors*, the English newspaper even, "published a brief description of Lincoln's successor, Vice-President Hannibal Hamlin, and closed with this contribution: 'Let us hope, however, that there will be no occasion for the curious medley of associations suggested by the substitution of a Hannibal in the political patriarchy for an Abraham.'"

The Collected Works Of Abraham Lincoln, Vol. VII, 1863-1864, edited by Roy P. Basler indicates that Lincoln wrote twenty letters, orders, telegrams and authorizations from November 20th to December 2nd, not including the pencilled note to Seward dated November 27th. These written communications were addressed to Zachary Chandler, Edward Everett, George G. Meade, Robert C. Schenck, Edwin M. Stanton, E. P. Evans, William H. Seward, Green C. Smith, Seth Eastman and Ulysses S. Grant. In



From Lincoln Memorial University

Lincoln's letter written the day following his Gettysburg Address regarding a condemned lieutenant by the name of King.

How - Sec. of State
 I am improving but I
 could not meet the cab-
 inet to-day
 A. Lincoln
 Nov 27-1863

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

This interesting little card was first published in facsimile in *Lincoln Lore*, No. 1433, dated July, 1957, page 4. It is one of the few written reference made by Lincoln concerning his illness. Other written references are to be found in letters to George Opdyke and others, Dec. 2, 1863, and Governor Andrew G. Curtin, Dec. 9, 1863.

not one instance did Lincoln mention his illness.

An index as to Lincoln's condition during the period of his illness might be determined by the amount of his correspondence.

Nov. 20, 1863	9 messages
Nov. 21, 1863	1 message
Nov. 22, 1863	1 message
Nov. 23, 1863	3 messages
Nov. 24, 1863	2 messages
Nov. 25, 1863	4 messages
Nov. 26 to Dec. 2	no messages

However, during those days of seeming inactivity, Lincoln may have worked on his Annual Message to Congress of December 8, 1863.

During the period of Lincoln's illness, he was forced to take action on cases of desertion submitted to him by the military authorities. As these involved the death sentence unless counter-manded by the President, one can understand the anxiety suffered by the ailing Lincoln. In dealing with some half-dozen soldiers involved, Lincoln took a dim view of involking the death sentence before a firing squad, except in one instance, Lincoln lost patience where the deserter wrote letters persuading others to desert. However, even this deserter finally had his death sentence revoked.

One case, which must have annoyed the sick patient no end, was the sentence of the First Lieutenant Edward King, Company H, Sixty-sixth New York Infantry. On Friday, November 20th, the wife of this sentenced man secured an appointment with the President in order that she might discuss the case of her husband's court-martial. So intelligently did she state her case, and so grieved was this woman in distress, that she was able to impress the kindly Lincoln regarding her husband's innocence. However, she failed to give the President her husband's name.

It is to be assumed that Lincoln had

agreed to suspend the sentence of the condemned officer until he could review the case. Very likely, he gave the wife that promise. When she left the White House, the wife gave Lincoln what she considered ample data pertaining to the court-martial. However, on examining the material, Lincoln was at a loss to know the name of the condemned lieutenant. He surmised the name was King. So, on the morning of the 20th of November, 1863, Lincoln wrote to Major General Meade of the Army of the Potomac the following letter:

"If there is a man by the name of King under sentence to be shot, please suspend execution till further order, and send record."

A further study of the document concerning the case revealed the signature of "Mrs. Anna S. King", but not the full name of the condemned lieutenant. So much was Lincoln concerned with this trying problem that he wrote a second letter on the same day to General Meade as follows:

"An intelligent woman in deep distress called this morning, saying her husband, a lieutenant in the Army of the Potomac was to be shot next Monday for desertion, and putting a letter in my hand, upon which I relied for particulars, she left without mentioning a name or other particulars by which to identify the case.

"On opening the letter I found it equally vague, having nothing to identify by except her own signature, which seems to be Mrs. Anna S. King! I could not again find her. If you have a case which you shall think is probably the one intended, please apply my dispatch of this morning to it."

The ensuing correspondence of Gen-

eral Meade regarding Lieutenant Edward King is unknown. However, the sentence was commuted to imprisonment on the Dry Tortugas, May 13, 1864. An interesting postscript to this affair revealed, through correspondence from Lincoln's secretaries, John Nicolay and John Hay to Joseph Holt, Judge Advocate General, how Mrs. King was swindled by "An officer who gave his name as Captain Parker Co. M. 12th Pa Cavalary, who promised for \$300 to get her husband pardoned—claimed to know you, & got all the money the poor creature had."

One anxiety the sick President was spared was the recovery of his son, Tad, who may also have suffered from the same light form of smallpox. However, some doctors diagnosed the illness as scarlatina. On November 20th, Lincoln wrote Edward Everett, and among other things, revealed that, "Our sick boy, for whom you kindly inquire, we hope is past the worst." The *Washington Star*, November 28th, reported that, "The President's youngest son, who has been sick for some time past with scarlatina, was much better today."

Now that both the President and Tad were well on the way to complete recovery in early December, the First Lady, went on a four day trip. The press, however, continued to report on the President's health. The *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 11th, stated that, "Lincoln's health much improved; he sees visitors with special business." The *Washington Chronicle* (Dec. 11) reported that, "President Lincoln, we are happy to state, is now convalescent, and yesterday passed several hours in the transaction of official business." It appears, however, that on December 12th, Lincoln suffered a setback. Orville H. Browning recorded in his *diary* the following entry, "President sees no callers today because of illness." On December 15th, the *Washington Star* reported that, "The President this morning was able to be in his office and attend to business."

Meanwhile, the Capitol City continued to fear the smallpox scourge. Robert, the eldest son, a Harvard student, proposed to bring some friends to Washington for a White House visit, but the President on January 19, 1864, telegraphed his son that, "There is a good deal of smallpox here. Your friends must judge for themselves whether they ought to come or not." Apparently the decision Robert's young friends made was to accept the invitation, because a telegram from Robert, then in Washington, to Fred P. Anderson, at the Astor House in New York City, dated January 24, 1864, conveys this message: "Bring Robeson along with you—Come tomorrow." At the bottom of the telegram, there is a typical fatherly endorsement, "Charge to me A. Lincoln," written in his well known hand.

If Lincoln Had Grown Old

If Booth had missed and Lincoln had finished out his second term and retired in Springfield, to practice a little law and probably make a tour of Europe with Mary, what would he have looked like as an elder statesman?

Students who have made a study of Lincoln photographs ranging from age 37 (1846) to age 56 (1865) have long been baffled by a desire to know how Lincoln looked as a boy, youth and elderly man.

In regard to Lincoln the youth, we must be content with the idealistic pictures drawn by artists, and the busts and statues carved by sculptors. However, in the person of Charles Edwin Bull, a Lincoln impersonator grown old, we can capture something of the appearance and physique of Lincoln if he had lived to the age of 90.

Judge Bull was born in a log cabin at Bull's Spring, Texas, 90 years ago and he spent the first twenty years of his life as Lincoln did. He split logs for fences, helped clear land for the farm, and took bags of grain to the grist mill on the back of a pony. Eventually, he attained the height of six feet four inches and weighed 185 pounds.

When young Bull went to school, he was teased by the other pupils who said that he was "as homely as Abe Lincoln." As the youth grew older, the remarkable resemblance became more and more pronounced. Eventually, Bull played the role of Lincoln in the films "The Iron Horse" and "The Heart of Maryland."

Working his way through the University of Nevada, Bull took up law and became a judge of the Common Pleas Court at Reno for three years. Unlike Lincoln, he was forever afterwards called "Judge." Because of his resemblance to Lincoln, Bull became active in assisting in drives for funds during World War I, and meanwhile



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation
Charles E. Bull at age 74 in 1955.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Charles E. Bull who reached his 90th birthday on February 26, 1971.

he gained a national reputation as a Lincoln impersonator.

At the "Century of Progress" World's Fair in Chicago (1933-34) he appeared in Lincoln attire at the Ann Rutledge Tavern and gave autographs to thousands of visitors. He also performed as Lincoln on the stage and went on tours appearing in hundreds of high schools and colleges throughout the country.

Judge Bull always wore a beard like the Sixteenth President's, and his hair and dress resembled Lincoln's in every detail. He once made the statement, "I am proud of the physical resemblance which nature gave me, but I never 'aped' the man; I have never paraded the hat, coat and shawl unless in character on stage or in parades."

Having enjoyed an interesting and worthwhile career, Judge Bull lives quietly at his home in Los Angeles, California, reminiscing over events in his past and looking like Abraham Lincoln would have looked if he had reached his ninetieth birthday at the turn of the century.

John G. Nicolay — Inventor

It is generally known, at least among Lincoln students, that the Sixteenth President was an inventor. Lincoln's Patent No. 6469 bears the title "Improved method of lifting vessels over shoals." The patent is dated May 22, 1849 (See *Lincoln Lore* No. 1439, January, 1958). However, it is not generally known that Lincoln's private secretary, John G. Nicolay, was also an inventor.

It has been stated that, "Patenting inventions was the principal luxury (Nicolay) allowed himself throughout his life." According to his daughter, Helen Nicolay, Lincoln's

Secretary — *A Biography of John G. Nicolay*, Longman's, Green and Co., 1949, he obtained five patents: "The rotary press in 1852; a shot pouch in 1864; an ingenious window catch in 1870; an exercising machine in 1878; and, in 1891, a folding camp stool . . ." Some of these patents will be discussed in this short article.

Miscellaneous notes to be found in the remnant of Nicolay material, which the Foundation acquired in 1957, indicate that Nicolay spent considerable time on a machine to fold sheets of paper, on a springboard buggy, on an adjustable division for book shelves, and on a reading desk. However, these devices were not patented.

Among Nicolay's earliest papers is a letter from Harper's (probably Harper's Weekly) indicating that he had contrived a machine for folding sheets of paper. The publisher requested that he send his machine for examination as they had nothing of the kind in their printing establishment, and would like such an aid, if efficient, and, "not too expensive." Apparently the paper folder did not go beyond the drawing boards.

The inventor also worked on a rotary printing press for four years, and built a model out of material not well suited for the purpose. It seems that one important part was whittled from a pine board, which should have been metal rather than wood. However, the model worked. It was called "Nicolay's Rotary Cone Printing Press".

In the year 1852 Nicolay left Pittsfield (Pike County), Illinois for Washington, D. C., to visit the Patent Office. His model must have attracted some attention because on August 18th, the *National Intelligencer* mentioned Nicolay (the first time his name appeared under a Washington

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date line) as a youthful printer who, "in his remote residence, had never seen a machine press." The reporter continued: "We saw him often here, during the time his application was before the Patent Office, and were as much impressed by his modesty and intelligence as with the ingenuity of his invention."

In his Specification of Letters Patent, Nicolay stated, "My invention relates to an improved and simple arrangement of printing press. It consists of the peculiar combination and adaptation of conical impressing cylinders and their respective distributing rollers to the face or bed of a wheel or disk arranged and operating as hereinafter more fully described by reference to the drawing, whereby a press is produced combining simplicity, cheapness, and efficiency of action, whether constructed to be operated by hand or other power."

It is not believed that Nicolay stayed in Washington until the patent was issued because his Patent Number 9805 bears the date of October 5, 1852. For about six months the inventor devoted his full time to furthering his invention, but eventually he was back at the *Free Press* office as owner and editor.

Nicolay's "Improvement in Sash-Fasteners" was a device "to prevent (a) window from being raised from the outside." The Patent No. 108 171 is dated October 11, 1870. This time Nicolay gave his residence as Springfield (Sangamon County), Illinois.

His Folding Chair bears the Patent No. 445 190 and is dated January 27, 1891. The Foundation has Nicolay's original patent model. Helen Nicolay made the following statement regarding the patent: "A folding camp stool with a comfortable back, for which his daughter, using it on sketching expeditions, blessed him many times." The Letters Patent give Nicolay's address as Washington, District of Columbia.

Like Lincoln's invention, not one of Nicolay's patents ever proved financially profitable.

Ver-ry Inter-resting (If True?)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Little known references to the Lincoln family in Kentucky have always appealed to the editor, as he is a native of the Blue Grass State, and recently while checking an item in Emanuel Hertz's, *The Hidden Lincoln*, The Viking Press, 1938, William H. Herndon's letter to Jesse Weik, January 9, 1886, came under close scrutiny. Herndon related to Weik a very questionable story that he claimed occurred in 1817 (the Lincoln family moved to Indiana in December, 1816) which he attributed to Mentor Graham. The statement follows:

The name of the man is Mentor Graham; he was an intelligent man, a good and a truthful man, and yet in some things he was "sorter cranky." About the year 1817 he was traveling from to Elizabethtown, Kentucky. In passing from to the latter place he saw at a little place a crowd of men, stopped, hitched his horse, and went among the crowd, soon found out that a man had killed his wife. Persons were expressing



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

The original folding camp chair patented by John G. Nicolay, January 27, 1891.

their horror of the act. Soon after Graham had stopped Thomas Lincoln and his boy Abraham came along and stopped, went among the crowd, found out what was the matter, had some conversation with the crowd, and now comes the nib of this letter. After all the people had expressed their ideas, one of the men said to Abraham: "My little boy, what do you think of such a deed?" The boy studied a moment, and gave a terse and eloquent idea of the cruel deed. Graham says that the boy was very sad, that his language was eloquent and feeling for one so young. The remarks which he made astonished all present, were pronounced good, plain, terse, and strong, and says Graham: I have now known Mr. Lincoln for more than fifty years and I can see the same trait of character and the same style now in Lincoln that I did in 1817 in Kentucky . . .

The Ten Maxims — Not Lincoln's Words

Every year the Republican National Committee in Washington, D. C., furnishes speech material for those politicians who are called upon to make Lincoln Day addresses. Such compilations for 1967, 1968, 1969 and 1970 have been acquired by the Foundation.

While a great many of the topics for discussion deal with current issues, as seen from the Republican Party's point of view, some are concerned with Abraham Lincoln with such topics as "Lincoln's Life in Brief," "Lincoln's Farewell Address at Springfield," "Lincoln's Second In-

augural Address," "Lincoln Quotes," "Lincoln's Plan of Campaign in 1840," "Lincoln The Republican," and "Lincoln Anecdotes."

The compiler of this Lincoln-Republican information warned the Lincoln Day orators that, "that there is a popular misapprehension that the . . . ten maxims were authored by Lincoln" (See illustration "Ten points by Wm. J. H. Boetcker). The Lincoln Day orators were cautioned not to use the maxims as Lincoln's words even though in 1950 they were inserted in the *Congressional Record*, and were printed in *Look Magazine*, under the mistaken impression that they were Lincoln quotes. In fact, in 1954, the ten maxims were widely read and circulated in a Lincoln-Day speech of a Cabinet Member.

The case of mistaken identity possibly arose from a 3 x 5 inch leaflet that the Committee for Constitutional Government distributed prior to 1950. One side was labeled "Lincoln on Limitation," followed by bona-fide words of Lincoln, enclosed in quotation marks. The other side of the leaflet was headed "Ten Points — They cost so little . . . They are worth so much!" These ten points were not enclosed in quotation marks. However, in later printings in the absence of a stated source and with the deletion of Boetcker's name, the understandable impression was that they, too, were Lincoln quotes.

The ten points actually originated with the Rev. William J. H. Boetcker, a retired minister of Erie, Pa., who authored, copyrighted and first printed them in 1916. Later the Committee for Constitutional Government apparently adopted them for a Lincoln leaflet, printed them under Lincoln's "by-line," but with the notation: "Inspiration of Wm. J. H. Boetcker." Later this reference to Mr. Boetcker was dropped from the leaflet, and the later undated C.C.G. flier possessed by the Republican National Committee Research Division contained no reference to Mr. Boetcker's inspiration, or that of anyone else; thus leaving the impression that the ten points were suggested by Lincoln.

Ten Points

They cost so little
They are worth so much!

1. You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging the rich.
2. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong.
3. You cannot help small men by tearing down big men.
4. You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich.
5. You cannot lift the wage-earner by pulling down the wage-payer.
6. You cannot keep out of trouble by spending more than your income.
7. You cannot further the brotherhood of man by inciting class hatred.
8. You cannot establish sound security on borrowed money.
9. You cannot build character and courage by taking away a man's initiative and independence.
10. You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves.

Inspiration of Wm. J. H. Boetcker

If you wish to distribute this leaflet to friends, members of your church, lodge or union, please order in your lot, we will supply 25 for one, one per order, one cent. See the committee for address in your mail, 41 1/2c, 41 1/2c, 41 1/2c per 1,000 and so on. Ask for "Lincoln on Limitation," Committee for Constitutional Government, 101 E. 42nd St., N.Y.C.